



Book 30 Days to Social Media Success

The 30 Day Results Guide to Making the Most of Twitter, Blogging, LinkedIN, and Facebook

Gail Z. Martin
Career Press, 2010
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Recommendation

Tom Dickson is the CEO of Blendtec, a blender manufacturer. He is also the deadpan star of Blendtec’s famous “Will It Blend?” videos on YouTube. Dressed in a lab coat, Dickson conducts experiments to see if he can blend an iPhone, marbles, golf balls or a can of Coke. Yes, he can – and the videos showing the results are hilarious. Just type “will it blend” into YouTube’s search box to see for yourself. Since the company began posting its goofy videos, its sales are up 500%. This is no surprise: Social media can have amazing marketing power. Gail Z. Martin’s handy marketing guide teaches you how to use this awesome online tool to boost your sales and profits. Martin suggests spending 30 minutes a day for 30 days to develop a strong social media presence. The author tells you exactly what to do. *BooksInShort* recommends her practical advice to small business owners, entrepreneurs, authors, speakers, consultants, merchants and solo professionals.

Take-Aways

- Social media is not a fad; it is now a fact of life online. And it’s not just for 20-somethings; it is popular with all age groups.
- Social media can help you market your products, professional services or nonprofit cause.
- Develop a marketing plan to promote yourself or your company via social media.
- Put in 30 minutes daily for 30 days to start your online marketing campaign
- Plan your social media marketing to fit your goals, then learn and begin to use social media sites, then consolidate your online marketing with your other efforts.
- Use social media to keep in regular touch with your prospects and customers.
- Create engaging conversations with online prospects, but avoid a hard-sell approach.
- You must find your “real voice” to tell compelling stories online.
- Many social media options are ideal for marketing, from blogging, forums and chats to websites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.
- Tie your social media content to your website with really simple syndication (RSS) feeds.

Summary

The 30-Minutes-for-30-Days Approach

If you are an entrepreneur or a professional with your own practice, you can put social media to work promoting your activities. It’s not complicated. With 30 days of sustained effort – a minimum of 30 minutes daily, seven days a week – you can create a notable online presence for your business or professional activities.

“Social media specializes in massive reach.”

Then maintain your focus after the first month, so the benefits of your hard work don't go down the drain. Marketing via social media websites is not magic, but with dedication and effort you will find that it's an ideal way to stay in front of your current and prospective customers or clients.

“Thirty posts during 30 days read by 30 people gives you exposure to 900 people you wouldn't have met.”

Use your online presence to “touch” them in a low-pressure or no-pressure soft sale. The best way to sell is to have meaningful conversations about your products or services; social media enables that discussion on a broad scale.

To plunge in, spend the first week of your 30 days making “sure your marketing is reflecting your true business goals.” For the second and third weeks, get to know popular websites and start using them. For the last week, “tie your business goals and social media strategy together with other marketing actions for best results not just for 30 days, but all year long.” Then sustain your effort.

Wide Range of Benefits

The social media lets you showcase yourself with “clients, prospects” and the press. You can stay in close touch at no cost, particularly if you increase your site's visibility by making it appealing to search engines. Social media is not just for the young and it is not a fad. People of all ages use it, and the platform is expanding.

“The key to all marketing is to give the right message to the right person.”

Multiply your impact by following the “RESULTS” guidelines:

- **“Recommit to marketing”** – Your previous marketing efforts did not work? Try again.
- **“Expect success”** – Optimists win; pessimists lose.
- **“Seek partners”** – This could be someone you hire, a friend or a relative.
- **“Understand your audience”** – Focus on what your prospects want to buy, not what you hope to sell.
- **“Look for win-win scenarios”** – For example, a lawyer and a CPA could present a joint seminar for small business owners on a topic where both have expertise.
- **“Take strategic action”** – Plan your activities based on the targets you want to reach.
- **“Stay visible”** – Maintain a constant presence online.

Getting Started

Begin with a SWOT analysis: List your “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.” Then develop a business plan that targets your “top three business goals.” Align your marketing plans with your objectives and your “target audience.” Be sure you pinpoint the right audience for your products or services. Set priorities. Define “your transformative value,” that is, the way you solve your customers' problems. Define the “irresistible difference” that makes your offering special.

“Assumptions made based on market conditions prior to 2009 just aren't a clear picture of the real world anymore.”

To succeed on the Internet, you must find your “true voice” and use it to tell your “real story.” Discover your true voice by paying attention to how you speak and the specific words you use. Ask your clients, employees and friends to describe you and your business or practice. Write down the nouns and verbs they use, and put these words to work in your online communications. Your real story could be about you, your firm, your products or services, and case studies that demonstrate the benefits your customers receive. Everyone loves stories. Make sure you have good ones to tell online. Your voice and your story support your branding by flagging the elements that make you special. Add the right “tagline or slogan,” logo, “30-second elevator speech,” and online and offline communications. Make sure your social media profiles match your brand.

“In today's advertising-saturated world, it takes at least seven to 30 touches or reminders before a consumer takes action.”

To develop your specific social media-marketing plan, set up five columns of information. List your objectives, target audiences, current marketing actions, costs and the social media you plan to use in marketing your business or practice. Now that you have a clearer picture of what you are working with, evaluate your current marketing activities. Do they make sense? Are they efficient and cost effective? Social media is “free” in terms of sign-up cost, but it is not free regarding your time. Develop a marketing budget listing the funds required and the time you will need to spend. Make your marketing action plan detailed enough to be productive.

“The benefit of responding to chats, forums and threads is that you can achieve global visibility for the price of some good answers.”

Break each task into action steps like these:

- Target three social media sites that your customers use. Read their terms of service.
- See how your competitors present themselves on these sites.
- Prepare a digital photo, biography, and “links to your website and blog.”
- Check out the groups on the sites that relate to your expertise.
- Sign up and create pages about yourself on each site.
- Upload appropriate content, for example, “articles, news items, tips, forum questions, photos” and other information.
- Each day, ask 30 people to become followers, and add new content twice weekly.

Getting to Know Social Media

Become acquainted with and start using the leading social media sites, including:

- **Facebook** – Turn every stranger into a “friend.” To make the most of this site, set up a “fan” page where you can “share tips, links to articles, short audios and videos to enhance your credibility.” Use a really simple syndication (RSS) feed to post updates from “your blog, Twitter or podcast.”
- **LinkedIn** – This is an ideal networking website for professional networking and referrals. When you market yourself through LinkedIn, do so gracefully – no heavy-handed selling. Your Update box lets you inform prospects, customers and contacts about your activities.
- **Twitter** – This microblogging tool (“140-character messages”) lets you gain followers by following others. Aim for followers who are engaged, not an army of people who won’t ever buy your goods. Use Twitter to send out brief, actionable tips about your “area of expertise.” TweetBeep tells you when people tweet about “you and your products.”
- **Blogs** – Create your blog on a free blogging platform, such as Wordpress, Live Journal or Blogger. Embed films, website addresses, images or sound in your blog posts. To help search engines find your blog, make liberal use of tags, which resemble keywords. Share “your professional perspective.” Keep your content fresh. Update it regularly.
- **Squidoo** – Instead of calling your entry a page, Squidoo calls it a “lens” because it “focuses tightly on a particular subject.” Showcase your expertise, but don’t sell. The site frowns on overtly commercial messages, though you can promote your blog or podcast.
- **Digg, StumbleUpon, Delicious** – Bookmarking sites let you flag online items for others.
- **YouTube** – Online videos are a great way to market your products or services. Post entertaining “how-to” videos that last five minutes or less, or create commercials. Be funny. Videos that go “viral” can make sales fly. For sharing photos, check Flickr.
- **Forums** – Get a feel for a site’s discussions before you start to respond. Be helpful.
- **Other sites** – SmallBusinessBrief lets you “upload articles” that display your knowledge. Newsvine lets you post expert columns. Yahoo Answers showcases you as an authority.

Other Marketing Possibilities

Do not overlook the social media marketing opportunities that are right in front of you. For example, nearly every organization now has an online community, but few members avail themselves of the full marketing potential such communities offer. Use organizational directories to find people you want to contact online. Use email to make your initial connection. Do not try to sell anything at first. Introduce yourself and suggest a follow-up call. Tread lightly. To build traffic to your website and your social media sites, reach out through “online press-release distribution sites” (fees vary, but some are free).

“Squidoo returns to the original (and best) sales platform: having something valuable to say that solves a problem.”

Social media’s marketing possibilities are nearly limitless. You can create powerful sales incentives to move merchandise quickly or develop special promos for online “friends, fans and followers.” This audience will give you first-hand feedback about the offerings they like or dislike. You can offer “coupons, discounts and advance information on sales and specials.” Use survey tools such as StrawPoll, Zoomerang and SurveyMonkey to learn the concerns of your customers, clients or prospects. Study the results.

“The social media tools of club, association, organization and alumni sites are powerful because of shared allegiance as well as shared interests and common goals.”

Clearly, social media is not just for giant companies. It is a terrific marketing tool for local businesses. With the web’s remarkable connectivity, local businesses can now market their products and services on a global basis. Buyers no longer require face-to-face contact. Thus, you can sell to online prospects as easily as any other firm.

“Today’s consumers expect a multimedia experience from their Web-browsing time.” “More people are held back by a fear of success than by a fear of failure.”

Consider a few other specialized commercial uses for social media:

- **Event planners** – Meetup is a terrific website for meeting and event planners. Use it to promote your live events, webinars, virtual trade shows and electronic classes.
- **Authors and small publishers** – Use your Facebook fan page to build buzz about your newest book. “Blog, post and tweet” about book signings, as well as speeches or media interviews. Thanks to the new virtual world, you can conduct high-profile “blog tours” without ever leaving your house.
- **Speakers** – Use online video to promote yourself as an engaging, compelling presenter. Use information about your online fans and followers to build credibility. Publicize your speaking engagements on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.
- **Busy merchandisers and managers** – Elance, Guru and similar websites allow you to hire virtual assistants who can help you with time-consuming administrative matters.

Boosting Your Nonprofit

Social media also works well for nonprofit agencies and charities. Your online messages can reinforce your mission.

“What you post on a chat, forum, comment or thread last forever and is potentially searchable...think before you post, and...avoid commenting when you’re angry or in a bad mood.”

Nonprofits can use social media to:

- **“Tell a story”** – Explain your mission to a mass audience. For example, post “frequent updates on upcoming events, volunteer opportunities and ongoing programs.”
- **“Raise awareness”** – Maintain visibility with current and prospective supporters.
- **“Interact with donors”** – More than 30,000 nonprofits are on the Nonprofits on Facebook page. Twellow (a site associated with Twitter) lists more than 12,000 nonprofits. Communicate with donors by developing social media friends and followers. Encourage them to “spread the word” about your cause.

“Social media is not single-handedly likely to turn your company around, make you a millionaire or send your sales skyrocketing.”

Social media is also helpful for publicizing charitable events. For example:

- **“Before the event”** – Use YouTube, Twitter and Facebook to inform people about an upcoming fundraiser and to spark conversations about it.
- **“During the event”** – Shoot digital video to use for follow-up publicity on YouTube. You also can “tweet and blog live.”
- **“After the program”** – Post your video, audio and other content as soon as possible.

Be Prepared

Social media can send people to your website, so make sure it is ready for a bigger audience. Is your site clean, clear and up to date? Does it showcase you and your company? Use RSS to feed your Twitter and blog content, your podcasts and your online videos to your website. AudioAcrobat lets you create a personal audio greeting that you can embed in your site. All the different ways you can use social media to connect with prospects allow you to build trust and spark sales. Social media enables the most effective selling technique: the relationship-building soft sell.

About the Author

Gail Z. Martin owns DreamSpinner Communications, which specializes in small-business and solo-practice marketing. She is also an expert on using social media for book marketing.
