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**TEN WAYS
SOCIAL MEDIA
CAN GROW
YOUR BUSINESS**

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Ten ways that Social Media can grow your business



The arrival and mass adoption of social media sites is the biggest change to the way we do business since the development of the Internet itself. For many, it has revolutionised the way we get information and make decisions, and changed our expectations of how we interact with businesses, charities and civil institutions.

We meet many senior managers who are frustrated by the vague hype around social media and want to know exactly what it can do for their organisation. Unsurprisingly, we are big fans of social media. We have seen how it can work for organisations in exciting, measurable ways – and here are some of them....

1. Attract more customers

This is the big, obvious goal of most businesses when they initially think about social media. But how and why does it work? Well, *people like people who are like them*. So, a great source of new customers for your product or service is likely to be – **your existing customers' friends**.

Whether you're selling organic tea bags, running a driving school or raising funds for a charity, imagine being able to put your business directly in front of your customers' friends. Your typical 17-year-old learner driver hangs out with a lot of other 17-year-olds who'll need lessons soon. Someone who's ethically minded and gives regularly to charity probably has a social circle with similar values. And so on.

Getting your message to those people is the first thing that social media can do for you.

Once you know how and have properly integrated social media into your business processes, it's a ready-made channel to the most targeted audience you'll ever have.

2. Make your marketing budget work harder for you

You're probably doing a whole range of different marketing right now, from ads in the local paper to leaflet distribution. But how do you quantify the return on those activities? Wouldn't your business grow faster if you knew which parts of your marketing were effective?

Social media delivers a more measurable form of marketing. You can review statistics that let you know how many people are viewing your messages, what messages make an impact and can gauge levels of interest. A new breed of social media analytics including Clicks, Fans, Followers, RTs, Views, Impressions etc. provide a direct way of measuring revenue, ROI and lead conversion unlike any sales tool before.

In addition, social media allows you to capitalise on existing marketing and sales collateral that you've already invested in. Websites, brochures, presentations and other materials can, with some help, be given a new lease of life through social media.

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3. Pronto promotion

Certain social media platforms are perfect for real time communication. The ease of communicating lets you get your messages out there several times a day, and the immediacy of this channel means that you can get instant results – a restaurant can fill tables for this evening, a business hit by bad weather can hold an instant online sale, a spa can promote late deals. All of these things help you maximise your profits by getting customers through the door exactly when you need them – how else would you be able to achieve this?

4. Defend (and enhance!) your reputation

The reputation of your business can be one of its greatest assets – especially if you have a local client base where word travels.

Social media means that your business is being talked about online, regardless of whether you are currently involved or not. If someone says something negative about you publicly, and you're not listening, this gives the impression that your business doesn't care, at worst, or is “switched off” from your customer's conversations, at best. However if you respond and address their issue constructively, you've been able to prove to prospective customers that even if things go wrong, you will fix them – giving them a reason to trust you over the competition.

5. Show prospects what a great job you are doing

Happy customers will comment on their experience. If you are monitoring this, you get precious customer-generated testimonials that you can promote to a huge audience (using your social media platforms!). In addition, if you build an audience of regular customers, you have more opportunity to ask regular customers, or those you've given particularly great service to, to get their praise down in writing.

Remember – a customer saying how great you are is much more likely to grow your business, than **you** saying how great you are!

6. Free market research

Imagine having a group of people who you know are interested in your product or service and are able to hear your messages instantly, but can also reply. There are so many possibilities for how you can use this – they can help you develop new services, test out ideas or just spread the word. You can tap into online groups based on a number of factors such as location or interests.

The key thing is **engaging appropriately** with these valuable contributors. The age of one-way “broadcast” marketing is dying. You need to converse with your prospect and customer base – and social media is perfect for this.

7. Access the Achievers – in fact, access almost anyone!

Imagine walking into a pub where all your most influential industry contacts, suppliers and stockists

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are having a chat. Provided you join in that conversation appropriately, imagine what that could do for your business?

Used properly, social media can be just like this. Whether it's telling a journalist about your new charity campaign, or the owner of that high end boutique you'd love to stock your product, you can create opportunities to make contacts that would be very difficult to access through traditional means.

8. Magnify the value of your website

You've invested in a website (we hope – if you haven't, we'd suggest you sort that out – yes, even before talking to us about social media!). Now you need to make sure it works hard for you, which basically means lots of people seeing it. In March 2012 there were 644 million websites on the internet, and millions more are launched every month*. It's just not true that “*if you build it, they will come*” - **without effective marketing, you will only get a handful of visitors each month.**

Social media is a fantastic way of driving traffic to your site – just being visible and active on the major platforms will help. In addition to “passing traffic” who notice your Twitter or LinkedIn activity and wonders what you're all about, social media is a perfect channel for letting people know about quality content on your website, and getting them to remember you and visit again.

In addition, some forms of social media presence directly influence where your website shows up in Google results. It's not as straightforward as “sending out a lot of Tweets will improve your Google results”, whatever some of the social media cowboys will have you believe, but it does have an impact.

9. Own your audience

It takes time and skill to build up your social media audience, depending on your particular business and goals. That audience might be a blend of existing or prospective customers, industry partners or people that can help out with various aspects of your business.

But unlike, for example, advertising in your local paper (or even on Google!), once you've built that audience they will be there for you to engage with whenever you have something to tell them – **without having to pay another organisation every time.** A well built, engaged social media audience is a genuine asset to your business and will keep on helping you grow in the future.

10. Beat your competitors

If you aren't taking advantage of these new technologies (or worse - you're using them inappropriately and badly), it affects the way your customers perceive you. Worse, you're playing at a major disadvantage to the people and competitors in your industry who are actively using social media to gain visibility and achieve their organisational goals

Conversely, if you choose to step into the social media realm with a calculated plan and a clear strategy then you acquire a major competitive advantage. You have the chance to be one of the first in your sector or area to build a truly loyal following. Sure, the technologies are massive, but they're

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also young. No-one 'owns' the space yet, and many organisations still think that "being on Facebook" is a social media strategy (it isn't).

Now is your chance to do what you wished you'd done when the first wave of internet successes started emerging over ten years ago: take advantage of a new technologies to get ahead of the competition and grow your business faster than theirs.

To Summarise:

Hopefully this paper has given you a taste of the enormous potential of social media to make your business **larger and more profitable**. It's probably also made you realise that **there's rather more to it than registering a Facebook page or a Twitter account and hoping for the best**.

Every business is different, and you'll have different priorities depending on exactly what you want for your business this year – improved customer experience, a better reputation, or simply more sales. With our experience, creativity and understanding of social media we can get things moving for you straight away – the only question you need to ask yourself is:

By the start of the next financial quarter, where would you rather be....starting to realise the benefits of your social media strategy, or still with "do something about Facebook" on your "To Do" list?

How to get started

Sit down with a nice cup of tea (or whatever your poison is – we recommend saving the vodka for later, though) **and a blank sheet of paper**.

Write down the **top five challenges** your organisation faces at the moment. This can be anything from "increasing repeat custom" to "fixing a poor reputation".

Write down **who your customers are**, and what you know about them – are they male or female, what age groups are they typically, what other lifestyle characteristics do you know about them (for example if you're selling MPVs, an above average number of your customers will probably have young children). Are there other interests which tend to go along with an interest in your product or service? (racing bike buyers might be more into healthy living than junk food, etc).

Next you need to start applying that to the social media landscape. Which are the sites where your audience is most likely to be, and what functions do they have which will help you achieve your business objectives? How do you get them to connect with you there, what will you give them or do for them that they'll value, and how will you measure the results?

If you need some help with this process, whether it's defining the right strategy for you, or training some staff on a particular site, please **give us a call**. We look forward to helping you succeed.

*Source: [Netcraft Web Survey, March 2012](#)