

Social Media: the future of small business marketing

Social media may have started out as a new communication tool for people to connect with one another, but everyday it grows in importance for businesses - especially for small businesses.

Social media presented a fresh direction for marketing: instead of talking at consumers, talk with them. Traditionally, theories of marketing focused on what is known as the 4Ps: Product, Price, Placement and Promotion.

Then, in 2001, the Cluetrain Manifesto was published. Although the transition from product-focused models to consumer driven models was arguably brewing for decades, this manifesto asserted that the presence of the Internet had changed the old way of marketing forever. Connecting directly to the consumer became the new way of marketing, and marketers looked to social media to accomplish this task.

The good news is that social media is an ideal option for small business owners as it is such a cost-effective way of getting a message out to a targeted audience. The most popular online social networking sites actually provide free personal accounts, from which a small business can easily communicate with its stakeholders and audiences.

The business benefits of using social media

Here are just a few of the rewards reaped when a small business decides to use social media strategically.

- 1. Gain control of your brand name.** Before someone else captures your 'name' on the popular social media sites like [Facebook](#), MySpace, YouTube, [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#), you had better do it. You wouldn't want someone else holding the domain name [www.mysmallbusinessname.com](#), so don't let it happen with social media.
- 2. Provide links for search engine optimisation.** Of course, when you build a profile on a social media site like [Facebook](#), it will include a link back to your small business website. The more links you have to your site, the more likely it is to show up when someone is searching for the products or services you offer.
- 3. More hits on your website.** Since you will have an opportunity to link back to your site on all of these social media sites, you will be increasing traffic to your website - the place where you truly have the opportunity to sell your goods and services to the consumer.



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4. Build better relationships. Social media sites offer a unique opportunity to build relationships and engage with customers outside of them making a purchase. Of course, the nurturing of these relationships could eventually lead to a sale. If the customer feels a good connection with your small business, they are far more likely to feel comfortable doing business with you.

5. Good PR. Social media sites also help you to talk about your small business's achievements. These might include business awards, recognition in the press, involvement with charities and more. Long gone are the days that a newspaper will decide whether these sorts of stories are newsworthy. Your social networking sites will allow you an outlet for this information, making your small business more credible and worthy in your customers' eyes.

Social media: get started

Ready to get started? Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn are great starting points. You should look to connect within your niche. For instance, if your small business sells jewellery, you might want to find some jewellery groups on Facebook to join. Also, make sure you are measuring your success with social media by employing a web analytics program. Facebook provides its own analytics software called "Insights", which has been designed with small business pages in mind.

Finally, have fun and be creative. Just dive right in - no small business can afford to be left behind when it comes to social media. Please click on one of the images below to see how Constructaquote.com uses social media.



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