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## **How to Connect With Social Media Influencers**

Meeting people online is easy, right? You just tap them on the digital shoulder, say ‘hi’ and become lifelong friends. Unfortunately, that’s not how it works. People are busy and they only have time to make connections with people that provide some level of value or benefit. That’s true for you and it’s certainly true for the big name social media influencers.

### **Who Are the Influencers in Your Niche?**

Chances are there are a handful of big name people in your niche that you’d love to get to know. Not only could you pick their brains and learn a lot, you could also use your connection with them to add credibility to your own business. Imagine, for example, if you have a crafting niche and are connected to Martha Stewart on Facebook. That’d be a big deal, right? You’d be able to introduce yourself to her audience and establish a high degree of authority and credibility in your niche.

### **What’s In It for Them?**

But you can’t just go up to Martha and ask her to follow you on Facebook. We’ll, you could ask but chances are that she’s going to ignore your request. After all, there’s nothing in it for her. Or is there? Before approaching any particular social media influencer, consider what value you could offer them. For example, maybe you could offer to interview them and include a transcript of the interview in your upcoming book.

### **Keep it Short and Sweet**

When you’re initially connecting with a social media influencer, keep your message short and sweet. Briefly introduce yourself and make your pitch. Let them know what you have to offer them and state your request.

### **Get Involved**

Become an active member of that influencer’s community. Become someone they know and recognize. Be polite, professional, and productive – always offer value when commenting or sharing information. Respect and professionalism will help you get your foot in the door.

### **Be Polite but Persistent**

Didn’t get a response the first time? Touch base a week later and ask if they received your message. If they’re like many people, social media is something that easily falls by the wayside. It can be difficult to keep up with.

Finally, consistently strive to create a top notch social media presence of your own. Share valuable information. Communicate with authenticity and transparency. And be an active member in your own community. The movers and shakers in your niche will take notice and maybe they’ll come knocking on your door instead!

## How to Create a Marketing Strategy Mind Map

One of the most important things that affect your marketing is how well your various tactics integrate and support or complement one another. For example, your email marketing will ideally support your blogging and your social media marketing will support your email marketing. It needs to all be tied together to get the most from your efforts.

This can be a difficult task when you have several marketing initiatives going at once. One way to more easily see the whole picture is to use a tool called a mind map.

What is a Mind Map?

A mind map is a visual tool that allows you to brainstorm and foresee connections between various ideas and concepts. It's a simple tool that you can create with nothing more than a pencil and paper. If you're a digital person there are some straight forward digital mind mapping tools you can find online.

Essentially, a mind map is created by placing one central idea in the middle of the page. From there you'll branch out and identify the various marketing tactics you're currently using. This allows you to see them all at once. You can then begin to identify ways to link the tactics together.

Identify Connections

Viewing your marketing mind map you'll begin to brainstorm ways that you can connect your various tactics. For example, you might be able to identify tasks that overlap and various ways you can integrate your efforts. You might realize that a new product you're launching might support a promotion tactic that's ongoing.

Identify Opportunities

Mind maps are a way to see opportunities to leverage skills, technology, and tasks. Mind maps have a knack of providing clarity. Don't be surprised if you notice some redundancies. This is good. You can now take care of those redundancies and save some money and time.

Marketing Mind Maps Enable Comprehensive Exploration

In addition to taking a broad scale look at your ongoing marketing efforts, you can also explore your marketing team, budget, competition, and even how your price and products or services fit into the equation. You can also evaluate your resources, your marketing budget, and your desired marketing outcomes.

Use your marketing mind map to help you find clarity. To help you forge connections between your initiatives and to help you identify opportunities to leverage your various resources. If the concept of mind mapping is difficult or overwhelming, take a look at some mind mapping templates specifically for marketing strategies.

## How To Create An Effective Email Signature

How do you sign your email messages? Do you have a simple, “Best Regards,” followed by your name? Or do you include a full resume beneath your name? The truth is that neither of these is probably very effective at helping you market your business. Yet your email signature provides a significant opportunity for you to generate traffic to your website and to increase sales and profits. Let’s take a look at a few tips, tactics, and ideas to create an effective email signature.

### #1 Social Media

Are you active on social media? Do you have a presence on one of the big players like Facebook or twitter? Do your contacts, prospects, and customers know you’re active on social media? Your email signature is an excellent place to share a link and to invite others to connect with you. It’s recommended to simply include the link rather than a graphic or button. Many people disable the html on their email messages and will only see the text anyway.

### #2 Contact Information

Do include your contact information. However, limit yourself to the single best way to get a hold of you. If that’s your telephone number then include your telephone number. If it’s your email address then include that. Lengthy chunks of contact information are not pleasant to look at nor are they pertinent.

### #3 Keep it Short and Sweet

Consider including your business tag line or a short message that reinforces your products or services. For example, if you’re a home organizer your signature might be “Your partner in living a simpler & more organized life!” You’d follow up with your website URL and a social media link or two. That’s it. If you want to include more, take care and consider hiring a professional to help. There are email signature services that can create a business card type signature complete with your logo and tagline.

Finally, test your email signature. Make sure that all of the links work. View your signature on a variety of browsers too, to make sure it looks the way you want it to. And if possible, send visitors to a specific web page on your site created specifically to track your results. For example, if you want to send them to your home page, consider creating a duplicate home page for your email signature clicks. You can then test and track to find out how many people actually click on your email signature links.

## How To Create Your Company's Pinterest Page

Pinterest took off last year and it shows no signs of slowing down. Men, women, and children, people of all ages, nationalities and interests spend hours on the site each day pinning images they find useful, interesting, or just plain fun.

Pinterest is a fantastic way to create a visual representation of your company and strengthen your brand. Additionally, it's yet another social media tool you can use to help build a connection between you and your audience.

So how do you go about creating a Pinterest page for a business? While in many ways creating your company's Pinterest page is like creating your personal page, there are some significant differences.

### #1 What Are Your Pinterest Goals?

What do you want to achieve with Pinterest? Spell it out in advance so you can create a plan to achieve it. For example, if you want to use Pinterest to show customer success using your products or services you might create boards that support that goal. A weight loss company might post client before and after pictures. If your goal was community involvement you might invite others to share their visual success stories with you on Pinterest.

### #2 What Boards Support your Goals?

Imagine a Pinterest board like a large cork board. Your cork board has a theme and you pin various images to that board to support your theme. A board labeled pink cupcakes for example would be covered with images of pink cupcakes. Pretty simple, right? That's how it works on Pinterest too. However, instead of hanging on your wall, the boards are available for everyone to enjoy, comment on, and re-pin. Think of approximately 6-10 different boards you can create to support your goals.

### #3 Determine Your Desired Level of Interaction

As mentioned, you can allow others to pin images to your boards. They're called "contributors" and they can help you build a thriving Pinterest community. They also require a bit more maintenance because you'll undoubtedly have people pinning images that you don't want to represent your company. In order to be able to pin on your boards they must be invited. And you can only invite people or boards that you follow. See how it can get complicated quickly? Spend some time determining how you want others to interact with each board and how these interactions can support your goals.

Finally, be sure to take steps to optimize your boards. Add each board to a category so people can find you when they search. Use hashtags to identify the subject matter. For example, [#Weightlosssuccessstories](#). And include links to your website or to the site where the image was found. When you upload an image to Pinterest, you can embed a link in the image. Then whenever someone clicks on the pin, they are taken to the embedded URL. Pinterest offers some significant marketing and community building opportunities. Visit the site, browse, and explore how you might be able to use it to market your business.

## **How to Evaluate Business Advice**

When you own a business you get advice from unlikely and unexpected sources. And there's no shortage of business advice to be found online. Everyone has a secret strategy to make millions overnight.

The truth is that some of the business advice, unsolicited and found online, may be good, useful advice that helps you achieve your goals more quickly. Other advice is just plain bad and can cause you a world of trouble. But how do you know the difference? What advice will help you move forward and what advice will hold you back?

### **#1 Consider the Source**

Does the person giving advice have experience in business? Do they have experience in the topic they're giving you advice on? For example, your great uncle bob may be a fantastic CFO but if he's giving you marketing advice, it may not be advice you want to follow. Consider how dated the advice may be as well. Going back to Great Uncle Bob, maybe he was a superstar marketer thirty years ago but what worked for him then may not work for you now.

Finally, consider the intention of the person giving the advice. Are their intentions noble and good or do they have underlying emotions that may be interfering with their advice. For example, your mastermind group member may be struggling and envious of your success.

### **#2 What do YOU Think?**

As you build and grow your business chances are you're going to ask many questions and seek the answers in a variety of sources. However, the final decision always rests with you. It's important to be able to weigh the information carefully but it's more important to trust yourself and your decisions. What feels right for you? You may go against the best advice available and come out ahead simply because you listened to your instincts and did what felt right for you and your business.

### **#3 Clarity**

Often, advice can be boiled down into fine points. Instead of looking for broad answers to problems, tackle one small issue at a time. For example, instead of wondering why your email marketing isn't working and asking for help on your entire strategy, focus on the next email you're sending out. What can you do to make that email successful? Identify the single issue you want advice or help on and then seek answers to that specific problem.

Business advice will continue to come at you from a variety of directions. Learning to sort through the advice that is right for you and the advice that isn't will help you become a more decisive leader.



## **How To Make Your Marketing Budget Go Further**

Marketing often consumes the majority of a business budget. Unfortunately, there's rarely enough money to cover all of the marketing expenses you want or need. The good news is that there are surefire ways to stretch your marketing budget and make it work harder for you without spending any extra money.

### **#1 Repurpose Everything**

Let's say you spend a good chunk of change hiring someone to create an advertisement for you. You have the graphics and the copy and you publish the advertisement on specifically chosen websites or in periodicals. You can use this same advertisement to reach people via direct mail and email. You might even have it printed on post cards which you hand out at your next speaking engagement. Or scan it into your computer and include it as part of your email signature.

Another example are the stock photos that you might purchase. Don't just use them once and then let them collect dust on your desktop. Use them in as many ways possible to get the most bang for your buck. Repurpose email marketing messages into article marketing pieces or vice versa. With each marketing tactic, consider how you can repurpose it and use it in other valuable ways.

### **#2 DIY**

There are many facets of marketing that can be exorbitantly expensive. For example stock photos can run a company thousands of dollars annually. Yet you can take a photo yourself for free – and get exactly what you want. Write your own marketing email messages and PPC advertisements. Sure, it may take you a little time to perfect your craft, however you know your audience and you know how to communicate with them.

### **#3 Outsource to Freelancers**

When you outsource marketing needs you have two choices. You can generally hire a specialty company to manage the task for you, or you can hire a freelancer. It can take more time to screen freelancers to find a qualified one, however you can save a significant amount of money by finding hidden talent on a freelance job site.

Finally, be sure to test and track everything. Continue doing what works and cut the rest loose. Only spend your time, money, and energy on proven tactics. Sure, you'll need to continue to try new things. However, start them slowly, use them in limited amounts and keep tight control on the results. Test and track your data every step of the way to make sure you're spending your marketing budget wisely.



## How To Organize Your Marketing Ideas

How many marketing initiatives do you have going on at one time? Think about it for a minute. You probably have a blog. You may have an autoresponder or email newsletter. You may have pay per click ads, social media marketing, and maybe information marketing initiatives all going on at once.

It's a lot to manage under the best of circumstances. If you don't have an easy to use system to keep it all organized, some marketing tactics can fall through the cracks. They may not perform as well as they could. And you may miss opportunities to integrate marketing tactics to maximize your return on investment.

Organization is the First Key to Your Success!

### Step #1 Find a System

There isn't a right or wrong system. We'll actually there is. The right system is a system that you use consistently. Take a look at all of your options. If you're a pen and paper person then an organized three ring binder may be ideal. However, there are some amazing technologies that are easy to use and make organization as easy as clicking a button. Take a look at various applications for your smart phone or tablet. Or explore some of the basic project management tools.

### #2 Consolidate and Separate

Regardless of the system you use, there needs to be both a division and a unification of information. Consider keeping all of your ideas in one notebook. However, the plans for how you're going to execute each tactic may be better if it's in a designated section. For example, blogging ideas can be in your main notebook along with your promotion ideas, your email marketing ideas and so forth. However your blogging content plan should ideally have its own section and its own task list, editorial calendar and so on.

### #3 Create a Master Plan

Flipping through six different marketing calendars is enough to give anyone a headache. Pull it all together into one document that you can reference quickly. For example, some project management systems make it easy to create individual tasks lists and then a unified calendar for milestones and deadlines.

You can use this master plan to create your weekly action plan. Ideally, it will outline all of the tasks you need to manage, or outsource, for the week. It will identify the dates you're publishing various pieces of content and where you're publishing them. From this simple system of organization you can make sure all of your marketing efforts get the attention they deserve.

## How to Turn a Marketing Setback Around

It happens. Big marketing plans don't turn out as you'd hoped. The time, money and energy you sunk into the marketing tactic just doesn't pan out. Results are flat and so are your hopes. Before you throw in the towel or get discouraged there are a few dos and don'ts to consider.

### #1 Don't React

One of the biggest mistakes people make is to have an immediate reaction. Allow yourself and your company time to sort through what went wrong. It may not be immediately apparent. Evaluate the process from inception to conclusion. What could have been done better? What worked well? What might you do to make minor changes and reap better results?

### #2 Identify the Problem

Generally, marketing efforts fall through for one primary reason. However, you have to uncover the reason. What was the biggest contributor to the setback? For example, if you initiated an AdWords campaign and received a big bill but no increase in sales it may simply be a minor change in your call to action that can make all the difference. Or maybe a campaign that was working is suddenly flat and producing no results. What changed? You may need to dig deep to identify the problem.

### #3 Look for Opportunities

With every set back there is an opportunity. The opportunity may be to learn more about your audience, your niche, or to identify areas where a specific marketing tactic just doesn't work. Your audience and your niche are unique. There won't be a one size fits all approach that works. You'll need to try various marketing tactics to see what works and what doesn't. This means there will be some failures and some setbacks.

### #4 Recruit Your Team

Look around for skills, knowledge, and experience that you can leverage. Who can help you succeed the next time around? Who has specialty skills or has dealt this type of setback before? What technology can help you succeed? What resources do you have to take advantage of any opportunities the setback presents and turn it around?

### #5 Put Systems in Place

The only way to track success and evaluate your results is to put systems in place that do just that. Use analytics. Track each step of the process from the beginning to completion. This information will help ensure that your next marketing initiative is a success.

Finally, take action. It's not enough to sit and stew and plan and process. Once you know what went wrong and you've identified potential opportunities, created a team and have your systems in place it's time to step back into the game and try again. This time, you're armed with more information and experience – both valuable resources.

## **How to Use an Editorial Calendar to Plan Your Content Marketing**

Does creating content ever seem like you're flying by the seat of your pants? You have a blog post due today, an email due tomorrow and you have no idea what you're going to write about. Never mind linking the content together to send a cohesive message to your audience. An editorial calendar may be your key to content salvation.

What is an Editorial Calendar?

An editorial calendar is a simple tool. At the most basic level it's a list of what you're going to publish and when you're going to publish it. You can then add layers to your editorial calendar including the purpose for the content, where it will be published, who will write it, any internal links, notes to yourself, resources to write or create the content. You can also include any promotions you want to include in the content as well as your call to action.

As you can see, there's a lot of information that you can include in your editorial calendar. The more information you include, the easier it is to create a content marketing strategy that succeeds.

The First Step

The first step to creating an editorial calendar is to choose your tool. A simple spreadsheet is an easy and cost effective tool to make it happen. Spreadsheets offer you unlimited categories to track information about your content. The information is easy to access, easy to print, and easy to share. There are also online editorial calendar tools or you can grab a printable calendar and write your notes in the spaces provided.

The Second Step

The next step is to decide what you want to include in your content plan and calendar. For example, do you want to include a linking strategy? Do you want to make notes about sources or who will write the content? What about repurposing strategies? Decide, in advance, what you want to include and what will help you create the best content possible.

Step Three – Using Your Editorial Calendar

Using an editorial calendar is easy. The tricky part is sitting down once a month and establishing it. It's essential to sit down and fill in the categories you've laid out. One way to stay on top of things is to sit down at the end of the month to plan the next month's content. And any notes you have for future months can be documented at the same time.

Taking it To the Next Level

If you want to take it to the next level, consider creating a separate editorial calendar to track different types of content and content marketing initiatives. For example, your newsletter might have one calendar and your blog another. Editorial calendars help make content marketing easier. Find a tool you'll use, define your categories and required information, and start enjoying the benefits immediately.

## How to Encourage Others to Share their Story

Share your story. Have you ever been asked to do that? It's actually one of the more powerful questions you can ask your customers and prospects. And it's a fantastic way to get people involved with your business and to create a community.

### Why "Share Your Story" Works

Facebook used to have an application called "Share Your Story." It allowed users to create a system to collect customer and user stories and publish them on their Facebook page. For example, if you were in the dog training niche you might invite others to share their dog training success stories. They'd fill out a form, submit their story complete with images if they wanted, and the story would become part of your Facebook page. While this particular application no longer exists, the ability to capitalize on this concept still does.

Share your story works because people love to talk about themselves. And when you invite them to talk about their successes, or challenges, it connects them to you in a personal way. And anyone that reads each story is moved to comment, share their own story and get involved. It's an incredibly dynamic tool to generate conversation.

### How to Embrace the Share Your Story Concept

The Contest – One great way to motivate people to share their stories is to hold a contest. Invite prospects and customers to submit a video or a written essay sharing their story. Publish these submissions on a single web page and invite others to read, comment, and vote. The best story wins a prize.

You can use social media to publish the submitted stories or publish them on your blog or website and include links and teasers on social media sites to generate interest and motivate people to take action. For example, if you have a weight loss niche you might offer a \$500 gift card to a sporting goods store to the winner of the contest. Snippets of each submission can be published on your Facebook page with a link back to your website to read more. You might even share some stories in their entirety to entice people to visit your site and submit their own story.

### Use it To Collect Information

L.L Bean, the outdoor clothing company, has a share your story campaign on their Facebook page. Users can title their story, upload images and videos, and include content. However, what may be most useful for L.L. Bean is the second part of this form where they ask the following questions:

- \* How old are you?
- \* What is your gender?
- \* How often do you shop at L.L.Bean?
- \* Location

This is useful demographic information and when combined with a social media campaign that builds a community and gets people involved in touting their brand, well that's just good marketing.