



# The Business Planners

## HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS



**THE BUSINESS PLANNERS**

[www.thebusinessplanners.co.uk](http://www.thebusinessplanners.co.uk)



# INTRODUCTION



**YOU'VE HEARD  
THE BUZZ AROUND  
DIFFERENT SOCIAL  
MEDIA  
NETWORKS LIKE  
FACEBOOK, TWITTER  
AND LINKEDIN.**

**YOU'VE BEEN TOLD  
THAT BLOGS AND  
TWEETING WILL  
PROPEL  
YOUR BUSINESS  
TOWARDS  
MEASURABLE  
GROWTH.**

**HOWEVER, IF  
YOU'RE LIKE MANY  
ORGANISATIONS ON  
THE WEB  
TODAY, YOU HAVEN'T  
A CLUE HOW TO USE  
THEM TO GENERATE  
MORE LEADS  
AND GAIN MORE  
BUSINESS.**

A recent study from Chadwick Martin Bailey and iModerate Research Technologies shows that 60% of Facebook fans and 79% of Twitter followers are more likely to buy brands that they follow through social media.

Many organisations are looking for ways to capitalise on this potential and leverage it for increased online reach.

Unfortunately, most of these organisations have no idea where to start, or whether social media can be an effective business channel for engaging with their target audience.

Gone are the days of Cold Calling when you can use Social Networking for Warm Calling with often faster and more satisfying results! Social networking should be used to define your audience, locate your potential customers, build a social relationship with them and promote your brand and website.

Why is social marketing for business so important? Well, for instance Facebook has over 900 million users, 6 billion minutes are spent on Facebook on any given day and 10 million of these users become fans of different pages each day!

**“1.3 MILLION YEARS IS THE  
AMOUNT OF EYE-TIME SPENT ON  
FACEBOOK EVERY MONTH”**

# WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is a means of communication and marketing, made possible by the use of tools on the web that lets people share things like pictures, web pages and movies. Social media also allows people to interact with these digital items in a variety of ways, such as voting, commenting or reviewing.

In really simple terms, social media & social networking are about communication.

Chances are that you've seen or heard of social media, maybe by another name. How many of you have heard of Facebook? Well that's social media, albeit just one example.

Facebook is a massive global service, which has its biggest audiences in the US and Britain.

- Facebook has over 900 + Million members
- More than half of those are aged 18 - 24 years
- Users between 35 - 54 years of age logging in the first half of 2009 grew 276%
- Users in that age bracket doubles every 2 months!
- This will be the first year social networking sites will be used in the elections!
- AND NOW Facebook is even becoming prime source for divorce case evidence!!

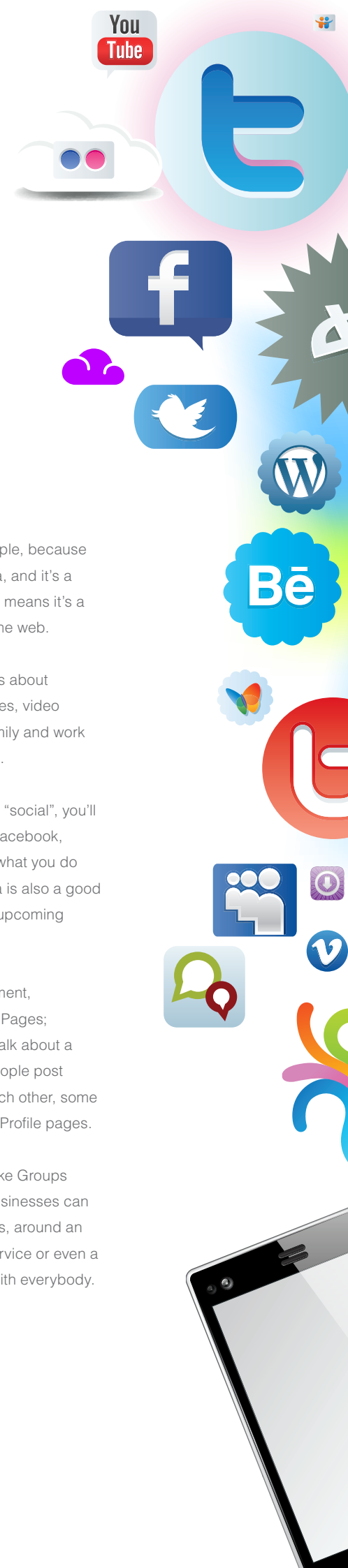
Facebook is an interesting example, because it's both a venue for social media, and it's a social network, which essentially means it's a place for people to connect on the web.

For the most part, social media is about sharing things (like music, pictures, video and web pages) with friends, family and work colleagues, and even customers.

And because this is about being "social", you'll have a profile on a website like Facebook, telling people a little about you, what you do and where you live. Social media is also a good way to promote ideas, projects, upcoming events etc.

Staying with Facebook for a moment, there are things like Groups and Pages; where people get together and talk about a particular interest. But a lot of people post photos, or send messages to each other, some of which are visible on their own Profile pages.

Also, because there are things like Groups and Pages, people as well as businesses can create a presence for themselves, around an idea, an interest, a product, a service or even a brand, which they get to share with everybody.



# WHAT DOES SOCIAL MEDIA DO?

Because there are so many different social media websites out there, it's not so much a case of you asking the question "what does social media do?" It's more a case of asking "what can social media do for my business?"

Here are a few examples of things  
you can do with social media:

## SUPPORT

Use websites such as Facebook and LinkedIn for ad hoc CRM (Customer Relationship Management);

**PUBLICISE**

Social media allows people to share things of interest with everyone, increasing the visibility of your business and yourself;

## INTEGRATE

Add social media into your broader marketing efforts;

## CONTROL

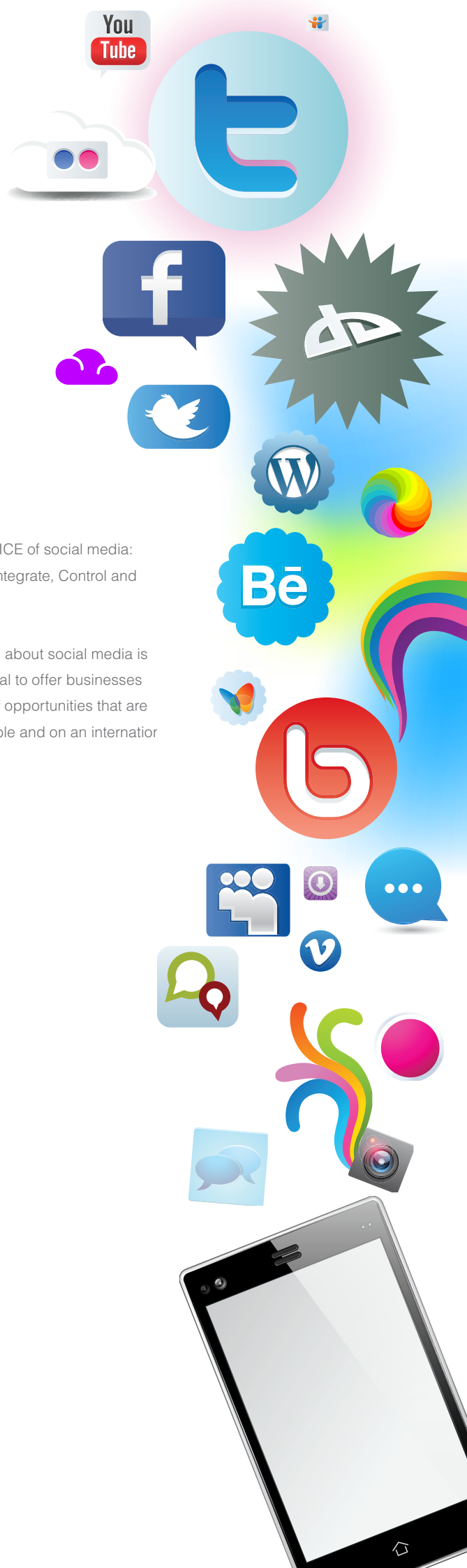
Detect and then prevent “leaks” (disclosures)  
as well as inadvertent privacy violations;

## ENHANCE

Manage your company brand and reputation, either proactively as a function of marketing, or reactively as a preventative measure against bad publicity.

So remember the SPICE of social media:  
Support, Publicise, Integrate, Control and  
Enhance.

The really great thing about social media is that it has the potential to offer businesses a whole new world of opportunities that are affordable, measurable and on an international scale.



# SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES

Linkedin is a formidable presence for connecting business people from all around the world.

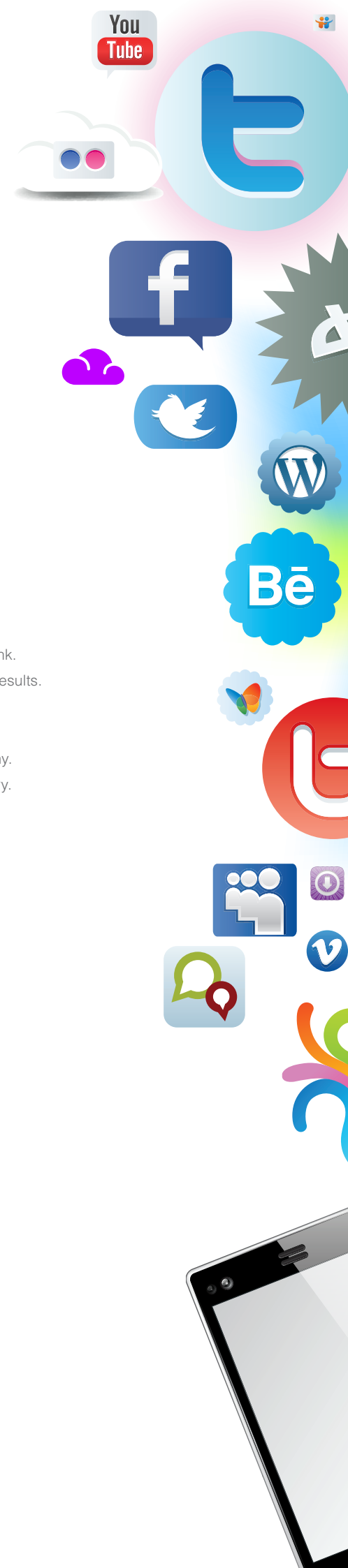
Linkedin has been described as a global address book, which is probably a little limited, but not totally off the mark. Its strengths are mainly in the connecting of individuals with a focus on finding people with very specific skills.

But in recent times, Linkedin has branched out, offering additional services, like the Q&A tools, leveraging the skills and the knowledge of its members.

- Linkedin has over 200 million members in over 200 countries.
- A new member joins Linkedin approximately every second, and about half of their members are outside the U.S.
- Executives from all Fortune 500 companies are Linkedin members.
- Unlike Facebook and Myspace etc Linkedin is targeted specifically to the business world. It is an online network of more than 8.5 million experienced professionals from around the world representing 130 industries.

## 10 ways to use Linkedin

- Increase your visibility.
- Improve your connectability.
- Improve your Google PageRank.
- Enhance your search engine results.
- Perform blind, "reverse," and company reference checks.
- Gauge the health of a company.
- Gauge the health of an industry.
- Track startups.
- Ask for advice.
- Scope out the competition, customers, partners, etc.



# A COMPANY BLOG IS A COMMITMENT

Much like social media and business as a whole, a blog is a long-term investment and is unlikely to bring immediate benefits. So it's best to plan a strategy with long-term goals in mind, and ensure that this ties in with your other marketing activities.

Blogging is a remarkably simple way of publishing. It's cheap, it's easy to do and it's something that your business can benefit from in so many ways:

## HIGHER SEARCH ENGINE RANKINGS

Generally speaking, a regular stream of new articles is considered appealing by the search engines, who will pay more attention to your blog or website, ranking you more highly accordingly. The more pages you write, the more there is to be found. However, it's an exercise in quality not quantity!

## GAINING TRUST

By writing informative and authoritative articles, over time you'll build confidence, trust, respect and a sense of "expert status" around your business.

## A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

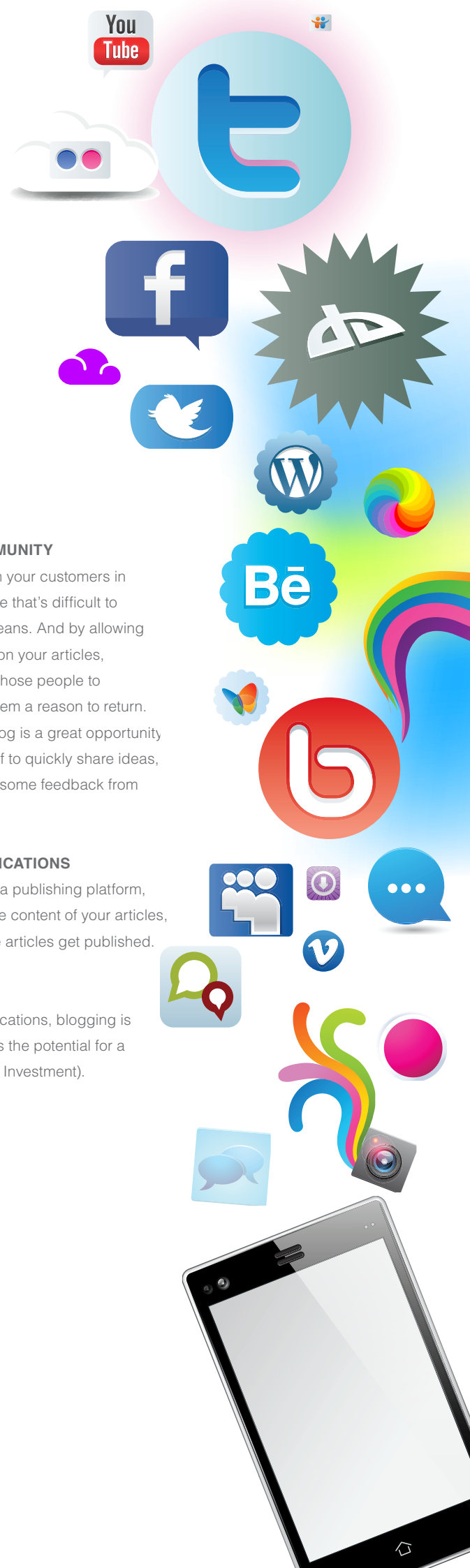
You're engaging with your customers in a conversational style that's difficult to replicate by other means. And by allowing people to comment on your articles, you're encouraging those people to participate, giving them a reason to return. In simple terms, a blog is a great opportunity for you and your staff to quickly share ideas, and maybe also get some feedback from your customers.

## BETTER COMMUNICATIONS

A blog is essentially a publishing platform, where you control the content of your articles, and also when those articles get published.

## COST EFFECTIVE

In terms of communications, blogging is very low cost but has the potential for a high ROI (Return On Investment).



# FIVE IDEAS FOR YOUR BUSINESS BLOG

There are plenty of good ways to use your company blog, which include:

## ONE

Share up-coming events and promotional activities, presenting ideas and sharing future plans with clients and stakeholders, to gather feedback.

## TWO

Quickly highlight issues pertinent to your industry or field, or to specific clients.

## THREE

Give your staff a voice, so they can share their own thoughts and ideas.

## FOUR

Keep customers up to date with your blog feed, to which they can subscribe.

## FIVE

Give some of your knowledge away for free!



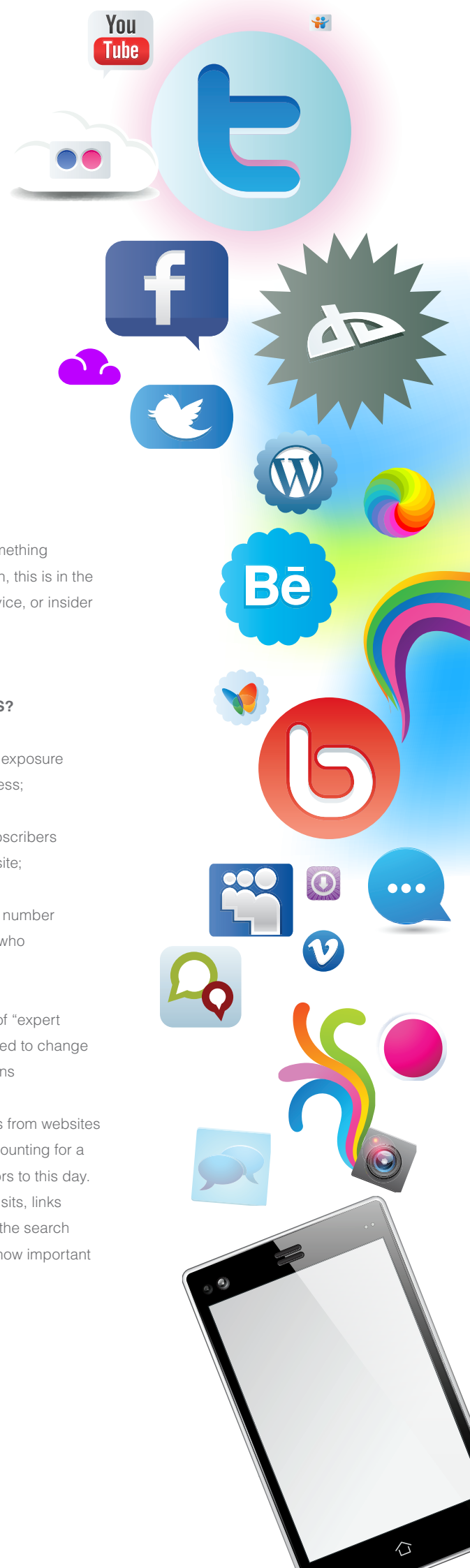
# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TACTICS

You can't expect to compete with Microsoft, but you can replicate some of their successes on a smaller scale, just by watching what they do:

- Inject an element of fun, fear or controversy into campaigns;
- Offer something unique that you either know or suspect people will find interesting;
- If you're aiming at a younger audience, find out where your audience is and target them on their terms and in their language;
- Viral marketing can be videos like the Cadburys advert with the gorilla playing the drums, which did pretty well on YouTube;
- Also, things like "linkbait" are controversial or wildly unbelievable stories that are so compelling, news websites want to link to your story, which can massively raise your profile;
- A list of something, such as: "Top 10 worst football moments" which people love because they're instant and often funny;
- And lastly, give something away for free! Often, this is in the form of shrewd advice, or insider information.

## WHAT YOU GAIN FROM ALL OF THIS?

- A huge amount of exposure and brand awareness;
- An increase in subscribers to the blog or website;
- An increase in the number of contacts, some who became friends;
- The added value of "expert status", which helped to change people's perceptions
- Thousands of links from websites and blogs, still accounting for a lot of residual visitors to this day. In addition to the visits, links are an indicator to the search engines as to just how important a web page is.





# REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

If you've spent years building a reputation amongst clients and suppliers around a product, a service or your brand, what you don't want to see is that entire investment of time and effort simply dissolve to nothing. I'm sure you've heard it before, but you really have to be proactive rather than reactive!

## ONE MANAGE

Use the search engines and social media websites on a regular basis to find information about your company. Use the company name, address, as well as any abbreviations or nicknames for your company, and also the names of employees.

## TWO REPAIR

See if anything breaches company policies that are currently in place. If you find something on the web that's potentially damaging, contact the author and try to work out a solution.

## THREE VOCAL

Having a blog or issuing regular press releases will help drown out anything on the search engines that's potentially

damaging. It's a crude tactic which, although it doesn't address the underlying problem, can be effective. Now that you know what to do, Brand Management really shouldn't sound like a big scary thing! It's a pretty simple bunch of activities built around best practice.

## MANAGING THE SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILE OF A BUSINESS

It's now quite common for prospective employers or potential clients to use Google to perform research into you or your business.

Ensure content reflects a professional image!

If people are saying bad things, Google will show those bad things as likely as it will the good.



# 10 PERSONAL BRANDING HABITS OF THE PROS

If you're serious about personal branding and brand management, here are ten things you'll see the professionals doing when blogging:

## ONE

Comments on other people's blog articles are your calling cards. Be sure to use these as an opportunity to draw the focus of the blog post towards your comment. Make sure you drop in a relevant link to an article of yours in the URL field. That way, you're not just making a statement; you're opening the door for bringing the dialogue to your own blog article.

A word of caution here. Misuse of this idea can be misconstrued as being "spamming", which you really don't want it to. If you're going to comment, then make sure you're adding value to the article you're commenting on, or don't do it at all.

## TWO

Think and act like a professional. Don't get drawn into heated debates, unless you're sure you can do so without just throwing away your dignity and losing some serious credibility into the bargain. That said, don't be afraid of contradicting or correcting someone, but be sure that you're right.

## THREE

Have a theme? Stick to it! You don't see too many truly successful general blogs. Most might start that way, but as those few that stick around longer than twelve months will attest to, some trimming of the excess fat inevitably takes place.

The web rewards those that carve out their own niche. Working within a niche and becoming an authority within it is better than being one voice in a crowded room.

## FOUR

Be seen, be known. Make sure you're to be found in all of the right places, such as Ryze, Xing etc. As a rule of thumb, if one of your competitors is there, you should be there, too.

## FIVE

Don't be afraid to sing your own praise. Let's face it, if you don't, who will? To begin with, few people will know who you are, so you need to be seen. If you've had some recent successes (for example, links from a major website or blog) then talk about them. Use those successes as a driver to help you with the next one, wherever that may come from.



# 10 PERSONAL BRANDING HABITS OF THE PROS CONTINUED

## SIX

Be consistent with your image - every blog post, every comment, every instant message, every email. If you feel that you've got a 'house style' then apply that style wherever you go.

## SEVEN

Be an opportunist. As an example, if you're a writer covering a particular industry, and news breaks on a story that's very much local to your topic of choice, make sure you're there.

However, it's not a race, so be sure to put the emphasis on quality and not speed. There's no point being the first in if all you're doing is saying: "Hi!" Sometimes it's as well to be fashionably late.

Over time, as your reputation grows, those that know you will wait. Additionally, being bad-mouthed could be a chance to make friends and influence people.

## EIGHT

Get a blog and get ahead! Blogs routinely outrank websites on the search engines for a number of key reasons.

The main reasons are that a typical blog has a constant stream of ever-changing content, there are a great number of out-bound links to other sources, and there's usually a community of people commenting on your articles.

In addition to this, make sure people can do stuff with your stuff. By that we mean make sure you have some way of syndicating your articles, either by a newsletter or from a feed subscription.

## NINE

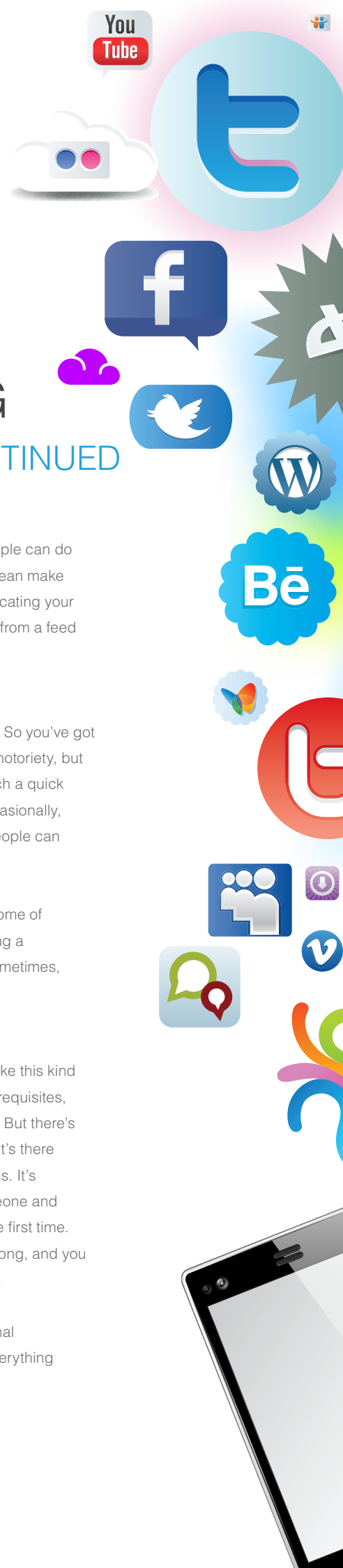
Be seen, be known, be available. So you've got your audience, you've got some notoriety, but you're aloof! Someone might catch a quick comment exchange with you occasionally, but that's usually it. Make sure people can contact you.

What you'll have noticed is that some of these suggestions are about being a shamelessly self-promotional. Sometimes, that's what you have to do.

## TEN

Be yourself. Above all else, to make this kind of thing work, there are few prerequisites, which have been covered above. But there's one prerequisite to rule them all. It's there when you're commenting on blogs. It's there when you're talking to someone and explaining yourself to them for the first time. It's even there when things go wrong, and you then make that graceful recovery.

That quality, that essential personal ingredient is you, yourself and everything that makes you who you are.



# MEASURING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESSES

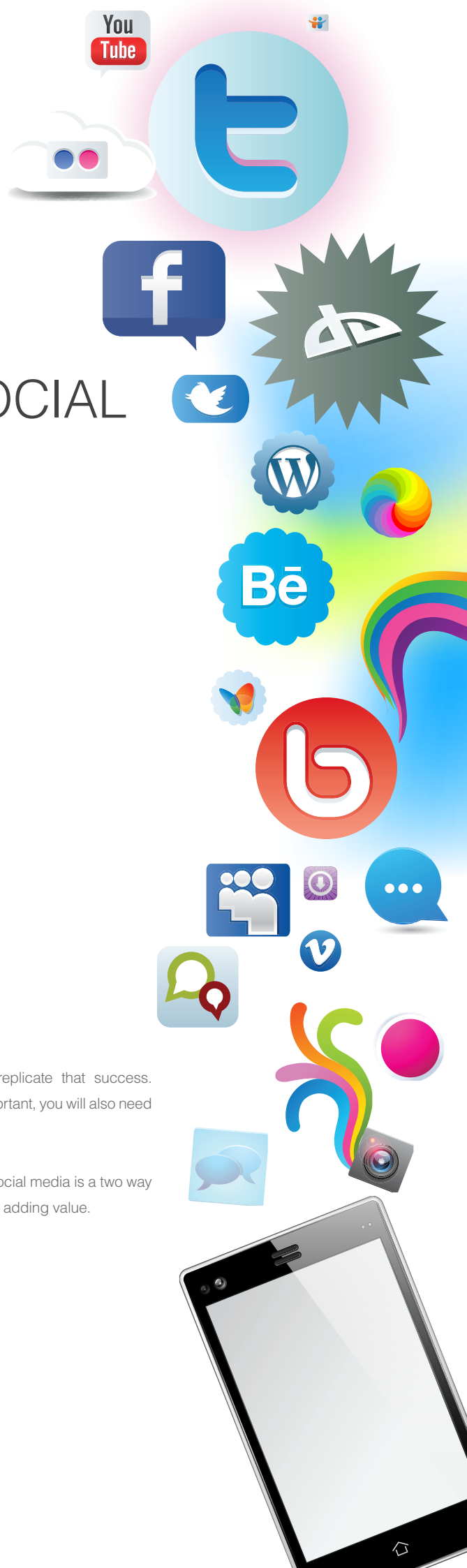
Does this page engage you?



Success in business rarely amounts to anything if you don't know how to replicate that success. To do that, you need to know what you did right in the first place. And equally as important, you will also need to know what things you did wrong.

In terms of Facebook pages, We strongly recommend customisation – Why? Well social media is a two way relationship – You want to educate them about your brand and interact with them by adding value.

Use images, logos, promote special offers; make the page enticing!



# MEASURING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESSES CONTINUED

Or would you be more engaged by this page?



Customise your page and notice the increase in engagement. You will be able to see how many people watched any videos you post, click through to your website and sign up for any newsletters you may produce.

At that point you might want to send welcome emails and start building relationships.

# ANALYSING THE TRAFFIC TO YOUR BLOG OR WEBSITE

Things that you can know about the visitors to your company website or business blog include:

- What website referred them to you;
  - How long they spent on your website or blog;
  - What other pages they visited there;
  - The web browser software and version they're using (Microsoft Internet Explorer 7, for example);
  - The size and resolution of their computer display (1400 x 900, 32bit, for example);
  - What country they're from and what language they speak;
  - The operating system on their computer (Microsoft Windows Vista, for example).
- Knowing these things tells you a great deal about your visitors. Once you get a clearer picture of where people are coming from, you can begin to plan your efforts around what you have learned.

Fortunately, there are some excellent tools available to you to help you track and monitor the visitors to your website.

Google Analytics is a free service provided by Google which offers a comprehensive set of tools to analyse and monitor the visits to your business website or company blog.

## Encourage your visitors to share

You can't always count on the people visiting your web page or blog articles to share everything they find interesting.

So it's a good practice to encourage them to do just that! To help them along, it's as well to make the process as simple as possible.

A good idea is to place buttons at the bottom of your articles, that link to the top social media websites.

Most of these websites offer buttons with special links to submit your articles.





# BE AN ACTIVE SOCIAL NETWORKER

Your social network can be a great source of new information about issues related to your industry or niche - use this knowledge.

Additionally, being active in your social network can move you into the position of being an influencer, the kind of person that sets the agenda for others. In such situations, be generous towards those that influence you.

By giving someone a worthwhile, quality link in any article that you feel they have helped you to write, you're endorsing them as a person, which not only adds credibility to them among those in their social network, but the same credibility and recognition is seen by the search engines too, having an appropriate, if somewhat relative, affect on their ranking.

## Managing your social profiles

To establish a presence in any social network, you're probably going to need to be a member of one website or another, such as Facebook or LinkedIn etc. Here is where you create for yourself a personal social profile, detailing those things about you that you feel matter.

If you have joined several sites perhaps try using one site to manage the content of all your networks such as [www.hootsuite.com](http://www.hootsuite.com)



# PRIVACY

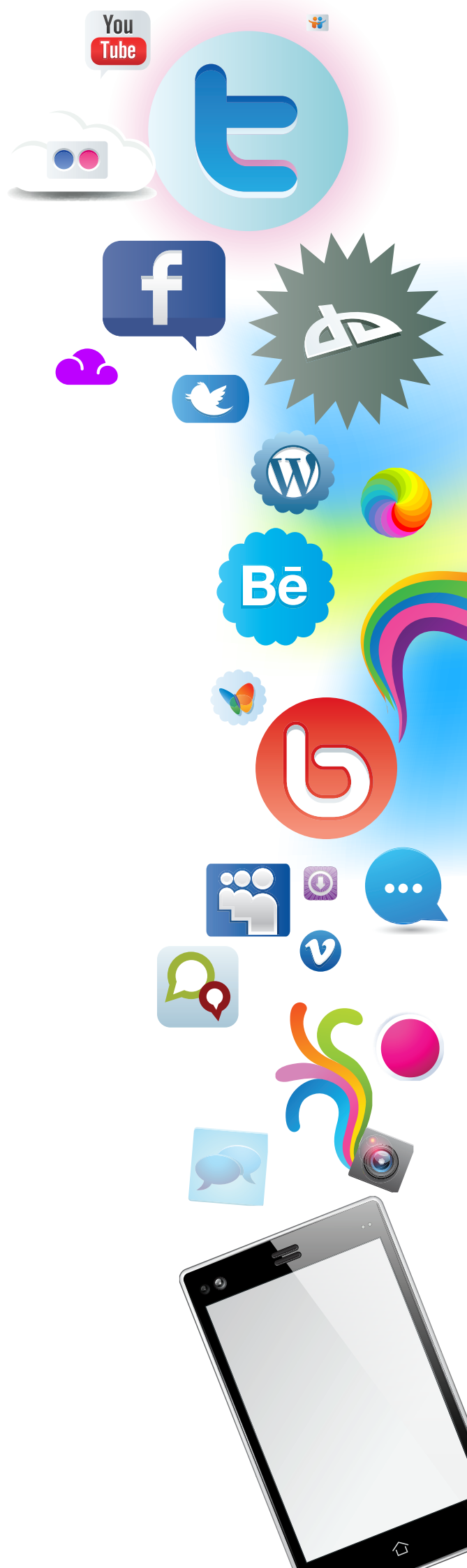
Managing your personal social profile will inevitably include sharing some information about yourself with others. What information you choose to share is important.

In the same way you wouldn't tell a complete stranger your home address or telephone number, you might not want to share with others those details on the likes of Facebook, for example. There are real world implications related to sharing information about yourself via Facebook.

Is this the kind of thing you want potential or current employers, or even clients to see?

Additionally, there are potentially more worrying repercussions, such as identity theft, which can be accomplished with some very simple details about you.

By choosing carefully what information you would prefer to share, with whom and where should be a prior consideration, not one after the fact. The search engines tend to have very long memories and what was once in plain sight but now hidden can be found again, retrieved from the cache of Google, or some other search engine.





# CONSISTENCY

You might want to use your full name as your user name, or your own picture or company logo. It is not a good idea to have a random avatar; the trick to social media is to be consistent.

Consistency can easily be seen as being boring, but look at how the likes of Sony, Apple, Nike or even how Jaguar and Audi manage their brands

Use **www.namechk.com** to see if your brand/ company name is available in each social network to ensure consistency.

   
Show All (157)   Sort by Name   Export

Check to see if your desired username or vanity url is still available at dozens of popular Social Networking and Social Bookmarking websites. Promote your brand consistently by registering a username that is still available on the majority of the most popular sites. Find the best username with namechk.

Blogger	deviantART	Kaboodle	About.me
Facebook	Fanpop	hi5	BlinkList
YouTube	StumbleUpon	yfrog	Families.com
eBay	slideshare	DailyBooth	Gogobot
twitter	last.fm	Viddler	FriendFeed
MySpace	Kongregate	delicious	Aviary
Pinterest	blekko	Xanga	Food Spotting
Wordpress	UStream	Soup.io	Flavors.me
tumblr	Instructables	behance.net	Plancast
LinkedIn	foursquare	GetGlue	Dribbble
photobucket	reddit	Digg	Qik
Flickr	LiveJournal	bebo	Picasa
Hulu	Badoo	Buzznet	brightkite
DailyMotion	epinions	Current	Blip.fm
Etsy	Twitpic	Technorati	blippy
Vimeo	Bit.ly	Tripit	Wefollow
Squidoo	Posterous	gowalla	Wishlstr
cafemom	blip.tv	Fotolog	identica
Disqus	Steam	Faves	Chimp
Flixster	Netlog	netvibes	claimid
Good Reads	Gather		



# GREATER ENGAGEMENT

Many businesses make the error of selling and not telling. With good social media engagement you will reap the rewards. Don't send awful welcome emails listing all of the services and products you offer. Instead, build the relationship and then identify the customer's needs.

Try sending a welcome message to thank them for joining your network and ask a question - Get them to engage back with you because as soon as you gain interaction the stronger your relationship is.

The key to social media is to draw your target market to you by engaging through discussion

- Ask questions and initiate participation
- Fact find and establish a need.

Segment your network based on your sales cycle

- Send a welcome email
- Send more information
- Set up a meeting
- Add them to email newsletter



# CONCLUSION

Like it or not, social media can touch your business, sometimes from the other side of the world.

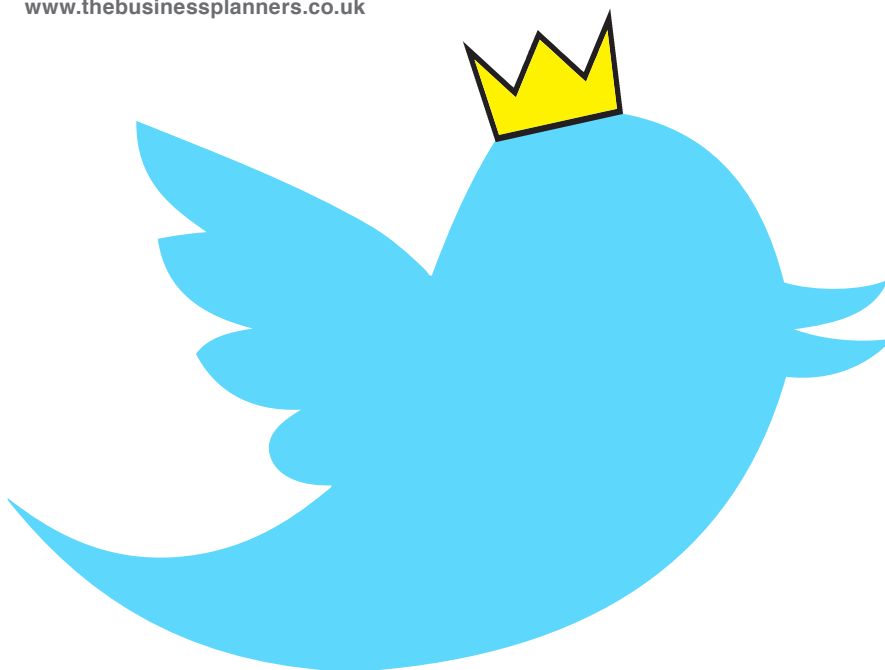
Whether you feel social media has any place in your business is entirely up to you.

But at least now you hopefully will have a better understanding of social media and how it can affect you, your staff and your business.

Fast Company Formation can provide you with a greater insight into the world of social media. We can help you customise your plans and devise for you a personalised social media strategy.

For more details visit

**[www.thebusinessplanners.co.uk](http://www.thebusinessplanners.co.uk)**





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