



HOW CAN SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT MY BUSINESS MAKE YOUR MARKETING PERSONAL

Social media sites such as blogs and social networks allow people to form connections with other users and brands and share content such as messages, news, video and photos. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have experienced unprecedented growth over the last few years and are some of the most talked about destinations on the web.

Social media offers an opportunity to connect and interact with your customers, promote your brand and drive traffic to your website. Getting involved in social media can also create a more human face to your business and be fun at the same time.

What are the major social media sites?

Whilst many online services now have a social element, the five most important social media sites for businesses are:

- **Facebook** - Social network available in 70 languages with over 800 million members worldwide, and more than 425 million monthly active users logging in with mobile smartphones
- **Twitter** - Micro blogging site where users post frequent 60 character messages with over 1 billion tweets sent a week
- **YouTube** - Video sharing site owned by Google, with 8 million unique visitors each month and 100 million people taking a social action (likes, shares, comments etc) every week
- **LinkedIn** - Business focused networking site with over 100 million members worldwide, and 2 million companies profiles worldwide
- **Google+** - Social network launched in 2011, attracting 25 million members in its first month!

What is a blog?

Alongside using the above services to help promote your business, it is possible to add a social dimension to your own site by adding a blog. A blog consists of a chronologically ordered list of entries (referred to as blog posts) where readers can add comments. These comments are important as they change a post from a simple article into a discussion. Blogs are great for adding interesting, original and frequently updated content to a site, which will be loved by both readers and search engines!

How social media can help your business

Form closer relationships with customers

Using social media is a great way to make your business seem friendlier and to form closer relationships with your customers. By engaging in social media, your company can interact directly with customers and by creating interesting and useful content you can position yourself as an expert in your field.

Drive website traffic and encourage recommendations

It's quick and easy to set up a company profile on the major social media sites and then start publishing your own content. If your content is interesting, other users will share it with their friends, which will generate interest in your business and click-throughs to your site. Such personal recommendations are a highly effective way to promote a business and using social media has the potential to massively expand your reach.

On Facebook, for example, companies can set up their own 'page'. Other users can 'Like' the page itself and any posts on it. The things that they 'Like' will then appear on their own profile for their friends to see. In this



way, interesting content will be naturally distributed and generate interest in your business.

Blogging on your site is also a great way of driving traffic. Blog posts tend to be unique and the interactive nature of blogs means that they tend to attract incoming links. These two factors cause blog posts to frequently appear in search engine results, generating natural search traffic.

Get instant customer feedback

Social media is not just a way to talk to your customers, but also a great way to listen. By monitoring what people are saying about you on Twitter, blogs and other social networking sites and talking to customers directly, you can get real time feedback on what customers are thinking about your products and services. Lots of free tools exist for monitoring and listening on the social web, including Google Alerts.

Broadcast articles, news and offers

Social media sites allow companies to share news and ideas and distribute promotions. Here are some ideas for what you could write about:

- **'How to' articles and videos:** Demonstrate your knowledge of your products and provide useful information that other users will want to share.
- **Competitions:** Competitions generate lots of excitement and are fun to do
- **Company news:** Publish interesting news and developments about your company. You might, for example, post news about awards won or even a picture of a team fundraising event to give a feel for the people behind your brand
- **Product launches and reviews:** Keep your customers up to date with your latest products and make product recommendations
- **Special offers:** Everyone loves a bargain so share frequent special offers exclusively with your social media connections

Be careful though, as obvious sales pitches do not go down well on social media sites! Also, remember that a conversation is a two-way thing and it is very important to join in by reply to comments as well as direct messages. Engaging with your audiences will be the key to a successful social media approach.

Social Advertising

Facebook Ads enable businesses to advertise to Facebook users based on their profile information. These adverts are charged on a cost per click basis and require a minimal initial spend. Start small and experiment with different adverts and target audiences to get the best results. Remember, the more targeted and relevant you can make your social ads; the more likely they are to provide a positive return.

Connect and interact with your customers today with these simple tips to getting started with social media.

