

Understanding Social Media Marketing

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What is Social Media?

Social media is certainly the buzz of today, but what is it, how can it benefit you, and why do you really care? Glad you asked. First, let's stress that if you think social media is a fad that's going to disappear you couldn't be further from the truth. Social media is a phenomenon and it's taking the internet by storm.

Those who were quick to jump on the bandwagon and take the time to understand social media marketing have already taken their businesses miles ahead of the competition. Over the next decade, we can expect social media's role in marketing and business to grow by leaps and bounds.

So what is social media? By definition (Wikipedia), social media refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue.

So how big is social media? It's huge! To give you an idea of how huge here are some recent stats.

- There are more than 750 million active users on social networking site Facebook.
- There are more than 156 million blogs.
- There are more than 490 million YouTube videos.

Social Media by Characteristics

The best way to understand social media is by grouping by characteristic.

- **Openness:** The majority of social media venues promote leaving comments, voting, sharing information, and removing barriers making content open to everyone.
- **Connectedness:** Social media thrives on being connected with other people, resources, sites, blogs, etc.
- **Conversation:** Traditional media is one way communication whereas social media is more of a two-way conversation.
- **Participation:** Social media promotes everyone to contribute and provide feedback. Media and audience blur together.
- **Community:** Social media sees communities quickly sprout up based on common interests.

5 Basic Forms of Social Media

If you're wondering when we are going to get to the meat and potatoes of social media marketing, we are already on our way. To get the most out of this e-book and concepts we'll discuss, you need to understand social media and its components. If this is all rather boring to you we encourage you to skip forward.

There are five basic forms of social media. Let's have a look at them.

1. Social Networks

These are sites where people build personal and business web pages and then connect with their Friends and/or family to communicate, share content and share photos. There are many social networks although most of us think of Facebook right away.

2. Forums

Forums came before social media and were an important predecessor that remains important today. These are sites where online discussions are around a specific hobby, topic, or interest. Information is shared and exchanged and online communities are built.

3. Blogs

Blogs are a well known and popular form of social media. A blog is like an online journal. It can be personal or business. They can be based on a specific topic such as fashion or real estate, or they can be more like a diary discussing daily events or news. Blogs

4. Content Communities

Content communities organize and share based on a specific type of content such as videos or photos. YouTube is the biggest content community. There are others such as Flickr or del.icio.us.

5. Microblogging

Microblogging combines social networking and micro blogs, which are the equivalent of little sound bites. It's the perfect way of sharing information for mobile devices. Twitter is an excellent example of microblogging and they are considered the leader in the microblogging arena.

Social Media and the Distribution of Information

Social media has grown at a phenomenal rate, faster than any other area of the internet. It wasn't that many decades ago that the ability to create content and then distribute it to the masses was limited to those with access to television, radio, and print.

If you wanted a video, you would call a television station, which would have employed thousands of professionals who would create, compose, and bring to air your video. If you wanted print material, you would call up a newspaper or magazine that also had teams of writers and editors who would put together your copy and bring it to print.

The internet opened the door to creating one's own content and distributing that content. But still even a decade ago, it was still beyond the technical skills of most. However, today anyone can create their own content and easily distribute it to the masses. Anyone can take advantage of social media and the powerful marketing tool it presents, whether that's using a blog, Facebook, Twitter, or any number of other social media avenues.

How Social Media Networks Work

Social networks grow and prosper when web surfers find a social media network they want to join, so they sign up, create their profile, and begin to connect with friends, family, coworkers, and contacts. They invite others to join the social network, and those people invite more people and suddenly the social media network has exploded in popularity.

MySpace

A great deal of MySpace popularity is because of its music services, and with more than three million musicians/bands registered, it should be no surprise that there are more than 200 million registered users.

Facebook

With more than 750 million users Facebook has quickly sky rocketed to the position of #1 in the social media world. Whether you want to play a game of Scrabble with friends, send a virtual gift, or wish someone a happy

birthday, it's as easy as 1,2,3. The business side of Facebook is quickly growing as more and more companies recognize it for the powerful marketing tool it is.

LinkedIn

Of the many social network sites LinkedIn is the one most used to build professional contacts and grow a business. It has received some disapproval for being too closed to the public and for the fees it charges for some of its services, but it is also the second most popular social network site, next to Facebook.

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing, is often referred to as SMM. It is a type of internet marketing that focuses on branding to create product and brand recognition, and creating marketing strategies using the various social media networks that are available. Social media describes the activities that occur including photos, videos, content, and social interaction.

It's easy to get so excited over the technology and the internet that sometimes we fail to plan or create the necessary roadmap for your online business to be successful. Social media is a powerful tool that can aid your business in reaching their highest goals.

- Increased traffic to your page
- Conversion to a sale
- Sales tracking
- Page exposure
- Increasing brand awareness
- Business development

How to Create Activity With Social Media

The internet lets you interact with web surfers and you can create and promote your content by using the right strategy. You can reach targeted traffic and key influencers with social media. Let's look at some important tips that can help you get a better understanding of social media marketing.

1. Process

Don't become a follower trying to keep up with every idea that comes along. Instead set your goals and establish your own processes, such as keyword research or content analysis, then map out your plan. Far too many companies will move too fast before they've ever put a plan in place. If you don't put a plan into place you are not going to see any good results.

2. Assistance

When it comes to social media helping others is key to success. People fail with their social media marketing because they are too about "me," and not enough about "them." Always remember that this should be about those who are visiting your social media marketing page not about you.

3. Connect

You can reach out to those who are influencers in the marketplace. You'll be surprised how brand advocates can help you in your niche. Remember to always be polite and sincere.

4. Contribute

You need to create content that is of the highest quality. As important as social media is, content remains the most important aspect of your online business and marketing campaign. There are a number of opportunities waiting for you.

5. Position Yourself

To create a powerful connection to your brand and your company, learn how to position yourself amongst consumer passion.

6. Blog

A blog is so easy to set up and it is one of the most powerful social media tools out there. As more and more people discover their value they are beginning to grow at an astronomical rate.

7. Links

Don't be afraid of linking. Linking to other websites and blogs can be a powerful tool for you to build a targeted audience. Search engines are built on links. Learn how to use them to your advantage to drive traffic to your website.

8. Videos

Video is one of the fastest growing sectors of the internet. You have the potential to reach millions when you use video correctly. For a wider distribution there are other tools that you can use such as vidmetrix.com to aid in automating distribution of your videos. You'll draw the most viewers with videos that are funny, weird, and controversial in nature.

9. RSS Feeds

RSS feeds are an excellent way to spread the word. You can easily distribute update notices, headlines, and content change. People like to be kept in the loop and know what's going on. Subscribing to an RSS feed allows them to do that. There are all kinds of RSS feeds that people subscribe to including My Yahoo Web and iGoogle, as well as many others. Make sure you take advantage of what an RSS feed can do for you.

10. Micro Communities

There are all kinds of micro communities that pertain to your business. In fact, there's a micro community for almost every interest. For example, gardenweb.com, education.com, shoetube.com, etc. If you want to have your voice heard micro communities are a much better option than trying to get noticed on one of the large communities such as Digg.com. Create relevant remarks that are link worthy and don't forget to connect with the top influencers online.

The Best Media Resources to Get Started With

Facebook

Reach Your Target Market

- Connect with more than 500 million potential customers
- Choose your audience by location, age and interests
- Test simple image and text-based ads and use what works

Strengthen Relationships

- Promote your *Facebook Page* or *website*
- Use our *Like* button to increase your ad's influence
- Build a community around your business

Control Your Budget

- Set the daily budget you are comfortable with
- Adjust your daily budget at anytime
- Choose to pay only when people click (CPC) or see your ad (CPM)

Step by Step Guide to Marketing Using Facebook Ads

You can enjoy success by learning how to mix online advertising with Facebook ads and content marketing. You can measure the effectiveness of your Facebook ads using Google Analytics and number of other tools. If you properly place your ads, viewers will not find them as annoying. Targeted ads will enjoy a much higher click through and conversion rate

Follow this step by step guide to setting up your Facebook ads

1. Choose your offer and set up your landing page on your website

Before you ever start to run Facebook ads you need to develop a landing page that promotes what you are offering. Your landing page is where both what you are offering and your hook can be found. The visitor clicks the ad and the landing page says “hey glad you came – this is what we are offering you.”

1. Here is how to set up your landing page:

1. Set up the page on your website and provide it with an identifiable sub-directory URL (yoursite.com/contentname)
2. If at all possible remove site navigation. Having no site navigation is proven to increase your conversion rate because your visitor stays focused on what it is you are offering.
3. Your copy needs to be clear and concise with a strong call to action.
4. Use the language your customer speaks. Detail the benefits using bullet list.
5. Use the same picture on your landing page and Facebook ad to create familiarity.

2. Set up your tracking URL

You can set up a tracking URL with Google Analytics or a number of other analytical providers.

3. Decide Your Budget

We’d be amiss if we didn’t mention that any type of ad campaign including Facebook ads comes with a risk, so if you should only partake if you feel the risk can justify the return. Of course, we should also mention that in order to maximize your ROI you need to take some risk. You can run an ad campaign of \$50 a day or \$500 a day – it’s

entirely up to you to determine what you will spend on your Facebook ad campaigns. You can experiment starting with a small amount of money. It works by shutting off your ads once you reach your daily budget.

4. Setting Up Your Facebook Ad

Once you have decided on your budget, you will need to complete the following information:

- *Destination:* Your external URL
- *URL:* Paste your tracking link
- *Title:* The most important part of your Facebook ad. Give it the appropriate attention.
- *Body:* Make sure you use audience's language in your Facebook ad. "Find out how," or "Click here to do this," are a couple of lines that work well in the majority of cases, but you need to determine what will make your targeted audience respond in the way you want.
- *Picture:* They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and that's so true. Your Facebook ad gives you only enough space for a call to action headline and a two-line description. Make sure your picture says it all.

5. Target Your Ad

Facebook lets you target users' likes and interests. You can have your ad reach an area as large as the number of people living within a specific radius of your business. This could be in the millions, or it could be as low as a few thousand. Such is the case when looking to reach those between the ages of 18-19 who like white chocolate chip cookies, and live within 5 miles of your business. You can also change your target settings on the fly. So, if you aren't experiencing the click through you hoped to see, you can quickly change your settings to improve your target audience.

6. Check and Adjust

While you need to check and adjust as needed you don't want to become obsessed with checking the analytics. Be patient.

The Facebook Toolbar

Lets you share with your friends while browsing anywhere on the web - get notified, share content, upload photos, and update your status no matter where you are!

Twitter

Twitter is a tool for micro-blogging. Twitter was actually designed to be compatible with cell phones through text messages, which is why each Twitter post was limited to 140 characters.

Suggestions for Using Twitter for Marketing

Engage your CEO in social media. Social media is an excellent way to have a conversation with your market, make connections, and manage those connections with customers, prospects, bloggers, etc. However, for a CEO, the characteristic routes to social media can be tough, especially with larger companies. Generally, a CEO doesn't have time to write a blog, answer a bunch of messages, or deal with tons of friend requests on Facebook.

Twitter is a method that eliminates all those hassles. It's quick and easy. Twitter is limited to 140 characters per update, so it is all about short thoughts and comments. If you can send a text message, you can use Twitter from anywhere in the world as a marketing tool.

Keep in touch with bloggers/media. It is easy to follow someone on Twitter, and how often they decide to follow you as well.

Monitor your company or brand on Twitter. By monitoring you'll be able to tell what's working and what's not and make the necessary changes.

Announce specials, sales, or deals. If you often have special offers, you can use Twitter to instantly broadcast these deals.

Live updates on events. Whether you have corporate events or trade shows you participate in you can use Twitter to announce the event, last minute changes, and more. It is an excellent last minute marketing tool.

Promote webinars, blog articles, news etc. It's really easy to post a link in Twitter.

A Step-by-Step Guide to Using Twitter for Marketing

1. **Signup and post a profile.** Visit www.twitter.com and click on the "Get Started - Join" button. Follow the signup prompts.
2. **Write updates.** Twitter's maximum 140 character limit is the great equalizer. No one post can outdo another, so just write something.
3. **Make friends.** It's pretty easy to make friends on Twitter. Just surf Facebook profiles, favorite blogs, etc, and when you see a Twitter box click on it, which will take you to their profile. Now click on the "Follow" button and you are now following them
4. **How to post URLs.** With a maximum of 140 characters if you have a really long URL, it may not be enough room. In that case you can use www.TinyURL.com, which will turn a long URL into a short URL.
5. **Monitor conversations about your company.** Even if without joining Twitter it's easy to monitor what people are saying about a company, brand, or person. This is very useful for marketing.
6. **Chat using the @ symbol before someone's Twitter username.** This makes the username a link to their profile, which allows others to follow the conversation. For example, if you wrote, "[@namehere](#) thanks for fab info on Twitter today" that would allow you to tell the person you liked what they wrote.

Twitter Tools

There are all kinds of valuable Twitter tools you should know about to make the most out of your Twitter social media marketing experience. Let's have a look at the top 20.

1. **FriendOrFollow** - Who are you following that's not following you back? Who's following you that you're not following back? Find out!
2. **WeFollow** - Find new followers based on your inputted keyword.
3. **Twitterless** - Tells you who stops following you, and graphs the history of your follower over time. The info is available in a variety of useful views.
4. **Just Tweet It** - Makes easier for people using Twitter to find other "Tweeters" with similar interests.
5. **Twimailer** - If you are tired of shallow e-mails from Twitter when someone follows you, or you want more information right in your inbox Twimailer is just what you need.

- 6. Less friends** - Find out if the people you follow on Twitter, follow you.
- 7. MyCleenr** - Lets you sort your friends by their last tweets. Lets you get rid of all the useless or inactive accounts that you are following.
- 8. Who Should I follow** - Helps you find interesting people to follow on Twitter. It can suggest people who are similar those you already follow.
- 9. Twubble** - It can help expand your Twitter bubble by searching your friend graphs and picking out people you might be interested in following.
- 10. Mr.Tweet** - An excellent tool to find most significant individuals, get useful statistics and much more.
- 11. Nearby Tweets** - Extends Twitter's capabilities to its full potential: a geography-centric social tool for networking and a business tool for building customer relationships.
- 12. UseQwitter** - E-mails you when anyone stops following you on Twitter.
- 13. Your Twitter Karma** - This is a very handy tool. Get a completely manageable page with all friends, and followers with avatars. You can do quite a few bulk actions such as bulk follow, bulk un-follow, or bulk block.
- 14. My Tweeple** - This is an excellent way to manage all of your Twitter people in one place. You can quickly see who's following you and who you're following.
- 15. Twitblocker** - If you have friends that just don't stop twittering, you can install this script, so when you double click these chatterers tweets will be temporarily removed. When you restart your browser they'll be back.
- 16. SocialToo** - This tool can assist you in becoming a social networking power user. Keep your follower lists in sync across networks, and get daily updates. Send surveys to your followers and more!
- 17. Twellow** - This tool aids in cutting through the clutter to find other Twitter users based on a specific industry.
- 18. Tweepsearch** - Was created to permit people on Twitter to search their follower's bio and location information.
- 19. TwitterCounter** - This is a WordPress plugin and includes stats. You can also add the Twitter Remote to your blog, which displays the twitter users who have recently visited your blog or website.
- 20. TwitterMass** - TwitterMass is a hyper networking toolset for Twitter on steroids. Site suite of tools aim to help relieve some of the mundane processes you would go through when trying to build your Twitter network.

Secondlife (3D)

Second Life is a free 3D virtual world online where users can socialize, connect, and create using free voice and text chat. There are nearly 20 million users. Big companies like Proctor & Gamble, Georgio Armani, Dell Computer, and others use Second Life to reach their audiences and increase sales. Here's how Secondlife can work for you.

Fostering Community

The Second Life "community" is currently made up of over 550,000 people who go "in-world" an average of 40 hours a month. There are a number of smaller communities, formed around personal interests and activities.

Because of this the best entry point for outside companies is generally through brands and products that Second Life users are already attracted to.

The first relatively successful corporate-funded presence in Second Life was built for Showtime's popular series *The L Word*. The site featured recreated locations from the show where fans could gather and socialize. Using the capacity to stream QuickTime video into Second Life, "L Word " hosted regular episode viewing sessions in a virtual living room. The CW show *Gossip Girl* took that a step further, creating a role-playing game where fans of the series become characters inspired by the show.

Embracing the Fantastic

The most common mistake (and the worst) made by virtual world marketers is trying to mirror the real world in their Second Life. Some of the most successful grassroots locales incorporate spectrum of possibility a bit like a 3D dreamscape.

Among Second Life's most popular locales is "Greenies," a giant living room where avatars appear as tiny as ants. Here is where a British agency launched a campaign L'Oreal Paris, with custom-made virtual products discretely placed inside a lady's SUV-size purse. After 3 months, Second Life residents had grabbed 34,000 copies of L'Oreal-branded objects. The click-through rate of these virtual products was an amazing 3% of the active user base.

Leveraging Metaverse Brands

This user-created world has its own currency, and it's packed with established brands that only exist in Second Life. The wide selection of virtual companies launched by content creators includes, landscaping, fashion, tattoos, aerospace, architecture, choreography, and that's just a few. Instead of superimposing real products into the virtual world, everyday brands should hire top notch content creators to merge real and virtual brands into a product that exists only in Second Life

YouTube

You Tube isn't just a video platform, it is also a social network. Because of the easy to use YouTube's format, messages can efficiently spread across a many mediums such as Twitter and Facebook. You can quickly and easily add a YouTube video to your site, your Facebook account, your Twitter account, etc., and there is no need for a special viewer to watch.

More than 500 tweets per minute contain a link to a YouTube video, and the YouTube's search bar is the second most common search bar on the Internet, second only to Google. In a month 3 billion hours are collectively spent on YouTube, so you can see as a social media marketing tool, YouTube has the potential to be a powerful tool.

So as a marketer with a media division here's how to maximize YouTube.

Customize Your Channel

YouTube allows you to customize your channel to compliment your branding, and it also lets you highlight the content you want to focus around. You can pick which video will display first and how your content will be displayed. When you signup to YouTube, you are instantly given a channel. You can customize your channel and add a content description. When you log in, you have access to a menu and you can customize your channel here.

Curate Content

You can use YouTube to administer content from all your channels without ever uploading an original video. You can do keyword searches to search by duration, category, features, upload date, and more. To get started choose a few videos you want to add to your channel. You can create a playlist or favorite list, then use your playlist settings to arrange the videos.

Original Content

You don't have to have a dedicated media team to create good content. All you need is a digital camera, or a cell phone with video capabilities, to create a basic video. Create how to videos, interview important people, create tips for products, etc. to increase targeted traffic.

Get Found

The search engines will pickup YouTube videos; however, they are not able to determine content. To ensure surfers can find your channel you need to properly tag your videos and your channel. Describe your channel, and pay close attention to the video titles you choose.

34 ways to use YouTube for Your Business

Marketing and Advertising

1. Set up a channel to reflect your brand and connect with others.
2. Show your product in action using a movie trailer style that's catchy.
3. Choose a user name for your channel URL that reflects your brand.
4. Create a video explaining your product/service.
5. Add your channel URL to marketing and social network profiles.
6. Build credibility by posting customer video testimonials.
7. Show the outcome of others using your product/service.
8. Use recordings of previous events to promote your events.
9. Take viewers on a tour of your offices to help them feel connected.
10. Ask others to use your product in their videos
11. Run a contest.
12. Don't be afraid to cross-promote products.
13. To add authenticity introduce your staff.
14. Post links to your videos on various social networks.
15. Look into YouTube promoted videos to reach your target market.
16. Use Google AdWords. These use text-based ads and do not require a video from your business.
17. Earn money from your videos by partnering with YouTube.
18. Study your channel's performance with the Google Analytics.
19. Display company information in every video including name, URL, email address, and phone number.

Expertise and Leadership

20. Share slides from presentations.
21. To demonstrate authority upload recordings of presentations you've given,.
22. Conduct an interview with an expert in your niche.
23. To show expertise create short videos of valuable tips your client can use.
24. Expand your reach by turning your podcasts into videos.
25. Engage with the YouTube community by leaving comments.
26. Record an important meeting to share with employees.

Customer Service

1. Post solutions to common product/service problems.
2. Create “how to” videos to help your customers use your product/service.
3. Embed videos on your web site.
4. Answer customer-specific questions using videos.
5. Post a blog entry discussing a problem and create visual support by including a video.
6. Go the extra mile by adding closed-captions to your videos.

StumbleUpon

StumbleUpon helps you discover and share great websites. StumbleUpon delivers pages based on the user’s personal preferences. These pages have been recommended by your friends or one of over 15 million other web surfers with interests similar to you.

How to Market for Free on StumbleUpon

1. You must inform and entertain with a high Wow factor, often called link bait. The goal is to convert visitors to buyers, subscribers, or linkers.
2. Never just submit content. You should join the community, and spend time learning what your target community likes. StumbleUpon recently added profiles and community networks.
3. Pictures are key.

Tips for Paid Advertising on StumbleUpon

1. You must inform and entertain with a high Wow factor, often called link bait. The goal is to convert visitors to buyers, subscribers, or linkers.
2. Never just submit content. You should join the community, and spend time learning what your target community likes. StumbleUpon recently added profiles and community networks.
3. Pictures are key.
4. If you’re investing serious effort into your content spend the money to send it through StumbleUpon.
5. Pay for stumbles on content that’s quality but that surfers aren’t necessarily searching for.
6. If you’re launching a website and you have invested in branded content to convert viewers make sure StumbleUpon is where you are advertising.

StumbleUpon Facts

- It can send an notable number of visitors to your page
- People coming from refer.php page are usually random surfers .
- Benefits you can gain using StumbleUpon:
 - **build relationships** within your niche
 - develop your **brand**
 - get **targeted visitors**.

StumbleUpon Approaches That Work

1. Get-Noticed Approach

You need to grab the attention of at least one niche and others will come. StumbleUpon's strong point is that each niche has many fans who also have fans of their own; so if you appeal to one, you will connect to others at an exponential rate.

Be an early bird: be the first to stumble interesting posts by your favorite bloggers. They will appreciate your efforts. Add bloggers you daily read to your friends and also follow them.

2. Brand-Your-Image Approach

Don't neglect the power of imaginary. Eye catching photos stick in a visitor's memory. When an image is seen several times, people begin to recognizing it and make the association with your company. Make sure to add the same photo to your StumbleUpon profile, to your blog, to you website's home page and anywhere else where you are participating online.

3. Brand-Your Name Approach

If your company shows up regularly, it will soon be recognized. Make sure you interweave networks you are actively participating in.

4. Build a Fan Club Approach.

Each time you stumble an article, your fans may read it but you shouldn't waste your friends' time. **Stumble** only posts that have value, which will promote people add you to their friends and follow stumbles.

5. Build-Social-Friendship Approach

Never focus solely on niche influencers. Remember everyone is important. Thank your stumblers by dropping them a short message.

6. Do-Your-Homework Approach

Your goal is to get to know the person behind the stumble: his/her interests, website(s), social networks, etc. When you are at ease in the community and have lots of friends, improve your connection by replying to every message and comment, mention their posts, etc.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn connects you with the right audience and it offers hundreds of ways to help you ensure your message makes it to the right person(s). Over 100 million professionals follow more than 1.9 million companies, recommend more than 150,000 products, and join more than 850,000. LinkedIn connects you with the right audience, and offers you hundreds of ways to target your message to the right person at the right time.

Yet LinkedIn remains an underutilized social media network. Many believe it's difficult to make connections and so therefore use it more to post their resume rather than a social media marketing tool. LinkedIn has the potential to be a powerful professional social media network.

How LinkedIn Can Help You Market

Boost Your Search Engine Optimization

There are three areas where you can add website links to your LinkedIn profile. Rather than displaying “My Website” and “My Blog” click on the Edit button, then click on Other. Next type in a **keyword phrase** describing how people would search for your business.

For example, let’s say your promoting mortgage products/services. You could change your website to read *Mortgage Options*, and your blog to read *Foreclosure Options*.

Promote Your Blog Feed

You can import your WordPress blog feed to your profile by, which is a quick way for others to be able to scan your blog content. LinkedIn also has a blog application, “Blog Link,” which supports WordPress.org, WordPress.com, LiveJournal, Blogger, TypePad, and Vox.

Your blog is your best tool for developing your brand. Now you can promote your blog and develop your brand by sharing insights and thoughts on your LinkedIn home page.

Create LinkedIn Ad Campaigns

LinkedIn has its own Direct Ads Campaign that targets professionals. You can quickly reach a rapidly growing community of over 57 million professionals with an average household income of \$110,000 US, and you can select your ad audience by industry, seniority, company size, job function, etc. In just minutes, you can write, target, and run your ad. You can get started just US \$50. Be sure to leverage the power of LinkedIn by using your professional brand to put a face to your business.

Utilize Events to Engage Clients

Creating an event in LinkedIn is really easy. You can send invitations through your LinkedIn network, which creates an opportunity for you to meet those who decide to attend. At a glance you can see all of your network’s upcoming events. It’s a terrific marketing tool to be able to promote business events online in the same manner you would offline.

Using Groups to Connect With People

While starting a group takes some effort to grow your group it’s worth all the effort. A great place to begin is to invite your current network. As the people from your network join your group, it’s observable in their network news feed, which can generate new interest and new group members.

Get Recommendations to Attract More Clients

Recommendations are one of the features that makes LinkedIn unique from other social media networks. What could be better than by having your colleagues and clients share your expertise. The best way to get recommendations is to give recommendations.

Del.icio.us

Del.icio.us is an excellent source of inbound links, exposure, and traffic, yet it remains an underutilized social media marketing tool. Let’s have a look at 3 ways to effectively use Del.icio.us.

Networking

It's easy to miss the fact that you can network with other users with del.icio.us. Compared to other social media sites, del.icio.us doesn't have a bunch of fancy features, but you can easily add others to your network, share links, and view bookmarks with those in your network. When you want to get something to the front page, each and every bookmark counts. Pickup some extra bookmarks by sharing with your friends.

There are a few things you can do to grow your network. Start by including a link to your del.icio.us page from your website so others can add you. You can use one of the official badges provided by del.icio.us for this purpose. You can also ask your friends who are del.icio.us users for their id and add them to your network.

Brand Yourself With Del.icio.us

Many del.icio.us users stop by the front page often to see what is popular. Keep your content focused on your primary topic, which can help you to effectively brand yourself.

Create Focused Content

The best way to get to the front page of del.icio.us is to create a resource that del.icio.us users will likely bookmark. If you have been optimizing for del.icio.us, you will know what types of resources and articles do well.

The del.icio.us pages that become popular usually have plenty inbound links. Pages that have lots of inbound links usually rank well in the search engines. Consider key words and phrases that you would like to rank well in the search engines. Think about what content will help you target your keywords, do well with del.icio.us, and draw links using those words resulting in a ranking boost.

5 Social Media Tips for Ecommerce Marketing

If you run an ecommerce business, chances are your customers are active on social networks regardless of their gender, age, or economic status. In fact, according to the statistics from social media monitoring site Pingdom:

- 47% males and 53% females use social network sites
- 61% of Facebook users are middle aged or older
- The average age of social networking users is 37
- 18- to 24-year-olds don't dominate any particular social networking site

If you aren't learning which social networking channels your customers spend their time at, you're probably missing out on increasing your customer base through online word of mouth. Leverage these 5 social media marketing tips to get the most out of your ecommerce marketing.

1. Go Where You'll Find Your Customers

Digital and social media marketing offer endless options. From Facebook to LinkedIn to Twitter to YouTube, there are an endless number social networking channels available that your business can leverage. The key to winning social media ecommerce marketing is to choose the right channels so you reach customers.

You can learn where your customers gather by:

- **Asking them.** While it sounds simple, it's often overlooked. Just send out a formal survey to customers or do an informal polling on your website, which can provide a wealth of knowledge.
- **Monitoring social sites.** There are a number of free tools such as Trackur to learn how and where customers are talking about your competitors, your brand, or your target keywords. For There are also paid programs that are more robust.

- **Leveraging the stats.** When it comes to stats some sites like Facebook are transparent or you can leverage third-party research.
- **Review** job postings, backlinks, keyword rankings of competitors, and news announcements regularly to get a quick look into your online marketing health.

2. Use Social Media to Promote Exclusive Offers

In order for your ecommerce business to build followers on the social channel you choose, you must entice customers with something they aren't able to get anywhere else. Offer an exclusive item to social media followers or fans, such as a weekly coupon. You might also offer "breaking news" that they can't find somewhere else.

3. Monitor What Your Competitors Are Doing

Whether your ecommerce business is new to social media marketing, or you just want to take it up a notch, competitive intelligence can be very helpful. Conduct a competitive audit of your top five competitors on the social web and then answer the following questions.

- What social sites are they active on?
- What type of content do they publish?
- How many followers/views/fans do they have on their site?
- How do they promote their products, events, or programs using social media?

4. Don't Just Promote Products/Services

The main focus of your ecommerce site is to sell products, but your social media marketing strategy should include a wide range of strategies that go beyond promotional offerings. Here are a few ideas to try incorporation into your social media marketing.

- Share news stories or messages from external sources
- Create a blog on your site then feed your blog content to your social media accounts
- Ask questions, poll your customers, or participate in discussions via social media
- Post pictures from company events or videos especially when the CEO speaks

5. Sell Products Through Social Networks

Many ecommerce sites use social channels to make it easier for customers to purchase their products. For example, 1-800-Flowers was the first ecommerce site to launch a Facebook store, which allowed customers to browse, and purchase its products directly through Facebook.

The five ideas are a good start when it comes to successful ecommerce social media marketing.

Understanding the Playing Field of Social Media Marketing

Designing and building a social media campaign that's successful is a bit like designing and building a high-rise. First, you need to research your material, then you need to put down a solid foundation, and then you need to continue with regular maintenance to ensure your social media promotion is a success.

The Proper Building Blocks

The proper building blocks are key to successful social media marketing. The strongest social media plan needs to include the following building blocks:

Democratized Social News Sites

These tools permit online marketers to network with a community by both voting on content and by submitting your own content for others to vote on. Examples include Reddit and Mixx.

Social Sites

These sites offer a fantastic opportunity to build and interact with a network, and to publish your original content in a number of forms such as videos, photos, links, news, and more. Examples include Facebook and LinkedIn.

Editor Controlled News Sites

When content the user submits fits the editorial guidelines it is accepted and distributed. These high profile websites can produce enormous results. Yahoo is a great example of a news site.

Micro-Blogging Sites

These include sites like Twitter and Friendfeed, where your comments are limited to 140 characters or less. Keep your comments interesting. A great way to broadcast to a large audience.

Social Bookmarking Sites

A great tool for marketers are social bookmarking sites where you can submit URLs of interest to sites like Delicious and StumbleUpon, which will drive targeted traffic to specific page. These sites are great for doing research pertaining to the type of content that your audience is interested in.

Wiki Sites

If you want to dominate search results, Wikis are a great tool, because they frequently rank high. Use wikis to reach new audiences by posting original content and editing existing content.

Social Question & Answer Sites

Marketers can answer existing questions and post new questions on sites such as Wiki Answers and Yahoo! Answers. This is a great way to develop and grow brand reputation and become an authority. It's also an excellent way to do audience research.

Social Content Sharing Sites

Flickr and YouTube, are just a couple of the sites that let you post specific content types, from photos to video to reviews. These sites can aid marketers to build brand recognition and to target relevant audiences.

Niche Sites

These sites target a specific niche, such as Chihuahuas, Italian wine, or blogging. As a marketer these are excellent because you are able to target a extremely relevant audience.

Blueprints

In order to create a social media campaign that will be successful you must have a detailed plan. These steps will ensure your campaign is solid.

Background Research

Learn where your online audience is located. Examine the type of content they submit to social media sites for ideas of what interests them. Also, identify thought leaders to target in order to spread your message to a broad audience.

Brainstorming

The purpose of brainstorming is to generate tons of ideas that you can use for promotions. Have a look at what has worked in the past and then build upon that. Look at what has worked for other similar companies or products and then see how that could be integrated into your platform. Take the time to filter out the good, the bad, and the really good, so that you can find a workable solution.

Idea Research

You will need to follow up on the ideas you implemented to see if they actually worked (and how well they worked) based on what currently happening in the targeted social media. Flexibility is really important, as is the ability to adapt and change if something isn't working. After all, there's no point in continuing down a path that isn't working.

Story Production

Work hard to avoid a message that is an obvious sales pitch, and what's referred to as marketing speak. Use videos and photos to enrich your stories.

Schedule and Launch

You need to be aware of the days and the times you targeted audience is on the social network sites. Make sure you link your promotions to relevant events to generate timely interest.

Build a Foundation

For your social media marketing campaign to be a success it's key to interact with a social community and build a strong foundation. There's a reason it's called social. Make sure you are socializing with an appropriate community and use these guidelines to get the most out of your campaign.

Network and be Social

You should continuously join and participate in groups, make new friends and interact with existing friends, and in general participate in the community.

Be Genuine and On Target

Provide your audience with what it wants.

Provide Value

Provide users with something of value – expert advice, tips, something entertaining, etc.

Allow People to Act Naturally

Allow users to have fun with your content and interact in a natural way. Don't force them to interact in a specific manner.

Listen and Respond

Watch for positive and negative reactions to your content once it goes live. Respond to your users and always work to improve content.

The Wrong Way to Use Social Media Marketing

When it comes to generating results in their social media marketing campaigns, some social media marketers choose to cross over to the dark side and we're not talking about Darth Vader's dark side. Avoid creating a social media ring so members can vote your content up, messing with the reputation of a competitor, using social media applications that automate processes, or hacking WordPress blogs to include your link. Avoid these unscrupulous tactics because they will not benefit you over the long haul and can actually jeopardize your long term success.

Create a comprehensive social media campaign by putting focusing on the three major stages we talked about:

1. Proper building blocks
2. Blueprint
3. Building a foundation

Social media marketing is a powerful tool so make sure you get the most out of it.

The 5 S's of Social Media Marketing For Your Business

It's important for you to understand the social aspect of how users utilize social media sites to adapt and be a success at their business. Social media revolves around the social networking sites. Let's look at the 5 S's of social media marketing your business should utilize.

1. Share

Social media is all about sharing. Individuals write blogs for the world to read, upload videos to sites like YouTube for the world to see, share bookmarks with sites like Digg, and post links to points of interest on Twitter. If your goal is to explore social media marketing and venture out, it's important to recognize the conversations can't be all about you or your company. Share information about your company with the rest of the world through social media and show your audience your company has the necessary expertise.

For example, with Twitters, the recommended formula is 10% sharing to 20% self advertising. Of course the formula isn't set in stone so experiment and see what works best.

2. Support

When you think about it, social media is pretty fantastic because users are having real-time conversations about everything and anything you can think of. PR agencies are beginning to strongly recommend that companies keep a social media presence. Social media sites like Twitter allow an avenue for customer support.

3. Social

Social media is about socializing with existing friends and making new friends. For your social media marketing to be successful you need to interacting with your followers who are your potential customers. Socializing and growing your fan base increases your presence. Think of social media is virtual socialization and for your business it is a virtual marketing Mecca. Engage – communicate – socialize = successful social media marketing.

4. Strategy

Make sure you have a social media marketing strategy in place, otherwise you could be wasting a great deal of time and money. Each social media type has a different environment, functionality, and demographic base. Determine what it is you want to achieve using social media, then analyze the different social media types and the various channels each offers. Create your online profile, brand your products/services, and then execute your plan. Make sure you analyze the effectiveness of your marketing strategy and make any needed changes. Social media is fluent, constantly changing, so you may have to fine tune your strategy as things change.

5. Sales

All the social media marketing campaigns are of no value to you and your business if they don't generate sales for you. You need to be creative. Set up a landing page, unique product campaigns, make pages trackable so you have access to data, and do anything else you can to track how effective your social media campaign is.

There you have it the 5 S's that can make your social media marketing campaign a success.

Understanding Your Audience

If you want to get the most out of your social media marketing you must understand your audience. Social media has evolved into far more than just an interesting site that people use to chat about their day to day lives. Many social media sites, like Facebook, have become virtual communities where friends interact, new friends are made, awareness campaigns occur, games are played, and much much more. Business has been slow to recognize just how powerful social media is.

Just recently have more businesses recognized there is a huge untapped market here with the potential to skyrocket their sales to a new level. By developing solid marketing strategies to use with social media you can also enjoy the benefits.

Don't make the mistake of thinking if you build it they will come. That's simply not the way it is. Too many businesses quickly throw up a website, start a blog, sign up to Twitter and start tweeting, and create a business page at Facebook, then they sit back in anticipation and are distraught when they reap no benefits, wondering what they did wrong.

Here's what you need to do to enjoy successful social media marketing.

Create a Profile

Don't create a profile for a single person. What you want to do is create a profile that is a representative character for thousands even millions of individuals that will connect to your business using social media channels.

What to Look For

If you want to understand your social media persona look to those who are already connected to you. To build a strong ask these three key questions.

- What are the content preferences of your customers?
- How do they discover content and then consume, and/or share that content?
- What are they looking to discuss on the social web?

Once you have the answers to these questions you can make smart decisions about what your content should be, and how to best present it.

How to Build Your Social Media Profile

There are all kinds of sites popping up who offer services to build your customer profile. If you want to undertake this project on your own, you need to keep these three powerful yet simple tools in mind when you want to find and develop your social media profile.

- **Surveys** – The main reason a business is unable to profile the visitors to their site is because they don't take the time to interact with their visitors. The easiest way to interact with your visitors is to ask questions. Surveys are a great way to ask questions and get answers that can help.
- **Web Analytics** – Google analytics is one of the most popular analytical tools and best of all its completely free. It's set up in a manner that makes it easy even for beginners. Any business that wants to be successful with their social media understands the profile and uses some type of web analytics.
- **Rapleaf** – There are other sites like this but Rapleaf is one of the popular choices. Its purpose is to see that every person that uses the internet have a meaningful experience. Here's how it works. You send Rapleaf a list of all your email addresses for your users. Rapleaf then searches its database for that particular email address and then provides you with information about the person associated with that email address including age, gender, and location.

Ten Commandments to Understanding Social Media

1. Thou shall blog like crazy.
2. Thou shall create profiles everywhere
3. Thou shall upload lots of photos.
4. Thou shall podcast often.
5. Thou shall upload all the videos you can find.
6. Thou shall immediately set alerts.
7. Thou shall get connected with everyone.
8. Thou shall comment on a multitude of blogs.
9. Thou shall explore social media for a minimum of 30 minutes per week.
10. Thou shall be creative.

Commandments #1. Thou Shall Blog Like Crazy

Blog. Please. That's the first priority. Set up a blog, a personal blog, a business blog. It's easier than you think. Use an existing blogging site such as Blogger.com or GOingOn.com or install your own branded blogging site right on your own server by using WordPress. And, WordPress is free.

Commandments #2. Thou Shall Blog Like Crazy

Create your profiles sooner rather than later because if someone else takes them, they are gone forever. This is referred to as cyber squatting. So get busy – get out there now and start creating your profiles. You can use Open Social to make the filling out of each profile as easy as 1,2,3 and a click of a button.

Commandments #3. Thou Shall Upload Lots of Photos

Upload as many good photographs as you have. Now this doesn't mean you should be uploading pictures of you dancing on a table top wearing a lampshade, as these types of photographs will hurt you not help you. Customers and potential customers want to see photographs of you participating and your company in action. Your audience want to put a face with your company.

Commandments 4. Thou Shall Podcast Often

You can use the free audio software on your computer or invest in a relatively cheap camera. Podcasts can run 24 hours a day. Once you've created your podcasts there's no cost associated with providing them to your customers and potential customers and they offer a great deal of value in building your business. Do interviews, training lessons, and any other type of podcast that is interesting, entertaining, and relevant.

Commandments 5. Thou Shall Upload all the Videos You Can Find.

Post videos, more videos, and then some more videos. They can be customer videos, training videos, or entertaining videos. So grab the video camera and get out there and start interviewing customers and anyone else that can provide valued information. Pictures are worth a thousand words and a happy customer smiling is just that.

Commandments #6. Thou Shall Immediately Set Alerts

Alerts are a must. When people are talking about you and your business you want to be alerted as to what they are saying and when they are saying. This information can be useful in creating powerful social media campaigns.

Commandments 7. Thou Shall Get Connected With Everyone.

Get connected by signing up to LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites. On your email signature put that you have a LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter account. Also include it on your business cards, on your letterhead, and anywhere else where there is an opportunity to promote your social media presence.

Commandments 8. Thou Shall Comment on a Multitude of Blogs.

Commenting on blogs is a bit like having a chat at a cocktail party, or other type of event. Just as you would not walk into a cocktail party or event walk up to a group that's chatting and tell them your name and your business, you shouldn't do it on a blog. Posting a comment on a blog is fine but you don't want to come across as rude. So first listen by reading the posts and then make a comment post. It's okay to be controversial or voice your opinion even if it doesn't agree with the posters opinion, but you must do it in a manner that's respectful. There's a great opportunity here to promote your business so don't miss out on it.

Commandments 9. Thou Shall Explore Social Media For a Minimum Of 30 Minutes Per Week

Every week you should explore social media for at least 30 minutes. Of course, longer is better. So why not grab a cup of java and park yourself in front of your computer for 30 minutes and start searching. Using Google search engine is an effective way to search for and find social media sites. This is also a good way to look at expanding into other social media sites.

Commandments 10. Thou Shall be Creative.

Of all the commandments, this is by far the most important. Have some fun and let your creativity flow. Know what your customers want and expect and then provide that to them in a manner that catches their attention. Remember your audience wants transparency, authenticity, to be able to communicate openly, and to have a little fun.

These ten commandments will guide you in your quest for maximizing social media marketing.

Conclusion

Social media has take the world by storm. Businesses that recognize this and the power of this virtual world are taking advantage of the opportunity to grow and prosper using social media marketing. Don't be afraid to reach out to many different social media channels and venues. We've discussed many in this e-book, but there are plenty of others. We've pointed you in the right direction now get busy and expand on the information we've provided.

Social media makes it easy for you to target the appropriate audience. There's little value in targeting the wrong audience. For example, if you are selling adult entertainment you wouldn't want to target a family audience. Be patient, take the necessary time to determine which channels will best benefit your business.

Join groups, like pages, and interact as much as possible. The more you interact and engage in discussion the more your following will grow and the more your business will prosper. Your comments and discussions should offer information that's relevant, and interesting. Posting just to post will annoy your audience, which is not what you want to do.

You can start slowly so that you don't become overwhelmed. Facebook is a good place to start followed by Twitter, and YouTube. Once you've created your profiles, set up your page(s), you are ready to begin to enjoy all that social media has to offer. It won't take you long at all to put your plan into play, especially if you make use of the valuable information we've provided you.

Marketing is key to the success of any business. Those businesses that recognize the power of social media marketing will be miles ahead of the competition. So are you ready to take your business to new levels? Are you ready to jump start your client base? And are you ready to share with others just how you were able to become so successful because they are going to be asking. The secret is yours to keep for as long as you like.