



Unit 12 Using Social Media for Marketing

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Describe features of some of the key social media sites, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter
- ✓ Decide whether a blog adds value to a social media plan

Building your Social Media Team

Getting Started

Can Facebook help you grow? Can it help you make more sales? The answer to that is multi-faceted and will depend on where your customers are, as well as what you have to offer.

Facebook is an internationally successful social media platform that, in 2011, had amassed over half a billion users. This is an enormous market for any business; if your prospects or customers are on Facebook, you need to establish a presence there too.

Businesses are not allowed to sell directly on Facebook. Instead, they can offer information, make connections, develop relationships, and share news by creating interesting posts, notes, and so on. We refer to this process as **building a community**. Some contests are allowed, but you need to check their terms of reference (which change regularly) to make sure your approach works with their site. Otherwise, your page could be shut down by Facebook administration.

First Steps

Before you set up any kind of business page on any social media site, review your marketing plan. This will help you to make sure the page fits with your plan, supports your business, and is not going to take you in a different direction.

Next Steps

Visit www.facebook.com. If you don't have a personal account, you cannot set up your business page. You might not want your personal information shared with all of your employees or customers, naturally, and you have the option to adjust your privacy settings so that people can see only what you want them to. This means you can set up your personal page along with your photo (perhaps a way to contact you), and that's all anyone else has to see. It's really up to you.

An important note about Facebook is that from time to time they change their privacy and visibility settings. This means it is essential that you keep an eye on their terms of service and that you check your account and privacy settings. As an example, in June 2012, Facebook changed every person's e-mail contact information to a Facebook e-mail address. This outraged some subscribers and people were rapidly making adjustments so that their information reflected their personal e-mail addresses. You simply have to be ready (or assign someone on your staff to be ready), alert, and flexible.

Due Diligence

Before you get too far, visit Facebook's terms page at www.facebook.com/policies?ref=pf and make sure that you agree with the rules and are able to follow them. You may also want to check out the rules for promotions, which are at this link:

https://www.facebook.com/page_guidelines.php#promotionsguidelines. (Note that these links were accurate at the time of writing. We take no responsibility for the accuracy of these sites or the content within.)

Now You Can!

From your personal Facebook page, you can set up a business page that visitors can visit. If they want to see your updates in their own newsfeed, they can click “like” on your business page.

Your updates need to be interesting and capture attention. If they don’t, even people who have “liked” your page may hide your posts and not see them. This means that you are not trying to gather numbers. Instead, you must focus on developing relationships and interacting with your community.

Building Your Community

There are lots of ways that you can engage your community. Initially you may find yourself getting a bit frustrated with the amount of work, so we’re encouraging you to keep the faith and stick to your social media marketing plan!

At first, you want to get people visiting your business page, adding comments, and engaging with you (and possibly each other). Encourage them to click links to your hub site, if you have one. (There are plenty of small startup companies that include craft operations, family businesses, and more, that are starting out with just a Facebook page). Get people talking on your page, interested in your business, and sharing the link. You can encourage them to post recommendations if they get great service or like a product, post pictures of themselves with your products, and more.

You can also use the page to post pictures of your products, your location, the people who work with you, and more. Businesses will post information about charity events they get involved with, teams they sponsor, and more.

As the administrator of your business page, you will receive an e-mail each week that shows the interactions on your page. When you have enough of a community presence that you can start leveraging your analytic information, you can make marketing decisions based on that too.

Taking it Further

When you initially set up your business page, it looks like all the other business pages: the colors will be similar and the layout format will be the same. Make sure that you learn how to use features that allow you to tailor the page to your business, incorporate some of your brand, and to demonstrate the connection between the page and your company.

In addition to the business page, you can also advertise on Facebook to promote your page. Facebook has some pretty sophisticated advertising so that your ads are directed to the right people. Users will see these ads on their personal page, along the right margin.

You may have noticed that if you are visiting a particular business page, those will be the ads that start appearing in the margin. This is targeted advertising that businesses pay for on a **pay-per-click(PPC)** basis. (Pay-per-click is a way for you to pay for your advertising as you go. You design your ad, supply a credit card number, and then assign a limit to the number of times you want people to click on your ad. If you can only afford to pay for 2,000 clicks, for example, you set that limit and your ad is pulled after 2,000 people click on it. As well, your account will be charged accordingly. See our course on *Basic Internet Marketing* for more information.)

Depending on the nature of your business, you can have several ads on the go at one time. Just watch your statistics because a catchy ad can get clicked on a lot! Keep in mind that if your social media marketing plan has no budget available, you cannot afford pay-per-click advertising.

Test your knowledge

Does Facebook have a role in your social media marketing plan?

Have you set up a business page on Facebook? If so, are you developing a community there?

What else can you do to increase the quality of connections to your community? Add these elements to your social media marketing plan.

Using LinkedIn

LinkedIn Essentials

LinkedIn is a business-focused social media site. Its aims include helping people in business connect, helping businesses do business with each other, providing services to business people, and networking within your industry (as well as related or complementary industries).

Within the LinkedIn network (found at www.linkedin.com), you can establish a profile, create a company profile, and engage in communities that already exist, while considering the benefits or establishing your own community there.

LinkedIn has several ways that you can locate other people. You can search for them from the home page of the site before you even join and see if there are like-minded people there that you want to connect with. LinkedIn is a consistent, content rich, place to find people and information. It is a site that has focused on what it is good at, so you won't games or chat. They do, however, offer an enormous network of groups where you can find blog posts and articles, connect in conversations, and expand your own network.

LinkedIn does have the ability for you to enter a status update that will show in your newsfeed on your profile page and the newsfeeds of people you are connected to. In order to save you a bit of time, you can update your status on LinkedIn and have it automatically feed it to your Twitter update. Since both statuses are restricted to a concise 140 character limit, things that you say in LinkedIn do not get cut off in Twitter.

However, Twitter announced in June 2012 that users will not be able to automatically post their updates to LinkedIn. You can still send your LinkedIn updates to Twitter, but not vice-versa. Be judicious in your LinkedIn updates and people will be more likely to be curious about what you do so and follow you along.

Setting Up Your Account

Whether you already have an account set up on LinkedIn or not, this section has something for you because plenty of people have set up a LinkedIn account and never updated it.

LinkedIn profiles are set up to look similar to a resume. You can provide details like where you attended school, jobs you've held, recommendations you receive from other people, who you are connected to, and more. You can also add keywords and statements about projects you've done, what you want to accomplish by being on LinkedIn, and more. This is handy if an old colleague or perhaps a complementary business wants to reach out to you and add you to their network because it shows where you are at. You can make some great connections to people by being involved in LinkedIn, so you want to really pay attention to how you set up your profile, the way you word your information, and how it looks on your page. Think of your profile as a resume. Consider getting some help with it from someone who is a writer or even someone who specializes in resume writing.

Once you have set up an account and started building your profile, you can have LinkedIn search your email contacts to see who else has a LinkedIn profile that you can connect to. You can also import your contacts from several different e-mail platforms. This helps you to quickly build your LinkedIn network.

Getting Connected

Connecting to Others

LinkedIn is all about connections, and as with any social media platform, those connections help you to build and/or connect as a community. When you log into your LinkedIn profile, you can then add connections from the Contact tab. You can look for connections by selecting schools you attended (to connect with classmates), companies you've worked with (to connect with colleagues), and so on. There are also plenty of helpful how-to links on LinkedIn to get this working for you.

When you are logged in and you want to search for a connection, you simply enter the person's name in the LinkedIn search bar. You can also search for them quickly if you know their e-mail address. If you want to connect to someone you do not actually know, LinkedIn encourages you to connect to people that you know and people who are connected to someone you know (a second-degree connection) and that they know (a third-degree connection).

You can connect to second- and third-degree connections by sending them a request directly (and you should mention who you know in common if you do so), or, you can request that your friend (the first-degree connection you have) introduce the new person to you. This sounds more complicated than it is, but helps to stop people who don't know each other at all from connecting and simply building huge lists of connections that they really have nothing in common with, and don't wish to have in their network.

LinkedIn also provides HTML code for you to add a LinkedIn button to your website or blog so that people can find you on LinkedIn easily. This is especially handy if you have a pretty common name!

Using Groups

LinkedIn groups are also a great way to get connected. There are plenty of them to try out. We suggest that you visit, read, connect to, and start communicating with some of the groups that are already there. You can adjust your settings with the groups so that each day or once a week you get a digest of conversations that are underway, resources that have been made available, etc. Some groups will have to give you permission to join.

If you are connected to groups that are right for you, join in the conversations and see what is happening. If you don't enjoy being a part of a particular group, you can always leave and disconnect yourself.

When you have been part of these groups for a while and are getting involved in some conversations, it may be time to consider whether it makes sense for you, your company, or an association you are connected to, to start a group. You'll want to have plenty of conversation starters as part of your plan.

You also need to devote time for visiting the group regularly – (once a day at least) to engage in the conversations there, answer questions, provide links to resources, or to connect people together. If this sounds like a lot of work, it can be.

You need to refer back to your social media marketing plan to consider if your involvement in LinkedIn is part of your marketing strategy and make sure things stay on track. Get as involved as you would like and have time for, and see what kind of information and value you get from particular groups in your industry or other areas of interest. If you do set up a group, you need to be dedicated to it to ensure that it thrives.

Using Twitter

Tweeting

Twitter is another large and very popular social networking platform. It has amassed millions of users around the world who are sometimes referred to as Twits.

Twitter allows you to build a profile centered around you personally or your business. As with other social media networks, it encourages people to organize in communities as you connect with people you know, do business with, or who find you randomly.

When you use Twitter, you will get used to speaking in very concise terms, because each update that you post on the site is restricted to just 140 characters. (That's not 140 words, but characters, as in the individual letters and spaces that you include in your message. You can link your message to a photo that represents a thought or particular moment, a blog post, an article, or provide a link to your website. As you develop fluency with Twitter, you will find it easier to create short, snappy comments that compel people to read your messages and make them want to know more about you and your company.

When you start to use Twitter, you will find that you can get bogged down in the number of other people's messages. In keeping with the theme of this course, we're reminding you again to check back to your social media marketing strategy and make sure that what you are doing on Twitter fits with your plan.

One of the weaknesses of Twitter is that people post whatever they are thinking about or doing at that moment, so there are pages and pages of banality to filter through as you look for people to connect with. Then there are people who post links to nonsense you won't be interested in, spam, and hours that you can sit and simply read streams of information.

However, Twitter has some excellent features from a marketing perspective, which we'll talk about below.

Hashtags

Do you remember not that long ago when we called the # symbol a number sign? Twitter has re-branded that symbol and it is now commonly called a hashtag.

When you add a hashtag to your message, you can track, organize, and communicate with other people who use the same hashtag. In order to communicate with their communities directly, a business owner can start a “meeting” and everyone there answers or asks questions that end with the same hashtag. People following along with the hashtag can see the conversation going on within its own stream, and outside of everyone else’s conversations.

Say that you represent a business that sells smartphones and you’d like to get people talking about it and answer their questions before the next release is due out. You could set up a status update that says: “Join in on new I’m Smart phone apps Tuesday at 7 P.M. Eastern. Use #smarter.” That message tells people what you are talking about, when to be on Twitter, and which hashtag to use. If you send the message out and change the wording slightly to catch people’s attention, you can host a virtual conversation that helps you connect to your community. You might try something like this: “New I’m Smart phone is out in two weeks. Come ask questions Tuesday, 7 P.M. Eastern. Use #smarter.”

Re-Tweets

By keeping your status updates short (the example above about #smarter is 98 characters), you leave space for people to forward your messages along to their followers by re-tweeting. The space that you left allows them to add a brief comment like “Great idea,” “A must see,” and so on. A re-tweeted status update also starts with the abbreviation RT. If your status is long, people can use MT in front, which stands for “modified tweet,” where they will edit your message so that it fits alongside their own.

If someone re-tweets the #smarter message, they might say something like this: “RT @helper New I’m Smart phone is out in two weeks. Come ask questions Tuesday, 7 P.M. Eastern. Use #smarter.<--Great idea! I’ll be there!”

Initially, your staff and friends can re-tweet messages if you ask them. You’ll soon see that if you are offering something of value to people, and your message catches their attention, that your messages will spread.

By looking under the “Interactions” tab and selecting “mentions,” you will be able to see who re-tweets your messages. By searching for your hashtag, you can also see who is using that moniker to connect.

As well, Twitter courtesy is to thank people who spread your messages by sending them a message via a status update, like this: “Thanks for the RT @helpful, @helper, @moniker.”

Using Lists

With the running list of updates on your screen, it can be very difficult to find information that is addressed to you or that you should be keeping an eye on. Fortunately, you can organize people that you follow into lists. That way, you can check for direct messages, mentions, and hashtags to see if there are messages directed to you or your organization. You can also check into the lists you are most interested in to see what people are saying that might catch your eye.

As an example, my personal Twitter account (which represents my business) has about 1,300 followers right now. Some of those people tweet frequently, so it is not possible for me to keep up with what everyone is saying. To organize things, when I follow someone new, I put them into a list if I want to keep an eye on what they are saying. All of my lists are private so that other members of Twitter cannot see how I organize them, but you can make your lists public if you think other people might be interested in them or sharing the lists benefits you in some way.

You can create lists very easily and give them any name you want. Currently, I have lists for:

- Folks to watch
- Local businesses
- Media
- National businesses
- Training and education

The big advantage of lists is that you can check into Twitter quickly and see what's most important to you. When you have some extra time, by all means click on the Home tab and see everything in your stream. Lists are handy, however, to keep an eye on people you are most interested in.

Building a Blog

Should I Be Blogging?

This is becoming a more difficult question to answer. Three to five years ago, every business was starting a blog and it was essential to create a good one in order to promote your business. With the wide adoption of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn (all sites from which you can microblog with short updates), blogs have had to adapt to stay on people's minds and remain relevant. In addition to **microblogging**, we can also create video blogs (or **vlogs**).

With people's very short attention spans, one of the key things to remember about blogging is to keep your blog posts short. Seth Godin, who writes about marketing and has a brilliant blog, sometimes creates posts that are only a few hundred words long. Whether you are creating short, informative

pieces that are less than 500 words, or longer, more introspective pieces, you want people to read, remember, and think about your blog.

Choose a voice (the tone of what you say) that reflects who you are, what your company stands for, and catches people's attention. You can explore being informative, being controversial, asking questions, and having some fun.

Avoid the mistake that many beginning bloggers make and don't assume that you are a writer unless you really are. Instead, come from the position that you are learning to write and blog, and then behave like a student and learn what you need to do.

When it comes to getting started, our first recommendation is that you read as many blogs as you can, and see what's working (and what's not!). Notice the attention that they pay to page layout, length of posts, columns on the margins, pictures, color, and, of course, the content. You can look at some of the popular blog sites that offer free spaces, such as Blogger and Wordpress. Depending on who is hosting your hub site, they may also offer a blog space, or you can have one created for you.

When you start posting on your blog, you can create traffic by posting a link on your Facebook page, LinkedIn status line, or on Twitter to announce it to people.

Blog Rules

When you create a blog, there are some guidelines that can help you along. Like every other area of Internet-based marketing, things are changing continually, so make sure you keep on top of things.

When you write a blog post, you also add **tags** or **keywords** to it. This will help you to find your old posts, to categorize things, and for people to find what you are writing. Make sure that you set up some kind of analytics, too, so that you can see which posts attract attention, which ones didn't, and who is reading them.

Don't lose sight of your old posts. If your content is good, it has staying power. A blog post you wrote six months or a year ago that remains relevant can be included in another blog post or re-posted to Twitter because it seems like a timely topic. For example, if you write a great series of blog posts for health and safety week this year, you can refer back to them again at the bottom of a health and safety post that you write next year. Keep up the interest and don't be afraid to do a little recycling!

Your blog needs to **look like you are interesting**, and as though you are interested in your readers. There are lots of free and inexpensive templates available, or you can quite easily have someone set something up for you. Don't feel like you have to do all of these things yourself, but remember that you are responsible for your own outcomes and, ultimately, for the success of the blog. If you represent a design company, your blog had better be stunning to look at. If you are from a financial industries company, then your blog is expected to include some pertinent, informative, and meaningful information. Check back with your marketing plan and remind yourself what you are trying to accomplish and how you intend to get there.

You can use paid services that will promote your blog for you, but this can take up lots of money and actually lead you nowhere further than you take yourself. Do your research before you decide to use a paid service and remember to incorporate the costs into your social media marketing plan.

Research the **keywords** for your industry and set up a glossary so that you can use them (without overusing them) in your blog posts. There are lots of programs that can help you do this and someone on your marketing team will make a good resource for this. Using keywords will help search engines locate your posts and push your page to the top of the search listings. If you search for your own posts (or have someone test it for you), and things show up on the second page of search results, people cannot find you. This kind of search engine optimization (SEO) is essential if people are going to find you on any kind of social media.

Help People Find You

Make sure that you optimize your blog for the range of reading platforms that are available. If you don't know what I mean, have a look at a blog you like to read now (if you can't think of one, try www.velsoftcourseware.com/blog) and look at it from a desktop computer, a smartphone, and a tablet. On each device, your blog needs to look good and be readable. Don't expect that your readers are all coming to you via the same media, because they aren't!



Most blogs will allow (and encourage!) you to use RSS feeds to update your followers when you publish a new blog post. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication and is a way for you to distribute (or syndicate) your posts in multiple locations. You can place the RSS icon on your site, and then people can sign up to receive automatic updates every time you publish. This method is very straightforward for your readers, but does take some programming knowledge for you as a distributor. Your programming guru can help you with this.

Your readers can then get all their RSS feeds in one place and never have to search for your blog again. They can also organize their feeds in a convenient way where news, businesses, and friends are all updated in the same location (usually via an RSS reader or an aggregator). Individuals can set these feeds up through their web browser (like Mozilla or Google Reader), their e-mail application (such as Microsoft Outlook), or many other solutions. We don't recommend that you offer RSS as the only option, however, since many readers like being notified via e-mail.

What Will I Write About?

That is a very good question. What will you write about? What is it that you have to share with the world? Or, perhaps you've already been blogging and now you want to set a more certain direction, so your blog is ready for an upgrade!

Using Specialty Sites

The beauty of social media is that there are so many options. However, this can be a downside as well.

Specialty sites allow you to focus your interactions, contribute to a community, and/or expand your network in a highly specialized place. We are providing some examples here, but we want to remind everyone that these sites are continually launching, evolving, and refining. We encourage you to keep your eyes and ears open for what is new and could be a good fit to your business.

Yammer

Yammer calls itself “The Enterprise Social Network” and is a social network for people within companies. Yammer allows you to chat, share, and collaborate within your company structure, without the distraction that is often attributed to public sites like Facebook or Twitter. When the company sets up an account on Yammer, all employees with a dedicated e-mail can also join. Members set up profiles, enter interesting information about themselves, and can communicate within their own company-specific site.

You’ll find this site at www.yammer.com. At the time of writing, accounts were free, but Yammer has also recently been purchased by Microsoft.

Pinterest

Pinterest is a visually-based site that allows a member to set up a profile, start pinning pictures that they like, and organize their own pictures onto pinboards (like adding pictures to a bulletin board). People can link with you and create a network of shared interests based on your pinboards. While there are commercial benefits to this, there are also some challenges, particularly if you do not have a strong visual element to your business. However, if you start to pin things that might be of interest to your customers (including complementary and even competing products), this can help you to serve your network.

For example, someone who works as a dietician and counsels people on nutrition may not have a whole lot to offer. However, that dietician can pin all kinds of healthy recipes (including directions and stunning pictures) to share with their clients. A wedding planner has access to thousands of ceremony and reception ideas and a landscaper has a wealth of garden ideas for budgets of all sizes. Think outside the box and you’ll probably think of an application for your business!

Pinterest can be found at www.pinterest.com. (As of this writing, this is a free service.)

SnapGuide

SnapGuide is an application that is specific for iOS products (such as iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch) that allows you to create an instruction guide that can be read on these devices. With a little effort and some really good digital photos, you can create a visually appealing instruction guide about any of your

products or services and share them with your network. There are samples on the site that include instructions for entertaining, cooking new recipes, repairs, do-it-yourself projects, and a lot more.

You can link SnapGuide to your Facebook and Twitter accounts so that each time you publish a SnapGuide, everyone that follows you will get the message. This is a great option if you would like to spread the news about what you are doing and appeal to visual customers and prospects.

Visit www.SnapGuide.com for more details and to get in on the fun. (As of this writing, this is a free service.)

Staying in the Loop

There are other sites that list interesting networks, offer associations, and have the potential to help you market your business. However, there are many sites that come and go, so we encourage you to look for them online, particularly those that are related to your industry. No matter what you do, there is probably something out there for you. We have encountered sites that focus on dogs, athletics, organization, music, writing books, and more. Have some fun searching!

Using Social Media Management Tools

As you've probably already realized, social media marketing is a commitment not to be taken lightly. There are some great tools available to help you manage it all. These will help you send out messages to multiple networks at once, receive messages from different services in one place, and help you manage your social media marketing plan. In this session we are going to introduce you to a few social media management tools, but remember that these are not the only ones that are available. As well, things come and go, so do plenty of research before choosing a tool.

Please Note: When you use some of these tools, you are allowing the resource to access your accounts on individual social media networks. When this happens, you grant these social media management tools to have access to your data on the original site. We caution you to read the fine print on any of these sites and to be fully aware of what information you are giving them. If you decide that you don't want to grant access to your information, simply refrain from signing up. It's your information, and you need to protect it.

Tweet Deck

Tweet Deck describes itself as an application for Twitter power users. (It is now owned by Twitter.) Tweet Deck allows you to sort, filter, and organize incoming information through Twitter status updates so that you can focus on what is important to you. You can use it to schedule your own tweets, which allows you to create tweets ahead of time and then release them in a way that helps you to reach as many followers as possible. This helps accommodate for time zones and people's reading preferences.

Hoot Suite

Hoot Suite provides a dashboard-style approach for you to manage and track measurement of your social networks. You can use Hoot Suite to update different platforms at one time (including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter). This means that you can update everything once and it populates your social networks. HootSuite offers several features as part of a free service. There is also an enhanced package which provides you with more features including additional updating, reporting, and more users.

Prosperous

Posterous is a space that allows you to make an update to any of your social media sites (including a blog), and Posterous will feed the update forward to your networks in the same way that HootSuite does. They promise to respect the privacy settings you use on other sites. They are at www.posterous.com. (As of this writing, Posterous was recently acquired by Twitter, so it will be interesting to see what changes happen in the future.)

Salesforce Radian6

Radian6 is a fully integrated social media management tool that is supported by Salesforce.com. (Salesforce.com helps businesses with sales and customer relationship management. They have also branched out into cloud computing.) Radian 6 offers what they call an Engagement Console approach, so that you can scale social media to make it manageable, and then also listen and engage with your customers. They also have sophisticated measurement and tracking capability. Check them out by visiting www.radian6.com.

Launching Your Plan

Test your knowledge

Pulling Everything Together

List some enhancements to the plan that could work in your business as part of your overall marketing strategy.

Why do these enhancements make sense?

How will they be applied?

Find an accountability partner in the class. List their contact information below.

Test your knowledge
Preparing for Delivery or Upgrade

List five to seven aspects of your social media plan that you will use.

How will you deliver them in your workplace?

How will you celebrate them?
