

Free Tech Report
Executive IT Info Series

*"Virtual CTO" Tim Gillen reports on
current business technology issues*

Benefits of Social Media, and Social Media Marketing, for Small Business

Social media provides a way for businesses to increase their "word of mouth" advertising. Word of mouth has always been a powerful method of promoting products and services. Think about it - when you need a new mechanic for your car, do you trust the advertisements in the newspaper or your friend who tells you how great their mechanic is?

Social networking makes it possible to establish relationships and build trust online, which allows businesses to indirectly market their products and services to people who are more receptive to the marketing messages you are sending out. Generally, people are more trusting of social media sites than they are of more traditional websites selling products or services directly, because the users of social media websites feel that there are fewer people who would have something to gain by reviewing and recommending another's product or service.

Social media marketing offers a number of benefits you would be hard pressed to find in other forms of marketing, including:

- Ability to create brand awareness. As more people see your business name and the link to your site, your logo, and other details found in social media profiles, you establish more brand awareness among your potential client base.
- Trust is established through natural connections and relationships that develop in online communities.
- Your main website will gain traffic from niche conversations had through social networking websites, discussions, groups, and through blog comments.
- Search engine optimization is increased through the increasing number of high quality links to your site and/or blog as other community members link to you and as you link to yourself from various social media sites.
- Increased visibility in search engines will boost the number of visitors who find your website when searching keywords related to your industry.
- Having a following on various social sites will decrease your dependence on search engines in general, since you'll have a number of other websites helping to drive traffic to your site or blog.
- Your participation in social media discussions and groups helps you see what is going on within your niche and find out what people want to see in the products and services you offer simply by listening to what people say to one another.
- When you are actively involved in social media, you have the opportunity to manage your reputation. You can respond to complaints in a timely manner, encourage

people to talk about their good experiences with your company, and keep an eye on what is being said about you in general by your client base.

- You can discover more about the needs, desires and trends that encourage your market niche to spend money, and use that information to fuel your marketing efforts.

Advantages of Social Media Linking

It's possible to obtain links to your website from a few different sources online - including companies who sell links to your site. One of the primary advantages of using social media marketing is that you obtain numerous links to your website and blog from multiple sources. When you publish a new blog post or an article on your website, you can automatically update each of your social media profiles across multiple websites to reflect the new post - and include a link back to your site. If your followers, fans, or connections appreciate the information in your blog posts or article, you'll see them announcing these to their followers, fans or connections, quickly growing the number of incoming links through social media. You end up with links to your site strategically placed everywhere your potential client base is already visiting online, which means the people who are clicking those links are already your targeted prospects, and have already established somewhat of a relationship with you through their connection on these social media sites.

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