

Getting Started With Social Media Marketing The Right Way

Hey,

Today I want to help you get started with social marketing the proper way with an A-Z guide consisting of over 20 tips, to help you understand the backbone of successful social media strategies.

Let's get started...

#1: Build a Group of Followers

[Austin Considine](#) reveals the “worst-kept secret in the Twittersphere.” He writes:

“That friend who brags about having 1,000, even 100,000, Twitter followers may not have earned them through hard work and social networking; he may have simply bought them on the black market.”

Rome wasn't built in a day and neither are social media followers. Companies should **think of followers as something they've earned**—the virtual pat on the back.



Where you lead, they will follow... Image source: iStockphoto.

#2: Curate Content

The question about original content vs. curated content can be a little confusing at times for businesses starting out on social media. Bottom line, you need to do both. A good rule of thumb is the 80-20 rule—**use 80% others' content and 20% your own.**

[Eric Savitz](#) explains,

“As content marketing becomes increasingly central to the overall strategy, marketers look to content curation as a way to help cut through the clutter and provide their prospects with the valuable information for which they are looking.”

#3: Dedication for the Long Haul

The problem that many businesses run into is that they start using social media with lots of good intentions, like someone who has made a New Year’s resolution to exercise every day. They have great attendance at the gym in January, and by February are missing in action.

Develop a reasonable, doable plan and stick to it year-round.



Map out a social media plan and stick to it. Image source: iStockphoto.

#4: Elicit Responses

No one likes to be talked at without being given an opportunity to respond. If you have a blog, **let your users communicate and respond to your posts** via comments. **Ask thought-provoking questions** on your other social networking sites that people will genuinely want to respond to.



Ask questions on social networking sites.

#5: Follow Twitter Lists

There are many benefits when you **create and follow Twitter lists**. [Crystal Vogt](#) suggests:

“Twitter lists also allow you to **find like-minded followers** by perusing others’ lists. The Twitter list function can be an important tool for businesses.”

Twitter lists can provide a great resource for finding other profiles you may want to follow.

#6: Goals Shouldn’t be Hidden

[David Meerman Scott](#) writes in his book, *The New Rules of Marketing & PR*:

“When content effectively drives action, the next step of the sales process—an e-commerce company’s Products button, the B2B corporation’s White Paper Download form or a nonprofit’s Donate link—are easy to find.”

Make your products and services easy to find so users know how to take the next step.



Make calls to action visible and a key part of your social media goals. Image source: iStockphoto.

#7: Hometown Perspective

Sometimes it can be confusing to **understand the difference between social networking sites**. I love [Jeffrey Hayzlett](#)'s hometown analogy:

“Think of LinkedIn as a sign that you post on Main Street; Twitter, the view from your front porch as you wave when people go by; and Facebook as the den you use to invite special people to get to know you.”

#8: Industry Contacts + Clients = Users to Follow

[Georgina Laidlaw](#) offers a list of mistakes that might be strangling your success with social media and includes one major oversight that I've seen made repeatedly by businesses: Not following or friending industry contacts (and clients, too).

When you **follow your contacts and clients**, you'll have an opportunity to read their news; see first-hand what content is important to their business; and **comment, respond and further your dialogue**.

#9: Join the Conversation

By now, the phrase “join the conversation” has been added to the ranks of social media clichés. If your company is able to **assign a few people who can regularly represent and speak on behalf of the company** via social media, you will find many rewards.

Speaking of conversation, businesses who **claim a presence on social networking sites** need to have a unique and recognizable voice. We'll talk more about voice in Tip #24, Voice Lessons.

#10: Keyword Research

[Caroline and Steve Melberg](#) point out that keyword research is one of the most important parts of the SEO process, “yet few small business owners actually **conduct a full and complete keyword research exercise** before engaging on their first SEO campaign.”

Caroline and Steve consider keyword research to be essential to help businesses:

- **Identify the best and most profitable keywords** for their campaigns
- **Find missed opportunities that may be profitable for their niche**, and conversely, ones that should be scratched from their list
- **Identify the focus and direction of their SEO campaign**, and ultimately, the core of their online marketing strategy



Look for the best and most profitable keywords for your campaign. Image source: iStockphoto.

#11: Location, Location, Location

In one of our earlier 26 Tips articles on the topic of location-based marketing, we referenced [Neil Patel](#)'s 8 strategies for local search that provide excellent guidelines to **launch local campaigns** and are worth repeating here (followed by Tip #13, Market Your Business Locally, with additional thoughts about local listings).

- Keyword research to **focus on industry-specific terms and geo-specific terms**.
- **Optimize your website for local search** by adding locally optimized title tags and meta descriptions.
- **Create a geo sitemap**.
- **Have the best Google Places listing** possible.
- **Build profiles on other sites** to build citations for local SEO.
- Get local reviews when you **add buttons to your website and encourage reviews**.
- **Build links** from related local businesses and local bloggers.
- **Optimize your social pages** (Facebook Page, Twitter profile, LinkedIn page, Google+, etc.) for local.

#12: Market Your Business Locally

With the rise of smartphones, tablets and mobile devices, local marketing has become increasingly important for businesses. [Sian Simon](#) suggests factors that help to **get good local listings**:

- **Create a profile within the search engines themselves.**
- **Get listed in local directories** (e.g., [Superpages](#), [Citysearch](#)), which give you a chance to be displayed more than once in the search engine's results.
- **Claim your business listing and create your profile**—you can get started with Google, Yahoo! and [Bing](#).

#13: Netiquette and Response Time

[Tom Cull](#) offers advice regarding business response time on social media:

“It could be a blog comment, a message through a form on your website or an email straight into your inbox; all potentially as good leads as each other. What the customer wants in each case is a prompt response, which addresses their inquiry and provides a next course of action. If it's a personal blog, email or even social media, then people generally expect a response in 1-2 days.”

Are you responding within 1-2 days to inquiries that you receive via your social networking sites, blog or email? If not, how can you **ramp up your response time**?



Prompt response time is an essential part of social netiquette. Image source: iStockphoto.

#14: Objectives for Social Media Success

[Forrester Research](#) has analyzed hundreds of companies that have successful social media strategies. From their research, they've identified **five primary objectives for success**:

- **Listening**—Use social media tools to **research** and **better understand your customers**.
- **Talking**—Use social media to spread your brand and company goals.

- **Energizing**—Find your “unofficial” leaders and brand enthusiasts and **use social media to supercharge the power of their ideas** and word of mouth.
- **Supporting**—Set up social media tools to **help your customers support each other**.
- **Embracing**—Integrate your customers into the way you do business and **give them an avenue to share product ideas and cost-saving tips**. This is the most complex strategy; and one, when implemented well, can demonstrate the greatest ROI.

#15: Patience Is a Virtue for Social Media Marketers

[Ilias Chelidonis](#) reminds us,

“Anything that is worthwhile takes time to build, and growing tribes and followers on social networks and creating community takes time. One way to **think of it is like building a house ‘one brick at a time.’** In the case of social media, it is one piece of content at a time.”

#16: Quick on Your Feet

In Tip #14, we discussed the importance of responding to users’ inquiries within 1-2 days. But social media can also be unpredictable. A negative comment can set off a chain reaction, so you need to be quick on your feet to **diffuse things before they get any worse**.

[Nicholas D’Angelo](#) offers the following advice:

“As a brand, or especially as the social media manager of a brand, having negative comments or a ‘brand assassin,’ can have a drastic effect on the way your firm is perceived by others. As a brand you have to:

- **Be the bigger person**
- **Seek resolution**
- **Try to help**
- Do everything in your power to **turn this ‘brand assassin’ to a ‘brand ambassador’** and take the higher road.”

#17: Round Robin Your Team’s Thoughts

Sometimes, even with all the best intentions, a company doesn’t instinctively **understand the value that a social network can provide** to their business.

[Heather Clifford](#) suggests looking to your internal teams for ideas.

“Why not **host a social get-together with your team and discuss all the valuable aspects of your company?** Do a round robin and **allow each person on your team to give their thoughts...** Harness the value that is right beneath your own roof. Possibility thinking along with group input is extremely valuable today.”

Confer with members of your team about company messages on social media and see what insights you gain.



Look to internal teams for product and service information that will strengthen brand awareness and customer loyalty. Image source: iStockphoto.

#18: Start Somewhere and Start Small

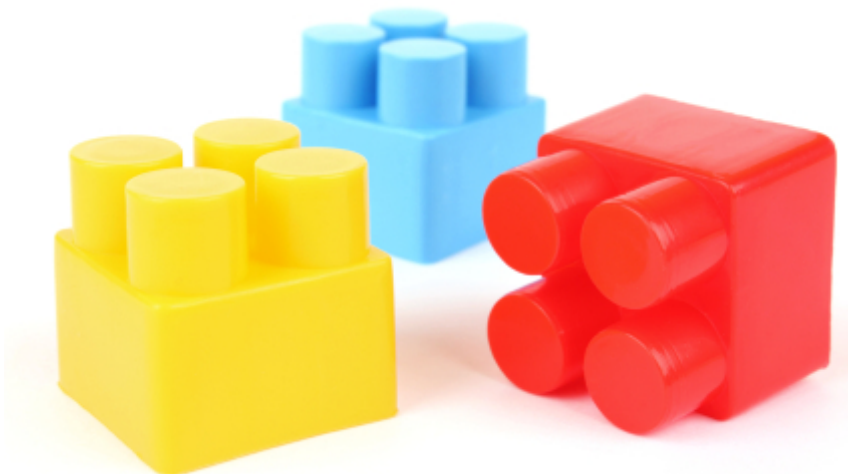
In Tip #1, Assess and Reassess, we discussed social platform decision-making in terms of the size of networks.

[Mark Parker](#) offers this piece of sound advice:

“The best place to start is to **look at who you want to communicate with**, define your typical customer and look at their familiarity with technology and where you are likely to find them.”

He also cautions to not “over-think the interaction... start somewhere, and start small.”

Whether it’s one of the “big four” or YouTube, Pinterest, Yelp or one of the other many sites, **choose what’s most relevant for your business.**



Start small. Image source: iStockphoto.

#19: Time Allocation

In the fall of 2012, [VerticalResponse](#) surveyed 462 businesses with fewer than 100 employees and found that 43% of small businesses are spending at least 6 hours per week on social media.

Finding social media content was reported as taking the most time, followed by learning and education, analyzing efforts, scoping out the competition and responding to questions.

How much time is your business spending on social media? What are the most time-consuming steps?

#20: Update Overload Can Be a Problem

[eMarketer](#) reported on a study conducted by [SocialVibe](#) that found “one-third of US Internet users who had ended a social connection with a brand did so because the company simply posted too many updates.” **Communicate and educate.** Don’t inundate.

#21: Voice Lessons

What does your business sound like on social media? Are you professional? Friendly? Friendly professional? Serious? Too serious?

[Brad Smith](#) recommends that businesses should **have a unique voice and personality.**

Does your business sound like someone people will want to talk to? Another way of looking at it—would you want to talk to you?

#22: Ways to Capture Different Kinds of Visitors

[Darren Rowse](#) suggests catering to two different kinds of blog readers: 1) the hard-won, single visitor and 2) the generic, viral visitor.

For hard-won, single visitors, Darren recommends capturing their attention with things such as:

- **Link to further readings** on the same topic
- **Include signup forms/newsletter subscriptions**
- **Provide a contact form for questions** they might want to ask
- **Provide free download** targeting their need
- **Have active community of commenters** or forum members
- **Link to social media/RSS subscriptions**

For generic, viral visitors, Darren recommends:

- **Make comments on posts prominent**
- **Offer a free download or subscription** related to the same content on the same page

- **Follow up with the linking site** to see if they'll accept a guest post, so you can further build your profile with the site's readers
- **Offer the linking site an exclusive piece of quality content** (e.g., a white paper or report that links back to your blog)



Hook your visitors. Image source: iStockphoto.

#23: (E)xplore the Social Media Ecosystem

[Danielle Brigida](#) compares the exploration of social media to finding your niche in the natural world—hiking a new trail, observing a stream or other surroundings.

Danielle suggests you **use the same tactics for social media exploration:**

- **Listen**
- **Ask/document questions**
- **Experiment**
- **Create**
- **Assess and analyze**

#24: Yield Deeper Customer Relationships Via Social Networks

[Chris Brogan](#) writes:

“If you think of social networks as places where things other than your business happen, then you’re starting to get how this all works. People aren’t there to find you. They’re there for

their own purposes. Your job is to **have an outpost there and to listen**, so that when someone expresses a need you can address, you'll have the ability to start a relationship.”

Are you deepening your customer relationships with social media? What do you need to do differently to make it happen?

#25: Zero Cost of Entry, but Is Social Media Really Free?

[Tom Johansmeyer](#) points out that many of the costs associated with social media marketing are not immediately evident. Many of the platforms are free to join and set up a profile, but there are other things to consider:

- The primary issue is content: you need to be able to **publish blog posts, tweets and status updates**.
- You need to **think about content promotion**— i.e., getting people know about and read your content.
- There can be public-relations efforts, search engine optimization and community development and management required. This involves more people, more time and more expense.
- As with any marketing activity, measurement is necessary... Google Analytics, Facebook Insights and time with the likes of [bit.ly](#) and [Topsy](#), though free, require someone to look at them, crunch the numbers and draw conclusions. Tom asks, “So, is social media marketing really free?” As he says, “Anyone who’s made a serious effort to do it knows that there are expenses all over the place. Don’t take this as a reason not to hit the social media world to market your company...”



Social media may have zero, or little, cost of entry, but there are definite costs. And as many businesses have discovered, it's well worth the investment! Image source: iStockphoto.