

A Guide To Using Social Networking Sites To Promote Your Company

by

Jens P. Berget

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Why free?

I believe that free is important. Free is what keeps me going. Don't think that I don't care about money, because I do. But to me, everything should be free at first, then, if you enjoy it, then you should pay the money. This is what it should be like when buying software. You should be able to download a free trial, and you should be able to use it for 1 day, 7 days, or 30 days, or maybe just 30 minutes, what's important, is that you should be able to try it before you buy it. The same goes for close to anything, even food, because you should be able to taste it before you buy it.

This report is not about money, although it's about how your business should be using social networking sites. It's about marketing. At the bottom, in the footer, I've included three interesting systems/e-books that I recommend. My affiliate links are included.

Now. Before you start reading this report, please take a few minutes and visit KIVA.org, an organization like no other organization you probably have seen. Kiva let you loan to low income entrepreneurs. Kiva's mission is to connect people through lending for the sake of alleviating poverty. It's what's gets me up in the morning, and keeps me going. It's all about hope and giving people an opportunity.

I have recently created a team of lenders at Kiva, and I would be really happy if you would join me and my friends (well, at the moment it's only me). I'd really appreciate it. Very little money can save lives.

Please join me today at: <http://www.kiva.org/team/jens>

Introduction

An Internet marketer has many tools with which to build and grow their business. You have advertising, content, search engine optimization, and linking among many other marketing and promotion tools and strategies.

Even though social networking, which is about 15 years old, many Internet marketers are just now discovering the power this marketing and promotion tool has.

Social networking has grown to an amazing number. Today there are more than 200 mainstream social networking sites. According to a study at NetPop Research, social networking has been growing at a rate of 93% since 1996.

What does this all mean? It means that participating in social networking is a tremendous opportunity to promote your business.

What Is Social Networking?

'Social Networking Site' as it is defined by TechWeb is, "A Web site that provides a virtual community for people interested in a particular subject or just to "hang out" together."

Whatis.com defines social networking as "the practice of expanding the number of one's business and/or social contacts by making connections through individuals.

Is There Anybody Out There?

Before you begin to even consider social networking as a tool to promote your business you probably want to make sure your particular audience actively participates in social networking. A bit of research and some time on various social networking sites will tell you what you need to know and chances are, your audience is participating.

According to the same NetPop study cited earlier, the most common social networking participants are between the ages of 18-29. The next most popular age group are people 30-39 and even seniors are getting in on the action. In fact, social networking usage is increasing amongst all age groups.

Over the next few pages, we're going to take a look at three main topics. The first chapter is devoted to discussing the benefits of social networking, mainly what you can do with these sites to market and promote your business. In the second chapter, we'll take a look at two main social networking sites, Twitter and Facebook and explore your marketing and promotion options in depth. Finally, we'll wrap it up with a quick bit about social networking dos and don'ts.

Let's get started!

CHAPTER ONE

Social Networking, More than a Meet and Greet - Use It to Promote Your Company

Social networking is being used by companies of all sizes, in every industry imaginable and all around the globe. It's being embraced as a tool that connects you directly to your customers, where they hang out, and it gives you as a business owner a unique opportunity to provide value, brand your company and well...sell your product or service.

According to the folks at Microsoft, social networking enables companies to:

1. Express Yourself As A Brand
2. Create And Maintain Good Conversations
3. Empower Participants

But how can you accomplish all the above, you ask, by posting comments on social networking sites?

How Social Networking Grows Your Business

There's no doubt, social networking gives you access to your audience but what else can you accomplish with this tool?

Social gives business owners the ability to:

- Build an online presence
- Increase website traffic
- Boost SEO
- Establish credibility
- Connect with your audience
- Glean valuable information to grow your business

Whether your online business is just starting out, or you're a large corporation, adding social networking to your marketing strategy will help you promote and grow your business.

Options to Use Social Networking to Promote Your Business

There are a number of ways you can use social networking to promote your business. Let's take a look at the most popular and powerful.

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- Drive Traffic to Your Blog or Website - Post a curiosity generating or attention grabbing headline and include a link to your website.
- Promote – Launching a new product? Announce it via social networking sites. Offering a huge holiday discount? Let people know.
- Share Lessons and Experiences – Social networking is about connecting. If you have something relevant to your industry to share, share it. Start conversations and partake in them.
- Share Pictures, Audio and Video – Many social networking sites embrace visual forms of posting as well. YouTube of course is a video social networking site but even Facebook lets you link to and post audio and video messages. And Twitter developers have created picture and video sharing applications.
- Share Information - Post interesting and relevant statistics, quotes, or headlines and start a conversation. When appropriate, link to your company website.
- Advertise – Many social networking sites also sell advertising space.

Before we move into the next chapter and look at the details of how to accomplish all of the above with Twitter and Facebook, let's take a look at a few of the most popular social networking sites.

Top Social Networking Sites

Here are just some of the many popular social networking sites:

1. [MySpace](#)
2. [Facebook](#)
3. [Classmates](#)
4. [StumbleUpon](#)
5. [Flickr](#)
6. [YouTube](#)
7. [MyLife.com](#)
8. [Buzznet](#)
9. [Yahoo Buzz](#)
10. [Del.icio.us](#)

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11. [Meetup](#)
12. [Xing](#)
13. [LinkedIn](#)
14. [Orkut](#)
15. [Digg](#)
16. [Bebo](#)
17. [Tagged](#)
18. [DeviantART](#)
19. [Twitter](#)
20. [hi5 Networks](#)
21. [CaringBridge](#)
22. [BlackPlanet.com](#)
23. [Gaia Online](#)
24. [AddThis](#)
25. [SodaHead.com](#)
26. [Multiply](#)
27. [Friendster](#)
28. [Xomba](#)
29. [Propeller](#)
30. [MSN Groups](#)

Conclusion

The benefits to using social networking to promote your business have a wide reach. You'll not only connect with your audience on a new and more personal level, which is required in today's competitive market, you'll also reach a whole new group of people. Couple that with the fact that social networking is extremely cost effective and your return on investment is like nothing else in your marketing toolbox. Next, we'll take a look at two of the more powerful social networking tools, Facebook and Twitter, and a brief look at a professional social networking site, LinkedIn.

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CHAPTER TWO

How to Use the Social Networking Sites, Twitter, LinkedIn & Facebook

Presently, Twitter and Facebook seem to be the most prosperous social networking tools businesses can use to promote their business and in this chapter we'll take a look at these two sites in depth, we'll also take a quick look at LinkedIn, a social networking site for businesses to connect with each other – great if you're a service provider.

How to Use Twitter to Promote Your Business

Your first step to use Twitter effectively to promote your business is to register and create an appropriate profile. That will include potentially creating a custom Twitter background and learning about all of the tools, applications and gadgets you can use to optimize Twitter as a marketing tool.

Creating Your Twitter Background

Because your Twitter Profile is something that will help brand and differentiate you, it's important to spend some time making it represent you and your company. Twitter offers templates you can customize, you can utilize secondary software to create your Twitter background, and you can outsource the task to a graphic designer. Many graphic designers who specialize in web content are now offering custom Twitter backgrounds.

Custom Twitter backgrounds give you the power to present a strong first impression. It sets you apart from your competition, gives people a good idea of who you are and what you're about and if you provide links to your website(s) it'll send you traffic.

Once your profile has been created, it's time to find your audience. Rest assured once you begin posting relevant, valuable and beneficial information and are interacting with Twitter users, you will get more followers. However, in the beginning, you may want to connect with key influencers. How do you find these key influencers? Search!

Finding Friends and Followers - Twitter Search

Once your profile has been created, it's time to find friends and followers, people to connect with. Twitter search is a great way to get started, however you can also download your email contacts and search for friends that way.

The Twitter search tools provide essentially two ways to find information and potential followers.

Basic Search – Is a keyword driven tool. Enter your keywords, click the search icon and your results show up on the left hand side. Take a look at the various people posting frequently on this topic to determine if they're a key influencer. For example, if you own a crafting website, you may want to follow Martha Stewart on Twitter because her followers are most certainly interested in crafting too.

Advanced Twitter Search – Click the Advanced Twitter search button at the bottom of the page where you can search by multiple words, person, or hashtag #. (The # is a tool to create groups, which people can search by. Using the crafting example from earlier, you could post something about crafting and then end it with the #crafting hashtag.)

Interacting on Twitter and Promoting Your Business

Your next step is to begin interacting with your fellow Twitterers. Twitter asks one question, "What are you doing?" The trick is to make it relevant to your business and interesting and you have 140 characters to get it done.

Your tweets or posts are designed to accomplish two things, promote your business and connect with users. Sometimes you can accomplish both however other times you'll want to focus on just connecting or just promoting. Back in Chapter One, we mentioned several ways you can promote your business using social networking. We mentioned posting attention grabbing headlines and linking to your site, we also mentioned announcing promotions. You can even give away free content on Twitter. Here are a few tools to help you use Twitter to promote your business.

- Twitter Groups, <http://twittgroups.com>, gives you the ability to join and create groups to motivate a following. It's a great tool for creating sub-niches within your audience.
- Social Too, <http://socialtoo.com>, is a site that automates following those who follow you. It also filters spammers and has a survey function. Additionally, you can automate a custom message to thank all those who follow you along with a link to your website or a giveaway.
- Magpie, <http://be-a-magpie.com> is an advertising tool, which helps identify key influencers for your product or service, and then use them to spread the word about what it is you have to offer. You create your own ad campaign with your choice of message and keywords.
- Twitter mobile. There are also a large number of widgets and plug-ins, which make Twitter accessible from just about anywhere including your Blackberry, iPhone, Gmail, post them on your blog for cross promotion and so on. You can find a number of these applications by

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linking on the apps button at the bottom of each page or you can simply visit <https://Twitter.com/downloads>.

Twitter can also be linked to Facebook so all of your Tweets show up as Facebook posts, thus helping you optimize your efforts. Next, let's take a look at how to use Facebook to promote your business.

How to Use Facebook to Promote Your Business

Facebook is a rapidly growing and boasts 175 million users with about five million new users a week. This makes it a ripe opportunity to boost your business. And when it comes to Facebook, while you cannot create a customized profile page like Twitter, you can create fan pages, send mass messages to your fans and join groups.

The first step to promote your business with Facebook is to create a business profile. Facebook offers you the ability to separate your personal and professional social networking activities and offers a number of settings, which you can adjust to meet your needs. To set your privacy settings, visit <http://www.facebook.com/privacy/>

Next, just like Twitter, you'll be connecting with people and also like Twitter, you can import your email list and connect with those people first. You can also search for friends using the Friend Finder feature and Facebook also suggests friends based on people you've connected with, items in your profile and groups you've joined.

And make the necessary changes. For example, you may only want friends to view photos and videos tagged with you in them.

The next step, which again will feel similar to Twitter, and most other social networking tools is to begin interacting and promoting your business with the tips and strategies we've already mentioned. Upload videos, announce promotions, share links to interesting and relevant sites, share your experiences and get involved.

What is unique to Facebook are the applications, fan pages and groups.

Promoting with Facebook Applications

Facebook offers a number of applications including creating and joining groups. Adding and joining groups is another way to connect with a very specific target audience. If, for example, you are a dog trainer and your market are new dog owners, you could create a group for puppy owners and share helpful tips, links and information with them. The group function allows you to also see the groups your friends and associates are participating in so you can make the decision about whether or not it's a group you too want to participate in.

There are a large number of applications and with Facebook continually growing new applications will be added every day. A few great applications to consider include:

- Twitter – Allows you to publish your Twitter posts on Facebook.
- BlogNetwork – This application is a great way to publicize your blog and gain new followers.
- Advertising – Facebook allows you to advertise on their site and to also sell ad space on your profile/fan pages.
- Facebook Pages - A Facebook Page is a public profile that makes it possible for you to essentially create a business profile page right on the site. You can share products, sell ad space and market to your audience. You can also invite people to become a “Fan” (through PPC ads). Each fan is now someone you can market to directly by sending them messages, promotions, information, downloads and so on - much like you would an opt-in list.
- Mobile Facebook – allows you to use Facebook from your mobile phone. Great for sending on the fly messages but also good to remember that many people use this feature on their mobile phone and you can market to them specifically.

Facebook is an active, thriving and growing community and it's not just for teenagers anymore. In fact, middle-aged men and women are one of the largest growing communities online and they're a lucrative audience. However, if you're not selling products and Facebook isn't for you, there's one last social networking site we wanted to pay a bit of attention to.

Promoting Your Business With LinkedIn

Designed for professionals to network with other professionals, LinkedIn isn't like other social networking sites. It's ideal for finding service based companies to work with and if you're a service company, it's a great place to be represented. Like many social networking sites, users can invite, create and join groups and search for like minded individuals. However, LinkedIn offers much more.

LinkedIn allows business owners to:

- Receive Recommendations – Other business owners can boost your profile by recommending you and your business.
- Create Groups – Like Facebook, you can create a group for your target audience to join. This gives you the ability to connect with and market directly to them.
- Utilize Applications - LinkedIn offers applications like Blog Link, Polls, and Reading Lists to help you enhance your profile and connect with others.
- Advertise your business on LinkedIn for more awareness, traffic and exposure.

Conclusion

LinkedIn is a fantastic opportunity to build your professional network. Along with Facebook and Twitter, and any other social networking tools you choose to use, promoting and growing your business just got easier. That being said, we'd be remiss if we didn't mention a few do's and don'ts.

CHAPTER THREE

Nine Social Networking Dos and Don'ts

We're just going to jump right into these do's and don'ts. You may want to actually print the list so you can optimize your social networking strategy for maximum results.

#1 Do write attention grabbing posts. Attention grabbing posts can be created a number of ways including:

- Ask Questions - Asking a question helps engage your reader immediately.
- Arouse curiosity – Make them have to click through to find out what you're talking about.
- Provide value – For example a “How to” statement demonstrates value and benefit.

#2 Do Integrate Social Networking Into Your Company Website.

- Add a find me/follow me button. Most website and blogging platforms offer widgets, modules, or plugins that help you promote your social networking profiles
- Add it to your signature. Do you have an email signature? Do you send newsletters, autoresponders, and promotions? Add your social networking link or name to your signature.

#3 Do Choose the Right Social Networking Sites

With more than 200 mainstream social networking sites, and that's not including all the forums, chat rooms and blogs, it can be difficult to decide which site is the right site to invest your time and energy in. Evaluate them based on:

- Popularity –How many active members does the site have?
- User Statistics – Is your audience participating on this site?
- Features – Does the site offer business promotion friendly features?
- Your Profile Options – Are you able to build a profile to build brand awareness and promote your business?

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#4 Do Create a Social Networking Strategy. Before you begin comparing social networking sites, spend a few hours or days creating a plan. Write down:

- Who your target audience is
- What your social networking goals are
- What image you want to convey
- What options you need to achieve your goals and create your ideal profile

#5 Do Test and Track your efforts - Social networking is like any other marketing strategy. It's important to have a goal, a plan and a system to measure and track. That way you can be sure you're spending your time and marketing budget wisely.

#6 Do Update frequently – Like blogging your social networking results are only as good as your efforts. You can also make use of tools like HootSuite that allow you to schedule your posts on Twitter and let you track several Twitter accounts at once.

#7 Do remember to be professional. Talk with your audience as if they were customers because they are potential customers. They're also potential partners and valuable resources. What impression do you want them to have of you?

#8 Don't market without contributing and participating. Yes, there are marketers who don't interact at all and only post links and promotions for their business, they're generally not as successful as those who build a community by participating.

#9 Do Start small. It's easy to overextend yourself and join too many social networking sites. Start with one or two, build great profiles and actively engaged followers before you begin marketing and promoting on another site.

Conclusion – 7 Takeaways.

1. Plan your social networking strategy in advance
2. Research social networking sites before you get started
3. Create a profile that supports your brand image and goals
4. Utilize social networking tools to make the most of your efforts
5. Keep your audience and social networking strategy in mind when participating
6. Integrate your social networking strategy into your other marketing strategies (for example when you post content online, link to it by posting it on your social networking site of choice)
7. Test and track your results and fine-tune your social marketing strategy for optimal results.

Thank you for reading.

Jens P. Berget

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