



BRIEF GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA

There is no denying the importance of social media in today's market place. It has the ability to build brand awareness, build up valuable business contacts, and create advocates of your brand.

40% of online traffic comes from social media, so it can play a huge role in driving traffic to your business. This is not just with direct traffic and sales, but so much more.

With the rise of social media you now need to own your reputation on-line, and not just your domain name.

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1. Is it for you?

When starting your social marketing campaign you should always work around your existing marketing plan (if you don't have one... **eeze**, do one). You need to have a clear idea of what you are already doing before you go and embark on a social media campaign.

The key is to take your time and make a plan, do not expect instant results.

Many companies have made the mistake of rushing into setting up facebook accounts, twitter accounts, starting blogs etc, without thinking of the bigger picture. Social media is a long term strategy, you may not get instant results and if you do not stay on top of it by keeping things updated and relevant, it will have a negative effect on the image you are trying to project.

Work out what you hope to achieve by using social media.

78% of the UK's online population belong to a social network of some kind.

2. Planning

When doing your planning think: Why are you planning on doing this? Why now? And what is next?

Why this?

Is this going to make you stand out from the competition? What are the key benefits going to be for your company? What are the key targets of your website?

Why now?

Why do you want to launch this now? Will your target audience benefit from it? Will it give you a competitive edge? This is a good time to look at your competitors and figure out what they are doing. Take a look at what social networking sites they are using.

What next?

How are you going to promote your site? How are you going to reflect social media and your online marketing strength? Develop a program and stick to it!

Do you have any social media activity to date?

If yes... take a look at any social media you (or anyone within the company) has carried out and go over it with a fine tooth comb. Are you using the right key words? Is the message clear? What message are you trying to get across?

Make sure you are consistent throughout each platform. Are you sending the right messages and are they relevant? Are you time sensitive with offers? (E.g. if you are a hotel, inform people of bank holiday special offers through these various forms of media.)

3. Finding the right platform

Finding the right platform that will work for you and your company is essential.

Not all platforms will work for you, so decide what is most relevant for your business.

To help you decide take a look at your target audience. Will any of them use social networking sites? Equally, check to see if any of your competitors are using them.

It is better to pick a few good platforms that you can spend time putting on some really good material, rather than having a lot of platforms that are just distinctively average.

40% of online traffic comes from social media

4. Finding the right content

Now this is the not so **eeze** part for many companies. The information you put out via social media needs to be interesting and engage your target audience. Be creative, be different; do not use these platforms just to sell, sell, sell. Show yourself to be human, give yourself a personality, become approachable, be fun, be different.

5. Social Media platforms

There are a large number of social media platforms out there and they are not all going to work for your company. Here is a brief overview of the main social media platforms:

Facebook

This is by far the number 1 tool, it's the largest of all the social networking sites. This can drive quality traffic to your business. It is a fantastic platform for B2C. You can set up facebook pages and groups for the products and services you offer.

Facebook is a great tool for creating advocates for your company. Offer people incentives and customer loyalty schemes and this will get people on board with your brand so they will spread the word and associate themselves with you.

Twitter

This is a very useful tool if used correctly. Some have said that twitter has now had its day and the buzz is starting to fade from the microblogging site, but now you are left with the 'hardcore' twitter users and therefore you are already getting a better quality of lead. It also has the highest proportion of users aged 35 and over, which makes it better for B2B

The potential uses of Twitter include; to develop reputation, perform market research and demand and lead generation with case studies, client wins, awards, projects etc.

Use Twitter as a support tool to your ongoing sales and marketing strategy. Support your PR efforts, Adwords campaign, service launches, product updates, time sensitive sales and promotions (Easter holidays, spring break etc) and general client updates.

It is a good idea to link with your clients, link with your local publications / reporters (you never know when you might get a bit of free PR).

Linked In

Online networking at its best! This is an excellent platform for B2B management and sales as you can post company news, network with potential clients and give and receive leads. It also tends to be massive for recruitment, generating leads, building your reputation and identifying suppliers.

YouTube

If you're not sure about the power of YouTube, then bear in mind the fact that they get 2 billion hits a day and it is the world's 2nd largest search engine! The viral capability of YouTube is **HUGE** and it is fantastic for both B2B and B2C.

You can create company channels, where you can upload your own videos. These videos can be your testimonials, promotions, viral campaigns, adverts, charity events, meet the team, anything you can think of that will reach out to your customers. Great promotional platform if you have the time!

Forums and Blogs

These are biggest time investment of all the social media platforms. Do not use forums or blogs to sell - people will just get annoyed and will soon lose interest.

You need to build up relationships, become trusted so you become an industry expert within your field. This is when you will start to see the real benefits. Give people a reason to return to you, keep it interesting and relevant. Also use external blogs to generate awareness of your business but remember: do not sell yourself, keep it interesting and relevant so people will read your blog and become an advocate of you and your brand.

In 2009, more communications were conducted on social networks than via e-mail

6. Tracking

It is important to track the success of your social media campaigns. When your new **it'seeze** site is set up we automatically install Google Analytics.

Google is not 100% accurate but is a very good way to track the overall success of your campaign. It is also worth using the various platforms' own analytics; this will give you a more accurate picture of your campaign's success.

7. Updating

All of these platforms need to be kept up to date. You need to bring all of the relevant platforms together. Plan your campaigns and work out how they are going to work with one another and what message they are going to send to your target markets.

Make sure your content is fresh and interesting. This is an opportunity to give your company a personality that will attract your target audience; you want them to relate and become loyal advocates to your company, so you must maintain their attention.

Engage with your audience and you will soon convert their interest into sales!