

"... an easy, thoughtful, and strategic manual for your social media marketing success plan. Avoid reading this social media marketing guide at your own peril."

—DAN SCHAWBEL, #1 international bestselling author of *Me 2.0*

30-MINUTE

SOCIAL MEDIA

MARKETING

Step-by-Step Techniques
to Spread the Word
About Your Business
FAST AND FREE

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All-in-One for Dummies*

Warning: One Size Does Not Fit All

The title of this chapter sums up social media marketing strategy with a six-word warning. By saying one size does not fit all, I mean there is no single recipe for success with social media marketing. Instead, each company has its own unique social media marketing strategy, and so should you. As you venture into the world of social media marketing, you'll be tempted to copy your competitors. By doing so, you'll be marketing scared and from a reactive position rather than from a proactive position. Don't be tempted to follow others, because what other businesses are doing with social media marketing might not be right for your business. That's why there is no single action plan, schedule, or template that a small business owner should follow to implement his or her own social media marketing plan.

As you learned in Chapter 3, you need to be aware of what other businesses (particularly your competitors) are doing on the social Web, because you can certainly learn from them. However, no one is truly an expert in social media marketing, because it's still in its infancy. Large companies, small companies, and every company in between are still in the testing stage when it comes to leveraging the tools of the social Web to build businesses. In fact, if you ask 10 social media marketing professionals to create a social media marketing strategy for your business, you'll probably get 10 different answers. But guess what? That's OK.

Many tools are available for little or no cost to help you market your business through the social Web. These include blogs, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, and many more. You need to understand your business, audience, and goals before you can determine where to start your efforts at social media marketing. At the same time, you need to understand that using these tools requires a time investment. Not only do you need to select tools and initiatives that fit into your schedule, but you also need to experiment with them and find the tools you actually *like* to use.

Realistically, the majority of people who own small and midsize businesses don't have the money to hire teams of people to actually *do* social media marketing for them on a daily basis, so they have to do it themselves. It stands to reason that if you don't like Twitter, then you won't be motivated to update your Twitter status throughout the day. If your efforts at social media marketing aren't enjoyable for you, then you won't use them enough to be successful, and your passion about your business won't shine through. As a result, you won't make the quality connections and build the relationships you need for building your business. But if you love to create videos, you can start a YouTube channel where you can share your video content. The choice is yours.

Bottom line, you must first experiment with different tools to find the ones you actually enjoy and want to spend more time using. Soon, interacting with your online connections won't seem like work. Instead, it will be fun, and you might just find yourself spending more time on the social Web than you expected and without complaint. Ultimately, your social Web presence will expand into new activities, which effectively surround people with opportunities to build relationships with you.

Take the case of NakedPizza. This company maintains a diverse social media presence. NakedPizza is an excellent company to watch and learn from on the social Web.

NakedPizza opened its doors in New Orleans in 2006. With the costs of direct mail (a medium that pizza restaurants rely on heavily) soaring and response rates plummeting, NakedPizza turned to the social Web for new marketing opportunities. In March 2009, NakedPizza joined Twitter in an effort to save on marketing costs while building relationships that could lead to sales. Before 2009 came to a close, Twitter had become an integral part of NakedPizza's growing business. The company set a new in-store sales record

on May 29, 2009, with 68 percent of sales on that day generated by customers who came to NakedPizza by way of Twitter. Throughout 2009, NakedPizza expanded its social Web presence and activity to ultimately include a blog, Facebook page, and Flickr and foursquare profiles, and business was thriving.

Five Steps to Successful Social Media Marketing

Consumers have more choices than ever, thanks to the ease of finding information online, and the social Web has opened up a global online conversation that most companies still don't know how to leverage. That's because companies aren't willing to accept the three keys to social media marketing success:

1. Brand consistency in image and message, which creates a brand promise
2. Setting and meeting customer expectations based on the brand promise
3. Letting the audience take control

Not only is social media marketing an excellent opportunity for building relationships, brand loyalty, and business, but it's also an amazing tool for search engine optimization, opening more doors for people to find you online than anyone could have dreamed of a decade ago. The question today shouldn't be "Why should my business be active on the social Web?" but instead "Why isn't my business already active on the social Web?"

Using the tools of the social Web, you can directly and indirectly promote your business, because every interaction opens a new door to your online presence. That means your social media participation shouldn't be limited to promotional efforts. Instead, you should invite all departments and functions to join your business's social media efforts. Figure 4.1 shows some of the many ways that multiple departments within your business can join the online conversation to build awareness, recognition, and business for you.

Regardless of what department is participating on the social Web or what message is being delivered at any given time, the five basic steps toward success in social media marketing remain constant.

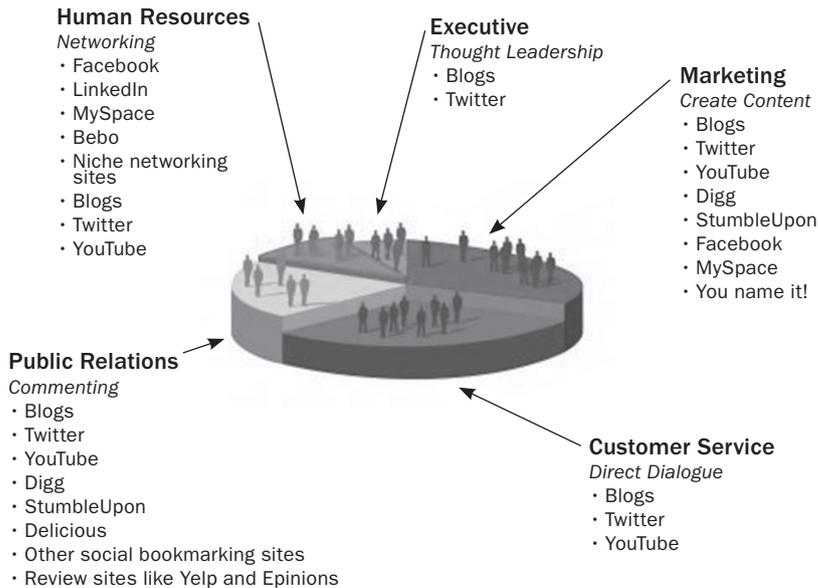


Figure 4.1 Multiple departments can get a piece of the social media pie.

You'll have to experiment with tools and tactics, as discussed earlier in this chapter, to find the mix that works best for you, your audience, and your business, but the basic steps remain the same with each new initiative you pursue on the social Web.

Step 1: Find Your Best Audience

The Internet is a crowded, cluttered place, and it doesn't matter how great your social media marketing efforts are if you're not spending time in the right places on the social Web. Before you do anything else related to social media marketing, you must invest time in finding the people you want to communicate with online. Once you find them, you can join the conversation where they're already spending time. Eventually, you can work to guide them over to your own blog, Twitter stream, and so on, where they can find more of your amazing content and continue to strengthen their relationships with you.

QUICK TIP

Conduct a Google blog search (<http://blogsearch.google.com>) or an advanced Twitter search (<http://search.twitter.com/advanced>) to find people discussing subjects related to your business.

Step 2: Create Great Content

What you *say* on the social Web is the most important element of your social media marketing success or failure. In Chapter 2, you learned about creating amazing content, and that content should be the cornerstone of your online presence. Make sure your tone and writing style are human, honest, and transparent, and most important, make sure your personality shines through. No one wants to build a relationship with a machine or a company blowhard, and that's exactly how you'll be perceived if you keep your personality hidden behind jargon and rhetoric.

QUICK TIP

Take the time to proofread your online content and communications. Spelling and grammatical errors can detract from your brand image.

Step 3: Never Stop Researching

Not only should you keep tabs on what your competitors are doing on the social Web, but you should also know what your target customers are doing. Find out what kind of information they're looking for, what engages them and what keeps them coming back for more, and then give them those things. You should also find businesses and people outside of your industry who are doing great things on the social Web. Benchmark their tactics, identify the ones that are relevant to your business and goals, and apply them to your own social media marketing strategy.

QUICK TIP

Determine the keywords your audience is likely to use in online searches to find a business like yours, using tools like Wordtracker (www.wordtracker.com), Keyword Discovery (www.keyworddiscovery.com), or the Google AdWords keyword tool (<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>). Then sign up to receive e-mail alerts when those keywords are found by Google (www.google.com/alerts) or Twitter (www.tweetbeep.com).

Step 4: Give More than You Receive

As you learned in Chapter 3, you should spend far more time building relationships and communicating *with* people on the social Web than you spend self-promoting or talking *at* people on the social Web. Don't just publicize company news. Instead, give your

QUICK TIP

Set a timer to keep you on track with your social Web efforts each day. It's very easy to get lost in "Internet time," and suddenly hours have passed when you thought you'd only been interacting for minutes.

audience interesting, useful, and valuable content and communications. Answer questions, ask your own, and be accessible. Remember the 80-20 rule discussed in Chapter 3, and try to spend at least 80 percent of your time on the social Web interacting with people and no more than 20 percent self-promoting.

Step 5: Diversify Your Social Web Activities

Don't put all your eggs in one basket. As you become more comfortable on the social Web, test new tools, join conversations on other sites, and spread your online brand further. Doing so allows you to connect with a broader audience and build your network of brand advocates. As your online efforts grow, you need to be certain that you stay active on your various social media profiles. In other words, when you find a new tool you like or get a big response from, don't abandon it. A few minutes spent updating and engaging is better than none if a tool has proven to yield positive results for your business.

QUICK TIP

As you find new tools you enjoy and plan to stick with, be sure to link your social Web profiles together if possible, and promote them on your blog, website, e-mail signature, and so on to increase your connections. For example, add your blog feed to your Facebook and Twitter profiles using a tool like Twitterfeed (<http://twitterfeed.com>).

Don't Get Overwhelmed, Get Going

The social Web can be intimidating. New tools are popping up every day, and it might seem like it's just too big for a small business to infiltrate. However, the reality of the social Web environment is just the opposite. In 2009, social Web use surpassed e-mail use for the first time, and with smart phones making it easier to update a Twitter profile than it is to make a phone call, the shift from traditional media and forms of communication to new media isn't likely to slow down anytime in the near future.

That's why it's so important that you get involved on the social Web sooner rather than later, or else your business will be left behind. People are online, and they're actively using the social Web to find products, services, businesses, and more. Your business needs to be there. Don't be afraid to start off slowly. Choose a half hour each

day to devote to social media marketing activities. Remember, simply responding to comments and sending friend requests counts as actively participating on the social Web.

Choose a time during the day that fits your schedule, and then divide that time between interacting, creating content, reaching out to new connections, and so on. The more you use the tools of the social Web, the easier it becomes. You'll find yourself falling into a comfortable pattern of social media activities. Just don't get complacent. Remember, the social Web is always changing, and you need to continually do your research so you can realign and maximize your efforts in terms of the time you invest and the returns you receive.

Realizing You Need Help

If you simply can't find the time to participate on the social Web or have absolutely no knowledge of how to use a computer or the Internet, your business can still have an active online presence. There are many social media consulting companies that can manage your business's social Web activities for you—strategizing, creating content, communicating, and even analyzing results. But keep in mind that a full-scale social media strategy could cost \$5,000 or more. Ongoing consultation and management could run you another \$5,000 or more every six months. Separately, creating content each month could cost you thousands of dollars more.

Fortunately, a lot of freelancers are able to help you create content and manage the day-to-day activities of your social Web presence. There are a variety of websites where you can publish job opportunities for bloggers, tweeters, social media writers, and more. Some of these sites are listed in the sidebar "Popular Websites for Finding Freelancers." Freelancers work for themselves and often charge lower rates than full-scale social media marketing companies, simply because their overhead is lower. (Their skills and experience are often just as good as or better than those you'll get from many full-scale companies.)

Before you hire a company, consultant, or freelancer to help you with your social media marketing efforts, you need to make sure they know what they're doing. Many people promote themselves online as social media experts but don't have the true experience or credentials



POPULAR WEBSITES FOR FINDING FREELANCERS

- ProBlogger (www.problogger.net)
- Elance (www.elance.com)
- oDesk (www.odesk.com)
- iFreelance (www.ifreelance.com)
- craigslist (www.craigslist.org)
- BloggingPro (www.bloggingpro.com)
- Freelance Writing Jobs (www.freelancewritinggigs.com)
- Guru (www.guru.com)
- FreelanceSwitch (www.freelanceswitch.com)

to back up their claims. Make sure you view samples of their work, have in-depth discussions about your business and goals with them, and review their social media profiles to be certain they can actually do what they claim they can.

Before you hire a freelancer or company to help you with your social media marketing, you need to define what you want that person or company to do for you. Experienced freelancers and companies will ask you the right questions. For example, if you're hiring a blogger, candidates should ask you how long you want posts to be, if you want images included, if the blogger will be responsible for adding tags and categories, if the blogger will be responsible for managing comments, and more. Each of these tasks affects how long it takes for a blog post to be written and published, and an experienced blogger will want to set expectations and time requirements up front. A single blog post could cost you anywhere from \$5 to \$100 or more, depending on the experience and abilities of the blogger. As with most things in life, you get what you pay for, so choose wisely when you select someone to help you with your social media marketing.

Experienced professionals should also ask you questions to learn about your business, competitors, audience, brand image and message, goals, and budget. Then they should be able to give you an outline of the types of services they can offer to help you meet your goals.

If they don't ask probing questions in order to truly understand your business and your goals, then a red flag should go up. The person or company that handles your social media marketing should be your *partner*. Being a partner requires fully understanding your business in order to be able to talk about it passionately and build meaningful relationships for you.