

Social Media MARKETING 101

*The Essentials You Need To Know
About Social Media Marketing*



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Introduction To Social Media Marketing

In case you're wondering whether social media could be useful for your business, the verdict is yes: social media is a great way to drive repeat business and attract new customers. Whether or not you're just starting out, this guide will help you sort out what is needed to get the business moving, and if you implement the steps outlined here, you should be able to see a positive change within a short period of time.

Social media has changed the way people connect, discover, share information and conduct business- but you already know this so let's get to the good stuff. Here's what you need to know:

- Social media – this is the technology people use to connect, share ideas and experiences. Businesses tap into this infrastructure to connect with customers and grow their brands.
- Social networks – such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.; these are the places where social interaction take place.
- Social media marketing – using this technology to build relationships that build awareness, customer trust and of course, repeat business.

Any of this make sense? It should, because social media is basically just word-of-mouth powered by technology. Over 75% of people are highly likely to share content they like online with their friends, family or coworkers; and 49% do this on a weekly basis.

Social media for your business

Both large and small businesses use social media to do the following:

- I. Promote the name of the brand and business
- II. Tell people about their products and services
- III. Find out what people think about their brand
- IV. Attract new customers
- V. Build stronger relationships with existing customers

What are the advantages of social media to your business?

There are a myriad of advantages to using social media in business.

These include:

- Broader reach – you're able to reach millions of people through a single popular social media platform.
- Localized, targeted marketing – it's essential to target your niche specifically in order for the message to have its intended effect; and social media facilitates this.
- Low-to-zero cost – majority of popular platforms are free to use, and the ones that cost money won't stretch your budget thin.

- Quick and simple setup – It only takes a short time to set up and account and post information- and anyone can do it.
- Personalized communication – social media allows businesses to send personalized messages to customers and help them with common problem such as implementation.

The setup

How do businesses use social media effectively? It all starts with goals. If you set your goals right and know from the start what you expect to achieve from your marketing efforts, it shouldn't be too difficult to organize and implement a winning strategy. These are some of the ways established brands use social media to expand their reach:

- Spreading the word – show your customers who you are, what you can do and more importantly, how your product or service can benefit the prospect.
- Drive sales – you can do this by offering existing customers special offers or starting a promotion. Just make sure they like it well enough to share it with their own social circles.
- Provide people great customer service – this is essential to any business but social media makes it much easier to engage with customers and find out what it is they need from you. Find out what they are saying about you and establish a good feedback loop.

- Keep them coming back – when you set in place an effective system and build strong relationships with your customers, they will always come back.

Key networks

Different types of social networks work for different marketing purposes. The key is to find a central position that takes into account as many platforms as possible, without saturating the message. Some of the main platforms include:

1. Facebook – a website that allows you to have conversations with your customers and post photos, videos and news about new products and features.
2. Twitter - a micro-blogging website that you can use to send and receive short messages as well as post photos.
3. Youtube – the most popular video hosting website. This should be used when posting promotional videos and the videos should be linked to other social media networks.
4. Photo-sharing – these are websites that allow you to store, organize and share photo collections with customers.

If you're not entirely familiar with social media and don't know how you could use it to grow your business, this guide was written for you. The specifics may seem complicated at first but it's all worth learning more.

How To Get Started With Social Media

When using social media to grow a business, the worst action is no action, and the worst problem is invisibility- not bad perception. If you're part of the conversation you can always massage what people are saying about your brand; but if nobody knows about you, then you have no chance of growth. What this means is that you need to get involved: not only to exploit the many business opportunities available for your business, but also to develop a winning reputation.

It's a good idea to start by developing a plan that takes into account the social trends that characterize social media interaction today and organize a framework that will help make your conversations popular and relevant. But with all this mass of social networking sites and tools available today, how does one navigate through it all to set up a strategy that works? Here are ten steps to get you started:

- **Set up goals.** Think about what you hope to achieve from the social interaction. Are you doing it to generate direct sales, offer better customer service, or better yet, develop stronger relationships with your clients? Your answers to these questions will determine how you go about setting goals.

- **Consider your resources.** It's going to take more than a clever idea to set up a marketing plan that works: you need people working for you. Someone has to set up the social media accounts, engage with customers and respond to questions, create compelling content, etc.
- **Know your audience well.** Find out where your audience spends time, what conversations they are involved with, who influences them, and what kind of information they're looking for from you. In order to provide your audience what they want, you first have to understand who they are, how they think, and what they want from you.
- **Come up with good content.** Once you find out what your audience is into, you can then work on giving them something to talk about and possibly share. Conversations have to keep going and this means creating lots of good content for the audience. Try to create a variety of different types of content that can be shared.
- **Consider quality.** While the pressure of creating content is certainly understandable, you cannot resolve to create a bunch of pointless topics for the sake of interaction; people will tire of it. The goal here is to build actual customers and that won't happen if you're not offering useful information and products/services.
- It's tempting to promote your products every two minutes on every social platform available to you but you may need to do something not self-promotional so that you don't come off overly self-absorbed or too salesy.

- Find time every day to look up what's going on in social circles and engage with your customers to find out what the general vibe is about your brand.
- Learn the culture of social networks. What are your competitors doing and what does that teach you? Learn more about social trends and find out where companies or brands have gone wrong with marketing strategies so that you don't make similar mistakes.
- Acquire brand ambassadors by observing the most active people in the social networks and encourage them to sell your brand.

So which social platforms should I concentrate on? Most large brands operate dozens of social media accounts but they have more people working on that so you might not be able to start big. Besides, you want to learn how to use each website perfectly to get your message across and this might take more time if you embarked on creating 20 social media accounts at once. Focus your attention where it matters and learn everything about those websites and how larger businesses use them to promote their own brands.

Facebook

When it comes to this, the numbers don't lie; you want the websites with the highest number of active users in order to get a broader reach. Facebook alone will get you access to a social network with over a billion users worldwide. If Facebook were a country somewhere off the coast of

California, it would be the third largest in the world in terms of population. Features such as Like, Timeline, Newsfeed, Apps, Cover Photo, and Mobile Upload; these will be useful as you gradually build a connection with your prospects, so learn the lingo and get to work.

Twitter

You get up to 140 characters when sending out messages to your subscribers and you can include links, videos and photos as well. Adding images and videos expands the message because the words are somewhat limited and you need to communicate more effectively than 140 characters can articulate.

If you have an existing Twitter account for your brand but have let it drop off lately, you might want to take a fresh look at what Twitter's offering. Features such as real-time marketing and multi-screen usage will be useful to your marketing efforts. In the world of micro-blogging, Twitter stands as the most powerful tool you can use for business. Other popular micro-blogging sites include Plurk, FriendFeed and Tumblr.

Present your brand

Your social media accounts form the foundation of your marketing efforts. They give you the chance to tell the world about your business and so they need to be well defined. Create a web presence people find appealing and distinct; that way people recognize your brand across multiple platforms.

In order to present the brand more confidently, you have to fill up and complete the profile, and make sure people know your bio, the actual location of the business and the address to the official company website.

When creating a social network for your business, start with these people:

1. Customers
2. Business partners, suppliers and contractors
3. Relevant trade organizations for your industry
4. Local businesses in your neighborhood

Work up a time schedule for social media

You could end up spending hours each day trying to keep up top speed with what's going on online so if you want to manage your time better, create a time management structure to keep your time online useful and strategic. One way to do this is to find out what time your customers start responding to your feeds, and take a couple of hours to engage.

A Social Media Marketing Plan For Your Business

Effective social media strategies require proper planning and execution. If you're new to this and expect to see results from a few blog posts and random updates, you might find the whole endeavor very disappointing. Serious marketers know that in order to harness the full potential of social media one has to incorporate at least these three elements:

- Listening to the audience
- Sharing relevant messages
- Enabling the audience to share the message

So what is it that you're supposed to share? Good content. You can't have effective social media marketing without good content. The entire marketing plan originates from a solid content creation strategy. The good thing about useful content is that it gets people to appreciate your brand and share; and the sharing is what builds your brand.

This works whether you're a small business or a large multinational and it costs very little to set up so the budget shouldn't be a major factor when setting up. Ever heard that saying that goes "failing to plan is planning to fail?" It's very true when it comes to marketing because creating a well-detailed social media strategy is just as crucial as having a rock-solid

business plan.

In order to attract, engage and ideally convert fans and followers into customers, employ this strategy.

1. What should I aim to achieve from social media?

This depends entirely on what type of business you're in. you may want to use it to gain exposure for your brand or simply to interact with customers because it's good for business. Remember, if you're just winging it your audience will know and that's not good for you. Try to understand your customers' goals and find out how to connect with that. One way to do this is to find out how you can use social media to solve your customers' problems.

2. Who should set up the company's social media account?

For smaller companies it would be better to delegate the task to a staff member who has experience implementing effective social media campaigns. Larger companies give the job to qualified workers in the marketing department and if the budget allows, some may choose to hire a consultant or firm.

3. Should I create accounts on all social media platforms when starting out?

As a starting point, it would probably be better to operate with a presence on one or two social networks and a blog. The network you choose will be determined by where your audience hangs out; so survey your customers and find out what their most popular platform is. The more the business grows the more social networks you can get into.

4. What's the best social network for a small business?

Whether you're operating a large or small business, you can never go wrong with a Twitter account. The platform is easy to learn and it gives your business a voice in the micro-blogging world. Another crucial network to be on is Google+- if only to boost your site's search engine rankings. If however, you have a B2B firm, social networks such as Slideshare and LinkedIn would be great places to reach influencers, and you wouldn't go wrong with Facebook and Pinterest.

5. What's the right frequency to post updates?

Two-five posts each day should be enough. Remember your followers visit social media websites at different times, and a single post each day couldn't possibly be enough simply due to differences in timing. To reach more people, stagger the posts consistently throughout the day.

6. What type of content should I post?

Again, the purpose of your marketing campaign will determine what you post. But also, the platform you're using matters to a certain extent. For

instance, Pinterest and Instagram are inherently visual, so striking, memorable images detailing your products and services would be ideal if you're operating such accounts.

Company events and a few behind-the-scenes photos are great for connecting with audiences on these networks. But you may also post text updates on Facebook and have them trend well, especially if you're posing a question or giving out relevant information. When using Twitter, try to keep a balance between tweets and re-tweets. Curate a diverse mix of content (photos, links, tips, short videos, thoughtful questions, etc.) across different platforms in order to keep things fresh and interesting.

7. Is social media a good platform to provide customer service?

Social media has over time become one of the most popular platforms for businesses to interact with potential and existing customers. You can use all the popular platforms to respond to customer questions and complaints, order status enquires, etc.

8. How exactly does one convert followers into customers?

There aren't any surefire tactics to get fan's dollars, however some tricks seem to work better than others. For example, Facebook ads are a simple, affordable way to expand your fan base, boost engagement and collect sales leads. It's entirely up to you to convert those leads. One of the best ways to go about converting leads is to implement a cross-platform contest that integrates all the popular platforms and perhaps offer sweepstakes that resonate well with the audience and draws in potential customers.

For instance, in order to drive consumers to your online store, you could send a simple tweet that describes an ongoing contest on your Facebook account, and drop a link to the rules of the contest and the entry form on your online store.

9. How do people go about measuring the success of their marketing efforts?

It's very important to make sure you always track your marketing metrics so as to establish which tactics are working and which aren't. Some platforms come with their own metrics; Facebook for instance gives you administrator access where you can check out page insights data and use the data to evaluate what's working and plan your future posts.

LinkedIn offers similar analytics which are essential for business pages. Google analytics can be used to measure the effectiveness of social media campaigns and see how your strategy's driving your traffic to your online store.

10. Biggest mistake to avoid

You can't afford not to have a social media plan, so create one and stick to it. Remember social media is constantly evolving and in order to stay ahead you have to be prepared to adapt and redefine your strategy as needed. If you do this every few months you will identify which tactics are redundant and in the process work out the best plan for your business.

Most organizations begin their social efforts by listening and engaging with their customers across different platforms but at some point they have to look at the staffing required to carry out an effective campaign and ask what it is they're really getting from social interaction. In order to maintain a social business strategy that binds disparate efforts together to create a long-term plan that keeps the business growing, significant time and resources have to be set aside.

How To Build Brand Awareness Using Social Media

So you've already built a pretty impressive social media engagement campaign for your business; but how do you know you're doing it successfully? Keep in mind the number of followers you have doesn't always determine the effectiveness of the campaign- it's about how many people in your circles who actively respond. There's a wide range of responses you could get from social media aside from the usual customer questions and complaints. Aside from the comments, blogs, dialogue and re-tweets, look into this:

- Humanize the brand
- Manage perceived reputation
- Generate leads
- Create a few brand advocates
- Resolve problems with customers

- Handle crises effectively

It doesn't matter where the conversation is at: whether you're on Facebook, Twitter or your blog, there are a number of ways you can generate good conversations. These conversations will solidify your relationships and fans will experience a more direct connection with your business, which is what your aim is.

Engagement for creating awareness

One common purpose of social media is to create a public profile. Consider Canadian Olympian Sarah Wells; she started a campaign on Twitter where she hoped to engage Olympic fans and raise awareness of her quest for the gold, and possibly gain a significant number of followers. Just days into the campaign, Sarah had hit the 400 follower mark owing to the strength and enthusiasm of her friends and family. It's one example of an effective grassroots social media campaign.

The benefits of creating brand awareness

One of the many benefits include measurability. Consider these key awareness metrics:

- Share of conversation – this is about how often you get mentioned in context of the conversations that are relevant to you.
- Share of voice – how often are you covered or mentioned in comparison to your competition?

- Mentions per time period – this describes how many times audiences discuss your brand in a given time period. It gives you a sense of overall chatter and awareness.
- Potential reach – followers, fans or eyeballs; this is seen as potential reach because those people won't pay attention to you simultaneously.
- Inbound links – an indicator of audiences that are aware of you and are talking about you. To get a better sense of which types of media drive consistent attention to your brand, look at all the active social media accounts.

Offer people choices

Perhaps Twitter does not reflect your communication style and you prefer Facebook instead. Learn how your audiences like to communicate and give them different choices by creating more than one social media platform for dialogue. Ensure that you post the same information-perhaps in different contexts- across all platforms in order to get a response. Tools such as Hootsuite will save you a lot of time when you want to manage and schedule posts across all platforms.

Whatever channel you like most, remember to give the audiences a 360° look at your company and brand. Use a communication style that's consistent with the brand so as to avoid confusion. You will be able to build

those strong meaningful relationships with your audience if you learn how to initiate smart dialogue across all platforms.

Generally speaking, people enjoy being part of a business or brand that is actively building an engaging community and multiple studies have revealed that customers prefer to purchase from businesses that have active social media pages. That emotional connection with prospects is what builds a positive business reputation.

Recognize community strength as a powerful force for a brand and employ all the features of social media in creating a massive community of happy and loyal customers.

Lessons in brand awareness

Branding tactics keep changing and marketers have had to learn an entirely new playbook- a playbook that keeps evolving with new social platforms and technologies to make it all work. Learn what you can from larger brands that have successfully implemented their social media campaigns and established themselves as trendsetters. Each one of those large companies dominating social media today started small. YouTube was started by two friends in a small room above a pizza place and M&S begun as a market stall so don't let the competitiveness wear you out; little can still get pretty big.

Lesson 1: Think like a publisher

Innocent founder Richard Reed adopted the publisher model of marketing by publishing multiple recipe books as a way to expand their growth. It has had a tremendous impact on the company's overall reach and also, it changed the general perception about the company- people don't see Innocent as a brand trying to sell products for cash; they're seen as a healthy company that encourages people to live healthier lives.

They also have a blog on which they post content that helps people make decisions that impact their lives positively, and this enables the company to engage with large audiences. In addition, 10p% of Innocent's profits go to charity, so the blog is also used to show how they are making a difference the world over.

Lesson 2: Find your tone of voice

When you find a tone that works for your audience, stick to it and maintain it when creating content for all your platforms. You are marketing to people; not robots, so start by creating buyer personas and learning what their goals are and what types of challenges they face. It will help you get a better understanding of who your audience is and that way you can adjust your tone of voice to one that they can relate to.

Lesson 3: Make your content shareable

When you create valuable and engaging content it makes you a great resource to your audience. Give your prospects what they need and it will

help create an organic audience who engages with your company and follows you across multiple platforms.

Always consider how shareable your content is. Just ask yourself whether or not you would find it engaging enough if you were the audience, and whether you would consider sharing it with your own circles. If the answer is no, then you need to go back to the drawing board and figure out where you went wrong.

Lesson 4: Create headlines that attract people

When you're trying to come up with something that will get you maximum exposure, you have to nail the headline. Most successful brands come up with dozens of possible headlines for each piece of content then settle on the one they believe would get the best response. If you can come up with something that grabs people's attention, it will expand your brand's reach and make your content that much more popular.

Lesson 5: Never be boring

This goes without saying but you'll be surprised how many brands keep posting the same dull material on social channels. In order to ensure that your customers don't opt out of your social networks, you will have to come up with content that's not just interesting and shareable but remarkable. The only way this could happen is by making sure you don't create the same content as everyone else in the industry. Make the brand stand out in a way that makes it unique and original.

Want to show off the personality of your brand, do something quirky and experiment with info-graphics, videos and other visual content and see what you come up with. Keep in mind that 90% of all information transmitted to the brain is in fact visual, and the brain processes visuals 60,000 times faster than plain text.

Lesson 6: If possible, hire journalists

Whether they're working in-house or for a large traditional media outlet, journalists have the same job; figuring out how to come up with the next interesting story that will make people want to read about. The best journalists asks questions and challenge common assumptions, and not just in terms of what business your company is into, but also other people in the same industry. That's how great content comes about and people can't help but share it.

How To Get More Engagement From Your Followers

As we mentioned previously, follower count is worthless in and of itself and if you believe that follower count is a badge of honor or some sort of powerful status symbol, then you've got the whole thing wrong. But that being said, getting more followers is good for you and here's a good reason why:

The more followers you get, the more engagement you have. It's an obvious benefit to have a large number of people following you because then there's the likelihood that someone will see one or two things they like and share it. It's a math game: if more people see the content, more people will interact and share it. This means more likes, more re-tweets and comments, etc.

Such growth can provide you with excellent feedback for future discussions. If for instance one particular subject of discussion happens to get more interaction, then it could inspire you to create more content around the subject in order to keep the conversation going. On the other hand, if a customer asks a question about your brand, it could inspire you to write a new blog post.

People absolutely love to share content they find interesting and engaging. Want your brand name to be recognized the world over? It won't matter if

your initial plan was to simply generate more sales for your business; social media opens up a bigger aspect of business success: brand recognition. When you set up a good campaign, you will have the opportunity to not only increase sales, but also create brand awareness and a strong sense of loyalty from customers. Let's look at ways you can increase engagement across the two most important social platforms for your business.

Twitter offers you a great platform for engagement but how much do you really know about Twitter? Let's look at a few statistics you could find useful to your campaign:

- Engagement for brands is higher by 17% on weekends. Clearly not many people realize this, which is why only 19% of brands actually send out tweets over the weekends. Are you trying to get your audience to engage more but don't feel like working over the weekend? You could use Buffer to schedule the tweets and have them sent out while you stay cozy at home.
- Tweets with images and links get twice the engagement so work on creating photo stories that will get people talking.
- Keep your tweets relatively short. Statistics show that tweets with more than 100 characters spark fewer conversations, so work within that 100-character limit. If you've got links in the posts, it shouldn't go over 120 characters.

- The fastest-growing demographic on Twitter is 55-64 years old. If your brand accommodates the senior crowd, then it would help to reach out to the new users who are more than willing to try out new discussions and check out brands.
- Hashtags inspire more engagement. But that being said, keep the engagement at a minimum: 1 or 2 hashtags will increase engagement by up to 21% but too many hashtags will kill the conversation before it starts.
- Target mobile users. Mobile users make up 6.66% of user-generated tweets that mention specific brands so it would be a good idea to link out to usernames of people you mention on Twitter and add in a hashtag.
- Mobile Twitter users are 181% more likely to log in during their commute. When sending out content, think about where most of your audience could be at that time. If it's morning on a workday, then they might be commuting to the office, and it's a good time to start engaging with them; that way you can have their attention for the rest of the day. Find something interesting to occupy them in their morning commutes and they will make it a habit to check out your posts each morning.
- You want more engagement? Ask audiences people to re-tweet. You may have heard that the best way to get your content re-tweeted is to ask for it: well statistics show that spelling out the word "re-tweet"

actually increases the chances of it happening by 23 times, as opposed to abbreviating with “RT”.

- Include more links in your tweets. Just like images, links are more likely to cause an effect; however, unlike images, which directly boost engagement, links tend to increase the number of re-tweets.

Now let’s look at Facebook and what makes a good engagement campaign in that platform. There are a few effective strategies you could implement in order to get your followers talking.

- Create open loops on some of your posts. An open loop is where you give a hint to what’s in a new post. It’s actually quite simple; let’s say for example you want to post an article about “Why All Business Should Use Social Media”, you could just put in something like “Great post, useful guidelines”, or something similar, but it wouldn’t get that much attention. But if you said something like “The second point is insane! I need to implement it right now”, or something similar, you would get a better response because people will want to know what the excitement is about.
- Mix up the content a little bit. If people have gotten used to you publishing blog posts every day, it’s going to get boring pretty fast, so every once in a while get them off guard and publish video series, images, podcasts, slide-show presentations, etc.

- Use older content that new audiences might have not seen yet. If you have some good material from a while back and you've accrued a significant number of new people on Facebook, consider posting one or two good stories at least once in a while. Because a larger part of your audience is new, this will add value. And for the rest of audience who might have seen the post the first time but forgot about it, this would be a great way to spark new discussions.
- Check out Facebook insights to find out which posts your followers liked the most and if you find that people respond more to a specific type of post, then you want to work on perfecting that format and find more related topics to discuss.
- Add more apps to your page. There are a variety of apps available for you depending on what industry you're in and how you want to engage with your audience so head over to the apps section, shop around and find an app that makes sense for the followers.
- Upload videos to your Facebook page and stop copying and pasting YouTube video URLs. There's nothing particularly wrong about pasting video links to other sites on YouTube, but statistics have shown that these types of videos get significantly less engagement than when users upload the videos directly. When you upload videos alongside cool posts, it allows people to interact without having to leave the page. It's a little trick which requires more effort but it can get you more engagement in the long run.

That's where you need to start if you want to get more engagement on Facebook and Twitter. Hopefully this gives you some perspective on how audiences operate on other social networks. Companies have been investing more money in paid content distribution on Facebook and that's certainly a viable option for when you want more targeted ad campaigns and great content, but if you that's not part of your strategy, you can still achieve solid engagement with these strategies.

How To Get More Fans To Your Facebook Page

Has your Facebook page growth been stalled? Now might be a good time to start evaluating your Facebook strategy, see what's working and what isn't, and cut out whatever's stalling growth. Let's start with the basics: a lot of people get impressive engagement on their personal Facebook profiles and while that's a good get in itself, it's still important to set up a business page.

If you're creating a product, offering a program or service, your business page will allow you to create an image that will allow you to become an authority on the subject and once you get to that place, you can then discuss your business freely. It should be your goal to become that go-to authority in your niche and that's why you need to have a business page.

Set up a marketing plan to get you more fans

Start with these three phases when putting together the plan:

- **Attraction-** this means finding different ways to grow your fan base depending on what they're into. Learn as much as you can about your audience and create a persona of your typical fan. That way you know how to center the campaign around them.
- **Promotion** – come up with strategic posts and keep them short and to-the-point.
- **Sales** – one of the best ways to get audience feedback for when you want to sell products and services is to ask questions. You'll find out what your audience wants and develop something they will spend money on.

Now in the next step you can use the following tips to really grow your fan base.

1. Connect with fellow page managers

So let's say you run a small ice cream store and have already set up a Facebook page with a decent following: try to make a live connection with the pizza parlor across the street if they attract the same clientele. Talk to the owner and invite them to do a little cross promotion on Facebook, where you can share posts with your audiences and forge stronger

connections.

2. Share content

This works across all social platforms because when people see and share your content, it has a direct impact on your sales. Have you considered taking original photos and using them as part of your content on Facebook? It could be a simple behind-the-scenes picture at your workplace, a thought provoking image or an inspirational picture: whatever you decide to post should serve to get people sharing. Just make sure to follow copyright laws when downloading pictures online.

3. Tag your Facebook page on your personal profile

The goal here is to make sure your prospects can access your page easily. Pages aren't getting too much attention these days so you need to come out and make sure to tag your business page so that people can like it right from your update.

4. Link the page to your profile

It's a simple thing to do but a lot of businesses get it wrong. If users can search and find your personal Facebook page, then you want to make it so that your business page is just as easily accessible.

5. Include Facebook in your email signature

Do you send out emails every day? This is not a complicated trick: just a reminder to include a link to your Facebook page in your email signature. Use a mail program that allows you to customize your email signature and

put in clickable icons.

6. Comment on different pages

This is yet another great way to get more people to notice you on Facebook. Find out which other pages your audience could be having conversations and get involved. Like complementary Facebook pages as your own, and then keep an eye on your home page feed and respond to the posts.

7. Run contests

Lots of businesses do this just to get more likes on their page. It will cost you to run a contest but hopefully you've set aside a marketing budget for this campaign. All the contests have to be run through Facebook apps but they don't cost too much and they're relatively easy to set up.

8. Set up a QR code for your business card and use the link for your Facebook page. Websites such as QRStuff and QR Code offer the codes for free so set up the codes on any of your business cards so that people can find you.

9. Use a sponsored like story to generate more fans on Facebook.

There are many ways to advertise on Facebook these days and one popular option is the sponsored like story which advertises your page to your fans' social networks, basically notifying their own friends about your page and showcasing that the user's friend already likes your page.

10. Include a Like box on your site. If your website gets a good amount of traffic, you should be able to get a fair number of likes on your page. Track where the likes are coming from and find ways to win more fans from those avenues.

11. Use blog feeds. Apps such as RSS Graffiti and NetworkedBlogs can be used to import posts from your blog and right into your Facebook page. Make sure the posts are useful to your audience and keep it engaging so as to enhance interaction.

By now you've probably heard that offering your Facebook fans something extra can be an effective way to grow the number of fans you have. It's simple, you come up with an offer you know people will love, spend time promoting it through all your social channels, and in the process, get more people coming in on your official Facebook page.

For many businesses, special offers are a regular component of their marketing strategy. Things like special discounts, coupons and giveaways are used to attract new customers and reward the most loyal. But sometimes creating this type of campaign is not as effective as one would hope, and prospects remain unmoved.

In such cases, a downloadable content campaign would be a great solution. If for instance you run a restaurant, you could offer your followers a recipe for the upcoming season. Likewise if you're a marketing consultant you could offer a white paper with helpful tips for prospects and clients to

enhance their marketing efforts. It is a way to showcase your expertise and also build familiarity and trust, which will be crucial to your own growth.

Examples of Businesses Using Social Media Successfully

Are you experiencing the success you thought you'd have with social media? Or could it be that your business has seen little-to-no growth even after rolling out a bunch of campaigns to get the brand noticed? If you've had some bad luck with social media, then you're certainly not alone because many companies, both large and small, experience some sort of difficulty achieving their marketing goals at some point, but what sets some of them aside is the fact that they learn fast, and adapt.

Look at some of the tactics used by companies that employ effective social media strategies: don't focus too much on their target audience, because that's hardly relevant. These tactics will work on just about any audience if done right.

Martell Home Builders

This is an Atlantic Canadian custom home building company which in the past relied on realtors to keep the business afloat. This however changed once they decided to embrace social media and they finally developed an

effective direct-to-consumer strategy which kicked out the middleman and allowed them to bring in the business.

This all started with the creation of a blogging strategy that mainly focused on giving homeowners and would-be homeowners valuable tips about home ownerships and they were able to capture the attention of countless homebuyers. Posts such as “Home Staging Tips and Techniques” were particularly useful to their audience and today, the company gets 86% of their total leads from consumers.

An important point here to note is that multiple studies have revealed that people respond more to blog subscription via email as opposed to RSS feed. Martel clearly understands this as seen on their call to action which reads “Get the blog sent to your inbox.” It’s a smart way to get new leads while making sure to maintain value by giving out new blog updates.

Another feature the company executes well is customer service, especially where they take advantage of modern geolocation technology by mounting trackers on contractors’ vehicles, so that customers know exactly where the contractor is when on the job. It eases the customers’ minds and makes it look like the company understands their customers perfectly.

With such innovative technology and profound understanding of their customers, Martell has been able to grow their brand beyond what anyone could’ve expected, and they have made homebuilding experience a social thing. They also have photo galleries showing clients’ homes under construction which allows people to monitor closely the progress as the

house comes to be. It's one of the most shareable contents on their website because clients get to share the images in their own social circles, with friends and family.

Another feature Martell uses for social integration is the Facebook like box; which is updated dynamically every time a user visits their page on Facebook. It's a nifty little widget which shows how many people liked your Facebook page and also displays faces of some of your fans. One advantage to using this feature is the fact that people can join your fan group without having to leave your website. It compels visitors to stay longer on your website and that in itself increases your fan base significantly.

#Tip: When creating your own strategy, try to think outside the box like Martell did by giving their clients access to unique photos showing the construction of their homes and allowing them to track their contractors' whereabouts.

Zappos

This is a popular online retailer that focuses on clothing, shoes and accessories. Zappos is known mainly for the great emphasis they put on building strong relationships with their clients. The company's Facebook tab reads: "Let's be in a Like-Like relationship." It's one of the ways they show real commitment to their fans and this helps solidify trust with their customers.

The company's attraction process involves them asking people to Like them and then join their email list. When a visitor clicks the like button, they bring up a sign-up page where people can join the community and get access to products. Because they wait until a visitor joins the community, it gives people a sense of value and it shows they actually care about getting to know their fans and building relationships.

Zappos also uses another interesting strategy where they reveal certain content to fans only. It's actually called "fans-only content" and it encourages people to join in so they can access things like cool fashion images, videos and insider tips. The process is as simple as clicking the like button and the company gets new people coming in every hour, joining the special community to be a part of a fashionable and well-informed group.

Zappos has a custom welcome tab which features comment widgets, where fans can talk about products, and the posts appear on their own pages or profiles telling their friends about Zappos products and what they like most about the company. It is a great strategy for social proof.

As far as engagement strategies go, Zappos doesn't hold back with their "Fan of the week" contest where they have fans send in their pictures with the Zappos box, and other fans get to vote for the picture they like most. The winner gets their photo posted on their wall image where everybody can see. No doubt the company puts their fans first.

#Tip: Find out how you can use the power of social media to make your fans feel like stars, and they will love you for it. Shine a spotlight on your followers on all your social media channels and they will be compelled to

talk about your brand. It doesn't take a multi-million dollar strategy to be able to do this; just borrow a few ideas from what Zappos and other brands are doing and mold your own strategy to be more effective but still affordable.

Giantnerd

Giantnerd sells equipment designed for outdoor activities such as biking, hiking, snowboarding, etc. This company has in place one of the best examples of social media interaction in the industry. It works by offering fans friendship while also giving them the best value in the process and they've also merged their website with social media in every aspect.

The official company website features a custom social networks which requires a single click to join and makes it very easy for visitors to join. Another cool feature is the incentive program which offers new members a 5% discount on products – they call it the "Nerds save 5%" promotion and it pulls in a significant number of new members.

Giantnerd saw their average order grow by 50% after they put up the like button; a major ROI boost from social media. In addition, they provide a bunch of ways for customers to find information when researching products on their website. For instance if a potential customer wanted to find information on a specific product, they could check out feedback from other social buyers; perhaps log in to the company's WikiNerdia, and get to see all the different products available, including photos and descriptions.

With this great solution for interaction, customers are able to ask important questions about different products by posting on the board for the rest of the community to comment. A lot of studies have shown that people trust their friends and fellow consumers more than they trust the brand, and so it's crucial to have a forum where customers can interact and discuss products as they learn more about the company.

Social Media Marketing Mistakes To Avoid

What common mistakes do small-scale business leaders make when implementing their social media strategies? There are quite a few and we're going to look into it so that your strategy comes out solid.

Thinking of social media implementation as a sprint instead of a marathon. A lot of people expect the job to be quick and simple but that's not the case. You can't get into it and commit a month to social media then step back and hope it all work out in the end: the entire plan will fall by the wayside and you won't have anyone to blame but yourself. Give it time to grow and be there to make sure you adjust the details of your plan as needed. Remember you are building relationships –so commit at least a year to engagement and advertising before you can expect to see real traction.

Not having a strategy

This would have to be the biggest mistake anyone could make when running any type of business. Have a clear strategy and understand why you are using it and what you expect to get from it. Also, keep tabs on the movements on your social platforms to make sure you're on track and have what you need to support the totality of your efforts just in case you need to protect the entire campaign from being disjointed.

Not listening

Just because you have good content and can keep your audiences engaged indefinitely doesn't mean you should go out on a relentless rant about whatever you think is important. The core of what you're doing should be to make connections; and, just like what happens in the real world, (away from the internet) people will like you more if you seem to listen to their rambles and want to help them. If you're constantly talking and not paying attention to the feedback then you'll miss out on a great deal.

Posting bad feelings

This happens more times than you'd imagine. A few CEOs have resulted to using sites like Twitter to air their bad feelings, starting pointless arguments with competitors, workers, etc. some people go as far as posting derogatory language and that's about as low as anyone can get. Try to remember ethics and conduct yourself professionally- that way people will respect you and you won't have to worry about brand image.

Not moderating self-promotion

This happens occurs more in small businesses where the owners spend most of their time trying to market or promote themselves. Don't forget social media is constantly evolving; so what you're doing now might not appear to hurt your business, but your brand could suffer later on. Look at the forums and find out what the customers are saying. And don't forget about the reach you have on social media. It can take over two decades to build a business and watch it go down in 20 minutes because someone wasn't paying attention.

Unrealistic goals

You cannot expect social media to run your business entirely. It's not the only way to get results so polish up the other tools you have in your arsenal and see how you can compartmentalize. Whatever plans you come up with, ensure you set reasonable expectations for your team.

Not making the posts relevant to the customer

Nobody wants to receive 20 tweets a day hearing about you. People want messages that are relevant and of value to them. So give them something that's going to be interesting, useful and shareable: but don't send too many messages because you don't want the consumer annoyed. Keep the messages short, succinct and of value to the consumer.

Not responding to fans

Common mistakes here are:

- Ignoring customers
- Not updating content
- Bad design and branding
- Not responding to or addressing comments and complaints
- Spending too much time working on promotional material

Not understanding personal and professional lines

If you're using your Facebook page to post professional material about your business, try not to make it a platform for your other casual or personal posts. Decide whether you want an account to be personal or professional, but don't make it both. LinkedIn is a good platform for conducting business professionally, so you could set up there, and use Facebook for more personal content.

Making casual assumptions

If you evaluate many cases of failure, much of it can be attributed to false assumptions. Highlight these assumptions and stay away from them:

- Researching and monitoring aren't important- On the contrary, it is critical to understand the way your market engages with each other and with your company.

- The best way to initiate customer engagement and interaction is through social media- while social media provides a good platform for businesses to engage with customers, it's not the only way to interact and it's certainly not good for every type of business, so check out your customer behavior.
- It's impossible to measure ROI- There are dozens of tools you can access online for this, so don't operate under that assumption.

A business profile is more important than a personable profile

Many companies start out by making company profiles appear as company portals, and trim them with a lot of complicated information sans value and relevancy. What this does is increase bounce rates because people check in and then flip out to different profiles and don't even scroll down. To avoid this, start by creating a profile that people will find interesting. Work on getting them in, engage them and then carefully start propagating your message.

Underestimating the resources needed to put it all together

How much do you think it would cost your business to set up and maintain a decent social program? Look at the math to make sure you don't have the wrong idea.

Failing to understand that it's all about building relationships

If you're getting into social media because everybody else is doing it and it feels as if you're getting left out, then you won't have a proper plan to succeed. It's one of the reasons people go and throw out all sorts of profiles on every social platform worth mentioning, trying to sell the brand to everyone, and hopelessly failing.

When you understand that the concept is relationship-building and give it time to grow and mature, then you'll make different choices.

Not integrating with other social assets

The way to get the most out of social media is to integrate it with other forms of digital marketing efforts. Don't leave your Twitter account on an island and hope for the best; link the accounts together and make sure they are all tethered to email, paid ads and search, and the website.

Use this guide to help stay away from some of the more common mistakes companies make on social media, and remember to use images and other visual content to help get people's attention so that you can drive the point.

10 Tips To Boost Website Traffic From Social Media

1. Create the best content for your audience

This all starts with creating content that helps people; and it would be better still if the content excites and thrills. When you publish a great piece of content it helps get people's attention, and more importantly, it gets shared across multiple platforms and that's good for business because it spreads your message and gets people to know your brand and what it represents. So make sure your website has all the right tools to make this work.

Optimize it properly with widgets and any button that you find useful. Facebook and Twitter buttons are a must for any business but if your business focuses more on visuals, then add in a Pin It button to the images. When you publish new content start by going through all your profiles and share the new post with your audience so you can get that first wave of traffic.

2. Optimize the content

It's important here to remember that only a fraction of your entire audience will actually see the content, and only a fraction of those people will share the content. This fraction is significantly lower for on Facebook and Twitter so you may need to work on the content in order to make sure each post

gets as many views and shares as possible. That way half your audience won't just be a statistic.

Consider the time you post the content, what day you're posting and the format in which the post goes out. When posting on Twitter, use big images and remember to post your link regularly. Facebook doesn't give you much with link thumbnails so use more images on your content and structure the content in a way that tells a story, as opposed to random thoughts or rants.

3. Use the analytics tool

Google offers you an effective analytics tool under the "Acquisition" section on Google Analytics so use this tool to get a clear picture of your social engagement. You should be making decisions based on actual data; so whenever you post new content, consider how the last post fared and see how you can make more of an impact. Twitter offers an analytics tool as well, so you could use that to compare notes, or look into other tools available to you. All this information will help make your strategy better for your business.

4. Share website links while posting content

At this stage your priority should be to boost engagement and build your profile. Talk directly to your customers and answer any questions they may have regarding products or services, so that over time they get to know you and build a relationship with you. Find a balance between sending links and sending content. You don't want your posts to be riddled with links- especially if you're operating outside of Twitter.

There should be a line between sharing content and pushing links. Obviously you don't want your audience to think of your posts as spam, because once that happens it won't be easy to change that perception no matter how good your content happens to be.

5. Make sure your website is included in all social networks

It should be one of your first moves so make sure when creating a new social program for your business, include the website URL in all social platforms. Have it visible on Google+, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, etc. There should be a website URL somewhere on your company page so don't forget to do that.

6. Start blogging

Businesses find it challenging to drive content to their social media pages when they can't produce enough new content. The easiest solution here is to stay active on your blog post as a way to maintain a dynamic site and ensure that there's always something to talk about on social media. If you find it difficult to come up with regular written content, use videos instead. If you have a video on YouTube that you can use to increase awareness, embed it to your blog. Do the same with Slideshare, Storify and infographics. If the posts on your social media platforms can point to other useful content on your website, there are higher chances visitors will click through and become new customers.

7. SEO

You might know this but your Facebook and Twitter pages could actually show up before the company website in a Google search. Make use of the About Us section to direct social media traffic to your website so that you don't miss out on potential traffic.

It's true that prospects will seek out your social media pages before they check into your website. They do this mainly to get a feel of your taste and culture before they decide to spend money on your brand; so ensure you maintain consistency across all the channels.

8. Google author rank

Google appreciates quality content. When you link up with the content on your Google+, it tells Google that the blog was written by a real person who understands the subject, and the users get the message as well. In order to build trust in your niche you will have to establish yourself as an authority on a specific subject: and visitors will figure it out pretty quickly if you're just winging it.

9. Review searches

You will have multiple websites doing this professionally but it doesn't stop you from creating a section for reviews on your social media accounts. The goal is to have more people end up on your own pages when they search for reviews of your brand. That way you can then work on getting them to

your website, where you've set up tools to ensure visitors want to hang around, and possibly spend money to have what you're selling.

10. Geo-tagging

Because of the nature of social media and in particular its personalization features, your ability to reach your audience from their distinct location means a lot for the business and the message you're trying to pass over. For this reason, make sure to include geo-geographic location when creating your accounts. It could just land you a few people strictly based on location.

As you can see, there are many ways to get your audience working for you and to boost traffic so get to work and don't take any opportunity for granted. Just a reminder, remember to:

- Blog daily
- Be consistent with your audience
- Optimize posts to increase "stickiness"
- Be patient

The Future of Social Media

A lot has been said about Facebook's acquisition of the popular phone app, WhatsApp. At a price tag of \$19 billion, it's definitely a historic purchase, and a few harbingers of doom suggest that it's a sign that we may be going back to the dot com era bubble. But keep in mind that this particular merger

is not AOL-Time Warner or some other similar name in the industry that characterized the early 2000s; and in fact, paying attention to cash spent on any of Facebook acquisitions means missing a major point: where Facebook goes, everyone else follows.

Consider, it's Facebook's initial spread that basically made social media what it is today, and since then the company has been expanding the role of social media in the society, and in the process determining what qualifies as the norm in terms of behavior and service. Even with new competitors going head-to-head with Mark Zuckerberg, and a chunk of its younger users fleeing to smaller, more streamlined social platforms, Facebook's long shadow is still visible in the social sphere. While the company might not be the embodiment of modern development, it appears Zuckerberg recognizes companies that are, and knows which ones should be integrated into his platform.

Now, considering all that, what can this acquisition -and in deed all their acquisitions- tell us about where social media is heading? We know at the moment that mobile interaction is defining social trends, and this won't stop: so what Facebook is doing, and other social giants as well, is try to figure out what else we're supposed to do with all that functionality.

Aside from mobile purchases, Facebook understands that social communication requires constant growth and evolution. The company may be gearing towards streamlining services and privacy between the sender and receiver, much like WhatsApp has managed to do with a simple and straightforward setup. Even as Facebook creates more capabilities, they

still have to offer users a simple individual app experience that works within the larger Facebook umbrella.

Other social media companies may choose to capitalize on that particular trend by working on simplicity, mobile access and brevity. As marketers already understand, these days the reader accesses social posts on a much smaller device, and they have to adjust, so they make shorter posts. This push towards social communication could also send consumers into a more dynamic and interactive mindset, something marketers could use to their advantage by coming up with more gamified experiences. Whatever direction the social giants concentrate on, the services will have to be even more streamlined, and privacy will always be an issue.