

## The Power of Social Networking

Social networking has taken over our homes and businesses. It has become how mainstream media taps into the society's pulse. It is how friends and families stay in touch around the world. It is how new friends are made and new business ventures are launched.

It's such a phenomenon that the creators and developers of the most popular social networking sites have become mainstream celebrities. Movies are even made about them detailing their rise to stardom and success.

As a business owner, blogger or website manager you can tap into the power of social networking to drive business, traffic and profits to your own business.

### What is Social Networking?

Social networking is the practice of using a social network service like Facebook, Twitter or sites like Google+, Pinterest or YouTube. A social network service is an online service, platform, or site that focuses on building relationships. The relationships can be defined by the social network service or they can be defined by the user.

For example, with a social networking service like Classmates.com the relationships are specifically classmates or past classmates from high school or college. For a social networking service like Facebook, the users create their own groups by liking others and by joining groups.

As a business owner, you can use this community building effect to build a community around your own business. You can tap into the likes, interests, and hobbies of your audience and prospects. You can connect with your audience, attract clients and grow your business.

### Why Participate? What Are The Benefits?

There are many ways you can benefit from participating on one or more social networking sites. As a business owner or a blogger you can:

- \* Increase Awareness
- \* Maximize Exposure
- \* Boost Credibility
- \* Build Community
- \* Multiply Profits
- \* Learn more about your audience
- \* Create partnerships

Sounds good, right? Especially when social networking doesn't have to take much of your marketing

budget. In fact, many business owners are able to achieve great results with social networking and spend very little.

### **What Are The Drawbacks?**

Social networking, however, is not a perfect marketing or business building tactic. In fact, there are some significant drawbacks to it. They include but are not limited to:

#### **It Can Be Incredibly Time Consuming.**

It can take quite a lot of time each day to participate on social networking sites. The key to success is often the amount of interaction you have with other members. Small business owners generally don't have all day to participate on social networking sites. To post and comment on other people's posts can suck hours out of a business day.

#### **It Can Be Slow To Generate Results.**

Depending on your goals it may take some time, effort and patience to reach them. Much like blogging it takes a while to build a following. And if you're short on time, it may not be your best option.

#### **It's Another Tactic to Become Educated About.**

Each marketing tactic you add to your marketing mix is another method you have to learn. Learning takes time, effort and sometimes it takes money too. If you're short on any of them then implementing a social networking plan can feel overwhelming.

#### **There are Too Many Options.**

There are literally hundreds of social networking sites. Some attract very narrow audiences. Others attract all types of people from all walks of life. To use social networking effectively you'll want to make sure you focus on the services that provide the most bang for your buck. You'll want to choose to create profiles on services that will help you get the most return on your time, energy and money effort.

The good news is that with the right plan and approach many of these drawbacks can be overcome or eliminated. We're here to help!

### **What's In This Study Guide?**

This guide is divided into two main sections. The first section is dedicated to the five step approach to a successful social networking strategy. The second part of is dedicated to expert tips and strategies for success.

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You'll learn:

- \* How to choose your target – which social networking service will you focus on first?
  - \* How to create goals for your social networking activities.
  - \* How to plan for success.
  - \* How to implement your social networking strategy. (Including time saving devices and strategies.)
  - \* How to integrate social networking into your marketing strategy.
  - \* How to test and analyze your tactics for success.
  - \* Social networking etiquette – what do your followers expect?
- And more!

Let's get started.

### Part One The ABCs of Social Networking

In this first section we've broken down the essential steps of successful social networking into seven steps. Some of them are very basic, like the first step. Others are more involved. Consider two different approaches to the material in this guide.

#1 Read it through completely, keeping a pen and paper at the ready. Jot down thoughts and ideas as you work through the material.

#2 Read through each step. Pause and complete the step and then move onto the next step.

There is no right or wrong way. Do whatever works best for you.

#### **Start Small**

It's important with any marketing strategy or tactic to focus your attention on one element at a time. Trying to juggle too many tactics leads to:

- \* Overwhelm
- \* Missed steps
- \* Missed opportunities
- \* Weak implementation

If you focus on one tactic at a time you can optimize it and then move onto your next task or tactic. The result will be a finely tuned marketing system.

Social networking is just one tactic in your marketing strategy. Embracing the 'start small' philosophy

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means focusing on one social networking service at a time. If you try to create profiles on too many sites they're all going to get shortchanged. None of them will receive your full attention and thus they'll likely fall short of your expectations.

However, if you focus on creating a profile and optimizing one social networking site at a time, you can maximize your efforts.

That being said, do look forward. Do plan what social networking site you're going to focus on first, second and maybe even third. That way your plan and strategy can support each other.

For example, if you choose to focus on Facebook first you may want to focus on twitter second. There are many ways to cross promote Twitter and Facebook activities. Each social networking site and effort can be used on the other and vice versa.

So on that note, now that you're thinking about where you might start, let's look at the next step.

### **Step One**

#### **Choose Your Target**

In this step you will choose which social networking service to focus on first. With more than 200 main stream social networking sites it can be difficult to decide which site is the right site to invest your time, money, and energy. Let's take a look at a few criteria to consider.

#### **Popularity – Where Can You Find the Most People?**

There can be a benefit to focusing your attention on the social networking site with the most members. It's like advertising during the SuperBowl. It may cost you a bit more but you'll be reaching more people.

Some of the most popular social networking sites include:

#### **Facebook**

www.facebook.com. Founded in 2004, their mission is: "Giving people the power to share and make the world more open and connected."

They claim:

- \* More than 900 million active users.
- \* More than 70 translations available on the site
- \* About 70% of Facebook users are outside the United States
- \* People on Facebook install 20 million applications every day
- \* Every month, more than 250 million people engage with Facebook on external websites
- \* Since social plugins launched in April 2010, an average of 10,000 new websites integrate with Facebook every day
- \* More than 2.5 million websites have integrated with Facebook, including over 80 of comScore's U.S. Top 100 websites and over half of comScore's Global Top 100 websites

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### **MySpace**

www.MySpace.com Founded in 2003, MySpace is “a leading social entertainment destination powered by the passions of fans. Aimed at a Gen Y audience, MySpace drives social interaction by providing a highly personalized experience around entertainment and connecting people to the music, celebrities, TV, movies, and games that they love.”

According to the factsheet on their website, “MySpace has more than 100 million users worldwide, half of which are in the U.S. Our fans are defined as Gen Y, whose numbers on our site grew over 23 percent this year. MySpace has a 50 percent market share in the 13-35 demographic in the US. MySpace is localized in 30 countries and translated into 16 languages”

### **Twitter**

www.Twitter.com. “Twitter is a real-time information network that connects you to the latest information about what you find interesting. Simply find the public streams you find most compelling and follow the conversations.”

### **Tagged**

www.Tagged.com . “Other social networks are for staying in touch with people you already know. At Tagged, we make it easy to meet new people through social games, friend suggestions, browsing profiles, group interests and much more.”

You can create an account using your Twitter, Facebook or MySpace id thus combining your efforts. Tagged claims to have over 100 million members and 25 million monthly visitors.

### **YouTube**

www.YouTube.com “Founded in February 2005, YouTube allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small.”

On their press page, YouTube claims:

- \* More than 2 billion views per day
- \* 24 hours of video uploaded every minute
- \* More video uploaded to YouTube in 60 days than the three major US networks created in 60 years
- \* YouTube is localized in 25 countries across 43 languages
- \* YouTube’s demographic is broad: 18-54 years old
- \* YouTube reached over 700 billion playbacks in 2010 and is growing daily

### **YahooAnswers**

www.yahooanswers.com “Find out everything there is to know about Yahoo! Answers.” Created in 2006 as Ask Yahoo, Yahoo Answers is a social network that operates on a scoring system. The more you interact, the higher your score. Yahoo! Answers staff claim 200 million users worldwide and 15 million users visiting daily.

### **LinkedIn**

www.Linkedin is a professional networking site. It's a place to build professional connections or further your career. Launched in 2003, "LinkedIn operates the world's largest professional network on the Internet.

On their about page, they claim:

- \* More than 90 million members in over 200 countries and territories.
- \* More than half of LinkedIn members are located outside of the United States.
- \* There were nearly two billion people searches on LinkedIn in 2010."

**Note:** For the purposes of this guide Social Networking and Social Bookmarking are differentiated. This guide is about Social Networking. Social Bookmarking is the practice of bookmarking web pages and sharing them with an online community. It is also a good business building strategy. Social Bookmarking sites are sites like:

- \* StumbleUpon
- \* Digg
- \* De.lic.iious

There are other benefits to joining a very popular social networking site – developers. The sites with the most members also tend to motivate developers to create ways to improve your experience.

For example, Twitter has a number of secondary tools you can use to schedule posts, to track results and to cross promote on sites like Facebook. A popular social networking site therefore might be easier to use simply due to the number of developer applications and secondary software products.

### **What Social Networking Sites Cater To Your Audience?**

It doesn't make sense however for you to choose a popular social networking site if your audience isn't using the site. It's much more important and effective to go where your audience is. So how do you find out if your audience is using a social networking site?

Browse the site and look at who is using it.

Ask your readers and website visitors what sites they use – publish a survey on your blog or website and offer a giveaway in exchange for their response.

Visit the social networking site's home page and review their statistics and user information. For example, Facebook lists the following statistics:

- \* More than 900 million active users
- \* 50% of our active users log on to Facebook in any given day
- \* Average user has 130 friends

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- \* People spend over 700 billion minutes per month on Facebook
- \* There are over 900 million objects that people interact with (pages, groups, events and community pages)
- \* Average user is connected to 80 community pages, groups and events
- \* Average user creates 90 pieces of content each month
- \* More than 30 billion pieces of content (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photo albums, etc.) shared each month.

To find this relevant data, most social networking sites list their user data on their site. This information can often be found on their “About” page or on their “Press” page. The above information was found on Facebook’s Press page. You can also search online to find social networking ranking information which may also list user demographics.

### **Features – Does It Fit Into Your Plan?**

Some social networking sites are easy to use and offer an abundance of features. Others do not. When deciding which sites are right for you, make a list of what you want to accomplish with social networking. We talk about your goals and social networking plan in the next steps. Once you have your goals established, you can compare sites based on that information.

For example, Facebook offers the ability to create a Business Page. A Biz Page works almost like a website on Facebook. You can include a sales page, welcome video, content and any number of links and promotions on your wall. It’s a nice way to build a community and a brand. (Although Facebook is constantly changing the rules, check often for changes.)

Facebook Biz pages allow for customization. You can add photos, discussion forums, micro-blogging, videos, and events. And a Biz page offers you the ability to differentiate between “friends” and “fans”. An update to your Biz page does not show up on your profile wall. This means you can post things to your fan page that your friends don’t see. It’s a nice way to separate your activities and prevent what may feel like SPAM to your friends. You can promote without any hesitation.

And when you feel like sharing information with your friends you can simply “Share” a biz page post on your profile.

A Biz page also provides you with analytics tools and data points so you can test and track your success.

### **Summary**

Your first step when creating a social networking plan is to consider which service or site you’ll use first. Take some time and evaluate the pros and cons. Make sure your audience is present on the site. Make sure the site fits your goals and objectives. And take a look at the outside applications and tools that can make your social networking efforts easier and less time consuming.

**Action Step:** Take a look at your social networking options. Make a list of the top three to five. In the next step you'll create your goals for your social networking site. You don't have to choose just yet. You can let your goals help you determine the best site to start with.

### **Step Two** **Establish Your Goal(s)**

On the very first page benefits for social networking were highlighted. These benefits can be further broken down into goals. Possible goals for social networking include but are not limited to:

- \* Marketing
- \* Connecting/partnerships
- \* Authority and credibility
- \* Traffic
- \* Content ideas
- \* Target market research
- \* Product launch

Let's take a look at them individually:

#### **Partnerships**

Social networking can be a fantastic resource for finding quality partnerships. You're able to meet and connect with likeminded people from around the world. It gives you a chance to not only research and study potential partners but to also put yourself out there as a valuable resource for other compatible businesses. Partnerships can range from simple link exchanges or advertising exchanges to larger scale partnerships and new business developments.

#### **Vendor Relationships**

You can find great providers via social networking sites as well. You might find the perfect bookkeeper, distributor or even a great marketing specialist. Social networking helps you connect with your ideal providers, vendors and contractors around the world.

#### **Mentors & Educational Opportunities**

Social networking is a fantastic way to learn. You'll glean new information from potential customers, from gurus in your industry and from those people you meet along the way.

Enjoy the learning process and the vast amount of information available on social networking sites.

#### **Connections**

In many cases the people you connect with via social networking sites can change your life and your business. It's not surprising to find lifelong friends, associates and customers while networking online. You'll learn from others and provide value.

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Take care however, to not spread yourself too thin. It's been said before and it'll be said again. It's the quality of your online relationships not the quantity of them that counts.

### **New Customers**

You'll likely also find a whole new customer base with social networking. You'll meet friends of friends who could use your products or services. You'll connect with people who have been looking for the solution you provide. It's a great way to do business.

### **Marketing**

At its simplest, social networking provides you with an opportunity to link to relevant content, promotions and offers. You're also able to establish your brand. This helps motivate liking and build a community.

### **Authority and Credibility**

Content is the foundation of social networking sites. It's an exchange of ideas. In the case of Twitter the content is limited to 140 characters. Facebook and MySpace offer a more broad opportunity. However, it all comes down to content. Through your content you can establish your authority and credibility in your industry. By sharing valuable information and guidance you position yourself as a trusted resource.

### **Traffic**

Social networking sites are supreme traffic generators. One link in one post on your social networking site of choice can send hundreds if not thousands of visitors to your website. It drives traffic through linking in your posts. It also drives traffic simply through your profile. People click to learn more about you.

### **Content Ideas**

You can use social networking to generate content ideas for your website, blog and content marketing strategy. It's actually a great place to find ideas. You can eavesdrop on conversations to learn what your audience's most pressing problems are. You can start discussions to learn what they want to know. You can also tap into trends.

### **Target Market Research**

Social networking is a fantastic place to learn more about your audience. In fact, short of sitting down with a focus group, it's likely the best place for your target market research.

### **Product Launch**

You can also use social networking to launch a product. It takes a bit of planning and forethought however; you can really boost your launch results. Here's an example of how you might use social networking to launch a new product or service.

1. Create a build up to the launch event. Post any sneak peeks, samples, and testimonials for the product a few days before the event.
2. Offer special incentives. You can also offer a limited discount or sneak peek viewing to the first 100 visitors, first 100 fans on Facebook or even the first 100 people to reTweet your offer. This is also a great way to gauge interest in your new product.

3. Blog about your new product and link to the new blog posts from your social networking profile page.
4. Publish content relating to your new product and link to the new content from your social networking profile. For example, if you're launching a new ebook, you can write an article on one of the topics covered in the ebook. You could also publish a testimonial or link to a rave review.

### **Monetizing – Making Money and/or Boosting Profits**

Okay, so you know you can use social networking to research your audience to drive traffic and to launch a product. You can also use it simply to make more money through direct or indirect monetization tactics.

Direct monetization means you profit directly from your social networking activity. An example would be publishing an advertisement in a post and earning a fee. Some social networking sites allow this, others don't.

If you create an application and sell it on Facebook or MySpace then that's also direct monetization. You can also employ indirect monetization. This is the most common means for profiting from social networking. In this case you might promote an affiliate product or service. You might link to a post on your blog that reviews an affiliate product. You might also link to your own products to sell them.

### **Conclusion - Defining Your Goal**

There are many things you can accomplish with social networking. In fact, there are so many it's easy to get carried away. Again, heed the advice in the beginning of this section – start small. Choose one or two goals that you know you can achieve. Focus on success. Once you've accomplished your goals you can add more challenging goals to your plan.

When considering your goal take a look at what would most benefit your business. Do you need more traffic? Are you looking to build more loyalty within your company? Are you money motivated and looking for more cash? Make sure your social networking goals support your business goals and you'll be off to a great start.

**Action Step:** Create your goals for your social networking plan. What do you want to accomplish with your social networking efforts?

### **Step Three Create Your Plan**

Once you have your goals outlined it's time to start planning how you're going to achieve them. This is the most active step yet. In fact, it'll require a bit of time, brainstorming and thinking as well as some research. Grab a piece of paper or pull up a new document on your computer and answer the following questions.

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1. Who is your target audience? - It's important to know this before you begin participating on social networking sites so you choose the sites which are right for your business and your goals.
2. What relationships are you looking to find and build? Are you looking to establish relationships with customers, vendors or potential partners? If so, how will you accomplish this?
3. What do you have to offer your audience? What content will you publish? What information are you going to offer and how are you going to participate? Are you going to link to blog posts? Post tips and information?
4. What image do you want to portray? What's your brand? For small business owners your personality is often also your brand. Maintain consistency through your profile page, communications, website and/or blog.
5. Who is your competition on each social networking site you've chosen to participate in? What does their profile look like? Who are they following/connected to?
6. How are you going to represent yourself online? There are many options here and you're not limited to one. However it pays to consider how you want to portray yourself. As an expert? As a partner? As a motivator? A resource?
7. How often are you going to post/participate? Create a realistic plan for posting and participating in your chosen social networking sites and schedule it into your day/week/month.
8. How many new people will you connect with each day/week/month? You can create goals here that will help you stay motivated to connect. Consider though that sheer numbers don't always mean success. With social networking the power is in the quality of the connection, not the quantity of connections.
9. Will you create specific content, promotions and offers for your social networking audience? If so, what? How do they fit into your goals?
10. How are you going to test and track your social networking efforts? We'll take a closer look at testing and tracking in step seven. However, begin to think about quantifying your goals and different tactics and tools you can use to track and measure success.
11. How will you manage your time? When will you schedule social networking? What tools will you use to make the process easier? For example, you might participate in social networking interaction and posting each night while you watch television. If you're using Twitter, you might also schedule posts in advance for the week using any number of tools.

Now that you have your plan written out, it's time to begin implementing it. It's time to start networking!

### **Step Four Implement Your Plan**

Your plan is laid out. Your first social networking site has been chosen. It's time to put your efforts, time and energy into action. It's time to implement your plan.

Your first step will be to register with your site of choice and to start building your profile.

Your profile page is often the first interaction you have with a potential prospect. It's the perfect opportunity to brand your company

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Depending on the site you've chosen to start with you may have lots of opportunity to create your profile and brand your business. Or you may be allowed little more than a username and website address. Make the most of whatever you have.

### **So...What Do You Include On Your Profile Page?**

Your profile page is the first glimpse into who you are and what you have to offer. Take time planning and developing your profile page. Consider the following elements:

**Your User Name:** Consider registering with your personal name rather than your business name. People will be more likely to connect with a person than a business.

**Your URL:** You may want to enter your landing page here. However, keep your goals in mind. If you're trying to boost profits for a product you might send people right to your sales page. Make sure your URL is in line with your goals.

**Your Description:** Your "About Me" page, business description and likes and interests are net. Consider creating a story that relates to your business and your vision. What do you have to offer? Include information about you personally. Social networking is about connecting personally. Promotion comes second. It's also okay to list your accomplishments here – this helps to establish credibility and it helps people recognize you as an expert in your industry.

**Interaction:** Once your profile is up it's time to interact. That means posting and commenting. Let's look at the actions individually.

**Posting:** Ideally you'll have a plan about what you're going to post. Your posts will support your goal and offer value. A post about the great tuna sandwich you just ate is only relevant if you have a cooking website or blog.

Random tidbits of information do not offer value to your audience or followers. However, offering tips, and solutions do help your audience. And if you can entertain them at the same time that's great!

Consider sitting down weekly and looking at your social networking plan. Determine what you're going to post about and then schedule the posts. If you can write them all in one day and schedule them to be automatically posted, all the better. That's not always possible.

Consider how your posts might integrate with your marketing and content strategies. For example, if you're creating blog posts to support a new affiliate product you might also link to those posts or create similar content for your social networking page.

Consider simply publishing a teaser. Often, publishing an entire article just doesn't make sense. You want to drive traffic to your website. Tease it on the social networking site and link to your website for more.

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Let your content do double duty. Use it to provide value and promote at the same time. For example, if you're releasing a new ebook you might offer several tips related posts with links to your ebook's sales page.

Make sure you're providing a consistent voice or brand. Social networking is about building a community. When you brand your content to your personality you build an audience of loyal followers. Posting is a primary activity however on social networking sites it may be secondary to interaction.

**Interact:** Interacting is most commonly accomplished by commenting on other people's posts. In the case of Twitter you can also "reTweet". On Facebook you can "Share." You can also "Like" on Facebook. Those are the basics. Most often you'll be actually providing discussions, comments, and insight or advice. Again, make sure you're not "Selling". Offer value. Don't merely market your business, connect and provide value.

**Follow and Friend:** Follow or friend people that are in your niche. Consider sending them a note or a message about why you are interested in following them. Build your following by following those who are in your niche. You don't have to follow everyone that follows you. However, it pays to take some time to evaluate the decision. Are they in your audience? Might they provide value to you in terms of education, connections or partnerships?

Many marketers follow everyone that follows them. This limits your ability to have a genuine interaction. You might consider only following those who you can keep in touch with.

Look for connectors and follow them. Connectors are people who are involved in their community. They know everyone. When you follow a connector you then become part of their community. Thus you have access to all of the resources and people they know. A very basic example might be if you were a crafting blogger and you decided to follow Martha Stewart. She has a huge community of followers. Commenting on her posts and interacting with her community gives you access to a very large crafting audience. Integrating your social networking activities with your marketing strategy is essential for optimal success. The next step explores the possibilities.

### **Integrate Social Networking Activities with Your Overall Marketing Strategy**

You've already taken the first and most important step to integrating your social networking tactic into your marketing strategy; you've created goals for your efforts.

Here are just a few ways you can integrate your activities into your total marketing strategy

- \* Email Marketing - Include a link to your social networking profile in your email signature. Include a call to action in your newsletter inviting people to find you on your chosen social networking site(s).
- \* Website/Blog - Include social networking interactions or buttons on your website. Use a widget to show recent conversations or posts. Or include a "like this on Facebook" or "Tweet This" button with each new page of content.

\* Article marketing – Include a link to your new content on your social networking sites.

Integrate your social networking activities into your traffic generation and marketing strategy. The more you can maximize and integrate your efforts the more results you'll get.

### **Step Five Test and Analyze**

Like any effective marketing effort it's important to test and track your efforts. You can test and track by installing analytics on your web pages. Your analytics will tell you how people arrived at your site. If your goal is to drive traffic to your blog or website this can be extremely useful information.

Additionally, you can tell which social networking posts achieved the most results. This can be accomplished by sending followers to test pages. You can also utilize many analytics tools designed specifically for social networking.

For example, HootSuite offers analytics. You can find out how many clicks you've had in the past week and see who clicked. This is extremely useful marketing information. You can also see who has mentioned you or your business.

For any goal you create, make sure there is a means to measure success. Include it in your plan and implement it in your strategy. Also consider tracking how much time you spend on social networking and the results you achieve. You may find your time is well spent. You may decide to outsource the task. Or you may decide to change your goals and strategy. Tracking and testing provide critical decision making information. Don't skip this step!

### **Conclusion - Rinse, Wash, Repeat**

Once you've established yourself on your chosen social networking site you can repeat this process. You can add another social networking site to your marketing and social networking strategy. Again, start small. Focus on singular goals. Create meaningful and beneficial relationships.

We're now ready to move into the next section of this report: Tips and Strategies for Success.

## Part Two 17 Tips and Strategies for Success

You can get started social networking right now without these tips and strategies for success and do just fine. These tips are designed to help you maximize your efforts. The goal is to help you achieve the greatest success possible.

### **#1 Be Transparent and Authentic**

One of the most important steps you can take online and on social networking sites is to be yourself. When you make a mistake – own it. Don't try to be someone or something you are not. It's important because authenticity is what will attract people to you.

Transparency is what will keep you out of trouble. Imagine getting caught in a lie on a social networking site! Within seconds your reputation could be marred for life. Integrity and transparency are just good business. Carry that philosophy and mindset with you when you're networking too.

### **#2 Don't Spam**

SPAM is the practice of sending unwanted messages to people. Many marketers take a follow as a perceived "Yes please post marketing messages on my wall and send me endless emails" agreement. It's not.

Make sure your messages are value based. If you have a promotion to offer people, great. Let them know about it and always offer value. Don't use social networking as a means to advertise for free.

And take great care to respect your friends or followers. Facebook recently allowed people to create groups and add you to the group without permission. You can lose friends this way. I recently was automatically added to a group without my permission and when I started getting bombarded with email messages, I was pretty mad.

Always ask for permission.

### **#3 Separate Personal from Professional**

Many social networking sites allow you to create more than one profile. Facebook enables you to create lists. The lists feature is useful because you can send messages to certain lists. For example, you can send a message about your class reunion to your classmates and your professional connection won't see it. And you can send an article link to your professional connections and your classmates won't see it. If you cannot separate the personal from the professional then decide what the purpose is for using the site and stick to it.

### **#4 Choose Your Connections Wisely**

Some experts will tell you to increase your friends and followers to as many as you can. If you have thousands of people to follow, this can create disingenuous relationships. There is no way, even if you networked all day long, that you can connect with each one of them in a meaningful way.

With most sites you cannot limit the number of people who follow or friend you. However you can choose how many you follow in return. Choose wisely. Follow people who can offer you a value or direct benefit. Make sure any relationship you commit to is one you can follow up on.

### **#5 Update Frequently**

Most people have a short attention span. If you don't consistently post and connect, people will forget about you. Your social networking efforts will lose their value quickly. You don't have to connect and post every day. However, there's certainly no harm in networking for a few minutes each day.

This is where the time management and scheduling tools come in handy. If you don't have time to network daily, consider outsourcing some of the tasks. Social networking has become a booming field and there are many experts who can manage the task for you quite effectively.

### **#6 Be Professional**

Remember you're speaking to potential customers, vendors, business partners and associates and speak to them appropriately. Be positive and portray the image you want your customers to hold onto and remember.

### **#7 Embrace the Power of a Photos and Video**

You might be surprised to learn that many experts recommend using a photo of yourself on your profile rather than a logo. This is because people connect with other people – not logos or brand images.

Also consider using photos and videos to connect on your profile page or wall. You might post a how to video on your Facebook Fan page. You might link to photos on your Twitter feed. TwitPic is a Twitter photo sharing tool.

You can also upload photos to your Facebook or MySpace profile. Using visual content is a great way to enhance a connection. It helps people establish an image of you and your brand. And photos or video can offer entertainment or informative value.

### **#8 Share from Other Resources**

Link to relevant content on other sites. You can actually increase your credibility if you link to other credible sources of information. Offer quotes and data. Link to newsworthy articles in your industry.

### **#9 Use Attention Grabbing Headlines.**

When creating posts or teasers, embrace copywriting techniques and post attention grabbing headlines.

- \* Ask questions – do you want to win an iPad?
- \* Use numbers – 5 ways to win an iPad
- \* Pique curiosity – Discover the secret to winning an iPad
- \* Use action oriented words like “Discover” or “Learn”
- \* Use scarcity or urgency – Only 1 iPad left. Claim yours now.

### **#10 Offer Giveaways and Freebies**

Who doesn't love to get something for free? Offer freebie downloads, discounts and giveaways on your social networking site of choice. You can post links to the freebie content to build an email list, to drive traffic or to simply offer value. You can also offer the freebies to your social networking fans or friends only. This may help increase your following.

### #11 Embrace Developers and Technology

There are a number of applications, tools, widgets and services that can help you optimize your social networking efforts. Some of the most popular ones include:

- \* SocialOomph – Twitter scheduler
- \* HootSuite – Twitter scheduler, analytics and user tool
- \* Friendly – Facebook on the iPad/iPod
- \* TweetDeck – publish Tweets from your mobile device
- \* Twitterrific – publish Tweets from your mobile device
- \* Facebook Badges – Publish on your website and make it easy for people to follow you

This is just the beginning. There are literally thousands of applications. Before you start downloading them all, decide what you need help managing or what your goals are and then compare your options.

Chances are, if you have a need there is a developer working on a solution.

### Conclusion

#### What to Expect From Your Social Networking Efforts

Like anything in life, you get out of it what you put into it. Social networking is no different.

If you go into it with a goal, a plan and a desire to connect you will achieve success. You will achieve your goals.

Remember to start small. Focus on accomplishing goals that make sense and support your business.

Participate fully, make friends, build relationships and offer value and you will create the loyal following you are seeking. You will boost your traffic. You will increase awareness and exposure for your business. You will also increase your profits.

Make time to network with clear goals in mind. Be authentic and transparent. Connect, inform, motivate, entertain, and inspire. Show your audience who you are and the value you and your business have to offer.

Use social networking to learn, grow and prosper.

Social networking is a growing medium because it works. Follow the strategies and guidelines presented in this guide and reap the rewards.

Happy Networking!

