

THE MOST EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TACTICS

In terms of attracting new users, Social Media is the fastest growing category of Internet Marketing. As you learned in the previous lesson, there are many different social media tools to generate publicity and build brand awareness. These include blogs and microblogs, social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, forums, press release and news distribution services, photo and video sharing sites such as YouTube, Flickr and Photobucket...and the list goes on.



Especially for individuals with personal brands, but also for larger organizations, Social Media offers an opportunity to establish yourself as an expert in your market. With the proper approach, the use of blogs, discussion forums, social news sites, etc. will help increase your credibility significantly. Remember, people like to buy from experts and also like to follow specialists on their blog, tweets, etc. In order to create a following, you must **offer something of value** to potential followers.

Each social media activity you engage in helps create buzz around your brand; however, you need to **act strategically using the right combination of tactics** if you want to create positive results. It is easy to invest significant time in Social Media, yet produce very little return. It pays to learn, and then follow, the right strategy.

In the following section we present some of the most effective SMM tactics and offer general guidelines for developing a winning social media marketing plan.

POSTING AND COMMENTING IN BLOGS

Blogs are powerful tools for building business. Though many businesses know this, comparatively few know how to navigate the blogosphere effectively. It's one thing to **have** a blog, it's another to **build** it strategically over time into a true business asset.

Creating a successful blog has many benefits. Here are several:

- The ongoing, fresh content helps attract new readers, retain loyal followers and attract search engine visits.
- The frequent posts create ongoing promotional opportunities.
- The credibility of the blogger as a niche expert increases as the blog gains online visibility.
- As readership increases and where appropriate to the business model, the opportunity to sell advertising can become an additional profit center.

Not everyone needs a blog, but those who seek to develop a personal brand definitely do.

If blogging fits your business building strategy, be prepared to update your blog weekly or at least twice a month. In addition, monitor it so you can be responsive to your growing online community. This means that you will need to watch the readers' reactions to your posts and interact with them as appropriate. Give readers all the information they need, answer questions, make suggestions and offer helpful remarks.

To learn more about this compelling technique please refer to the next lesson called "Making Use of Blogs and Forums."

Beyond simply having your own blog, there is another way to use blogs – and that is, to post comments on other blogs. Select active blogs with a readership similar to your target niche and offer thoughtful insight and comments. Don't forget to add links where it is possible, **but don't make the mistake of not engaging in sincere dialogue.**

Be advised that often regular Social Media users can quickly tell when other users are only interested in promoting themselves. The regular users tend to reject those who seem only interested in self promotion. Being seen as the latter can damage your business rather than help it. Therefore, you should mainly participate on other blogs, that are related to your niche, as a place where you can learn things that may ultimately help your business.

Commenting on other people's blogs in a strategic and intelligent manner can build awareness about you quickly. The more valuable your comments, the more likely others will visit your pages as a result.



Example of simple, positive comments.

One of the rapidly evolving SM tools which gained huge popularity is the **micro-blogging** system called Twitter. Here is an advantage of Twitter according to Mihaela Lica at Sitepoint: *"Twitter can affect positively your Alexa rankings by sending visitors to your pages. Usage data*

is a sign of quality for Google and all the other search engines. If you can make people come to your site via Twitter, then this is an SEO advantage you cannot afford to miss."

PARTICIPATING IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social networks became the pioneering social media channel and now there are now numerous providers that come in all shapes and sizes. They offer different avenues for online marketers to make a buzz. Here are some ways to use them:

- **Create a brand/company profile.** This technique is perfect for larger brands and companies, but may work for the smaller businesses as well. What you need is to be real and create the audience of readers, friends and/or connections. You have to be clear about exactly what it is you do and what is unique about you.
- **Create a group and engage readers.** You need to be intentional about growing your group and creating connections. This can help gather future clients or prospects and share information. Tap into groups of other people as well. All you need is good advice and valuable posts. People like to read information created by professionals that addresses their points of felt need.
- **Post Bulletins.** Bulletins offer an additional advertising option and can help spread regular news among the members.
- **Circulate polls and ratings.** This marketing technique is perfect for getting readers engaged. Major organizations use this technique widely.

Moreover, depending on your business objectives, social networking sites can also offer suitable, **highly targeted** advertising options. For example, the Facebook site has gathered hundreds of millions of users and makes a compelling case for investing in the trendy, yet increasingly powerful social media field. We also recommend Google+, Twitter and LinkedIn.

ONLINE NEWS RELEASE DISTRIBUTION

Online news releases are another form of effective Internet Marketing. Press releases and news releases give a worthwhile opportunity to spread news about you and your company across the World Wide Web. A **news release, media release, press release** or **press statement** is a "written or recorded communication directed at members of the news media for the purpose of announcing something claimed as having news value" (according to Wikipedia).

News releases can be spread via special services, free or paid. You'll need to do some research to find the better ones. The Web CEO Submission tool can greatly reduce the time it takes to share your content with the most popular press release and news distribution sites, blog

search engines, directories and communities. You'll be able to discover more about this powerful tool in the dedicated lesson "Press Releases."

Another common approach is to share the news story or article. To spread your news story or other piece of information you may use special social news sites like (Digg, Stumble Upon, Reddit, Newsvine). Here people discover and share content from anywhere on the web. Not only news but videos and even images can be submitted here.

It's important to respond to readers' comments and requirements. Lack of attention can hurt your brand reputation.

PARTICIPATING IN FORUMS AND DISCUSSION GROUPS

Forums are a great way to spread ideas and gather different points of view. Each subject attracts a different combination of forum members. That's a good reason to include a forum participation strategy in your SMM campaign.

Forums are divided by subject categories such as IT discussion, marketing, web design, search engines and virtually every topic under the sun. You'll find more on this topic in the next lesson.

Discussion groups present another place to ask questions, share information and/or exchange ideas with others, including experts from around the globe. There are popular Google, Yahoo and Microsoft groups' services where people with shared interests meet, get to know each other and stay informed.

Generally, you will choose a discussion group from the group list and then check out interesting posts, answer a question or post your own. You can even start a discussion group yourself and share message archives, photos and articles, member polls and shared links.

For starters, we recommend you check out these major service providers:

Google Groups

Yahoo! Groups

Microsoft Discussion Groups

This particular online marketing tool has evolved along with Social Media and continues expanding to offer more features and services. You may also want to search for other topic-specific discussion groups. Be aware that the web offers discussion groups for just about everything, i.e. journalists, physicians, politicians and so on.

POSTING MEDIA CONTENT ON CONTENT SHARING SITES

You can generate significant site traffic with the help of the photo and video sharing sites, as well as other media content sharing sites. YouTube is the best example for this purpose. It provides users the opportunity to upload compelling video and get additional traffic from YouTube.com.

The good news is that you don't have to pay for hosting and advertising to attract visitors to the pages where your new videos are posted. It's free and powerful; just keep adding to your gallery over time.

Important: remember to track viewer comments and needs. Answer questions and give all the required information in order not to lose potential buyers. Again, the important point to remember here is to be responsive. Lack of responsiveness to social media comments, once you start using these technologies, is bad form and can hurt your brand.

ADVERTISING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS



Advertising on different websites is also a powerful Internet marketing method. Traditional banner advertising as well as textual ads displayed on partner websites and in Google's, Yahoo's and Bing's sponsored results are widely used because they work! Yet Social Media offers new channels beyond traditional advertising platforms.

As a rule, the most popular social networks, blogs and forums provide advertising options to their gathered audiences (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Technorati and others).

Many popular blogs offer advertising options after they have gathered large enough audiences. It's a perfect place to meet specialists in your niche and connect with them and the audiences that gather around topics related to your products and/or services. Retargeting campaigns are especially popular now. Retargeting is when someone goes to a blog or site who has already been to your site before.

In order to get the most for your advertising dollar, make sure you take time to discover which audiences are most likely to be interested in purchasing from you. (Don't try to sell donuts through a health food site.)

Facebook provides some interesting ad options which differ from traditional paid search advertising. Bids are made for certain user demographics rather than keyword related and may target for a specific age, sex, school or sexual orientation.

However, use caution when investing in advertising through social media channels. This is because advertising on social networking sites may not be as effective as on traditional websites and blogs, since the primary motive of the social media visitors is to communicate with others.

There is more information about social media advertising in the "Social Media Advertising" Lesson, further in this course.

"Effective social media management can be a tremendous source for generating buzz, those all-important inbound links and just plain direct referral traffic," says Mike McDonald, a member and contributing author of WebProNews.

SUMMARY & A FEW LAST TIPS

We have laid out some basic tactics for developing a winning social media marketing plan and increasing your online visibility through SMM. Depending on the size of your company, you also may need to outline a Social Media Policy for approved use on company time.

We advise you to recognize that Social Media Marketing, like any form of marketing, takes time, effort and resources. Make sure you allocate enough to the effort. Also keep in mind that the rule of thumb is not to throw all of your efforts into one channel (Facebook, Technorati, YouTube, etc.). As with any marketing effort, there is usually not one 'magic solution' so avoid putting all your eggs in one basket. That basket might not be the one that works best for you and your company.

When writing content, do your best to be exciting, creative and consistent. You shouldn't be too academic. Compose brief pieces with lots of visual breaks for people to absorb. Don't bore readers. Web surfers like images and originality. Limit the number of "me too" posts to one or two, max three for a month. Your followers or readers may know more than you; that's why it's a smart move to ask questions as well.

SUMMARY

1. Social Media offers an opportunity for you to establish yourself as an expert in your market. People like to buy from experts and also like to follow specialists on their blog posts, tweets etc.
2. Track the prospects' comments and needs. Answer the questions and give all the required information in order not to lose potential buyers. Be attentive and responsive.
3. Creating a winning social media campaign is a challenge, but done properly, it can increase your success.