



# THE REVIEW

## SOCIAL MEDIA: What It Can Do For You

By Sallie Burnett

Finding it hard to grasp just exactly what social media can do for you? It may seem a challenge to draw a concrete line between [Facebook posts and bottom line results](#), but it's easier than you think to attach real business goals to social media tactics.

### Drive Traffic

Your Facebook fans have already invited you into their world, so when you offer up engaging or unique content within your postings that links back to your main website, you keep the connection with your customers while showing them something new. And remember, a more engaged customer is more likely to buy from you, refer their friends to you and stay loyal rather than jumping ship to the competition.

### Listen and Connect With Customers

No. You can't just assign an admin with the task of creating your company's Facebook page, then just sit back and hope something good happens. That's not how it works. Social media demands two-way communication, which means that you not only must be committed to monitoring your social media, but you have to be actively listening and responding to your customers. This is how you create a community, build customer trust, reinforce loyalty and learn how to affect purchasing behavior.

### Launch a New Product

Want to launch a new product and not break the bank? Consider launching it via social media. It can be a cost-effective way to test a product and fine-tune it before investing bigger dollars. [Heinz Ketchup](#) is currently launching a new version of its ketchup made with balsamic vinegar rather than the traditional white vinegar. Rather than taking it directly to store shelves, they are offering it only via their Facebook page this month to their fans.

### Reward Customer Loyalty

The instant access that social media provides allows you as a company to engage your most loyal customers on a dime. Did the latest collection just arrive today in your store? Tweet about it to your loyal customers—they'll feel like VIPs for the insider information.

Give them a behind-the-scenes look or invite them to a store event. They feel special. You build a long-term customer relationship.

### Check Your Reputation

Sometimes who you think you are, isn't who your customers think you are. Do a quick search for mentions of your company on Facebook, Twitter, and [Yelp](#) and find out just exactly what your reputation is in the marketplace. When a Denver-based salon found user reviews on Yelp that suggested a negative customer experience, they were able to respond with improved customer service. An abundance of monitoring services such as Radian6, socialmention and Trackur can help you stay tuned in to the conversation across the Web.

### Turn a Negative Into a Positive

One of the scariest elements to social media is the idea that we as marketers lose our control over the communication. What if a customer has a bad customer experience and posts it on our page? What if somebody hates the product we just shipped? Think of these kind of situations as opportunities to build your reputation. This is where you can shine as a company in your response. An immediate response that acknowledges the problem and how you are going to make it right shows that you care about your customers and deserve their business.

### Target Your Online Advertising

Both [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) allow businesses to run ads targeted at specific groups of users based on information within their profiles. With the ability to "bid" what you're willing to pay per click, you can experiment with what target works best for you.

### **Bottom Line**

Swimming in the Social Media marketing pool is relatively easy, and the entry price is attractive – VERY attractive. But unless you know where you're diving, the waters can be treacherous. Before you dive in, be sure to establish your business objectives. Create objectives that are realistic, measurable, and support your overall business goals. The planning process is more challenging but it makes the implementation much easier and significantly improves the success rate.

### Now, Where Do You Start?

So how do you know which social media channel is the right one for your objectives? Here's a guideline to help you get started

#### **Facebook**

Face it. Say the words "social media" and some people will think you're only talking about Facebook. It's one of the most relevant and widespread platforms for social networking today. With over 955 million users worldwide, it has become an acceptable place for consumers to connect with the brands they love. In fact, if improving your brand awareness is on your to-do list, then Facebook better be on there too. It can make your company more visible to your fans, and the friends of those fans. Another plus, the Facebook insights tool where companies can view reports detailing new fans, numbers of interaction and types of actions taken on their pages. So, if numbers help you get your head around social media, then this can be just the thing.

#### **Twitter**

Clocking in at just over 100 million active users, Twitter may have fewer active users than Facebook, but it has a distinctly unique audience that is tuned in and worthy of tapping. Those who tweet are interested in what's happening right this second. So Twitter can be a great way to promote products, services, free giveaways,

contests, guest appearances and anything that feels newsworthy about your business. Every tweet or interaction allows you to further shape your customers' perception of your brand whether you are based in B2B or B2C business.

## Pinterest

It seems like Pinterest has grown overnight into the third largest social media site out there. It's adored predominantly by women and has proven to be a solid traffic driver for retailers providing more referral traffic than Google+, YouTube and LinkedIn combined. If your brand has a visual story to tell (and all of you do), then by all means go straight to Pinterest and start creating boards and pinning your best photos and videos. Your Pinterest presence can engage customers (try a photo contest that encourages your customers to submit photos with your product), support your branding and drive traffic to your site.

## YouTube

YouTube is considered the second most used search engine following Google. That's right, we said "search engine". Site visitors search for videos and spend a relatively long time on the site (an average of 23 minutes). So if you have videos already featured on your website or blog, then it's easy to start your own channel, tag it with your most important keywords, then let this search engine bring prospects and customers to you. Monitor how often your videos are seen, then start crafting a plan for future video that would support your overall business objectives.

## LinkedIn

Highly considered the first social media stop for B2B, LinkedIn is the virtual water cooler for professionals. Here is the channel for you to network, test industry waters, make connections with colleagues, recruit staff, join like-minded groups and flush out sales leads.

## Blogs

This is an easy first step for those who haven't dipped their toe in the social media waters yet. Add a blog to your current website and use it to build your brand awareness, show your brand's personality, connect with consumers in a real and genuine way, and showcase your expertise and knowledge in your field. The content is fueled by you and can then be integrated into your other channels, like Facebook posts, Twitter streams, etc. Don't think this should just be a regurgitation of your latest brochure. This should have a tone and focus that makes readers feel that they're sitting across the table from you over coffee.

*Sallie Burnett is the President of Customer Insight Group, Inc., a strategic marketing company that helps companies engage, keep and grow their profitable customer relationships. Sallie's expertise in forging customer relationships through loyalty programs and strategic marketing has positioned Customer Insight Group at the forefront of harnessing the power of social media and integrating it into a company's big picture marketing strategy. Sallie can be contacted at [www.customerinsightgroup.com](http://www.customerinsightgroup.com).*