

Social Media for **Small Business** Primer

How to Strategically Use
Social Media Marketing to
Grow Your Business



The Social Web...A Boon for Your Business

There's no doubt about it. The Internet has become the social meeting place for people from all walks of life. Whether they're looking for a new place to have dinner, need information on a certain topic or just want a little laugh, they're turning to the social web to get what they need.

In addition, search engine giants like Google are using that same social web to deliver relevant search results to their users. As a business owner, that means it's becoming ever more important that you get involved in social media.

How involved you get is up to you, and will depend on your resources and objectives. Social media can take up a considerable amount of time and resources, so you need to plan accordingly. It's also important to **have a plan for your social media** and to stay focused because the lines between "working" and "playing" are easily blurred on social media websites.

This guide will give you an introduction to four of the biggest social sites and provide you with some ideas on how you might approach them.

Put your focus into the places where you can **find your target market**, and always refine your approach as you continue to explore. Also included are some additional tips to get you off to a great start.

Top 4 Social Networking Sites

If you do a bit of searching around you'll probably find lists of social networks, and you might be overwhelmed by the sheer number out there.

The thing to remember is that most networks have a very small user base and it is not often worth investing any time into them.

Of course, if you find a network that specifically targets your ideal customer, they might be worth exploring.

But for the purposes of this guide, we are simply going to take a look at the top four social networking sites overall.

Let's jump right in...



#1: Facebook

URL: <http://facebook.com>

Description: The granddaddy of all social networks, Facebook boasts the largest number of users from a wide demographic. Users can post updates, photos and videos. Interaction comes in the form of comments, sharing updates and “Likes” which demonstrate that someone likes the update they just read.

Demographic Data: Facebook has 845 million active users, 483 million users of whom are active on a daily basis. Facebook is available in over 70 languages. There are slightly more female users on Facebook than male users, but their representation is fairly even. The age range of users is broad, but the 20-29 age group is the best represented.

Business Opportunity: Facebook allows business to create “**Business Pages.**” Users can subscribe to receive updates from your page by clicking a “Like” button to indicate they are a fan of your business. You can post updates about your company, interesting facts, share news, create polls and more. Facebook allows customization for branding your Facebook Business Page.



#2: Twitter

URL: <http://twitter.com>

Description: Often described as a micro-blogging network, Twitter allows its users to send short updates of a maximum of 140 characters; referred to as “tweets.” They can post text updates, and while the site also allows the posting of photos, users have to click a link to view the photos. Users can interact with one another by replying to user updates or “retweeting” them – which means rebroadcasting someone else’s tweet to their own followers. Twitter also employs the use of “hashtags,” which are keywords preceded by a “#” character, that make them searchable, so people can follow conversations on specific topics.

Demographic Data: Twitter has 300 million users that post over 300 million tweets per day. 53% of Twitter’s users are female, giving them a slight edge over the male user population. 30% of Twitter’s users are between the ages of 26 and 34 and 27% of them are 35-44. Twitter is currently offered in only a handful of languages, but they are working to expand their offerings.

Business Opportunity: Businesses are allowed to set up Twitter accounts, as the service does not distinguish between business and personal accounts. You can post updates about your company, share information, interact with other Twitter users and post photos. **Hashtags are an opportunity** to share information during events of interest and relating to specific topics. Twitter allows for custom branding of your Twitter profile page.

#3 LinkedIn

URL: <http://linkedin.com>

Description: LinkedIn is focused on connecting professionals, with the purpose of sharing industry-related information, as well as job and other opportunities.

Demographic Data: LinkedIn has over 150 million members and over 2 million companies have LinkedIn Company Pages, making it the largest professional social network online. It is available in 200 countries worldwide and is available in 16 languages.

Business Opportunity: LinkedIn provides professionals the opportunity to create profiles and increase their professional contacts and connections. You can also set up a **Company Page** to share company news, employment opportunities and more.

It is a good opportunity to meet other like-minded business owners and professionals for the purpose of sharing information, forming partnerships and more. You can create polls, share files, promote events, share presentations, and more. LinkedIn allows for minor customization in order to brand profile pages.

#4: Google+

URL: <http://plus.google.com>

Description: Google+ is a relatively new social network created by the search giant Google. As Google implements more social results into its search, SEO experts are saying that Google+ is becoming increasingly relevant to your appearance in search results, so it's definitely a network worth looking at.

Users can post updates, and share images and videos. Interactions come in the format of comments, sharing updates and clicking the "+1" to demonstrate that a user likes the update they just read.

Google employs the use of "Circles" so that users can categorize the people they are following into different groups such as friends, acquaintances, business connections, etc. There is also integration with YouTube, Picasa and other Google services.

Demographic Data: It is estimated that Google+ has about 90 million users, making it a relatively small social network in comparison to the others mentioned in this guide. Publicly available demographic data is limited, but it is reported that a large percentage of its user base is technologically oriented men. According to Wikipedia, over 71% of Google+'s users are male and 35% of all their users are between the ages of 25 and 34.

Business Opportunity: Businesses can set up a **Google+ Page** that allows them to connect with their followers. Businesses are not allowed to set up regular Google+ profiles, although you need to set up a personal profile before you can create a business page.

Users can subscribe to your Google+ updates by putting you into their circles. You can share updates, share useful content, photos and videos. You can also create “Hangouts” that allow you to interact your followers via video or audio chat. Google+ allows for minor customization in order to brand your profile page.

Where Should You Focus Your Efforts?

Now that you have a better understanding of what's available at each of the social networks, it's time to decide where you'll first direct your efforts. There is no sense in signing up for all the social networking sites at once if you don't have enough time or resources to dedicate to every one.

Here are few things to consider when deciding where to begin:

- **Facebook** definitely has the largest user base, so it's a natural starting place for a lot of businesses.
- **Twitter** is smaller than Facebook, but is a much more open network that is readily searchable. In addition, all updates are public by default. That means that your updates on specific topics may catch the attention of someone who otherwise may never have heard of you.
- If you are a new business, building a following on a Facebook Page can prove challenging. With a network like **Twitter**, it's easier to find other likeminded individuals and follow their updates and start making connections that way. For Facebook Pages, there isn't nearly as much of a reciprocal-minded following of brands.
- If you like to share a lot of visuals like photos and videos, Twitter and LinkedIn may not be the natural first choice. While you can link to those types of media, they aren't readily seen while a user is viewing the updates on the site. **Facebook** and **Google+**, on the other hand, are

more visual social networks that can put your visual content in the forefront.

- If your business is to create influential business connections or to meet others working in the same niche or industry as you, **LinkedIn** probably provides the best opportunities.
- If your target market is technologically-oriented men in their 20s, 30s or even their 40s, **Google+** may help you connect to the right audience.

Those are just a few starting thoughts. The best way to decide what will work best for you is to get your feet wet.

Set up a profile, start looking around at what other businesses are doing and get in on the action.

However, just like everything else in business, it can take time to build your following.

Just because you don't hit it out the ballpark in your first week, it doesn't mean the social network isn't right for you.

It takes **consistent work and effort** to grow over time.

More Social Media Tips for Business

Before heading off, here are a few things to keep in mind to ensure you are more efficient with your participation in social networks and continue to work toward your goals.

- **Have a plan for your social media.** Are you going to use social media as an extension of your blog and share updates on your content? Do you want to meet new business connections? Are you trying to create a greater sense of community? Are you trying to establish your business as a go-to resource on a specific topic?
- **Social media success takes time.** Unless you already have a well-established online presence, you may find that your foray into social media may not produce the instant results you're hoping for. The key is to start making connections, getting to other influential people and working toward serving your audience.
- **Analyze your competition.** While you want to set yourself apart from everyone else making noise on social media, there is no need to completely reinvent the wheel. Watch what your competition does on social media. Who is doing well and why are they doing well? These are important things to know.
- **Be careful with our social media management team.** Hiring a team or individual to help you with your social media campaign is a good idea, but you need to make sure a consistent and appropriate message is shared. Set

up well-defined guidelines to make sure everyone is on the same page.

- **Put some effort into your profiles.** Always fill out a profile **completely** and think about what your potential follower wants to know about you. Use an appropriately **professional image** and update details as needed.
- **Let everyone know you're on social media.** Add "Follow Me" buttons to your website, let your email subscribers know that there is a new way to connect with you and include the information in your advertisements. Publicizing your participation is an important step into growing your following.
- **Keep the "social" in social media.** While people love to hear from businesses and receive their updates, the focus should always be on the social. Keep your own focus on sharing helpful information, being helpful and avoiding constant blatant self-promotion.
- **Share readily.** Building on the social aspect of social media, readily share the content of others. Sharing is a great way to meet new people and to be seen as a hub of helpful information in your topic area.
- **Respond to those that engage you.** Where possible, **respond to comments** and **engage your audience** further. There's nothing worse than a business page that shows no real interaction by the owner.

What To Do Next

Keep in mind that you are still working and growing a business.

You still need to develop products, grow your mailing list and sell your products.

Social media is a great way to increase your exposure and connect more meaningfully with your followers, and it should be a **complement to your marketing activities** rather than replacing them.

Stay steady and focused and you'll be seeing the benefits of your participation, too.

Wishing You Great Success!

Theresa

Theresa Delgado
Business Marketing Consultant

TheresaDelgado.com

Step-by-Step Help to Build Your Online Presence