

Why Social Media Needs to Be Part of Your 2013 Marketing Strategy

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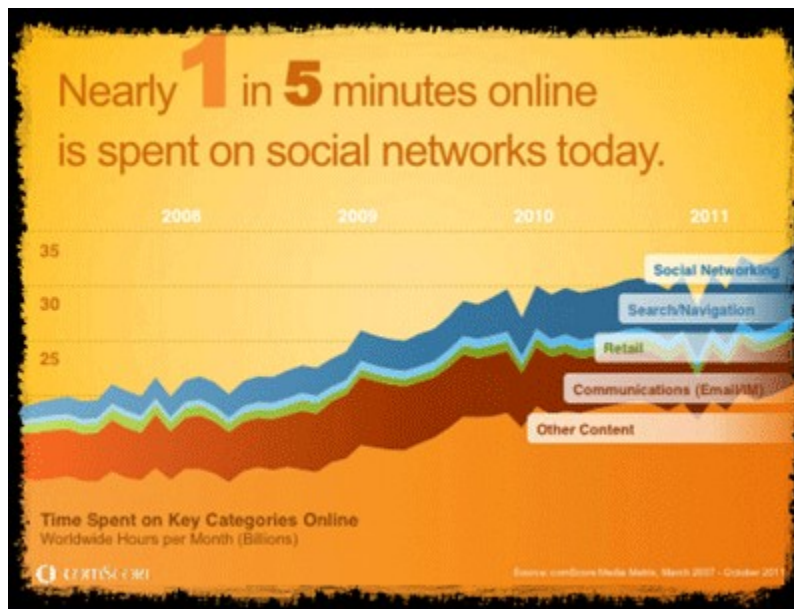
Why Social Media Needs to Be Part of Your 2013 Marketing Strategy

Those who predicted that the leading social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn would fade away or gradually start to lose members in 2012 couldn't have been more wrong. Those social media websites continued to grow become an even stronger foundation of our online lives. Furthermore, new social media sites like Pinterest were able to become incredibly popular just over the course of the past year.

Social media is here to stay. This means that in order for your business to be successful, you're going to need to make those sites part of your marketing efforts. Here are the top ten reasons why social media absolutely must be part of your marketing strategy in 2013.

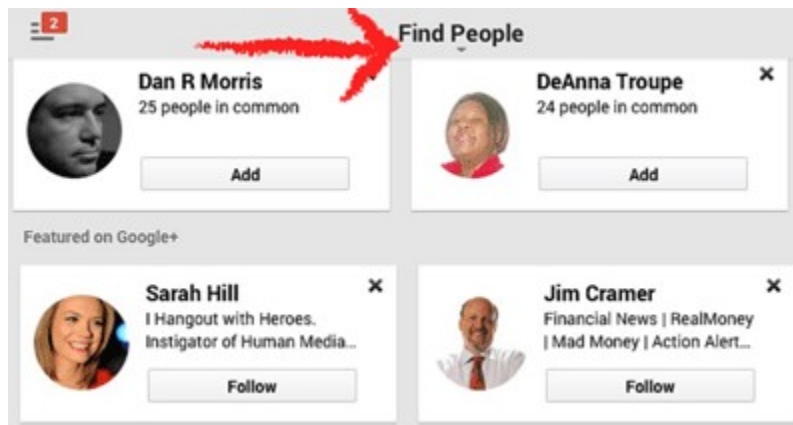
1. Time Spent on Social Media is Increasing

Perhaps you've noticed it happening to your teenage children, or even to yourself. People are spending more time on social media sites. In fact, according to a 2012 Report by comScore (http://www.comscore.com/Insights/Presentations_and_Whitepapers/2012/The_State_of_Social_Media), social media usage now accounts for 18% of all time spent online. If you want your business to be successful then you can't neglect marketing through social media – your potential customers spend too much time there.



2. Connect with Potential Customers

New customer acquisition is often the biggest hurdle for many new businesses. Not only can it be expensive to reach potential customers, it can be difficult to know exactly where might be the best place to reach them. With so many people logging in to Facebook and the other social media sites every week, those sites can be the best first place to start your marketing efforts.



3. Build Relationships with Current Customers

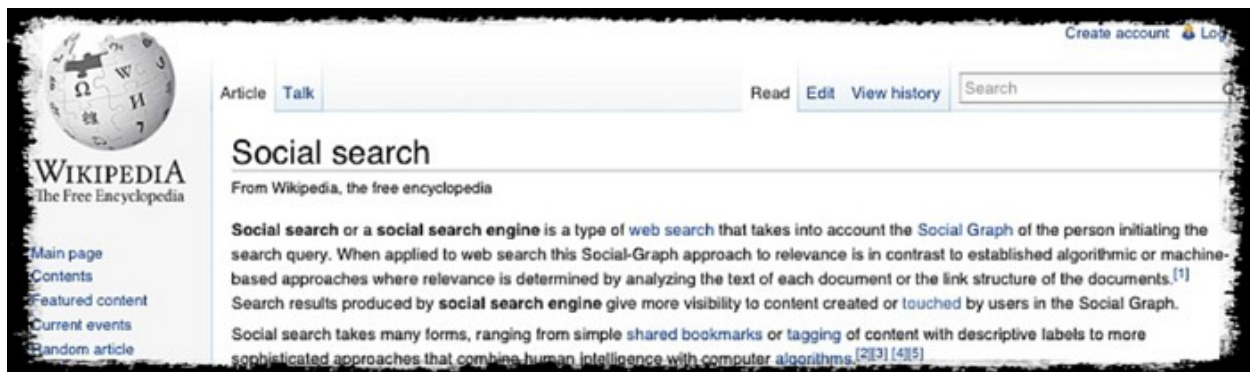
As you seek to connect with new customers, don't forget one of the best sources of business – your existing customer base. Through social media websites you can easily connect with people you've already done business, and forge relationships that can help you improve your existing products and services, as well as come up with ideas for new lines of business.



4. Social Media Influences Search Engine Rankings

While the process and methods aren't entirely opaque, it's generally agreed that the scope of your social media presence has an influence over your businesses. In addition to improving rankings to your website, people also share various links and content through social media sites – and this sharing can further boost your standing with the search engines. This influence can be seen directly if you happen to use Google as your primary search engine (as most of us do), and have enabled personal search results.

Wikipedia also has information about social search at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_search

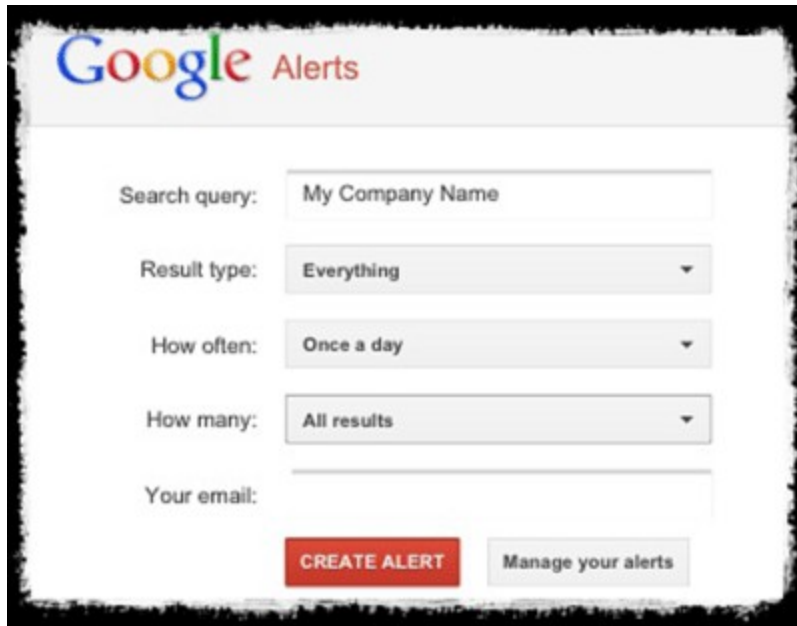


5. Conduct Customer Service Operations

One of the best ways to address any service issues with your customers is to first consider how you and your friends deal with any problems you have when you are the customers.

Chances are you don't always call the company you bought something from in order to lodge a complaint. In fact, there's a good likelihood that rather than contact the vendor, you take to Twitter or Facebook and let your friends and contacts know about your negative experience. If you proactively monitor these social media sites for mentions of your company then you can immediately address any negative customer experiences, and demonstrate to others that you're responsive to your customers' needs and feedback.

You should also consider setting up Google Alerts (log in at www.google.com/alerts) to monitor individual blogs and bulletin boards for the same reason.



6. “Social Media is the New Search”

You might hear some market observers refer to social media as being the “new search.” This means that for a larger number of individuals, when they need to look for an answer to a problem or need they have, are more likely to look to their online social networks for possible solutions rather than use a search engine such as Google or Bing.



7. Highly Targeted Marketing Opportunities

Because people share so much about themselves on social media sites, you already know a lot about your potential customer base. Just a decade ago, if you wanted to target potential customers you might be forced to purchase or rent a mailing list, and you’d never really knew how good that list was. These days you can target demographic groups with pinpoint accuracy through social networking websites.



8. Social Media Can Be Cost Effective

You can set up your own social media profiles for your business for free on all the major websites. This gives you a no-cost method to start implementing some of your social media marketing efforts almost immediately. In addition, if you choose to utilize the targeted advertising and promotional opportunities that are offered by Facebook and LinkedIn, you may find that the cost to reach targeted prospects is surprisingly competitive to other online advertising options you may have used in the past.



9. Commerce Will Be Conducted Through Social Media

In the long term, social media sites need to become profitable in order to survive. Trying to charge their members a fee to use will almost certainly be a non-starter, so it's anticipated that their revenue will come from taking a commission of any real-money transactions or ecommerce that's conducted on the site. While many of these ecommerce channels are not yet up and running, you can be sure that they're likely to become a big part of doing business online. By becoming established on social media sites and learning the best ways to reach new customers, you'll be in a strong position to take advantage of these ecommerce channels when they become active.



10. Social Media is Replacing Traditional Media

As the time we spend on social media websites increases, the time we spend reading newspapers, listening to the radio and watching television decreases. This means that you might want to reconsider any marketing efforts you may have been planning for traditional local media.



As you participate in social media sites, always strive to be professional, helpful and honest. Putting forth the best possible image will do wonders for your business.