

Better Marketing Through Social Media

The “What,” “Why,” and “How” to Building Your Business With Social Media and Content Marketing

What is Social Media? What is Content Marketing?

In a nutshell, **social media** is communication through digital space. The proliferation of sites such as Facebook and Twitter over the past several years have made this type of communication a common, everyday practice for most people in industrialized nations worldwide.

Recent statistics showed that 72% of internet users in the U.S. are active on at least one social media platform¹, and 42% were active in two or more². Given these statistics, it's no wonder social media has become an integral marketing medium. In fact, more than 90% of businesses currently use social media.³



Content marketing is a buzzword that has commanded the limelight over the past year, as companies realize that **what** they say on social media is as important as **where** they say it. **Content marketing** is creating valuable assets—such as articles, videos, webinars, and white papers—as a marketing tool to attract and retain customers. Per dollar spent, content marketing generates approximately three times as many leads as traditional marketing.⁴

Social media provides you with all of the pieces—your website, blog, and social networking accounts—that work together to facilitate and maximize your **content marketing** strategy.

1 SOURCE: [Mediapost.com](http://mediapost.com)

2 SOURCE: [Pew Research](http://pewresearch.com)

3 SOURCE: [JeffBullas.com](http://jeffbullas.com)

4 SOURCE: [Demand Metric](http://demandmetric.com)

If your company is just beginning to develop a social media presence and a content marketing strategy, this BBG&G white paper will provide the background, basics, and best practices to begin.

Q: What role does social media play in promoting my business?

A: Creating a presence on social media is an excellent way to increase search engine optimization (SEO), drive traffic to your website, improve brand exposure, and build consistent relationships. It's one way to build customer loyalty and retention, while also attracting and engaging new customers.

It also provides the ability to quickly address customers. According to Forbes, 71% of consumers receiving a quick brand response on social media say they would likely recommend that brand to others.

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Which Social Media Platform is Useful For Your Business?

Managing social media can be a full-time job. Each form of social media is different and attracts a specific audience. Some are better for B2B marketing, and some are better for B2C outreach.

You don't have to be everywhere. Having a strong presence on one or two is better than having a weak presence on three or four. Identifying which social media network(s) is best for your business is a strategic decision based on your target market.

You don't have to be first on these platforms, either. But you should create an account so you can claim the name you want, and strive to keep it consistent on each platform.

Once you establish an ongoing presence on any of these, make sure there are links to these accounts from your website by using widgets.

EXAMPLE: If you have an active Facebook account, the Facebook icon  should be static along the bottom, top, or side of every page of your site. It should be hyperlinked to the URL of your Facebook page, so anyone visiting your website can click on it and be automatically directed to your company's website page.

Social Media Works for B2B!

Companies can make use of social media, even if reaching consumers isn't the main objective. Some of the main ways B2B companies use it are to: generate demand; create brand awareness; establish thought leadership and increase trust; and gauge marketplace trends and perceptions.⁵



Social Media Platforms and Channels

Facebook:

What is it?

One of the most powerful social platforms in the world, where individuals and companies create and maintain a wall or page that can include photos and videos. Users post status updates that are seen by friends and fans who have chosen to connect with or follow that account.

Users: 2.2. billion⁶

What type of business benefits most from it?

Since 80% of consumers prefer to connect with brands on Facebook⁷, a public fan page can be used to personalize a company's brand, encourage regular conversation, and promote new products, services, and events.

Useful for B2B

Useful for B2C



Twitter:

What is it?

A platform that moves rapidly as account holders, both individuals and businesses, post messages (tweets) up to 140 characters long to those who follow the account. Tweets can also include links to websites, photographs, and video.

Users: One billion+⁸

5 SOURCE: Unbounce.com

6 SOURCE: BusinessInsider.com

7 SOURCE: Huffington Post

8 SOURCE: Digital Insights

What type of business benefits most from it?

Twitter is an “in the moment” medium used to announce breaking news, post updates, ask questions or solicit opinions. Twitter is best for businesses that often see change, and need frequent contact with their audience.

Useful for B2B

Useful for B2C



Google+:

What is it?

As the second largest social network after Facebook, it provides account holders, both individuals and businesses, various ways to share and receive content through a main page, and “circles” of other account holders.

Users: 1.6 billion+⁸, the majority of whom are men.

What type of business benefits most from it?

Businesses with a target audience that is tech savvy and male dominated should use this platform. Given the enhanced search capabilities it provides with its direct link to Google, companies can increase exposure and traffic to their website by frequently posting updates.

Useful for B2B

Useful for B2C



LinkedIn:

What is it?

A business-networking site that enables users to create a virtual resume and portfolio account page while making professional connections. Companies can create a page with an overview, images, and links to their website. Companies can post updates to users who have chosen to follow the page.

Users: 300 million+⁸

What type of business benefits most from it?

Because this is a more business-focused audience interested in educational content, and finding employment opportunities, businesses use LinkedIn to establish thought leadership through shared content, and to recruit talent.

Useful for B2B

Useful for B2C



Pinterest:

What is it?

An online book marking or scrapbooking tool that allows members to “pin” or post photos, videos, and website images to their pin boards, which can be made public, private, or shared within an invited select group.

Users: More than 70 million; 80% of whom are women.⁸

What type of business benefits most from it?

This platform is very effective in showcasing visual content to appeal to the viewer’s emotions in a way that text is unable to. Categories that do well include tourism and hospitality, food and beverage, arts and crafts, home décor and improvement, and fashion. Businesses with consumable products can use their boards to showcase and sell them.

Useful for B2C



Instagram:

What is it?

Instagram is a photo and video-sharing platform for mobile devices. Individuals and businesses can take, edit, upload and share photos. Users follow each other and can like and comment on each other’s photos.

Users: 200 million, 90% of whom are under the age of 35.⁹

What type of business benefits most from it?

The rapidly-growing Instagram audience is interested in engaging visual content. Companies use it to creatively tell their story by sharing photos of employees, office activities, key clients, and products.

Useful for B2C



Snap Chat:

What is it?

A photo sharing platform used primarily by people in the age range of 13-29 years. Users determine how long their image or video will be viewable, from 10 seconds to indefinitely on their Snapchat Story.

⁹ SOURCE: Instagram

Users: 60 million⁸

What type of business benefits most from it?

Companies targeting a young market that have visually-appealing assets to share, or can creatively tap into the speed of the medium to promote flash sales, provide running commentary during a live event, or make job announcements for potential young employees.

Useful for B2C



YouTube:

What is it?

A visually-driven online channel used worldwide by individuals and organizations to share video assets.

Users: One billion+⁸

What type of business benefits most from it?

Businesses with a product or service that can be positively portrayed through both short and long-form video. Videos can include CEO interviews, product use demonstrations, client testimonials, or behind-the-scenes facility tours.

Useful for B2B

Useful for B2C

What is a Social Media Strategy and Why Do I Need One?

In order to maximize your social media presence, it's important to outline your goals and create a strategy to support them. A social strategy is a written plan that will help you manage and streamline your promotional activity over the course of the year.

You can create your strategy in any format that works for you – a Word document, calendar, or a spreadsheet.

Action Steps:

- Review your yearly goals and then create a plan for each month based on those goals. This will enable you to look at the big picture and ensure that you aren't missing any opportunities to educate, promote and prepare your customers for your busy times of the year.

- Understand the social media platforms and know where your customers—as well as your competitors—are.
- Set a benchmark for the number of posts/tweets/updates you want to post each day. Fill in the topics you'd like to promote on each day. Listing the day of the week in addition to the date is essential, as there are posts that may not be appropriate on a weekday, but perfect for the weekend.
- Once you decide which topics to cover, start writing. Creating posts in advance saves you time and money and enables you to look at the big picture.
- Know how you're going to respond to inquiries and posts and follow through. You need to politely respond to all feedback, good or bad, in order to maintain trust and loyalty.

EXAMPLE: Here's an example of our Social Media Planning Guide.

The image shows a 'SOCIAL MEDIA PLANNER' spreadsheet. At the top right, there are fields for 'CLIENT', 'DATE', and 'SOCIAL MEDIA'. The main table has the following columns: 'DATE', 'AM POST TOPIC', 'AM POST CONTENT (what you will post to FB and Twitter)', 'AM POST APPROVED', 'AM POST KEYWORD', 'POST/TOPI', 'PM POST CONTENT (what you will post to FB and Twitter)', 'PM POST APPROVED', and 'PM POST KEYWORD'. The rows represent days of the week from Monday to Sunday. Each cell in the grid contains a topic and a corresponding content description, with 'X' marks in the 'APPROVED' and 'KEYWORD' columns.

Identify and Create Useful Social Media Content

Knowing the “why” and “how” of marketing via social media is only half the battle. You need to successfully navigate the “what,” meaning the content of your messaging.

Whether you want to educate, entertain, create an emotional connection, elicit a call to action, or build relationships, your process should be well thought out. Each social network is different. There are different tones, language, and rules of etiquette for each.

You know you're making an impression and impact on your fans, followers, and subscribers when:



- Your Facebook fans comment on your posts and share them with their friends.
- Your Twitter followers respond to your tweets, mark them as “favorites,” and / or re-tweet them.
- Your Instagram followers “like” your photos and comment on them.
- Your Pinterest followers “like” your pins, comment on them, and / or re-pin them to their boards.
- Your blog posts are getting comments, and are being shared on social media via your sharing tools widget.

Q: How do you make this magic happen?

A: First, and most importantly, realize that you're trying to establish and maintain relationships. You're being social! Using these tools strictly for sales-related output is not going to entice anyone to connect with or follow you.

*Relevant and consistent delivery of **good** content is key to establishing credibility and fostering engagement.*

Six Critical Components to Good Content:

1. Good content reflects your company's values.
2. Good content is useful, relevant information that informs and entertains. Interesting content is one of the top three reasons that people follow brands on social media.¹⁰
3. Good content is “native,” meaning it is original material you have created, or curated from relevant sources within your industry.
4. Good content is consistent, and delivered on a regular basis.
5. Good content is created with SEO (search engine optimization) in mind, rich with key words that allow it to be found in search.

¹⁰ SOURCE: Content+ (2013)

6. Good content is light on the sales pitches. Promotional messages are allowed and expected, but they should be infrequent. Good content is not an advertisement or a press release.

Good content is NOT an exact science. You can't control how it will be received, and you shouldn't expect it to go "viral."

Q: So, What Do We Post, Pin, and Tweet?

A: It can be daunting to come up with ideas on what to write about. Tap into these content prompts to get the ball rolling:

News and announcements – *Store openings, new classes or programs.*

Upcoming events – *If there's an entrance fee, include a downloadable coupon for a discounted price.*

Stories about satisfied customers – *Ask clients for testimonials, and post with their photo.*

Interesting facts about your company or staff – *Is anyone running a marathon, or participating in a special charity?*

"Behind the Scenes" looks at your business – *Candid images or video of your employees at work or play.*

Conversation starters – *Ask for opinions or reactions to a new product idea.*

Special promotional offers – *Only on an occasional basis!*

Images – *Take a break from words with an occasional photo or video clip.*

Good content is NOT an exact science. You can't control how it will be received, and you shouldn't expect it to go "viral."

Images and video work!

Posts with images get 94% more views than those without.¹⁰ Use compelling multimedia, including photos (including black & white and panoramas); short and long-form videos, and 3D virtual tours if you want to show off a physical space.

Encourage Interaction and Engagement

- Utilize every resource you have to promote your social presence, including your website, blog, company newsletter, outdoor signage, print advertising, business cards, and even your email signature. Include social media icons leading to your accounts. Encourage people with a call to action to follow you on those platforms. Offer exclusive offers or information available only on these channels.
- Re-purpose content across channels using ***“The Rule of 5 Formula.”*** Find a way to use a piece of content five different ways in the digital space to make it worth your time creating it.



EXAMPLE: A notable new cardiologist has just joined your medical practice. You can conduct a short interview with her on camera, and ask her to offer some tips to maintain optimal heart health. You can then:

1. Upload this video to your Facebook page.
 2. Upload this video to your YouTube channel.
 3. Transcribe the interview, format the copy as a list — “Top Ten Tips for Optimal Heart Health” — and post this on your website.
 4. On Twitter, post a link to this list on your website.
 5. Send this list to your patients in your next e-mail newsletter.
- Frequency counts. Refresh your content at least once a day, if not more often. This doesn’t mean you have to think of something new or original to post every time. You can share something you’ve found that your followers would be interested in, such as an article about a trend within your industry.
 - Ask your fans and followers to engage, but encourage them to post content – particularly images and videos – to your social sites. Mention and tag people or organizations who might then share your messages.

EXAMPLE: A new exhibit is opening next week at your museum. Announce it while tagging the local tourism promotion agency. That organization may then share your post with all of their followers.

- Mobile is more important than ever. Many consumers first experience a brand through a smartphone, via a website or an app, so make your website mobile-friendly, and participate in mobile platforms such as Instagram. Also, make your messages concise. Consumers are looking for “snackable” content they can quickly consume and share on their phones and tablets.



- Use hashtags. Those “#” symbols started on Twitter, and have worked their way onto Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram and Google+. The purpose of a hashtag is to call attention to a certain category, trend, theme, or geographical location. Using hashtags with key words that are important to your audience will allow you to be found by a wider audience.

EXAMPLE: Your quilting store is celebrating its 25th anniversary with a special sale. On Twitter, your tweet could be: “We’re celebrating our 25th #anniversary in the #quilting business by offering a #sale on select #quilt patterns! #HudsonValley”.

You could also participate in a popular hashtag stream such as “Throwback Thursday,” or #TBT, by posting a photo of your store, or the quilt styles, from 25 years ago.

The strategies presented here are mainly for the “passive” messages you post on your own pages, which are presented to the fans and followers who opt-in to receive them. There’s an entirely separate, yet equally important, opportunity to use the paid advertising opportunities in these channels. In particular, Facebook, which offers paid opportunities to promote your posts to extremely targeted demographic groups.

Your Social Media Toolbox

How much time should you be spending on social media? There’s no magic formula to determine that. Some companies employ one or more full-time professionals in their marketing or I.T. departments to manage their digital presence.

On a smaller scale, there are tools—mainly websites and apps—that you can use to facilitate and expedite your efforts. Within your accounts, look for ways to link them so that, for example, your Instagram posts are directly posted in your Facebook and Twitter feeds.

Here are a few outside tools to consider utilizing:

Crowdbooster – Analyze your Twitter account and Facebook pages in real-time to determine reach and loyalty through number of likes, comments, shares, retweets, replies, etc. Crowdbooster.com

Easel.ly – Create infographics (charts, tables, graphs) with your data and the provided artwork. Easel.ly (Also try Piktochart and Venngage).

Hootsuite – Use this to manage multiple networks and profiles from one integrated dashboard; plan and schedule your posts in advance; and analyze your results. Hootsuite.com

Storytellit – Use this social media content and management app by using the idea prompts to create content relevant to your community, then post it to multiple accounts at one time. Storytellit.com

Tagboard – Create a board where you can monitor and react to specific hashtagged content across multiple social media platforms, including your own customized hashtags. Tagboard.com

Twiangulate – Search, analyze and map the connections between your Twitter followers to determine influential people to engage with. Twiangulate.com



Return on Investment / Return on Objective

If you're developing a social media plan properly, meeting your objectives will create a positive return. What are the measurements used to gauge success from social media marketing strategies? Here are a few:

Income growth – Measurable by tracking revenue earned during a specific social media campaign.

Qualified lead generation – Measurable by inquiries your messages generate.

Customer loyalty – Measurable by growth in numbers of loyalty program participants during a specific social media campaign.

Customer advocacy – Measurable by amount of likes, shares, re-tweets, and comments of endorsement.

Cost savings – Measurable by the value of affordable, consistent and frequent promotional messages distributed through social media, compared to traditional methods.

How BBG&G Can Help

With a social media marketing team on staff, BBG&G can help you launch and maintain a cohesive, comprehensive ongoing social media strategy, or manage limited-time social media campaigns.

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