

Step One: Identify the appropriate social media outlets for your business



As this diagram illustrates, there are many types of social media websites. They range from social networking to blogging and from video sharing to bookmarking. With so many options, it is tough to figure out where you need to go. Here is a brief description of each type of social media outlet.

- Social Networking- communities where users create profiles and interact by sharing information, links, photos and more (Facebook)
- Bookmarking- sites where users create profiles and save links to websites which they can share with other users (StumbleUpon)
- Social News- platforms that allow users to vote on user-submitted news stories (Digg)
- Blogging- Short for weblog, or keeping an online journal in a sense; blogs can be about anything (Blogger)
- Message Boards- forums where users register to post questions and answers to each other (Yahoo Answers)
- Micro Blogging- Systems that allow only short, more frequent updates than blogs (Twitter)
- Photo Sharing- users upload photos that can be tagged and shared with others (Flickr)
- Video Sharing- users upload videos and share them with others (YouTube)

This sums up the types of social media websites you can use for your marketing plan. If you sell art, social networking and photo sharing would be great. If you do B2B sales, then a blog is for you. The first step to running a successful social media marketing campaign is to identify the type of social media that will be most appropriate for your type of small business.

Step Two: Become an active participant in the appropriate social media communities for your business



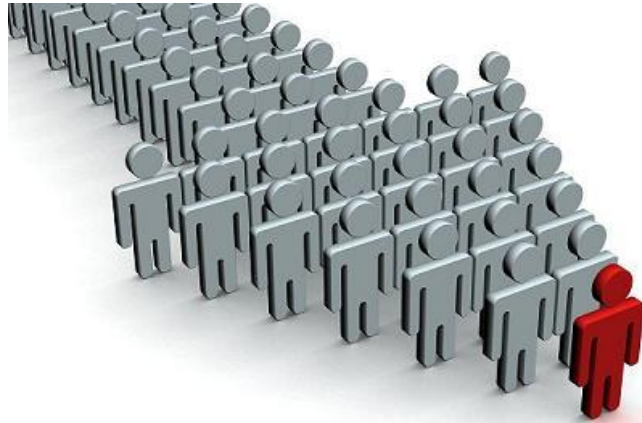
After you have identified the type of social media you want to leverage, you must find websites to create profiles and accounts. Registering with any of these websites is easy and fast. Make sure you use your real name and information. You want to look as far away from being a spammer as possible. Let's use an example to further explain this step.

Suppose I am the owner of a small business that sells golf balls. I have decided that video sharing, blogging and message boards are the types of social media I want to utilize. I would register accounts with YouTube, Blogger and Yahoo Answers. At this point, most people would start publishing their content without any regard for who might or might not be reading it. In order to get people to care about your content, you have to care about theirs.

Once registered on YouTube, watch a bunch of golf videos. Comment on the videos. Subscribe to the users who post these videos. Create relationships. That way when you post a video, you have a bit of a following on YouTube that will actually watch it and might care. If you start a blog about golfing, then read some other golf blogs out there. Comment on them, subscribe to them, create relationships. Then when you make a blog post, people will actually read it and might care. Go on to Yahoo Answers and start asking golf questions. Become friends with those who answer. Answer other questions about golf you come across. The more you establish yourself as an authority on a certain topic, the more people are willing to trust you.

This second step cannot be stressed enough. You cannot and should not post any content at all until you have established yourself as an active member of the social media community you have joined. Now, this means you cannot create 100 profiles overnight and expect to adequately maintain them all. Just create 4 or 5 max, then spend an hour or two each day participating in the community. You'll see that in a matter of months you have a small following of friends on these social media outlets.

Step Three: Publish fresh, valuable content to drive traffic to your site



The final step to leveraging social media is getting traffic to your site and hopefully converting those visitors into customers. The purpose of all the content you publish via social media should be to point people straight to your blog or home page. What you do with them once they get there is a different conversation for a different day. Again, it is important to remember that you cannot reach this point adequately if you have not been actively participating in your social media communities. No one cares if you post a video on YouTube if no one knows who you are on YouTube.

The key here is to publish valuable content. Something useful that people tend to like are lists. Again, if I sell golf balls, a top 10 best golf balls list would be a great thing to publish. A video featuring a golf trick with a ball I sell would be great. Just letting people know you have a website that sells golf balls is simply not enough. No one will care. You have to give them compelling content that will make them want to see your website.

This process is simple. Once you're published great content and gotten visitors to your site, simply repeat the process. Become an active member of other social media communities. Publish more content. Get more visitors and traffic. Continue to be active where you already are and continue to publish content there as well. You'll see that after only one year you can develop quite a reputation for yourself. People you've never met will find you or seek you out simply because of your contributions to some kind of social community.

I hope you have found this brief guide to social media to be helpful. I can't go into detail on how to be successful with every social media outlet available unfortunately. You will just have to register an account, build up your profile and see for yourself. If you would like an internet marketing agency to create and maintain your social media marketing campaign for you, just [click here to check out my company](#).