

Social Media Marketing 1

Some years ago we ran a newsletter under "[Social networks - do you have a netlife?](#)". Since then the world has, of course moved on and now social media marketing has become an integral part of internet marketing. Everyone seems to be using social media; for example Stephen Fry is a well-known [Twitter](#) user where Demi Moore promoted Susan Boyle and Gordon Brown recently used YouTube. About 100 million users log on to [Facebook](#) daily. [Twitter](#) increased 7 million in February. [LinkedIn](#) announced its 40 millionth member.



Now businesses are looking at social media and wondering how to use social media for marketing.

Many sites can be free to use and because they are there to discuss an interest or connect with friends, people on social media can be receptive to certain marketing approaches. But is social media marketing a genuine business tool, or just another example of hype that will prove to be little more than hot air?

So, what is social media marketing?

You've probably heard the term but you may be unclear as to what it is. In 'management speak' social media marketing is 'using social networking and user-generated content (UGC) platforms to promote a product, service or content by dialogue with the target audience rather than advertising to them'.

So there's the jargon and management speak but what does it actually mean?

Well the web has evolved with web 2.0 (itself an uneasy thing to define, encompassing as it seems to "the next stage of the internet and the second-generation of internet based services such as social networking sites where people do more things on the internet rather than on their own computer") creating a vast range of social media including forums, blogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video and more.

Here are just a few of the better known sites:

Blogs

Blogs: [Blogger](#), [Open Diary](#), [LiveJournal](#)

Micro-blogging: [Jaiku](#), [Plurk](#), [Twitter](#)

Networks

Social: [Facebook](#), [MySpace](#)

Business: [Ecademy](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Workmap](#), [Xing](#)

Social aggregation: [FriendFeed](#), [Gathera](#), [Mybloglog](#)

Events: [Upcoming](#), [Eventful](#), [Meetup](#)

Collaboration / reference / rating

Wikis: [PBworks](#)

Bookmarking: [Delicious](#), [Digg](#), [Mixx](#), [Reddit](#), [StumbleUpon](#)

Opinions: [epinions](#), [Mouthshut](#), [Yelp](#)

Q&A: [Yahoo! Answers](#), [WikiAnswers](#), [AskYourNeighbour](#)

Media

Photo sharing: [Flickr](#), [Photobucket](#), [Zivity](#)

Video sharing: [Vimeo](#), [YouTube](#)

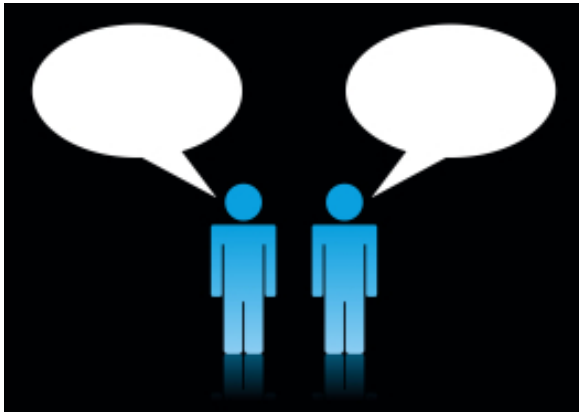
Livecasting: [Justin](#), [Ustream](#)

Music: [imeem](#), [Last.fm](#)

Virtual worlds: [Second Life](#), [The Sims™](#)

Game sharing: [Kongregate](#), [Miniclip](#)

How does it work?



It started with forums and then blogs, but forums and blogs have 'bi-dimensional interactivity' whereas a social network creates 'multi-dimensional interactivity' where whole communities of people who share interests and/or activities can communicate in a range of ways that are less restricted than a forum or blog. Most social networks provide a whole variety of ways for users to interact.

Because of the vast explosion of sites social network aggregation – collecting content from multiple social network service to allow users to consolidate messages, track friends, combine bookmarks, etc. so that it can be shown in 'real time' to other members and eliminates the need to jump networks to keep up to date – has also grown fast.

Many sites include features where companies as well as individuals can create profiles. For example, on Facebook companies can create "pages" where users can become fans of this company, product, service, individual, etc. Many companies create MySpace pages for themselves.

What all this means is that marketing has changed and that organizations have realised that investing in managing their 'internet presence' via social media marketing can generate brand exposure, contact opportunity and sales.

But to achieve those good things, according to Lloyd Salmons first chairman of the Internet Advertising Bureau social media council, you must realise that: "social media isn't just about joining big networks like Facebook and MySpace, it's about brands having conversations."

In other words you must interact with others. The clue is the word conversation and in a true conversation you have to listen as much as you talk. You must also communicate in real language that is natural, open, honest, direct and hopefully amusing. If you only know how to converse in mission statements, brochure-speak and 'your call is important to us'

language, social media marketing will not work for you. Have a look at Microsoft's Channel 9 rules - <http://channel9.msdn.com/About/> - to get an idea of how to act.

Social media marketing is similar to viral marketing but word of mouth is created not through friends or family but through the use of networking sites. However, the old adage "failure to plan is planning to fail" applies just as much to social media marketing as to any other business activity.



Planning

When planning:

- do your research first – there's so much out there you can't possibly dominate it all
 - work out your objectives as specific goals with timelines and milestones
 - work out how you will target the right audiences and media for you
- understand how what you do integrates with traditional and other online marketing activity.
 - work out how to measure them so that you know whether you have succeeded

Once you get out there then you want to make sure that people:

- know who you are – it's like giving them a business card but a profile says so much more
- want to associate – by becoming your 'friend' on a networking site or bookmarking your site
- want to interact – by posing questions that you think you can answer or by you asking them what they think and getting real value from their answers
- want to meet - social media marketing is about online conversations, but that there's still really no replacement for face to face, especially for services organizations

Next month we'll talk about how to do it. However, remember something whilst social media marketing can build long term traffic and search engine rankings it isn't mastered overnight but needs time and effort, so be careful that you do can measure your social media marketing and see a positive ROI.