

# SOCIAL MEDIA

## What Is It? Is It For Me?

Better Business Builder



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This Better Business Builder has been developed by Better Business Outcomes utilising both internal and external resources, the sources of which are referenced in the sources sections throughout this document.

The purpose of this Better Business Builder is to provide sufficient awareness of Social Media for you to decide on those elements that should make up part of your organisation's marketing strategy. It also includes extracts and references to additional resources to aid in the implementation of Social Media tactics.

While the content is current at the time of printing, the Social Media landscape is rapidly evolving and expanding, therefore be aware that things will always be changing.

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## Is Social Media Relevant to Your Marketing Strategy?

Social Media may be relevant to your marketing strategy *if the audience you are targeting are active Social Media users*. If you don't know the answer to this question, then it is recommended you do some research before you go any further.

Social media is a tool that facilitates conversations. Before a business can be a part of those conversations, they need to know what people are talking about so as to determine how best to contribute.

An important part of Social Media is developing a strategy. If you don't have a strategy in place when choosing to have a Social Media presence you are squandering time and money.

Also, don't be under any illusions that because the technology is free it won't cost you money. A sustained amount of regular time is needed to interact with the technology to eventually gain results. Also, if you choose to advertise on Social Media sites, this will also cost you money.

Your company is *ready* for Social Media if you can satisfy yourself of the following:

1. Your company has clear goals for Social Media.
2. You have the human resources to commit to Social Media.
3. You produce enough quality content to sustain Social Media conversations.
4. You know which Social Media sites are popular with your audience.
5. Your company website is prepared for Social Media attention.
6. You're ready to incorporate Social Media strategies throughout the buying process.

## What Is Social Media?

Wikipedia says Social Media “ includes web-based and mobile technologies used to turn communication into interactive dialogue between organizations, communities, and individuals. Social media allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content - the publishing of one's own content and also the ability to comment on the content of others.”

The Definitive Guide To Social Media ([www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)) defines Social Media as “the production, consumption and exchange of information through online social interactions and platforms.”

International trends confirm that time spent with Social Media continues to grow at a considerable rate with social networking and blogs accounting for approximately 25% of all time spent online. In tandem with this, the use of Social Media in a business context has been growing for both large companies and SME's.

So far as SME's are concerned we find that:

- 43% utilise at least one social networking tool (figure provided by Dun & Bradstreet).
- Most create a company page on networking sites like LinkedIn or Facebook and build communities with which they interact.
- Many post updates and/or articles on social media sites.
- Many blog with different degrees of success.
- There are however many SME's that believe that networking on Social Media is valuable, but are unsure how to proceed and therefore do little, if anything, in this regard.

What is interesting from a global perspective is that per capita Australians spend considerable time on social networking and blogging. This represents a good opportunity for SME'S to connect and build positive relationships with their target market.

There are many benefits that a correctly formulated Social Media strategy can achieve but the most compelling uses of social networking include:

- Learning about and building trust with your target market through open and honest interchanges between stakeholders.
- Attempting to positively influence brand identity and positioning, even though this ultimately resides within the mind of the consumer.
- Creating revenue opportunities.

Many companies start Social Media initiatives in response to competitive activity and perceive it as being relatively inexpensive compared to other forms of communication, such as advertising. While cost is a factor, the roles of Social Media and conventional media are complementary rather than interchangeable. Social Media does, however, have advantages over conventional media including immediacy and the fact that many perceive information obtained from peers, (especially influencers) as being more objective and meaningful than that provided by commercial sources.

An important part of Social Media is developing a strategy. If you don't have a strategy in place when choosing to have a Social Media presence you are squandering time and money. Don't be under any illusions that because the technology is free it won't cost you money. A sustained amount of regular time is needed to interact with the technology to eventually gain results.

Social media is a tool that facilitates conversations. Before a business can be a part of those conversations, they need to know what people are talking about so as to determine how best to contribute. These conversations hold valuable information if you are prepared to hear what users are saying. Although this may not appeal to marketers who are more renowned for talking, listening is compulsory in the Social Media context. Listening involves monitoring what people are saying and then understanding what is being said so you can engage in the conversation. It provides an opportunity to learn what people really think about your brand, what they are saying about your competitors and what they actually want. This is significant intelligence that can be used by businesses to their benefit.

One of the most challenging aspects of Social Media is creating the content. It can be time consuming and frustrating particularly when nothing happens and you feel as if you are wasting time. However, the point to remember with Social Media is that it takes time to get results. This is the reality of the participatory aspect of the web.

Creating quality content is neither about marketing nor a matter of press releases or making statements. It is about giving information that meets the audience's needs. It is a process to build trust and credibility, to show the audience that you have experience and expertise in your field. If you have done your research accurately you will be tapping into the right audience and therefore building up users. Once you have built up trust and confidence, users will turn to you when they have a very specific need. However, this may take months so be patient and do your research.

The practice of jumping in and utilising every platform available will guarantee frustration and disappointment. Allowing some time for planning will, in the long run, put you on the path to success.

It is important to remember strategy first, tools second.

### Sources

- [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)
- [www.annacairo.com](http://www.annacairo.com)
- [www.mybusiness.com.au/experts/social-media-for-smes](http://www.mybusiness.com.au/experts/social-media-for-smes) (Alan Kaplan)
- [www.nbsmallbusiness.com.au](http://www.nbsmallbusiness.com.au)

## Types of Social Media

There are six basic types of Social Media.

- **Social Networks** - Services that allow you to connect with other people of similar interests and background. Usually they consist of a profile, various ways to interact with other users, ability to setup groups, etc. *The most popular are Facebook and LinkedIn.*
- **Bookmarking Sites** - Services that allow you to save, organize and manage links to various websites and resources around the internet. Most allow you to “tag” your links to make them easy to search and share. *The most popular are Delicious and StumbleUpon.*
- **Social News** - Services that allow people to post various news items or links to outside articles and then allow users to “vote” on the items. The voting is the core social aspect as the items that get the most votes are displayed the most prominently. The community decides which news items get seen by more people. *The most popular are Digg and Reddit.*
- **Media Sharing** - Services that allow you to upload and share various media such as pictures and video. Most services have additional social features such as profiles, commenting, etc. *The most popular are YouTube and Flickr.*
- **Microblogging** - Services that focus on short updates that are pushed out to anyone subscribed to receive the updates. *The most popular is Twitter.*
- **Blog Comments and Forums** - Online forums allow members to hold conversations by posting messages. Blog comments are similar except they are attached to blogs and usually the discussion centres around the topic of the blog post. *There are MANY blogs and forums.*

Keep in mind that, while these are the six different types of social media, there can be overlap among the various services. For instance, Facebook has microblogging features with their “status update”. Also, Flickr and YouTube have comment systems similar to that of blogs.

## Social Networks

A social network is a service that allows you to connect with other people of similar interests and background. It usually consists of a profile, various ways to interact with other users, ability to setup groups, etc. The two most popular social networking sites are Facebook and LinkedIn.

### Facebook

Facebook is, by far, the most active social network on the internet with well over 700 million members. It is the most sophisticated and cutting edge platform available. Facebook are constantly adding new features and testing the best ways to allow people to interact. Facebook pages also provide tools like discussion boards, picture uploading and aggregating blog posts. Many businesses use Facebook to create awareness, build their brand, promote thought leadership and even manage events. Facebook pages can also help a business share enthusiasm and create loyalty.

You can share company information, grow a fan base, offer multimedia content, communicate events and give status updates - all of which contribute to brand awareness and increased loyalty by keeping your audience informed.

### LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the business professional's social network. If your desired audience consists of marketing professionals, CEOs or some other business-focussed niche, you should spend your time on LinkedIn.



The focus of LinkedIn is on education, work history, companies and professional interests which can be great for the B2B company looking to market and sell to a specific business niche and demographic.

The first place to start is building up your connections. LinkedIn offers other tools such as Q&As, groups and "inMail" that allow you to connect with new people and build a following.

You can use 'shared connections' to make introductions into companies you want to target. LinkedIn allows you to connect with others outside your direct network through introductions.

You can build a LinkedIn Group around your company's specialisations and core competencies. This can be a great way to demonstrate thought leadership in a specific area and to gain insight into the challenges of potential customers.

You can also research LinkedIn Groups to find out where your audience are hanging out, and join them.

LinkedIn Answers is a feature that allows you to ask thought-provoking questions or become an expert by providing valuable answers, demonstrating thought leadership, and problem solving capabilities to an entire network of people. This can drive interest in your company and new business.

You can also promote events on LinkedIn and encourage RSVP's.

Further information on LinkedIn is provided at the end of this workbook.

### Bookmarking Sites

Social bookmarking sites are services that allow you to save, organize and manage links to various websites and resources around the internet. Most allow you to "tag" your links to make them easy to search and share. Delicious and StumbleUpon are the two most popular.

People use bookmarking sites for two things:

1. Saving links
2. Finding links

People are not hanging out on these sites to find new friends and interact. They are there to find something interesting enough to click and go to a new website.

There are two ways to use bookmarking sites to grow your tribe:

1. **Make it easy to share your content on these sites.** You can add links to your blog posts and other content that allow people to bookmark your site on Delicious and share it on StumbleUpon.
2. **Build a resource for your fans.** By regularly saving and organizing relevant links on Delicious, you will create a fantastic resource for your fans while also establishing yourself as an expert and source of information.

### Social News

Social news sites let people post various news items or links to outside articles and then allow users to "vote" on the items. The voting is the core social aspect since the items that receive the most votes are displayed the most prominently. The community decides which news items get seen by more people. The most popular are Digg and Reddit.

There are many sites that constantly chase high ratings on the various social news sites, but for you it is likely a waste of time. Here's why:

- It is a constant strain to stay on the top. The type of websites that regularly get a lot of traffic from social news sites are constantly posting new, outlandish content in the effort to get attention. By constantly striving to appeal to the masses at these sites, your content will have to become more and more outlandish and you will always have to water down your message.
- Social news traffic is likely not good traffic. You *may* be able to get a lot of traffic by posting on these sites, however almost all your new visitors will look at one page and then leave. You won't see an increase in newsletter subscribers or any other engagement.

There are likely much better places to spend your marketing time...

### Media Sharing

Media sharing sites allow you to upload and share various media such as pictures and video. Most services have additional social features such as profiles, commenting, etc. The most popular by far are YouTube (videos) and Flickr (pictures). These sites get huge amounts of traffic - over 800 million unique users visit YouTube every month and Flickr gets over 22 million per month.

There are two reasons to get involved in these media sharing sites:

1. Your message is a natural fit. If you are building a tribe around photography or videography, getting involved in these sites is an obvious choice. But you also need to decide if your subject material naturally fits there. If you are writing a recipe book, sharing pictures and videos fits nicely. Likewise, if you are a fitness or martial arts instructor, producing how-to videos is the way to go. If there is big emotional or practical value to sharing your message with picture or video, media sharing sites are a great fit. YouTube can be a powerful tool to influence public opinion.
2. It's easier for you to produce video than written word. If it takes you no time at all to sit down in front of your webcam and produce a short video while writing is a long, laborious process, then you might consider using video and YouTube.

Promotional and sales-focussed videos are acceptable and can include:

- Product demos
- Customer testimonials
- Speaking engagements
- Video blogs

Sharing photos with your audience can be a great way to start engage them and start conversations. You can learn more about the interests of your audience and photos also allow you to record and increase the visibility of company events, industry conferences etc.

### Microblogging

Microblogging platforms are services that focus on short updates pushed out to anyone subscribed to receive the updates. Microblogging gives people a real-time insight into your business in a digestible way. You present timely information without making people visit your website or conduct a search.

The largest example, by far, is Twitter. It allows you to post updates that are short and concise, no longer than 140 characters. Started in 2006, Twitter's rapid growth reached 140 million users in 2012.

### Twitter

Twitter still has just 25% of the users that Facebook does. That said, Twitter can be a great medium for two main reasons:

1. It is extremely easy to connect with popular people. Twitter is one of the easiest ways to directly connect with people that would otherwise ignore your phone calls and emails.
2. Content spreads very quickly. Re-tweeting (reposting the same update as someone else) is very popular on Twitter and, as a result, your updates on Twitter can quickly spread. The more people that re-tweet you, the more people that click to your website and follow you.

### Blogs & Forums

A blog is a type of website that contains a series of entries ('posts'). Blogs are usually (but not always) written by one person and are updated pretty regularly. Blogs are usually written on a particular topic. Blogs are really just a content delivery method and can also be an effective way for groups to communicate with their members. It can also be a source of news for subject matter that's not covered by traditional media, for whatever reason. Not all blogs use comments – but most do. A blog is not a monologue but a conversation. Users can give feedback, comments, critique, a link to their own blog in the comments space at the bottom of a blog post.

A forum is similar - it is a place where people have the ability to start communication (in the form of threads) and reply to other people's threads. A member of the community in the forum posts a message, which is visible to everyone in that community. Once read, there is the option to post a reply, which can also be visible to the community. Thus, a discussion can build up without all users having to be online at the same time.

Blogs are useful for educating your audience. They act as a source of valuable content and thought leadership with a 'human' face. It lets you focus on your audience's agenda instead of your own (in contrast to your website, for example).

### Sources

- [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)
- [www.outthinkgroup.com](http://www.outthinkgroup.com)
- [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)

## Social Media for B2B (Business to Business) Companies

While Social Media has been used widely by consumers, B2B (business to business) buyers are now spending a lot more time on the web doing independent research, gathering information from peers, experimenting on forums etc.

Social Media plays a big role in the B2B decision-making process and you can leverage it for building relationships, listening to the market and influencing buyers before they're even identified as leads.

To put it into context, before Google, the only way a prospect could request information about a company or product was to contact a salesperson. Marketing consisted of mass advertising, tradeshows, PR, direct mail, cold calling and any lead was passed to the sales team for follow-up.

Then Google arrived in 1998, and B2B companies focussed on search engine optimisation (SEO), pay-per-click (PPC) advertising and email marketing to drive traffic to their website. They then created content such as whitepapers and webinars to convert traffic into leads.

Today we still market through SEO, PPC and email but Social Media sites drive a large portion of B2B interactions on the web. Prospects are more likely to click through to third party reviews or blog postings to get word-of-mouth recommendations, and as a result, search engines rank these sites more highly. These are Social Media leads and they need nurturing before you even know their names. This starts by sharing relevant information with them across a variety of Social Media channels.

Social networks are influential in mitigating the risk a buyer feels when trying to solve a problem or purchase a solution. A big part of this is from the social validation (or social proof) inherent to many Social Media sites. For example, sites that focus on bookmarking, ranking, voting and commenting incorporate social validation when users give their opinions through comments or ratings. B2B companies can use this social validation to boost their credibility and allay prospects' fears. By opening your website up to the ratings, reviews and rants of Social Media, you're telling your prospects you value transparency, are open to feedback and can be trusted as a vendor. By directing attention to valuable content on your website, users will trust your company more, your reputation is strengthened and the more likely others will think likewise.

By making valuable content freely available on Social Media sites, you're building relationships with people before you have them in your database. While they are anonymous, they will likely come to you as leads once their levels of interest are high enough.

And if there is no substance to the content you publish on Social Media sites, your audience will let you know. There will be no engagement with your posts, specifically no comments, likes or shares. Your profile or page will be like a ghost town with tumbleweed rolling down the main street. There will be no connections, fans or follower growth and you'll be left talking to yourself.

To provide substance you need to:

- Share news, articles, information, insights, quirky information or create a hub where your connections can go for more.
- Have your Social Media sites act as a customer service portal that is answered and makes people feel cared about.
- Create a relationship with your customers and let them know your business cares about them.
- NOT have a call to action in EVERY post.

When used appropriately, Social Media has the ability to deliver customer care, solid, online business visibility and customer endorsements. Be prepared to “listen” to the market and react to what they are saying (or not saying!). Be prepared to be consistent and be prepared to not over-commit.

Pick one Social medium and do it well. If you are easily managing one, then look at another – but not before you have decided you have the time or resources to commit. One Social Media site done well is far more powerful than several done badly. You want visibility for your business that makes people want to connect with you – not have a ‘tumbleweed’ site.

### Sources

- [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)

## Objectives Of Social Media Marketing For Businesses

Many business owners understand that it is important to be involved in Social Media, but they aren't sure what exactly they are trying to accomplish by updating their status and posting new pictures.

The objective of Social Media marketing is to forge active relationships, converting the reader from a passive observer into an active participant. This creates a network of advocates capable of rapidly spreading your message across their own networks.

The primary objective of Social Media marketing for a business is to strengthen your community in order to increase communication and sales.

Social Media marketing can also be used to accomplish these other objectives:

- **Build Meaningful Relationships** – whether you're a big brand or a sole proprietor, Social Media makes you accessible and approachable to a mass audience. Other businesses and individuals will have the opportunity to get to "know" you.
- **Public Relations and Brand Awareness** – spread news and important information about your business, brand, or product to a broad audience who are likely to share it to their own networks.
- **Build Customer Loyalty** – give consumers a reason to interact with you by offering promotions, coupons, or information. Make your network feel valued and they will value you.
- **Establish Trust** – share valuable information with your network that shows you are knowledgeable in your field and people will seek more information from you.
- **Manage Your Reputation** – hear what people are saying about you and your business and most importantly, let people know that they're being heard.
- **Increase Search Visibility** – Social Media plays a big part in the new generation of SEO. Your activity in Social Media can enhance your visibility in major search engines.

## Sources

- [www.equitymarketingsolutions.com](http://www.equitymarketingsolutions.com)

## Who Should Use Social Media Marketing?

Many businesses can benefit from correctly used Social Media marketing. Selfish promotions are immediately shot down; meaningful promotions that provide value for your network are rewarded. To be successful in Social Media marketing, businesses need to be interesting and in many cases – selfless.

But not all businesses can benefit from Social Media. So how do you know if it's right for you?

The essential thing you need to consider when starting out with Social Media is how you can incorporate it into your existing marketing activities. Facebook and Twitter are tools to help with your marketing - not stand-alone strategies. You should use Social Media to support your goals, objectives, key messages and evaluate whether it is working for you.

It's important to understand that using Social Media for business is different than using it for private purposes.

- People use Social Media to keep in touch with friends and family, and share information they find interesting.
- Businesses use Social Media as a form of branding and marketing. They aren't just sharing information with the people on Social Media sites, they're trying to get them to take some sort of action.

The businesses who benefit most from Social Media for directly boosting sales are the ones that require a lot of foot traffic for business. Restaurants, night clubs, bakeries, gyms, etc. are all examples of businesses that can use Social Media to keep in contact with their customers and incentivise them to return to their establishments.

Businesses that rely on high priced services and limited clientele will likely not make much use of Social Media to incentivise customers in this way. However they likely will use Social Media as a mechanism for branding their business, influencing public opinion, creating awareness and managing their reputation.

If your goal for Social Media is to cultivate relationships with your customers, and your business benefits from constant contact with your customers, then Social Media would probably be a good fit.

These are great, innovative examples of how businesses have used Social Media to get out their marketing message and generate revenue. But that doesn't mean all businesses need to use Social Media. You may not join fan pages for your plumber, roofer, or podiatrist. And you probably wouldn't follow them on Twitter (unless they're extremely interesting people!).

If you're unsure if Social Media is for your business, you can always try it out and see how it works. The sites are free to join and use - but to do Social Media properly requires a large time investment, so if you're going to do it yourself, be willing to put in the effort.

## Sources

- [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)
- [www.annacairo.com](http://www.annacairo.com)

## Checklist - Is Your Business Ready for Social Media?

Don't just jump into Social Media because everyone else is doing it. Social Media holds great opportunities but only if you understand what makes it tick.

Use this checklist (provided by [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com) in their 'Definitive Guide to B2B Social Media') to help you determine if your organisation is ready and, if so, how to make your efforts worthwhile.

Note: You are ready for Social Media once you can tick all the boxes...

- My company has clear goals for Social Media.** Be as specific as you can (eg. increase lead conversion rates, increase the number of qualified leads, build awareness measured by online traffic, decrease the time needed to resolve customer service issues etc.) and keep these objectives in mind for every initiative you execute.
- We have the human resources to commit to Social Media.** Before you start a corporate blog or Twitter account, ask yourself if you can allocate the resources needed. Social Media is about real-time response and continuously updated information - both of which require commitment and dedication.
- We produce enough quality content to sustain Social Media Conversations.** Content feeds the Social Media beast. Audit your existing marketing assets and identify the educational pieces - these perform much better in Social Media than traditional sales collateral.
- We know which Social Media sites are popular with our audience.** Do your research and focus your energy and investments where your audiences are.
- Our company website is prepared for Social Media attention.** Before you set up multiple Social Media profiles and pages, make sure your own website is in good enough shape to handle the attention (ie. you're proud of the way it looks and works). Be sure you have a plan to market to leads generated.
- We're ready to incorporate Social Media strategies throughout the buying process.** Social Media is not just for the top of the sales funnel. It's important to monitor and track your prospects and customers throughout the buying cycle.

### Sources

- [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)



## Which Social Media Platform Should You Choose?

Social Media can improve your business in a number of key areas:

- recruitment
- marketing
- brand building
- customer interaction
- locating strategic commercial partners
- gathering business intelligence

You need to first understand your marketing goals (target audience, niche, and tools) then choose the platform that best meets those needs.

When choosing which Social Media platform to use, it's important to understand where your customers/audience are. You should target your efforts towards the channels they use.

In some cases, you will find your best choice is obvious - for example, you may already know that there is a group on LinkedIn that reflects your business interests and is used by your audience.

[www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk) has a simple interactive tool that will help you identify which Social Media platform/s is likely to suit your needs.

In some cases, you may need to do some research.

If your business is a professional firm – then LinkedIn is probably a great place to start. It is important that you not only join groups within your industry but also those which may be relevant to your potential customers.

If you are a business that has an inherently social aspect, then Facebook, YouTube and maybe even the new Pinterest is where you can consider starting.

If you're still looking for that one-size-fits-all approach to Social Media, I suggest you re-evaluate your plans. Focus on meeting your customers/audience where they are, whether that's on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Google+, StumbleUpon, etc.... It will require more time and effort, but will be worth it.

Pick one Social Media platform first and do it well before you begin to use another.

### Sources

- [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

## Creating A Social Media Policy For Your Business

The Social Media environment can feel unstructured. It is wise to have a Social Media policy to guide the actions of those in your business who will participate in Social Media. It's also essential to monitor what's being said and provide guidelines on how to respond appropriately without making your employees feel they're being censored.

A formalised document will also ensure you're acting consistently across all Social Media sites, thus reinforcing your brand and value in the marketplace. Here is a guide to what a Social Media Policy includes:

- Define what Social Media means for your company. This avoids any confusion over when the guidelines apply and when they don't.
- Set up a basic set of ground rules.
- Address how employees, contractors and consultants should engage with and contribute to Social Media. Will your company's Social Media conversations come from a single person or will everyone participate? Will Social Media be used as a customer service function, marketing tool or for product marketing research?
- Stress the importance of confidentiality. Encourage contributors to manage their contributions to Social Media just as they would conversations made in public.

As at April 2012, a great example of a simple Social Media policy can be found at <http://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/legal/intel-social-media-guidelines.html>

### Sources

- [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)

## Creating A Social Media Strategy

In planning a Social Media strategy, Alan Kaplan offers the following:

1. Define your product or service in simple and clear terms including its added value and point of difference, whether real or perceived.
2. Research and understand the current situation. Listen to online conversations to establish what people are saying about your brand. 'Listening' in this context refers to Social Media monitoring. Establish what is being discussed about your company, its brands and competitors. Whilst 'tools' such as Google Alert (and more sophisticated ones) are relevant, interpretation plays a major role.
3. Establish your approximate 'share of voice' in terms of the above, relative to competition, as a benchmark.
4. Set your goals and measurement criteria. Who are you targeting? What do you wish to achieve? By when? What are your KPI's and how will these be measured? Establish costs in terms of spend and time. How will you measure ROI?
5. Find bloggers and communities that are relevant, in particular identify influencers with whom you can communicate and interact. If your interaction is successful they can go a long way in influencing their followers in a positive way.
6. Develop high quality, appropriate content from what you have learnt from listening, thereby adding value.
7. Create and deliver the content in the best possible manner on the most appropriate platforms e.g. Social Media sites most relevant for your target sector and objectives. This should also be consistent with your desired brand image.
8. In addition, incorporate your website into your Social Media strategy from a number of perspectives by creating links between platforms and by making your website interactive. For example Facebook followers could be directed to your website for informative hints, white papers, etc. Conversely visitors to your website can be encouraged to share content on sites like Facebook or Twitter by clicking on an icon or by having the opportunity to receive RSS feeds. Excellent web content can also be replicated in blogs and/or syndicated.
9. Become involved in conversations in an open and honest fashion and add value to the community as best possible. Be proactive wherever possible.
10. Where criticism is justified respond promptly in a constructive manner.
11. Track, monitor and measure outcomes relative to objectives.
12. Adjust your strategy, tactics and goals as necessary.

Whilst the steps as outlined represent a good overview, these should be viewed as a framework from which to develop your own Social Media strategy.

### Sources

- [www.mybusiness.com.au/experts/social-media-for-smes](http://www.mybusiness.com.au/experts/social-media-for-smes) (Alan Kaplan)

## Developing A Social Media Plan

This can be developed by answering the following questions:

- What are your goals?
- Who are you targeting?
- What Social Media tactics/platforms will you use?
- How will you measure the results?
- What specific action do you need to take?

### What Are Your Goals?

What is the metric you're trying to influence by jumping into social media?

- **Traffic:** If you're an ad-supported website, you care a lot about eyeballs on your site. More eyeballs means more advertising dollars. You want to use Social Media to drive a larger and larger audience to visit your website.
- **Leads:** If you're - really - any business, you care about getting people to come from Social Media and drop their contact information to request education or contact from you. You want to use Social Media to drive people to your website to download a free offer and become a lead.
- **Reach:** Reach is not usually an end goal but rather a means to one of the other two goals of traffic or leads. That's because the greater reach you have, the easier it is to get significant traffic or leads from Social Media channels. If reach is your key metric, you want to increase your social media followers or fans.
- **Buzz (Mentions):** More mentions means more people talking about you means more awareness of your company and product among a greater audience. If buzz or awareness is important to you, you will want to measure mentions of your brand names in Social Media over time.
- **Customer Happiness (Customer Support):** People are talking about you whether or not you want them to! Social Media allows you to tune into conversations your customers are having, be they positive or negative. Social Media has turned into a particularly great tool for responding to your audience quickly and directly.

**Now set your actual goal numbers** - be they traffic goals or reach goals. This is very dependent on where you are, where you want to be, and how you plan on getting there. You will need to have tools in place to track your progress against your business goals. Here are some suggestions:

- Traffic: Google Analytics, Hootsuite
- Reach: Facebook Insights, Twitter Counter
- Buzz (Mentions): Google Analytics, Hootsuite
- Customer Happiness (Customer Support): Your CRM (Customer Relationship Management System/Database)

## Who Are You Targeting?

Are you targeting prospects? Customers? Media? Once you've decided, then flesh out the defining characteristics of each group. Start with the characteristics you would normally have for a profile of your typical target audience (including their traits, needs etc) but then add a Social Media dimension to it. Include information such as:

- Age
- Industry
- Role (are they an influencer?)
- Preferred communication method (both personal and professional)
- Preferred Social Media sites and amount time spent on them (both personal and professional)

A template for your use (adapted from © [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)) is provided on the following page.

## Tactics & Key Metrics

First select the platform/s that best suit your business goals and your target audience. Refer to the section "Which Social Media Platform Should You Choose?" for more details on how to approach this aspect.

For each tactic (eg. blogging), identify the key metrics you will track and measure. For example, key metrics for Blogging may be:

- Number of posts
- Audience growth (unique and returns)
- Number of subscribers
- Inbound links
- SEO improvements

Key metrics for Social Networks may be:

- Number of posts
- Referrals from social networks
- Reach friends from social networks
- Velocity at which friends are built
- Influence of friends from social networks

A template for your use (© [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)) is provided on the following page.

## Who Are you Targeting?

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Age

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Industry

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Buyer Role

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Preferred communication method – Personal

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Preferred communication method – Professional

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Preferred social media sites – Personal

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Time spent on social media – Personal

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Preferred social media sites – Professional

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Time spent on social media - Professional

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## Tactics & Key Metrics

Social Media Tactic	Key Metrics

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## Action Items

Next decide what your action items are for each goal. Social media requires time, effort and resources. Take the tactics you've just decided on and associate clear action items for each one. An example (© [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)) is shown below:

Social Media Tactic	Blogging
Time Invested	2 hours daily
Short Term objective 1	Increase Brand Awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Create blog publication schedule</li><li>▪ Add RSS button</li><li>▪ Promote thought leadership through blog postings on industry best practice</li></ul>
Short Term objective 2	Increase Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Respond to comments within 24 hours</li><li>▪ Add links to blog on website and in e-newsletter</li><li>▪ Invite relevant guest bloggers and market to their networks.</li></ul>

A template for your use (© [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)) is provided on the following page.

## Sources

- [blog.hubspot.com/blog/](http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/)
- [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)

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**Social Media Tactic:**

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Time Investment:

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Short-term objective #1:

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Short-term objective #2:

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Short-term objective #3:

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**Social Media Tactic:**

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Time Investment:

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Short-term objective #1:

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Short-term objective #2:

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Short-term objective #3:

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## The Return on Investment (ROI) of Social Media

In their Definitive Guide to B2B Social Media, [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com) offers the following perspective. Many businesses fear there's no true way to measure the ROI of Social Media activities. In comparison to other marketing channels such as email and SEO, Social Media doesn't offer a concrete ROI measurement. This is partly due to the fact that Social Media interactions revolve around online conversations which are not as easy to measure quantitatively as click-throughs, for example. Social Media is very much about the qualitative rather than the quantitative - as a result there is much debate about what metrics are useful and accurate.

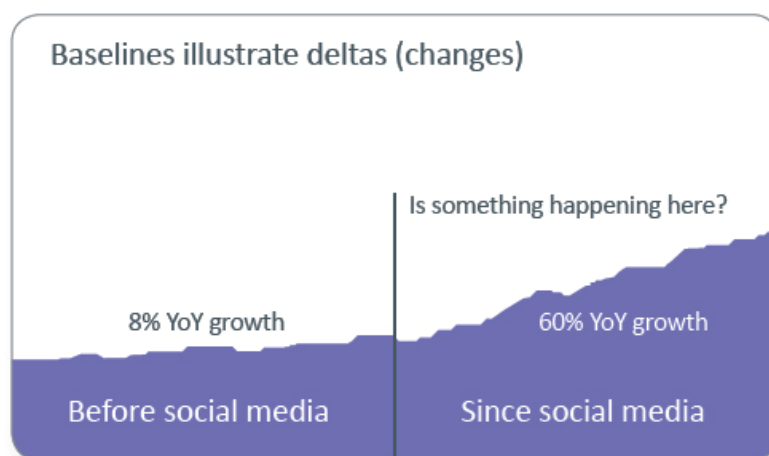
Social Media lends itself to new categories of measurement such as activity and engagement (such as posts/threads, comments, tags, votes, bookmarks etc.). Another important area of measurement for Social Media is brand and awareness. There are technologies that measure posts for positive and negative sentiments, and also those that measure 'share of voice.'

However the traditional ROI metrics of cost savings, conversions, costs per lead etc. are still what matters to proving the value of Social Media initiatives. While it may be difficult to attribute leads to specific Social Media sources, you can make useful correlations between Social Media and improvements in revenue, website traffic and other areas.

When you're dealing with a lot of different marketing channels, it's easy to get caught up in how each channel is performing. However what matters overall is that you're earning more money than you're spending (from an ROI perspective).

Social Media consultant Oliver Blanchard recommends an easy way to start measuring the impact of Social Media. First set up a timeline and draw a line signifying the point in time in which you started to use Social Media in your marketing efforts. Then map onto this timeline the Social Media activities you're using and the results (eg. opportunities, sales revenue etc.) your company has experienced since implementing its Social Media strategy. This will show what type of overall impact Social Media has had, and whether or not it has helped you increase your results over the baseline.

The following image taken from Oliver Blanchard's "The Basics of Social Media ROI" illustrates this.



*By establishing a baseline and measuring progress over time, companies can begin to see the effects of social media on growth and revenue. (Image taken from "The Basics of Social Media ROI" by Olivier Blanchard.)*

### Sources

- [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)
- Oliver Blanchard "The Basics of Social Media ROI" presentation

## Advertising on Social Media Sites

It may make sense for your business to advertise on one or more Social Media sites. There are two ways of doing this:

- 'Organic' Advertising such as status updates that praise your product, using fan pages etc. The trick is to use this kind of promotion judiciously and transparently.
- Paid Advertising which is similar to PPC but highly targeted as the social media network can use demographics, behaviour or a combination of both to display your ad to specific users. The sheer volume of social media visits make a potentially attractive audience

**The concept is simple: Be where your audience are.**

Regional businesses may find it very useful to look a little deeper into this aspect of Social Media. It may be particularly useful for recruiting purposes (ie. advertising positions you are trying to fill in your company).

- For details of advertising or sponsoring a story on Facebook, visit <http://www.Facebook.com/business/ads/>.
- For LinkedIn, visit <http://www.Linkedin.com/advertising>
- In the event you are considering advertising on Twitter, you can get more information at <https://business.Twitter.com/en/advertise/start/>

## Sources

- [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)

## Using LinkedIn

Following are tips from Guy Kawasaki at [guykawasaki.com](http://guykawasaki.com) for leveraging LinkedIn in your business.

1. Increase your visibility.
  - By adding connections, you increase the likelihood that people will see your profile first when they're searching for someone to hire or do business with. In addition to appearing at the top of search results (which is a major plus if you're one of the thousands of product managers on LinkedIn), people would much rather work with people who their friends know and trust.
2. Improve your connectability.
  - Most new users put only their current company in their profile. By doing so, they severely limit their ability to connect with people. You should fill out your profile like it's an executive bio, so include past companies, education, affiliations, and activities.
  - You can also include a link to your profile as part of an email signature. The added benefit is that the link enables people to see all your credentials, which would be awkward if not downright strange, as an attachment.
3. Improve your Google PageRank.
  - LinkedIn allows you to make your profile information available for search engines to index. Since LinkedIn profiles receive a fairly high PageRank in Google, this is a good way to influence what people see when they search for you.
  - To strengthen the visibility of your profile in search engines, use this link in various places on the web. eg when you comment in a blog, include a link to your profile in your signature.
4. Enhance your search engine results.
  - In addition to your name, you can also promote your blog or website to search engines like Google and Yahoo! Your LinkedIn profile allows you to publicize websites. There are a few pre-selected categories like "My Website," "My Company," etc.
5. Perform blind, "reverse," and company reference checks.
  - Use LinkedIn's reference check tool to input a company name and the years the person worked at the company to search for references. Your search will find the people who worked at the company during the same time period. Since references provided by a candidate will generally be glowing, this is a good way to get more balanced data.
  - Companies will typically check your references before hiring you, but have you ever thought of checking your prospective manager's references? Most interviewees don't have the audacity to ask a potential boss for references, but with LinkedIn you have a way to scope her out.
  - You can also check up on the company itself by finding the person who used to have the job that you're interviewing for. Do this by searching for job title and company, but be sure to uncheck "Current titles only." By contacting people who used to hold the position, you can get the inside scoop on the job, manager and growth potential.
6. Increase the relevancy of your job search.
  - Use LinkedIn's advanced search to find people with educational and work experience like yours to see where they work.

7. Make your interview go smoother.
  - You can use LinkedIn to find the people that you're meeting. Knowing that you went to the same university, plays soccer, or shares acquaintances is a lot better than an awkward silence after, "I'm doing fine, thank you."
8. Gauge the health of a company.
  - Perform an advanced search for company name and uncheck the "Current Companies Only" box. This will enable you to scrutinize the rate of turnover and whether key people are abandoning ship. Former employees usually give more candid opinions about a company's prospects than someone who's still on board.
9. Gauge the health of an industry.
  - If you're thinking of investing or working in a sector, use LinkedIn to find people who worked for competitors—or even better, companies who failed.
10. Track startups.
  - You can see people in your network who are initiating new startups by doing an advanced search for a range of keywords such as "stealth" or "new startup." Apply the "Sort By" filter to "Degrees away from you" in order to see the people closest to you first.
11. Ask for advice.
  - LinkedIn's product, LinkedIn Answer enables this online. The product allows you to broadcast your business-related questions to both your network and the greater LinkedIn network. The premise is that you will get more high-value responses from the people in your network than more open forums.
12. Integrate into a new job.
  - When people start a new job, ordinarily their roots aren't that deep in the new company. However, with LinkedIn, new employees can study fellow employees' profiles and therefore help them get to know more people faster in a new company.
13. Scope out the competition, customers, partners, etc.
  - This seems like it's a no-brainer, but you can use LinkedIn to scope out the competition's team as well as the team of customers and partners.

Many of these small-business people are using the site in ways you'd commonly imagine ie. finding leads, growing their business globally, or finding the right vendors.

Here are 10 additional ways small businesses can use LinkedIn:

1. Acquire new customers through online recommendations and word of mouth
  - Satisfied customers are the best source of new customers. Increase your word of mouth referrals by asking your happy clients to write you a recommendation, which will be published on your LinkedIn profile and will be broadcast to their entire LinkedIn network.

2. Keep in touch with people who care most about your business.
  - Sites like LinkedIn help keep your business alive in the minds of the people who care most about your business. LinkedIn is effective for two reasons: the business intent of LinkedIn users and fewer status updates, which mean you stay on top of mind. Tip: You can also increase the impact of your status updates by syncing your LinkedIn and Twitter accounts.
3. Find the right vendors to outsource services you're not an expert on.
  - Think of the number of times you've asked your colleagues if they knew of a great web designer or photographer. LinkedIn makes it easy for you to find and vet vendors through the network of your peers. Additionally, you can also trade services with your vendor connections on LinkedIn; sort of a mutual referral system.
4. Build your industry network—online and in person.
  - Search LinkedIn's Groups directory to find industry associations and networks to take part in. For example, if you're in the event planning industry, there are over 530 groups. In addition, LinkedIn also surfaces popular events in your industry calling out local events that your connections are attending. Imagine being able to find only industry events that your prospective clients are attending.
5. Get answers to tough business questions with a little help from your real friends.
  - Small business owners deal with challenging questions on a slew of topics each day. LinkedIn Answers and Groups let you find answers to those vexing questions quickly by tapping into the wisdom of your network. LinkedIn says there are over 200 different categories on Answers and over 2000 groups on small business related topics.
6. Win new business by answering questions in your area of expertise.
  - Use the many forums on LinkedIn to share the knowledge you've gained in your area of expertise. This is a great opportunity to win new business or at least find prospective clients to pitch your business to. Prospective customers will find your answers when they use LinkedIn's advanced Answers search. And don't forget, what goes around comes around. Don't forget, this is a great way to soft pitch your skills and expertise.
7. Raise funding.
  - You can use LinkedIn to find mentors or potential investors for your startup because there are over three million startup professionals and over 12 million small business professionals on LinkedIn and it's always good to stay in touch with folks who've been there, done that and willing to mentor you. Once you're connected, your participation on LinkedIn (answers, status updates or group conversations) may even cause them to consider investing in your small business.
8. Network with peers in your industry for repeat business referrals.
  - LinkedIn Groups is a powerful medium to find peers in your respective industries to network with and to find complementary businesses to share referrals with. For example, mortgage brokers can find real estate agents to partner with on relevant groups and as most small businesses know, these partners are your best source of referrals that can turn into repeat business. With over 2000 groups dedicated to small business topics, you're sure to find a relevant group to network.

9. Convince potential customers of your expertise by sharing unique blog content.
  - Small businesses smart enough to create unique content on their expertise (either with a blog or Twitter account) should link to it from their LinkedIn profiles. Or take it one step further by promoting featured blog content to LinkedIn members on the site (for e.g. with small text ads). You can specify exactly who will see your ads—Executives or VPs—and include a link to your profile so they know who's behind this content.
10. Keep your friends close and your competition closer.
  - Over 150,000 companies have a company profile on LinkedIn, the “public profile” for companies. These pages surface key stats on companies; recent hires as well movers and shakers. Not only do company profiles give you unique insight into your competition, they also give you an opportunity to stumble upon potential hires by browsing through company pages.

## Sources

- [www.guykawasaki.com](http://www.guykawasaki.com)

## Other Useful Resources

The sites and links listed below are current as at April 2012.

[www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com)

This is a great resource for cheat sheets on all aspects of Social Media. They offer free webinars on the subject as well as a whole host of other free online marketing information.

Visit [www.marketo.com](http://www.marketo.com), click on the Resources tab and select the Social Media section.

[www.hubspot.com](http://www.hubspot.com)

Subscribe to their list to get free webinars, ebooks et. full of valuable, relevant content. Social media is covered in detail along with all other aspects of Inbound Marketing. This is a brilliant resource that will help you with your website also.

[www.Facebook.com/business/](http://www.Facebook.com/business/)

This is Facebook's easy to use instructions for anything to do with setting up a business presence on Facebook. It includes setting up your Facebook for business page as well as advertising and sponsoring stories. Very user-friendly and recommended.

[business.Twitter.com/en/smallbiz\\_guide/?ref=tw-btc-hp](http://business.Twitter.com/en/smallbiz_guide/?ref=tw-btc-hp)

Here you can download Twitter's Guide For Small Business

[www.Linkedin.com](http://www.Linkedin.com)

Visit this link to begin using LinkedIn.

[www.hootsuite.com/](http://www.hootsuite.com/)

This is the leading (and free) Social Media dashboard for managing and monitoring all your networks. You can manage all your posts from one place, analyse traffic, track brand mentions etc. Very user-friendly and recommended.

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