

# Getting Started with Social Media in 5 Easy Steps



[www.formatcreativdesign.com](http://www.formatcreativdesign.com)

Revised November 15, 2011



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Printed in Canada

First Printing: September 2011

Revised: November 15 2011

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# Steps

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# Introduction

## What is Social Media?

Social media is a general term used to explain any online website, or platform that allows users to interact with each other. Users can interact through written word, photos, videos or audio. Visitors to the website can create an ongoing dialogue with the author and each other.

There are hundreds of different social media sites, from photo-sharing (Flickr, Photobucket), to micro-blogging (Twitter, Tumblr), to video sharing (Vimeo, YouTube). In this ebook, we will be focusing on a few of the larger, more well-known sites.

## An Overview

### Facebook

Facebook is the largest social media website.

Wikipedia explains Facebook as:

“...a social networking service and website launched in February 2004, operated and privately owned by Facebook, Inc. As of July 2011, Facebook has more than 750 million active users. Users may create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their profile.”

Source: “Facebook.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook>.  
(September 13, 2011).

Facebook uses Profiles and Pages to post information about a person or business (businesses use Pages and individuals use Profiles). Posting a Page, or Profile is free. Having a Page for your business can help people find your business information easily online. Facebook is an excellent place to network with other people and businesses that may share the same interests as your business and it is a great place to interact with potential customers and share information.

## Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging service that allows users to write small text posts up to 140 characters. These small posts are often called “tweets.”

Twitter is used to share small snippets of valuable information. Twitter is not the best way to gather leads, but rather a way to inform customers about events, promotions and link to interesting articles. It is the best way to get information out there quickly. If you write a blog, you can post links to your current articles.

## Google+

Google+ is a direct competitor to Facebook. It streams information and posts much like Facebook’s news feeds. The big difference between Google+ and Facebook is how Google deals with integrating how you surf the web, share information and how you organize your online friends.

Google+ allows you to sort your online friends using “circles” which contain certain groups of people. You can group together friends, acquaintances, family, coworkers or any group of your choice. You can then choose to share your posts with one, a few, all of your groups or post your information publicly. You can also hangout with friends using video chat.

Google+ also works with other Google features. You may have noticed the +1 icon all over the web. This works with your Google+ profile to allow you to recommend that article or website to others. Using a drop-down menu you can add it to your Google+ stream (news feed). Eventually, Google may be planning to use this +1 icon to help determine website popularity and placement.

Google+, much like Facebook, offers the ability to use business pages. This option allows you to share information and new about your business.

## Web Forums

Wikipedia explains a web forum as:

“An Internet forum, or message board, is an online discussion site where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages..., depending on the access level of a user or the forum set-up, a posted message might need to be approved by a moderator before it becomes visible.

Forums have a specific set of jargon associated with them; e.g. a single conversation is called a “thread”.

A discussion forum is hierarchical or tree-like in structure: a forum can contain a number of sub forums, each of which may have several topics. Within a forum’s topic, each new discussion started is called a thread, and can be replied to by as many people as wish to.”

Source: “Internet forum.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook>.  
(September 19, 2011).

Web forums will work best for companies that can be associated with an interest, a hobby, or has an online store.

## LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional networking service. It works as a way to connect with other professionals. You create a professional profile that you share with other professionals, link with other users, share messages and join groups.

LinkedIn is primarily used to keep in touch and build relationships with other professionals. If you provide a business-to-business service, LinkedIn can also be a way to connect with potential clients. It is also a popular way to find employees and often used by job hunters to search for jobs.

## YouTube

YouTube is a video sharing service. You create an account that allows you to post original videos to share with others. You can view and comment, on videos submitted by others. YouTube is an excellent way to not only show your customers how to use a product, you can post reviews and teach tutorials related to your business. YouTube videos with high views tend to rank quite well on Google search results, so a few short videos can help drive traffic to your website.

## Blogging

A blog is a website where short articles and comments are posted. A blog should centre around a subject, interest, or hobby. Although blogs traditionally were created by amateur writers to give an alternative to traditional media, this landscape is expanding to include more commercial blogs that are similar in many ways to traditional media. People are encouraged to comment on a blog post, or share the article with friends and followers by asking readers to post a link to the article on their blog, Facebook page, Twitter account etc...

## Website

A website isn't what people traditionally think of when they think of social media, but it is so important to your social media strategy, it needed to be included in this list. A business needs a permanent home online.

A website adds credibility to your social media message and gives your business an appearance of permanence and professionalism. Keep in mind if people find your business online through social media and they are interested in finding out more, the first thing they are likely to look for is a website. Don't deny yourself the opportunity to share your marketing message, one that you control and own.

A website can act similar to more traditional forms of advertising; a business card (contact information and a little bit of information), a brochure (more detailed information about your company, a more in-depth marketing message), or a catalogue (a store front that allows you to sell your products online). A website can also contain a blog.

To get all of the benefits of owning a website, you need an actual domain name (for example, *www.yourbusiness.com*. Not *yourbusiness.freewebsite.com*) Free websites often tack-on their own name to your domain name, or add advertising to your website. This looks unprofessional and often makes your online presence look "fly-by-night." There are many ways to obtain a website, and many different options that can suit any budget. Contact you graphic designer to discuss your budget and requirements.

## What Social Media Sites Should I Use?

### Sites to Choose

One of the best ways to find your current customers online is to ask them what sites they frequent. Facebook, Twitter and Google+ have a wide variety of people, from all walks of life and different interests. These sites can help direct people to your business. Any of these sites can suit your business needs because you don't have to focus on a specific topic. Facebook business Pages place well in search engines and Google+ can make your personal profile easier to find online. Twitter can help you release information about your business quickly.

Every business should have a Facebook Page. Facebook is currently the most popular social media site, so signing up for a Facebook page should be one of your first steps. After you have a Facebook page and are posting regularly, sign up for a few other social media accounts and see which ones you prefer.

Web forums generally focus on a particular interest. If your business caters to a specific interest or hobby then web forums are definitely for you. If you have an online store that caters to an interest then you should sign up for a few popular forums that fit the hobby or interest.

### Definitions

**Search Engine Placement**—When people are looking for information about a certain subject, or business, they often use a search engine such as Google to search certain keywords. If your business name shows up as one of the first businesses listed, then your business has good search engine placement.

The act of working towards improving your search engine placement is called search engine optimization, or SEO.



If you sell business-to-business, LinkedIn can be a great place to socialize with other professionals and help your business be more easily found in search engines.

YouTube is a wonderful site to post videos that show people how to use your products. This can be especially helpful if you sell or produce something that may be difficult to operate. YouTube can be a great place to show creative uses for your product. For example, If you sell cosmetics, tutorials on how to create a makeup look can help promote your products and give customers ideas on what certain products could be used for. If you sell musical instruments then videos showing how to play them can help promote your store. YouTube videos can also place high in search engines.

Blogs are an excellent way to build your online presence. Because a blog is a site that you consistently post new articles to, it can really help with your search engine placement. Always having new content encourages search engines to continue to visit your site for new information. Consistently posting new articles also encourages prospective customers to keep coming back.

Every business needs a website. This is the hub of your online presence. There are many options for creating a website that can suit any budget. When a prospective customer is looking for information about your business, a website is usually the first thing they look for.

Since the key to social media is consistency, you should choose to sign up for the ones that you enjoy using.

## **How Much Time do You Have?**

Another consideration for choosing which sites to take part in is how much time you have to dedicate to it. Some social media sites do not require a lot of upkeep. The occasional update and weekly visit to answer customer questions should be enough. Other sites require much more interaction, and time.

A Facebook page and LinkedIn profile doesn't require a lot of upkeep. A visit every few days to answer questions and add new information should suffice.

Twitter requires much more upkeep. Because information is constantly being added, your posts are quickly pushed to the bottom. You should post often to keep your information fresh and at the top.

Google+ is somewhere between Twitter and Facebook. The more often you share information, the more attractive it will be for others to follow you.

Web forums should be visited often. You will need to contribute to quite a few threads before people start recognizing you as a regular contributor.

YouTube and blogs require consistent upkeep. You should aim to post an article or video at least twice a week. The more often you post new information the more attractive following your blog or YouTube channel will be. One technique people use is cross-posting information across multiple social media sites, for example, if you film a new video you would post it onto your blog, post a link to it on Twitter and add it to Facebook.

## Definitions

**Cross-posting**—when social media authors post the same articles across multiple social media platforms.

## Tips & Tricks

Please do not delegate your social media efforts to the younger generation without some supervision. Yes, they might be more familiar with using social media websites but this is a marketing strategy, not a social visit. It is very important to keep this in mind while your company is taking part. They are representing your company's values, and marketing message. Unless they have some experience in marketing, then it is probably not a good idea to ask them to represent and market your company. It is a great idea, however, to ask them to show you how it works, and run ideas by them. If you are considering letting your children, or friends children run your online social media marketing strategy, ask yourself first if you are you are comfortable with them being the face of your marketing message. Their online activity may reflect on your business' activity, will you be OK with that?.

## How Do I Start?

Social media is simply a way to introduce prospects to you and your business (much like traditional advertising). You need to be able to direct customers from your social media pages to your website, physical location or motivate them to call you so that you can convert them into customers.

### What is Social Media for?

#### To Act as a Directory

One purpose of Social Media Marketing is to make information about your business as easy to find as possible. Always fill out any all profiles on your account with as much information as you can. Always show your website address the same on all of your profiles, for example if you commonly show *http://www.website.com* use that, if you commonly leave out the “www” then do so for all. This help establish consistency in your SEO efforts.

#### As Word of Mouth Advertising (Reviews)

Since the main goal of social media is to create a forum where everyone can share their opinions (good, or bad). Keep an open dialogue with your clients. You need to be aware of what people are saying about your business. If some of your reviews are negative, you can respond by letting other know how you resolved the issue and follow up.

#### To Spread the Word (Viral Media)

Consistently post information that is valuable to your readers. The more informative, interesting, entertaining articles you post, the more often your readers will share your information (go viral). The second most important goal of social media is to spread information, that your business provided, to as many people as possible. It's like electronic word-of-mouth.

#### Definitions

**Going Viral**—This is when something becomes very popular, online, in just a short amount of time.

# How to Sign up For an Account

## Facebook

If you do not already have a personal Facebook profile, you will need to sign up for one. Just go to <http://www.facebook.com> and fill in the form in the center of the page. If you already have a personal account do not sign up for another one, you can use the one you already have.

Have information about your business handy, including a web-ready image of your logo (for your profile picture). Sign into your Facebook account and go to <http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php> and choose the category that best suits your business, follow the instructions and start filling in the *Get Started* page. Make sure that you fill in as much information as you can.

To go back to your business page, log in to your personal profile. Click on “Account” on the top right corner. Choose “Use Facebook as Page” and select the button labeled “switch” beside your business page. You can go back and edit your page by clicking on the “Edit Page” button on the top right corner of your business page.

Your profile picture (shown on the top left side of the screen) doesn’t have to be square. You can use a profile picture that is up to 180 pixels wide by 540 pixels tall. If you choose to display a larger profile picture, be sure to select “Edit Thumbnail” right below the preview image to make sure that your logo is centred for when it is shown in thumbnail form.

## Twitter

To get a Twitter account go to <http://twitter.com>. Fill out the form in the center of the page. When prompted choose a user name that represents your business’ name. Click on your user name at the top right-hand corner and choose “settings.” Then click on the Profile tab and fill out as much information as possible.

Be sure to fill in the bio section using keywords appropriate for your business (think of your niche).

## Google+

If you have a Google account, then all you have to do is log onto <https://plus.google.com>. Follow the instructions on screen. If you do not have a Google account just go to <https://accounts.google.com/NewAccount> and sign up for one. Once you have you account, sign in and click on the profile button (it looks like a silhouette of a head within a circle). Be sure to fill out your profile.

Be sure to set up your privacy settings to your own preferences. Click on your profile avatar on the top right hand corner and select “privacy.” Read through the information to learn how to set-up your privacy settings.

To create your business page, complete the instructions above to create a personal Google+ account. If you are not signed in to your Google account, please sign in. Go to: <http://www.google.com/+business/> and click on the “Create your Google+ page” button in the centre of the screen. Follow the directions. Log back in to your Google+ business page (to do so, go to your personal Google+ homepage and choose the drop-down arrow beside your profile picture in the top left. Select your business page.) Be sure to fill out your business’ profile, to do so, click on the profile button (it looks like a silhouette of a head within a circle), and fill out as much information as possible.

## Web Forums

If your business is based around an interest or hobby, you can bet that there is a forum for you. Simply go to Google and enter your hobbies *name* or *description* plus the word *forum* in the search bar.

Every forum has its own culture and rules. I would suggest that you visit the forum and familiarize yourself with the forum culture before contributing. Be sure to look through the forum pages for “stickies” (these are posts that “stick” to the top of the page, usually indicated by a graphic beside the title, or the word sticky) that explain any forum rules. These can sometimes be found in the Introduction category, or News and Announcements categories. Sometimes the rules are provided to you as part of the sign-up process. Sometimes a moderator will provide you with a link when you introduce yourself. Forums differ quite a bit from each other so it may take some time to familiarize yourself with the rules and how it all works.

Once you sign up for an account, fill in your profile. Be sure to include a link to your website. In addition to your profile, most forums allow a signature (text or graphic that appears below each of your posts) and an avatar (an image that represents your account and appears beside each of your posts). Take a look for guidelines on what is allowed for your signature and avatar. Some forums do not allow advertising at all (make sure your business information is in your profile), some forums allow a link in your signature as long as it is

### Definitions

**Moderator**—A moderator is a person who is “in charge” of making sure that users who take part in their section of the forum follows the rules

discreet, some forums will allow a small banner, or graphic. If you are allowed to advertise your business, than be sure to at least add a link to your business in your signature. If you are allowed to, use your logo as your avatar.

If the forum has an introduction section, your first post should be there. Just post a greeting and a short blurb about you. This is not the place for advertising, but it is OK to mention that you own a business.

## **LinkedIn**

Linked in is a social network that focuses on your personal career. You act as yourself, a representative of your company, rather than anonymously. First you need to create a personal account for yourself. This can be a time-consuming task, so make sure you put aside some time to complete your profile. The more professional information your provide about yourself, the more value you give to your company.

To create an account, go to <http://www.linkedin.com> and fill out the form in the center of the page. Follow the directions and fill in as much information as you can.

Once you complete your personal profile you can create a page for your business. If you are not already signed in, do so. Go to <http://www.linkedin.com/company/add/show> and fill in the form. Follow the directions. Be sure to fill in as much of your company profile as possible. You can also add and change information by logging into your personal account. Mouse over “companies” in the blue navigation bar at the top of the page and select your business name. Add products and services by clicking on “Products & Services” directly above your profile. Or you can edit your company details by clicking on “Admin Tools” button then clicking “Edit” on the top right hand side of your profile.

## **YouTube**

If you already have a Google Account you already have a YouTube account, just click on “Sign in” on the top right corner of the website and use your Google account. If you do not have a Google account log onto <http://www.youtube.com> and click on “Create Account” in the top right corner of the web page. This will also start the sign-up process for a Google account. Just follow the instructions.

If you are not already logged into your account, log in. Click on your user name at the top right corner of the page and select “settings.” Fill in your Profile Setup as much as possible (keep your niche in mind).

If you plan on posting videos of your own, you will need a channel. Click on your username at the top right-hand side of the page and select channel, follow the directions. To choose a better name for your channel, select the “Settings” tab underneath the YouTube logo and enter in a better name in the *Title* field. Your channel can be customized by selecting the tabs and choosing your preferences.

## **Blogs**

There are a bunch of free Blogging sites. Some of the two largest being Blogger and Wordpress.com (not to be confused with Wordpress.org). Signing up for both sites are easy.

Blogger is owned by Google, so if you already have a Google account, simply go to <http://www.blogger.com> and sign in to your Google account. If you don't have a Google account click on the “Get Started” button on the left of the homepage. Just follow the directions to create a Google account.

Wordpress.com is a free blogging service. To get a blog go to <http://wordpress.com> and click on the “Get Started Here” button. Just follow the directions to get started.

For both free blogging sites, be sure to choose a name for your blog that describes what it is you will be writing about. This will help with your search engine placement.

Some free sites will show ads on your blog to offset the cost of providing free hosting. Wordpress shows ads, but will remove the ads for a yearly fee. Blogger does not show ads unless you would like to monetize your blog.

Both free blogging services will provide you with a domain name that contains their name, for example [myblog.blogger.com](http://myblog.blogger.com). For a yearly fee (and some technical know-how) you can use your own domain name (or subdomain) for Wordpress.com (this is called domain mapping). Blogger allows you to domain map for free. To domain map you will need to own your own domain name.

If you would like to completely own your own blog you will need to purchase a domain name, hosting and either hire a designer or have some technical know-how. Owning your own blog is recommended if you have already established your branding. It allows you complete control over the look and usability of your blog. If you already have a website you can usually add a blog to your website, that fits with the look and feel of areas of website without much technical know-how. Unless you have some web design experience, setting up your own blog can be difficult. It is recommended to hire an expert to set your blog up for you.

## **Website**

Your website may not be a social media site, but it is integral to your social media efforts. One thing you should aim to do is provide as much information about your business as possible. It is not always possible, or appropriate to put this information on your social media accounts. So, you should provide a place online where others can find out more. Many people hop online to research your business before they consider purchasing from you, so your goal is to give them a place to find the information your customers need to make the decision to buy.



## Now what?

### What Should I Write About?

#### Your Story

One thing that makes a great marketing message is your story. What makes your business (or you) unique, interesting, popular, fun...anything? Does your restaurant staff sing customers' orders? Does your store carry the most hats in town? Do you give out a free jar of jelly with every sale? If you do something different and better than your competition then this is your story. Everything you write needs to fit with your story.

#### Your Niche

Next thing you need to find is your niche. A niche is a subject or topic that is specific and narrowly defined. The advantage of "claiming" a niche is that there is less competition. Take a minute and search "Fashion Blog" on Google, there are a lot of fashion blogs, right? Now search "fashion blog for women over 50" in my search I received half the results. That's half the competition.

The trick is to find a niche that applies to your business and fits your story. If you have owned your business for a while, you probably have a good idea on what niche would suit your business. Take a look at the trends in your industry, or your own customers and think about how you can use that information to define your niche.

For example, if you run a lawn care company, you might see a trend in your customers. Maybe the amount of your retired customers has increased? The best way to find out what your customers are interested in, is to ask them. Figure out why they purchase your service. It may be that your older customers don't like to garden or maintain their lawns, they prefer to spend their time on fun activities. Or maybe the majority of your customers keep a seasonal home (a cottage, or home in the south) and are not home for a portion of the year. In this case you wouldn't write a blog about gardening (no one would be interested) instead how about writing a blog about fun activities for retired couples in your area, or a blog about maintaining a seasonal home?

You may be wondering how this brings customers to your business? You run a lawn care company, shouldn't you be writing about lawn care? Well, not really. You want to attract prospects who are interested in what you are writing about and need your services. If they don't like maintaining their own lawns, they aren't likely to read your articles if they are about maintaining lawns. Alternatively, if they are interested in the subject of lawn care, then chances are that they like to maintain their own lawns and don't need your service.

So how does that help your business? Having the attention of your customer is invaluable, they want to listen to what you have to say. You are aligning your business with a subject that your customers are already interested in and showing your customers that you understand their unique position. Once in a while, yes, write an article about how to prepare your lawn before you leave for your seasonal home, how choose a lawn care service, or an article about easy low maintenance gardening (so they have more time to do fun activities). The idea is to write articles that your customers are interested in, while subtly telling your marketing message.

Your niche should tell your story. If your business carries the most hats in town, your niche could be "hats on the street, photos of real people wearing cool hats." Your niche doesn't have to *be* your story, but it should have the same feel.

### **Facebook, LinkedIn and other similar sites**

On Facebook, LinkedIn and other similar social sites, you should write about your business. Make sure you provide your contact information, your core values, your marketing message, links to your other social media sites and your website. When you post updates you should include news and updates (like new products, sales, events) about your company (make sure that your news is valuable, you don't want to spam your followers) and links to the articles you write elsewhere. Keep in mind your niche (below) and include some valuable information that applies to your niche. Be sure to "like" or connect with other companies or people that suit your niche subject. Facebook and LinkedIn work as a sort of business directory, where you interact with your customers and colleagues and spread valuable information.

### *Definitions*

**Spamming**—  
Sharing unwanted information often, and in inappropriate situations. It is usually associated with advertising.

## **Blogs**

Your niche is the ideal subject of your blog. You should consistently post original, interesting articles about your niche, occasionally sprinkling in articles that point to your business. For example, if you own a lawn care company and write your blog on things to do in your area geared towards retired people, you might write a how-to blog article on container gardening with a link to your store where you sell the appropriate containers for the project.

## **Twitter**

For Twitter, you want to do a combination of writing about your niche and providing information about your company. You should post tweets when you have information that is valuable to your customers.

Twitter is especially effective for information that is time-sensitive, such as a sale, special event, or popular new product (that could sell out fast). You want your followers to feel as if they are getting exclusive information, that they are a part of your special Twitter “club.”

Keep in mind the niche you chose and include some of your information that fits your niche.

Be sure to follow other Twitterers, this is often a good way to get noticed and start getting followers of your own. You should focus on following Twitterers that are appropriate for your companies interests and values. Please don't follow anyone and everyone, often your followers will take a look at who you are following, so it's best to follow Twitterers who would appeal to your customers.

## **YouTube**

For YouTube you should post videos that appeal to your customers. Keep your niche in mind. But you also have the opportunity to show exactly how to use the products that you sell.

Be sure to subscribe to other YouTubers and comment on their videos. This is a great way to become an active part of the community and gain interest for your own channel. Be sure to subscribe to channels that are appropriate for your business (keep in mind your niche).

## **All Social Media Sites**

You may be tempted to mention your company as often as possible. But that often makes your articles look like advertisements. Most people don't like to be advertised to. Instead make sure you fill out your profile page, or include an "about us" page. In the case of blogging you should include an about the author "blurb" at the end of each article, with a link to your homepage (even if your blog is hosted on your website). Make your company information easy to find, but please don't force it on people.

# Step 4

## The Right Way to Take Part

Imagine social media as a party full of people you haven't yet met. You are there to network, hopefully gain some new clients and have some fun in the process. This is a social situation, not a business event, so you don't immediately bombard the other guests with your marketing message, or start throwing around business cards. No, you are much more subtle than that. You join in on conversations, injecting witty comments, or knowledgeable opinions. You know that your best strategy is to appear knowledgeable, friendly and personable. You understand that eventually someone will ask what it is you do for a living, or ask the host who you are. Someone looking for a specific product or service may just ask another guest if they know anyone who can help. If you are interesting, outgoing and likeable, eventually people will be interested in you and want to learn more.

### Best Practices

**Don't Push your advertising on others.**—People don't like being sold to, especially in a social situation. Like a party, there are appropriate times to tell people about what you do. The trick is to know when that time is.

The best way to know when to share your marketing message is to get a feel for the culture of your chosen social media site. For example, in Facebook there is a specific place for your business to feature your message, it is called a "Page." The purpose of your Page is post interesting and valuable information about your marketing message (think about your niche). This is an appropriate place to post information about upcoming sales, news and coupons. In contrast, take a look at web forums, it would be considered tacky to post information about sales out of the blue, especially when you are the owner of the business.

**Be yourself, literally.**—Please don't make multiple accounts under other names to boost your social media status. Don't post reviews under other names. There are a lot of web-savvy people online and it would be disastrous if others found out that you are not being honest.

**Take criticism gracefully.**—The best way to deal with a bad review is to respond to the review calmly and honestly. Tell others (if appropriate) why there was a problem and how you are fixing the problem. Then, follow up when the problem is solved. Never act offended, or angry at the bad review. If you think that the reviewer is flat-out wrong simply say “thank you for your review, we will look into the issue.” You never want to argue with your customers, even when you disagree, especially in a public place.

**Full Disclosure.**—Adopt a disclosure policy. It is important that your readers know when, and why you are speaking about a product. Do a search on Google for “Disclosure Policy” to learn more on how to write a disclosure policy and where to display it.

## Tips & Tricks

It is worth mentioning safety online. When taking part in social media, it can sometimes be easy to forget that everything you put online is accessible by all kinds of people. I know it sounds obvious, but it's easy to forget that you are not anonymous.

## How Do I Succeed?

It takes time for a social media strategy to work. Don't be discouraged if you don't see results right away. How much time it takes depends on how much effort and time you put in.

### Path to Success

- Provide valuable content. Write about what your customers are interested in and find your niche. Don't push your marketing message on others.
- Just ask. One of the best ways to quickly build your social media presence is to ask all of your current customers to follow you, like your page, or check out your blog. Add your social media information to your current sites, put up a little sign in your store, add it to your print ads. Make it easy to find you online.
- Be consistent. Make a commitment to add content to your social media accounts as often as possible. Put aside a certain amount of time each week to dedicate to your social media campaign and stick to it. Just like traditional advertising the more often your prospects see your message, the better.
- Be social. You will need to promote your social media accounts, or people won't know where to find you. One way to do this is by actively following and commenting on other people's social media accounts.
- Be friendly & positive. The most popular social media participants have great social skills. No one wants to get to know you if you are rude, uncooperative, or negative.

# Tracking Your Success

Tracking your social media success can be a bit tricky. First you need to determine what success means to you. What are your goals? Social media is not the best way to convert prospects. It can definitely help prospects with the decision-making process, but the best use of social media is to reach as many potential customers as possible with information relevant to making a purchasing decision.

One easy way to determine who is following your social media efforts, is to pay attention to who is following and responding to your information. Most social media sites have a way of viewing who is following your posts. On your Twitter home page, you can see how many people are following you near the top right-hand corner of the page.

Facebook offers “insights” that compiles various information about who is following your page. Log into your Facebook account and switch to your business page. Go to the business page home page by clicking on the “home” button at the top right corner and click on the insights link on the right-hand side of the page (the purple square speech bubble).

Another great way to track your social media efforts, is to find out where visitors to your website are coming from. Otherwise known as referral traffic. Google analytics is a great tool for website owners. It can show you how many people are visiting your website, or blog and where they are coming from. Setting up Google Analytics to track your website traffic requires a bit of technical know-how. There are lots of great online tutorials that can show you how to connect your website or blog. A quick online search should allow you find step-by-step tutorial on how to set-up your Google Analytics account.

Hootsuite is a popular tool for allowing you to follow most of your social media accounts in one place. The basic service is free. When you are ready for more information than the more basic methods above, Hootsuite also offers in-depth analytics for a fee. Visit <http://hootsuite.com> for more information.

Tracking your social media success can be as easy as asking your customers how they found you, or as detailed as setting up custom tracking through paid services. As your social media efforts progress, so should your tracking.

## Definitions

**Referral Traffic**— is when people are “referred” from one website, using a link, to another website.

You can see who “referred” visitors to your site, using Google Analytics.



# Conclusion

Jumping into a social media marketing strategy can be a bit intimidating. Especially when you aren't familiar with all of the options and techniques. But sometimes the best way to learn is to just "jump in" and give it a try. Just keep in mind the Best Practices and keep consistent with providing information and your social media campaign with start to take shape.

# About the Author

Joelle Cottle earned her graphic design diploma from St. Lawrence College in 2001. She brings over a decade of professional experience in the graphic design industry working with many large, international publishers and local businesses throughout her career as a designer.

She began her first blog in 2005 and is currently an active participant in many social media sites.

Joelle Cottle is currently the owner of Format Creative. Format Creative is a graphic design company located in Trenton Ontario, they offer design services to companies all over North America. You can find Format Creative at <http://www.formatcreativdesign.com>.

For more information and tips on small business marketing, follow Format Creative's blog at [www.formatcreativdesign.com/blog](http://www.formatcreativdesign.com/blog).



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