

## **Social Media Marketing Basics**

Social media isn't anything new. In fact, it's been around since the origin of the World Wide Web. Back then it was pretty much limited to chat rooms and such, where folks from all over the world would discuss pop culture and any number of other topics. It wasn't until 10 or so years ago that social media as we know it today fell onto the scene. Entities such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn and YouTube were in their infancy, and the bulk of the professional world looked at these applications as the modern day equivalent of passing notes in class. It was kids' stuff.

That certainly has changed. Today, virtually every company, big or small, has a Facebook page and countless other social media accounts. It's for good reason, too.

Those companies' customers are online. And they're online very, very frequently.

This creates a pretty substantial opportunity for these businesses. Consumers pump a staggering amount of data onto social platforms, and savvy businesses are able to use that info to gain levels of customer insight never before possible. More importantly, though, these social platforms enable businesses to develop and sustain long-lasting, personal relationships with their customers, and that's a huge business advantage. Believe me, customers are talking about these companies among themselves via social media and the successful companies will directly engage and be a part of those conversations.

So why else should a company make a social media presence a priority?

The obvious answer is that it represents the most direct way of communicating with their customers in today's online climate. Social media platforms are the first place people turn when looking for recommendations on everything from baby diapers and oil change locations to swimming lessons and theme parks. People want to know where their friends go for these things. Smart companies will be there to answer those questions, too. Social media allows companies to be a part of their customers' online experiences outside of the typical, more antiquated channels. Most importantly, engaging with customers on social media creates extremely loyal advocates for the business.

Making social media a permanent part of a company's marketing plan comes with a multitude of benefits. Here's a quick look at some of those benefits:

1. It's cheaper than more traditional marketing methods like print and advertising. Plus, it's more effective, too.
2. Knowing your market just as well or better than any traditional marketing survey can provide.
3. Ability to keep extremely insightful tabs on your competition.
4. Communicating with your customers on a more immediate and cost effective basis.
5. You can tell your brand's story like never before.

The era of social media marketing has just begun. You can bet that the successful companies will make social media a permanent part of their marketing strategies. Whether you own your own

business or you're the CMO of a major company, you too can be a member of this group of successful companies, regardless of your size.

All you have to do is get social.