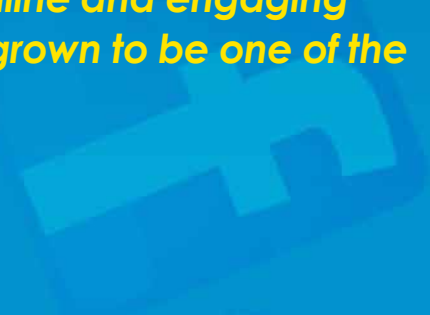
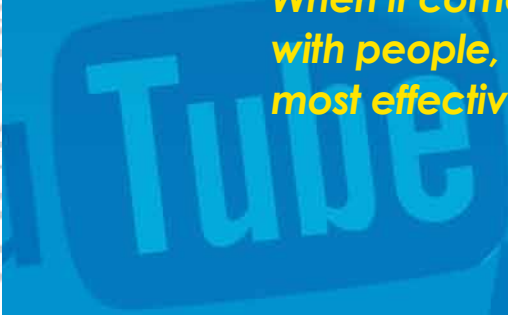




# Social MEDIA

*When it comes to interacting online and engaging with people, Social Media has grown to be one of the most effective mediums online.*



Social Media is not about communicating a message to another individual online. It is about influence, news, referrals, market research, goodwill, generating content, promoting content, and generating traffic, leads and revenue. It is one of the easiest and most cost effective ways to build an online community you can engage with, and who will talk about you and your business. The following ten tips can help you effectively introduce social media into your business.

### 1. Incorporate Social Media into how you market your business online.

In the same way that you account advertising, promotional material and Google adwords as ways to promote your business, Social Media should also be included as another means to do so. Therefore set goals for what you would like to achieve, make it priority and evaluate it.

Try this: After researching your customers, develop a plan to target which Social Media sites they are using. Find out which is their preferred media? Twitter? Facebook? Youtube? LinkedIn?

Remember that regardless of what Social media site you choose, it is essential that you invest time to build relationships.

### 2. Use a variety of social media sites for your online presence

Once you have completed your research, establish which social media sites your clients or suppliers are using then follow in their footsteps and use the same.

Try this: create a Facebook fan page; add a blog to your website that you can promote via social media; connect with Twitter; sign up to LinkedIn and join business groups; add promote video via YouTube (and embed into your website where appropriate).

Remember to look at how you can optimise content for keywords.

### 3. Set objectives

Just like any approach for promoting your business, you should expect to receive a return on investment. It's important to know what you want to achieve so your social media activities have a purpose.

Try this: set SMART (Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) goals so you can measure your return on investment (and while social media is "free" it is an investment of time). Your goals might include increasing your position in search engine rankings, an increase in traffic to your website, or an increase in subscribers to an e-newsletter.

Remember to set up Google alerts so you can respond appropriately when others are talking about your brand.

### 4. Promote your social media presence

Now that you have gone to the trouble of developing a social media strategy and signing up, don't forget to tell people! Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn all allow you to import contacts from gmail, hotmail and your address book. This will help you find your existing contacts so you can invite them to connect with you.

Try this: register on Twitter directories such as Twello ([www.twello.com](http://www.twello.com)) and mr Tweet ([www.mrtweet.com](http://www.mrtweet.com)) so that others can find you; create, join and participate in groups on Facebook and LinkedIn and invite others to join.

Remember to promote your social networks through your email signatures, websites, blogs, direct mail and offline communications. Give a client as many opportunities as you can for them to view your social media page.

### 5. Be yourself, be authentic and be true to your brand

When posting updates or contributing to your social network pages, don't outsource the content. No one knows your business better than you, and it's most effective when individuals from within your organisation are engaging and posting (and be interesting!). This isn't to say you can't seek outside help to set up your social media presence.

Try this: as well as sharing company information, offer opinions on current events and industry news; highlight events you are attending (where you can meet online contacts in person); show your personality.

Remember to be consistent when creating your company's Twitter page, Facebook fan page, or when creating a company profile on LinkedIn, including brand colours, words, images. Make sure your profiles are complete – fill in the required and optional fields when setting up your profiles, and include a photo or an image (such as a logo).

Remember to promote your social networks through your email signatures, websites, blogs, direct mail and offline communications.

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## 6. Know your followers

Your followers are likely to be your customers, suppliers, prospective clients, and others who are interested in your business. Knowing what they are interested in will help you more effectively engage with them.

Try this: look at who your followers are engaged with – through re-tweeting, sharing Facebook pages and commenting in groups. This helps to create goodwill towards you.

## 7. Engage with your followers – don't give them a hard sell

Successful users of social media don't constantly flog their products. They engage with their followers to share information, talk about achievements, offer incentives and prizes, share a "sneak peek" of a new product or feature to make users feel valued.

Try this: follow the 80:20 rule: 80% of your social media content should be about engaging – this might include re-tweeting interesting tweets; replying directly to followers who tweet or post interesting comments; introduce new staff or thank suppliers and customers; promote real world events; share information; write a blog post about your company philosophy on philanthropy. Only 20% of your social media content should be about directly promoting your products and services.

Remember to have fun with your social media – it will win you more followers.

## 8. Update regularly

The whole point of social media is that it allows you to update your followers with what you are up to, your 20 minutes 2-3 times a week for Facebook, and time to write at least 1 blog post a week. If you don't have time delegate the responsibility of updating your social media to 1-2 people within the organisation who are interested in social media (but set guidelines!).

Remember that if you don't update regularly your followers will quickly lose interest.

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## 9. Share your knowledge

Sharing knowledge helps you become recognised as an industry leader, which can lead to other opportunities such as publicity and speaking opportunities.

Try this: rather than promoting your company directly, write a blog post or an e-book about the benefits of using your product/service and make it freely available. Promote the blog post via Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Try not to be too pushy or overtly "sales-y."

Remember to encourage your followers to share your content that they enjoy – you can easily do this using social media bookmarking links.

## 10. Measure the effectiveness of your social media

As with any form of promotion, measuring and evaluating is essential. There are many ways to measure the effectiveness of social media including the traffic to your website, change in your search engine ranking, the numbers of followers, fans, contacts you have; the number of re-tweets, replies, posts, conversations and mentions your links generate; increasing sales/clients/customers who directly heard about via

social media.

Try this: tweet or post links to your website using SEO keywords and measure how many hits they generate.

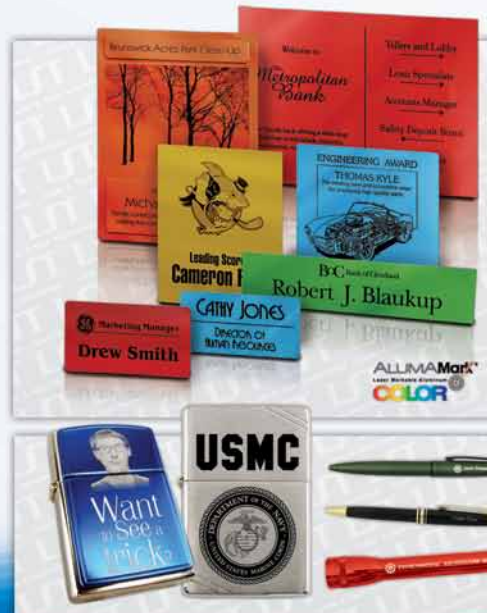
Remember to put in place, methods for evaluation for each social media site you use.

If you are not already engaging with social media, then now is a great time to join! Start with twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Create a simple profile – or allow for individual and business profiles. Spend time browsing each of these platforms and observe how they are used.

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