



Once you've established your motives for using social media, set your goals around a time period. Figure out where you want to be in three months, six months, a year and beyond, and be realistic in your goals. Also, keep your time line on short-term increments for reevaluation. Social media evolves at a rapid pace, and you need to be prepared to keep up!

### Tip #2: Do Your Research

One of the fastest ways to learn about effective uses of social media is observation. You can research social networking everywhere—at home, at work, in public places—but the most effective way to research social media for your business is to observe your competition. Football teams spend hours watching tape of their opponent so that they can make the necessary adjustments for success. Business works the same way, especially in the ever-changing arena of social media. So figure out what they're doing that works and imitate it! Notice the mistakes they make and avoid doing the same things! Once again, the only incorrect action is inaction, so don't be afraid to ask questions or take a chance.

### Tip #3: All Social Media Platforms are Not Created Equal (Know the Differences)

You may be wondering, "How do I choose the right social media platform for my business?" Good question! The answer is simple: the "right" social media outlet is ALL social media outlet. Of course, with the sheer volume of platforms available, the most efficient strategy is to target the "Big 4": Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and the blogosphere. Each platform has its strengths, and you should educate yourself of the "rules" of each:

- [Facebook](#) is the most diverse platform. It has a multitude of options for promoting your business. The large membership base ensures a wide audience for your service or product.

- [Twitter](#) is a quick and easy way to watch trends due to the frequency of updates.

- [YouTube](#) and video may seem intimidating, but it is an incredible tool which most companies fail to utilize properly. Since this tool is so underused, we've dedicated Tip #11 entirely to using video.

- Blogging is a tricky platform because there are so many different hosting sites to choose from. But the blogging

community (or blogosphere) is incredibly tight-knit and supportive, both of one another and of the companies and products they know and love. Once you find your blogging community niche, the word-of-mouth endorsements will come pouring in!

Each social outlet has its perks and you can (and should) utilize all of them simultaneously. Many people tend to use only one platform regularly, so it's advantageous to be present on each site. At the same time, there are people who frequent more than one platform, so it's important to keep your content varied between platforms.

## 14 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TIPS

1. BEGIN WITH END IN SIGHT (SET GOALS)
2. DO YOUR RESEARCH
3. ALL SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL
4. WHO'S THE BOSS?
5. KEEP IT REAL
6. BE EXCLUSIVE
7. SOCIAL MEDIA IS A HEARING AID
8. GO FISHING
9. STAY REGULAR
10. KEEP IT CLEAN
11. BE DIFFERENT, USE VIDEO
12. CORRECTIVE MEASURES
13. WATCH WHAT OTHERS SAY
14. DON'T GET STUCK

### Tip #4: Who's the Boss?: Designating Responsibilities

If online media is everyone's responsibility, it will be nobody's passion. So find someone who is enthusiastic about developing and maintaining your company's social media strategy. This person (or committee) will be held accountable for updating the sites and monitoring the feedback. Ultimately, this person will be responsible for the outcome, positive or not. Obviously, this is an important job, and many companies hire a staff to fulfill this need. Others outsource the job to social media professionals. There are a few issues to consider if you decide to manage your social media strategy in-house:

- Who will have access to the site? Will they be the sole moderators?
- How much time and resources will be dedicated to social media?
- What kind of content will you provide? Remember, once it's on the Internet, it's out there forever!
- Whether you have a large staff or a small one, encourage their creativity! Social media can and should be fun!

### Tip #5: Keep it Real

It doesn't matter what your business does, people want to be entertained. They won't stick around if you don't provide fresh and fun information. For example, show your customers behind-the-scenes photos of your staff, having fun while producing the product your audience enjoys. This gesture will give your company a more personal feel, providing the kind of brand loyalty a mom-and-pop store in your hometown would have. If they feel like they know you, they will keep coming back for more. Frequent updates with fun and relevant content keep your brand on the customer's mind—and what could be better than that?

When producing this fun, exciting content, it's important to consider your consumer demographic and give them information they want and need. Are you a restaurant? Provide your online followers with special recipes. Are you a plumber? Give product reviews of tools you use. Discounts and giveaways are useful, but don't limit yourself to online promotions.

Vary your content, and avoid using your online presence to push a sale. Let the audience know about new products and special deals, but remember that people don't want to spend their free time waiting to be sold stuff.

### **Tip #6: Be Exclusive**

Everybody wants to be a VIP. Customers want to feel like they're receiving special treatment. So play favorites with your online followers! Update your company's Facebook status, tweet, post a blog entry, upload a video to YouTube with an exclusive deal for your online fans. Keep it up for a couple of hours and then take it away. Your frequent followers will reap the benefits and tell their friends what they missed. Now more people will be watching for the next opportunity to save money or get free stuff, and when they visit your social media sites, your fresh and fun content will keep them coming back for more. Today, that's the way to grow a business.

### **Tip #7: Social Media is a Hearing Aid**

We've already established that customers want to be VIPs. This is especially true when they have something to say. They want to know they're being heard, so engage your customers in a Web dialogue about your brand! Post polls online and ask open-ended questions on Facebook and Twitter. Invite video responses (carefully moderated, of course) to your YouTube account. Encourage the conversation between customers! This will lead to greater customer participation, potential content for your sites and, if you respond quickly and proactively, to greater brand loyalty.

Social media can also be a vital customer service source. If one of your Facebook fans asks a question, answer it ASAP. The personal attention will impress your customer and prove to them your dedication to their satisfaction. Other customers may have had similar questions, and your response in a public forum will provide all your online followers with their answer simultaneously.

Contemplating a change to your business or product? Where it works, involve your customer! Remember the M&M vote in 1995? The marketing folks at Mars knew how to give their supporters a voice in choosing the new color of M&M to replace tan. Over 10 MILLION votes came in to decide the infamous color change - years before Facebook existed!

### **Tip #8: Go Fishing (for New Customers)**

Gain new followers by offering incentives for becoming your Facebook friend or for following your tweets or for subscribing to your e-mail blasts. At the point-of-sale, offer an exclusive discount, coupon or prize for keeping up with your brand online. Introduce your brand to new customers by constantly directing them to your online locations.

### **Tip #9: Stay Regular**

Part of your social media strategy should include guidelines for the frequency of your posts. Tailor these guidelines to each specific platform you use—here are a few rules of thumb for each platform. Twitter users look for frequent updates, so plan to post new tweets at least 3 times a week. Facebook updates should also go up multiple times a

week (too many updates in the news feed and people get annoyed. A Facebook fan is no good to you if they block your updates!) Blogs should be updated with fresh content at least once a week. YouTube is more flexible, so tailor those updates to your specific content and situation.

When you've established the frequency of your posts—stick to it! If a user comes back several times to see the same content they've already read before, you will lose their interest.

### **Tip #10: Keep it Clean**

It is very important to monitor your comments section and keep the dialogue clean and respectful. Don't allow foul language, inflammatory or discriminatory comments, threats or other bad behavior. As the monitor, you are in control; don't let the dregs of society pull your sites into the mud with them. Enforce your standards, but don't let the power go to your head. Honest comments about your product (even less-than-favorable ones) should not be censored, but should be addressed proactively, and with an attitude of satisfying the customer.

### **Tip #11: Be Different, Use Video**

Many companies miss the incredible opportunities offered by video due to the intimidation factor. Remember the fun photo of your staff in Tip #5? Well, if that photo is worth a thousand words, and "a video is worth a thousand pictures," then how many words do you have? I'll let you do the math, but it's a lot. Video brings your topic to life and engages the customer by allowing them to sit back and watch as you provide them with valuable information. Instructional videos are especially effective and powerful. Provide your customer with information they can use, not just another commercial.

Be sure to talk to a professional before producing your content. Viewers can easily identify an amateur's work. If hiring someone to produce your video is out of the question, at least consult a professional and do tons of research. Important aspects of filming include:

- Scripting
- Length
- Audio
- Testing your product

If you decide to make a "how-to" video, show it to as many people as possible to make sure your instructions are clear and easy to follow. If you miss a step or if the directions are confusing, you've just lost a potential customer. Informational videos are also popular. Everyone loves a story, so tell the story of how your company got started, or how a particular product came about.

Finally, it doesn't matter if your video is professionally produced, scripted and acted if nobody sees it. Promote your videos on your other social media outlets, utilize strategic keywords in your title and description so that Google and other search engines will know it exists, and e-mail it to bloggers in your community.

**Tip #12: Corrective Measures**

In a perfect world, every product that comes out of the factory is in peak working condition and everybody's happy. In the real world, however, mistakes happen to even the best companies. In cases such as these, social media can be an invaluable asset to correcting a bad situation. There are entire books written on the subject of crisis management, but these are three basic tips for turning a negative situation around and how social media can help:

- Be prompt in your response. Address the issue ASAP.

Silence is regarded as either the precursor to a huge cover-up or as a total lack of concern. Use your social media outlets to address the issue as you receive information, and let your customers know that you care.

- Be honest. You must determine which details of the crisis the public has a right to know versus what they need to know, but they'll want to know something, so make sure it's true. Keep in mind that the public sees omission as deception, and figure out how you can address the issue as fully as possible. Use social media to present the facts, and direct the story by releasing information first. Take the reins, and you control the story. Stay silent, and the story controls you.

- Make amends. Do your best to right whatever went wrong. YouTube would be a good platform for an address from the CEO of your company, or for showing a video of employees of your company out in the community working to correct the issue. Your social media team should work very

closely with your public relations staff throughout the crisis and beyond.

**Tip #13: Watch What Others Say**

Gauge your process as your strategy progresses and your online presence grows. Count Facebook friends and Twitter followers. See if your presence on social media sites is having a positive influence on traffic to your main website or on sales in the store. It's hard to quantify the effect of social media on your bottom line, but a significant change in either direction can be attributed to your efforts online. Regularly do searches on the Internet to see what people are saying about your brand. Google Alert is a good search engine to use, because it tracks when your company or brand is mentioned online (whether positively or negatively).

**Tip #14: Don't Get Stuck**

If the results from Tip #13 aren't where you'd like them to be, don't get discouraged! Adjust your goals and keep tweaking your strategy until you find your social networking "sweet spot." Change is not only a good thing, it's an absolute must in today's fast-paced social media environment.

Social media is not just a blip on the radar of marketing ploys. It's a constant, permanent aspect of business. Utilize these wonderful marketing tools and see your business reap the benefits.

## More Information About The Author

For video, Internet and social media consulting, you can find more information at [www.jeritabart.com](http://www.jeritabart.com)

Jerit Abart is an Emmy Award winning producer, director, and editor. He brings 12 years of creative and production experience to BoldFlame Pictures, a company now in its third year. At the beginning of his career he rose to the top of the directing industry, becoming the youngest NBA Live Director in history. At the age of 22 he won his first Emmy Award, and has since gone on to win multiple others, including Telly, Addy, and Pyramid Awards.

Jerit specializes in dynamic storytelling for television, film, and Internet businesses. He has experience in live action to motion design, art direction, animations, and entertaining branding.

Jerit has the utmost respect for his clients, and the level of trust they put in him. He works hard to earn it, and strives to be a great planner and communicator. His clients range from national broadcast networks to local small businesses.

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