



*smart. creative.*

## anatomy of a social media campaign

Social Media...or Social Media Marketing. You've heard about it...a lot. Twitter, FaceBook, YouTube, Flickr, blogs, viral video. How does it all work? What does it all mean?

You may have heard, "It's frivolous...a waste of time... it's a kids' thing." But we bet you'll also have heard that social media marketing may well be a great way to market your business, your products and services.

**Let's start with a basic premise,** namely that social media marketing is, in fact, social networking. And social networking is really any form of social interaction. For example, when you go to the local watering hole or out on the golf course with friends, you're engaging in social networking. When you go to watch your child at a soccer game, you are networking socially with other parents. When you go to an industry, association or Chamber of Commerce event or mixer, you are social networking.

What Social Media enables you to do is to network socially on the internet. The sites mentioned above and the techniques they employ let you reach out to hundreds, if not thousands of people quickly and easily. And they've been developed in such a way that you can use them both to draw new people into your social network and to continually communicate with those within it.

Let's say you've got an internet marketing strategy that includes an online store or



service site, a search engine marketing strategy so that people can find you, and an e-newsletter to communicate with visitors and current customers.

If you add a new product, you are going to display it prominently on your site and e-mail about it to your customer base. That's great! So far so good. But what if you could also send a message to non-subscribers, to people who haven't searched for you, who might have an interest in your category, along with all of your current "friends", associates, and subscribers on social networking sites you've already created. And what if all those people so liked what they saw that they told all the friends in their networks?

That's NOT frivolous, NOT a waste of time, NOT a kids' thing. It's Social Media Marketing, a valuable tool in your marketing mix and an effective way to reach, attract and persuade (gently) people to do business with you.

We stress the word "gently". Social media is not about selling, it's about networking. Think of the next few discussion points as the Criteria of Social Media Marketing.

## Criteria 1: Social Authority

Here's what Wikipedia (itself a social media channel) has to say: One of the key

components in successful social media marketing implementation is building "social authority". Social authority is developed when an individual or organization establishes themselves as an "expert" in their given field or area, thereby becoming an "influencer" in that field or area.

It is through this process of "building social authority" that social media becomes effective. That is why one of the foundational concepts in social media has become that you cannot completely control your message through social media, but rather that you can begin to participate in the "conversation" in the hopes that you can become a relevant influence in that conversation.

This conversation participation must be cleverly executed because while people are resistant to marketing in general, they are even more resistant to direct or overt marketing through social media platforms. This may seem counter-intuitive but is the main reason building social authority with credibility is so important. A marketer can generally not expect people to be receptive to a marketing message in and of itself.

In the Edleman Trust Barometer report in 2008, the majority (58%) of the respondents reported they most trusted company or



product information coming from "people like me" inferred to be information from someone they trusted. In the 2010 Trust Report, the majority switched to 64% preferring their information from industry experts and academics. According to Inc. Technology's Brent Leary, "This loss of trust, and the accompanying turn towards experts and authorities, seems to be coinciding with the rise of social media and networks."

Thus, using social media as a form of marketing has taken on whole new challenges. As the 2010 Trust Study indicates, it is most effective if marketing efforts through social media revolve around the genuine building of authority. Someone performing a "marketing" role within a company must honestly convince people of their genuine intentions, knowledge, and expertise in a specific area or industry through providing valuable and accurate information on an ongoing basis without a marketing angle overtly associated. If this can be done, trust with the recipient of that information – and that message itself – begins to develop naturally. This person or organization becomes a thought leader and value provider, setting themselves up as a trusted "advisor" instead of marketer. "Top of mind awareness" develops and the consumer naturally begins to gravitate to the products and/or offerings of the authority.

Of course, there are many ways authority can be created – and influence can be accomplished – providing valuable content through social networks on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter; article writing and distribution through sites such as Ezine Articles and Scribd; and providing fact-based answers on "social question and answer sites" such as eHow and Yahoo! Answers.

As a result of social media – and the direct or indirect influence of social media marketers – today, consumers are as likely, or more likely, to make buying decisions based on what they read and see in platforms we call "social" but only if presented by someone they have come to trust. That is why a purposeful and carefully designed social media strategy has become an integral part of any complete and directed marketing plan but must also be designed using newer "authority building" techniques.

## Criteria 2: The Democratization of Information

Experts see Social Media as "the democratization of information," transforming people from content readers into content publishers. In marketing, it is the shift from a broadcast mechanism of one-to-many



into a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers. In that sense, Social Media uses the "wisdom of crowds" to connect information in a collaborative manner.

We're going to repeat this: What you shouldn't do is to craft a social media campaign intended to broadcast hype or to blatantly sell a product. What you should do is offer information that people will value and share.

### Criteria 3: The "Value Chain"

As a marketing tool, the major strength of social media is the interface between businesses and consumers - or between any participants in a "value chain."

Social media and networking provides tools to establish relationships that can create two-way value with benefits accruing to both parties.

In general, social media operates by bringing people together and letting them do what people love to do - talk - about what they like and don't like, what they're interested in and what they're not, what they're doing, watching, or listening to and everything else under the sun. The Social Media channels create a context that brings people together.

For business, Social Media enables you to create communities that help promote and popularize your new and existing products by turning "friends" and "followers" into spokespersons and endorsers on your behalf. The people who have a trusted relationship with you may willingly "push" your products through their own networks.

### Criteria 4: The Care and Feeding of Social Media

For all intents and purposes, Social Media is a living, breathing thing. That means it needs to be fed and cared for. In other words, you need to participate. The key word in Social Media is SOCIAL. You need to be engaged on the site. The channels you choose and the messages you send should become an integral part of your business and your interactive marketing strategy. The benefits you will get from social media are going to stem from ongoing relationships and conversations that develop.

Social Media can help to transform the customer experience. By engaging with people who like you or have an affinity in some way with what you have to offer, you can amplify their passion, inform their interests and forge loyalty. If you encounter people who are upset with your product, you have the opportunity to correct misinformation, offer remedies



and solutions, and, most importantly, listen and respond to their concerns. Doing so may convert them and others to your message. In both cases, you may even transform those individuals into endorsers who will help spread a positive buzz about you and what you offer.

The essence of Social Media Marketing is interaction and a continuing level of involvement with your social media channels and the people who use them.

## Criteria 5: What Do You Want to Achieve?

The Social Media you may employ can take many different forms, including Internet forums, message boards, weblogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures and video. Technologies include blogs, picture-sharing, vlogs, wall-postings, email, instant messaging, music-sharing, group creation, to name a few. Examples of social media channels and applications are Google (reference, social networking), Wikipedia (reference), MySpace (social networking), Facebook (social networking), Last.fm (personal music), YouTube (social networking and video sharing), Second Life (virtual reality), and Flickr (photo sharing). The fact is, there are an abundance of tools you can use for a wide array of purposes.

Social Media and Social Networking tools can be employed to:

- foster community,
- generate relationships among providers, sellers, and consumers,
- create content,
- broadcast and amplify information,
- enhance sales,
- assist product development,
- solicit feedback,
- engender communication, and
- increase trust.

The guideline to a successful Social Media Marketing strategy is to select and match the appropriate and manageable social media channels to clearly defined goals that you'd like to accomplish.

## A Social Media Marketing Model

If you've read this far, then you now have an understanding of how Social Media works as a marketing tool. And you're probably asking how could Social Media Marketing work for me?

Unfortunately, that's not an easy answer. Every business is different. Consequently, successful social media marketing campaigns will differ from business to business.



Nevertheless, let's create a social media model that demonstrates how a social media campaign could work for you. We'll briefly cover some basic social media channels and tools you can use, then talk about the content that goes on them.

Let's say your product is flower pots. Now, you may be asking yourself, "How could I possibly social network about flower pots?" There are ways... as you'll see below.

Let's call your company "Best Flower Pots." Your website is [bestflowerpots.com](http://bestflowerpots.com).

First, we want to figure out what social media channels you could use to promote your product and what you might be able to say or show on those channels that would cause people to like you, friend you and perhaps even share your information with others.

## Social Media Channels

Here are some basics and just a few of the things you can do. Of course there are other channels, but this will get you started.

Create a blog: Share your knowledge and experiences. It could actually be on your website or appear independently on a channel such as WordPress, Blogger, or several others.

Create a Twitter page: Write a short profile of yourself. Search for and follow other Twitterers who have an affinity to your product. Tip to gather followers: Retweet what those you follow have to say, they may follow you back.

Create a Facebook page: Lots to do here. Create a profile, an avatar/logo. Post photos, videos. Offer valuable information. Gather friends and get people to like you.

Create a Flickr page: This is where you get to post photos. There's also Tumblr and Posterous for video, photo and text posting.

Create a YouTube page: This is where you get to post video like demos and those entertaining viral videos that everybody likes to watch and share.

You can use these social media channels and many others to link to your website where you can offer additional content and where you can actually **SELL YOUR FLOWER POTS!**

## Content is King

We've identified some of the social networking tools you can use. But what kind of information do you post on them that will get people to follow you, friend you, like you, and want to share with others?



Let's revisit the criteria of our discussion above and then we'll give you some social networking content examples as they relate to flower pots.

1. Establish Social Authority
2. Democratize the Information
3. Open Up a Value Chain
4. Be Ready to Engage, Converse and Share
5. Decide What Results You Want to Achieve

So, remembering that we don't want to broadcast hype or to blatantly sell a product, what do we put out there?

Here are some ideas to get people thinking... and talking...about flower pots.

- Talk about how to grow and care for potted plants
- Offer tips on growing from seeds or seedlings
- Discuss the benefits of clay pots versus plastic pots
- Show how tomatoes or herbs can be grown in pots
- Show how you can decorate indoors and outdoors with potted plants

Notice that none of these "posts" actually sell your product, but they satisfy the criteria for social networking that we've discussed.

So what else? Well, for the visual media we can:

- Show how to decorate with pots indoors, on decks, patios, porches and balconies
- Show beautiful photos of flowers and foliage in pots
- Demonstrate how to plant in a pot
- Show how to grow herbs indoors
- Show fresh, homegrown herbs being used in recipes

Alright, you've met the criteria, but you'd like to be a little more aggressive in directing people to your site and encouraging them to buy your product. What can you do that is socially acceptable?

- Introduce new products, designs, services
- Offer a coupon or a discount for visiting your site or commenting on your blog
- Promote sales that you're offering
- Run and promote an online contest
- Make a special offer to those who sign-up for an e-newsletter or refer a friend

So, we've generated fifteen ideas focusing on how you can use social media to market flower pots. There are undoubtedly many more. The point is that all of these ideas help to market flower pots by raising awareness about them, but none of them actually "sell" flower pots.



So, why will people buy flower pots from you? They'll buy from you because you've met the criteria of social media. By using these elements you've created an effective campaign that has goals, is coherent, is participatory and invites participation, is able to be maintained, is engaging and informative, and is acceptable and perhaps even valued by the public.

You might be saying, "I don't sell flower pots. What am I to do?" Think about it. When we started you might have thought there wasn't much to say about flower pots either.

So think about your product. There might be more there to talk about (and show) than you think.



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