

10 Social Media Tips Every Business Needs to Know



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Social Media is **NOT**:

1. Either social or media in a traditional sense. Social implies an interactive discourse, friendly companionship, and choosing to be with others. This may happen on personal sites, but most business do not enjoy a similar level of conviviality with their audience. This is not to say that a business investing in social media outreach is a waste of time, quite the contrary, it is just not social in the same way personal pages are. Media refers to a means of communication that reaches and influences people widely. Historically, these modes of communication (radio, television, newspapers, etc) were sources of information delivered to their public. Social media platforms are a place for information to be found by those searching for it. This is known as inbound marketing because sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, draw the user's audience in to them, rather than sending out content to their targets.

- 2. Traditional marketing** with a unilateral flow of information. In other forms of marketing, such as advertising, the business sends out its offer, promotion, or service to the intended audience to receive. Those who are interested respond, if the prospect is convinced they are converted into a customer. This process is very one directional and not the dynamic experience many customers are wanting now. With the digital age opening avenues for information exchange in multi-directional, complex, and customer-empowered ways, traditional advertising is no longer yielding the results of the past. It is a mistake to approach social media as if it were advertising and the results in doing so would be disappointing.
- 3. Only for the young and frivolous.** More and more, your customers and prospects are searching social media to find out about the businesses they want to learn about and contact. As evidence to the broken age barrier using social media, the fastest

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growing segment of Facebook users are women between 45-60. Because so many businesses are finding their voice on social media, the origins of Facebook as a place for college kids expressing youth culture is a shrinking population in the larger pool of participants.

4. **A quick fix.** It takes months of dedicated posting and reaching out to your audience to build a presence. Consider these platforms like a networking event. If you made it a goal to sign up a certain amount of clients at a networking event, you were likely disappointed. We don't network to sell, we network to build relationships, which is the foundation for a strong referral based business. Social media operates similarly; approaching social media with an expectation that clients will start calling because you have a Facebook page will likely lead you to the conclusion that Facebook "doesn't work". Approach social media as you would in-person networking - build your brand and business by showcasing how great you are, demonstrate how much you care about your customers, and make real connections - you are establishing the foundation for the "Know-Like-Trust" continuum of successful networking.
5. **A static promotional platform** like a website or an advertisement. Social media is intended to be dynamic with consistently updated content and an invitation for your audience to dialog with you there. It is not just to promote your business. People want to know the companies they are going to do business with have good ethics, a strong business model, and some personality. They want to see what you are about in a way a website and print ads cannot possibly reflect.

Social Media IS:

6. **The fastest growing**, most accessed, sites on the internet. The people whom you want to know about you are already looking for their next hairstylist, insurance agent, loan officer, or real estate agent on the internet. They are reading posts on their friends' sites and seeing posts of the businesses they like. Most people regard highly the opinions and recommendations of their friends, and make buying decisions based on those recommendations. If their friends "like" your business...that's a recommendation. It stands to reason that social media being the number one activity on the internet brings greater exposure to businesses who are leveraging these platforms.
7. **A place to be seen.** If your target audience is looking for information about you on the internet, and they check out your facebook page, twitter feed, linkedin profile, or pinterest board, what are they going to see? How are they going to feel about the kind of business you run? Will they get valuable information about your industry or

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one marketing message after another? Will they get a sense of the level of expertise you have and the kind of culture you inspire in your company? What if they look, but they can't find you at all? Having a quality presence means posting relevant content on a consistent basis that is of value to your target audience. It is not too much so as to annoy your followers or too little as to be insignificant. Developing community around your brand means engaging with your audience when they make comments and like your posts, like you would if they were in your business.

8. **Just one piece of the marketing pie.** Though a clear ROI is not easy to determine with social media due to a variety of factors, there are ways to determine how social media is working for you. Ultimately, we all want more business, or we wouldn't be thinking about marketing at all. It is understood that all efforts go back to building a client base. There is more than one strategy to accomplish that; social media is just one of the avenues and should not be "it". All of your advertising, promotional materials, email campaigns, website, blog, directories, and personal networking should connect to build the power of the organization. You can check some analytics on the sites themselves to get a sense of the reach you are having. For example, on Facebook you can see how many people your posts have reached (meaning they had the opportunity to be seen). This is where you get really powerful results because you may have 100 people who like your page, but your post goes on the newsfeed of all of your fans and if they each have 100 friends, that's 10,000 people who had the potential to see your post.

9. **A time de-railer** - have you ever found yourself on Facebook or Twitter, searching, finding people to connect to, reading great articles of interest (like this one), and before you know it, an hour has passed? Or, if you are like me, an afternoon has gone by and you may not have accomplished any "real" work. There are 2 critical points here: 1. start defining inbound marketing as "real work", just as you would any activity that creates business potential. 2. Learn how to strategize, plan, and set boundaries around your time to engage in these activities. There are 5 basic activities associated with social media. 1. Post content that you write - what are today's specials. 2. Post content that other people write - find a great article in your industry that your customers will value, copy and paste the url and it will show the original article with proper attribution. 3. Find people/businesses you want to connect with and like their pages 4. Interact on the pages of the people you like by liking, commenting, or sharing their posts or all three 5. Give yourself a deadline and have an idea of some direction for your activities. For example, if you are a loan officer, you may want to connect with local realtors and builders. Look for these people using social media and connect with them there.

10. **FREE!** Unless you pay for upgrades or use the sites for advertising, joining and participating has no financial outlay. The cost associated with social media is time and attention. Just like other forms of marketing, you can do it yourself, or you can

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hire someone to help you. Some companies have an administrative position that handles marketing and social media. Many small businesses do not have the resources to hire a position for this function and the company's owners/managers do not have the time or interest to engage on these platforms. Some businesses decide to outsource their social media management to a company that can accurately reflect the industry and business on these platforms.

In conclusion, social media is a free and powerful inbound marketing resource for business. It is growing and evolving. The smart business owner understands that the customers are increasingly interested in connecting with and observing the businesses they want to patronize on the internet. Businesses that are adaptable and anticipate the demands of the future consumers are going to be in a better position to weather the storms of evolution and economic instability than those who stick to business as usual. Most importantly, remember that it is not what you think, how you get your information, or make your buying decisions that matter - your customers now and in the future are what drive your business growth. If you aren't reaching them because you are not where they are looking, you are missing the boat that your competitors may already be on.