



Quickstart Guide To Social Media

Social Media And Success

- Does your organization want to leverage social media, but not know how?
- Have you heard the buzz about social media and wondered what it's all about?
- Are you a frustrated social media advocate because your boss doesn't seem to get it?
- Are you skeptical about real return on investment (ROI) using social media?

If your answer is “yes” to any of these questions, then this white paper is for you. We want to answer these questions in order to give you confidence so you can intentionally move into this growing and exciting communication form known as social media.

Level The Playing Field

To start, we will clearly define what social media (SM) is and is not. We will also touch on the concept of “community”—a word often used today—and clarify the idea and context of online community. We will later share examples of the most popular kinds of SM and finish with the benefits of SM to your organization.

Many ask, “What is social media?”

Social media is a shift in how people discover, read, and share news, information, and content; it supports the human need for social interaction with technology. It supports the democratization of knowledge and information, transforming people from content consumers into content producers. Social media has become extremely popular because it allows people to connect in the online world to form relationships for personal, political, and business use. (Source: Wikipedia)

SM is not a broadcast or a monologue such as radio or television (one to many). SM allows people to interact, connect, and dialogue (many to many).

SM has become a great “leveler”. You no longer have to be a larger multi-billion or million dollar company to get your word and brand out. With many free and low cost tools you can accomplish the same things large ad and marketing agencies have been doing for years. For instance, “Blogging is one huge

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word-of-mouth engine,” says author Shel Israel. He and co-author Robert Scoble, formerly of Microsoft, go on to say, “We believe that [social media] is not only wise for businesses wishing to be closer to their customers, but essential.”

Engaging customers and constituents turns them into company champions. They in turn reach out to their networks and encourage use of products and services.

The Power of Community

The popularity and widespread use of SM brings people together to form or join communities. The dictionary defines community as:

A social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests, perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists; a group of men or women leading a common life according to a rule; a social group of any size who often have a common cultural or historical heritage.



Likewise, an online community is a group of people that primarily interact using communication media for social, educational, informational, and professional purposes.

Think about your personal networks. How many people are simply a degree or two away from your close friends within these networks? What kinds of networks are you involved in? You will find that many of your communities overlap: business, hobbies, family, neighborhood, spiritual, social, etc.

Now ask yourself who your “trusted advisors” are within each of these groups. Think of these people as your Power Team or Fire Starters. They are the people you go to and hear from on a regular basis. You have taken the time to build “community” with them and you look out for one another. Whenever there is a question, an issue, a concern, or an exciting event, you know you can turn to this community of friends and constituents, and the word will spread. This is the power of community.

Reach Out And Touch Someone?

For the most part the world has not changed much, but technology sure has. We used to travel to talk with friends, then we started writing, and on the heels of that came telegraph, followed by telephone, and the ball has kept rolling. While



many of these early forms were one-to-one communication over a period of time, we now have one-to-many and many-to-many types of communication that are instantaneous. Choose your flavor of SM.

Some of the types of SM can be categorized in the following manner:

- Communication (blogs, micro-blogging, social networks)
- Collaboration (wikis, social book-marking, social news)
- Multimedia (photo sharing, video sharing, music sharing)
- Reviews & Opinions (product reviews Q&A)
- Entertainment (virtual worlds, online games)

Brands associated with these SM types would be:

Communication

- Blogs - Blogger, Live Journal, Typepad, Wordpress, etc.
- Micro-blogging - Twitter, Jaiku, Zannel, Plurk, etc.
- Social Networks - MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, Bebo, Ning, etc.
- Social Network Aggregation - FriendFeed, NutshellMail
- Events - Upcoming, Meetup, Eventful, etc.

Collaboration

- Wikis - Wikipedia, PBWiki, Dokuwiki, wetpaint, etc.
- Social Bookmarking - Delicious, StumbleUpon, Google Reader, etc.
- Social News - Digg, Mixx, Reddit, etc.
- Opinion - Yelp, epinions, etc.

Multimedia

- Photo - Flickr, SmuMug, PhotoBucket, Zoomr, etc.
- Video - Vimeo, YouTube, sevenload, etc.
- Live Casting - Ustream.tv, Justin.tv, etc.
- Audio/Music Sharing - imeem, Last.fm, ccMixster, etc.

Reviews & Opinions

- Product Reviews - epinions.com, MouthShut.com, etc.
- Q&A - Yahoo! Answers, WikiAnswers, Google Answers, etc.

Entertainment

- Media and Entertainment - Cisco EOS



- Virtual Worlds - SecondLife, The Sims Online, Forterra, etc.
- Game Sharing - Miniclip, Kongregate, etc.

At this time several of the most widely used and relevant SM tools are: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, and blogs. We will briefly take the time to address each one here.

Twitter—Microblogging on the Go



Twitter is a communication type of SM. It is considered by many to be micro-blogging. Posts are called “tweets.” Each tweet is limited to 140 characters, thus the term micro-blogging.

Twitter has over 6 million users and over 21 million visitors a month.

Because of this many use Twitter to:

- Create strong communities
- Promote better customer service
- Prospect and sell
- Build stronger brand awareness
- Continue networking

Linking your tweets to your other SM accounts makes for a single point of entry that touches numerous media types

Facebook—Connecting with Your Friends



Facebook is a social network for your friends and “fans”. Users can create personal profile pages and well as fan pages, groups and causes. Facebook is one of the first environments where online users freely share personal information about themselves.

Facebook boasts 200+ million active users and expects to be at 500 million by the year 2011, if not sooner. It is ranked #4 on the web by traffic reporting site Alexa. Of note, 70 percent of Facebook users are outside the United States.

Many people use Facebook to keep in touch with friends, classmates, and family. Others use the causes and groups features to promote awareness of a topic or issue. For other organizations they have found power in creating fan pages.

Fan pages allow unlimited users whereas groups only allow 5000 users. You can also create tabs on fan pages for additional content and applications that are search engine friendly and help people find you. Fan pages are also extendible via FBML (Facebook Markup Language).



LinkedIn—Build your Business and Professional Network



LinkedIn is a social network for businesses, organizations, and professionals. Like Facebook you can create and belong to groups, you can also post and answer questions, display your Twitter feed, blog posts, and even your latest PowerPoint presentation.

LinkedIn has about 35+ million members. Some of the many features members take advantage of include:

- A contact network consisting of their direct connections, the connections of each of their connection (termed second-degree connections) and also the connections of second-degree connections (termed third-degree connections). This can be used to gain an introduction to someone you wish to know through a mutual trusted contact.
- Finding jobs, people, and business opportunities recommended by someone in one's contact network.
- Listing jobs and searching for potential candidates.
- Ability for job seekers can review the profile of hiring managers and discover which of their existing contacts can introduce them.

Flickr—Share Your Photos



Flickr is an image and video hosting website, web services suite, and online community platform. In addition to being a popular website for users to share personal photographs, the service is widely used by bloggers as a photo repository. As of June 2009, it claims to host more than 3.6 billion images, up from 3 billion in November 2008.

Some of the features Flickr users enjoy are:

- Tagging images for easier searching
- Clustering photos into sets
- Clustering sets into photo collections
- RSS (Really Simple Syndication) for subscribing to a Flickr feed

At this time it is not clear how many registered users there are on Flickr. But, when Yahoo! bought the company in 2005 it was approaching one million, so it would be safe to assume the current number is three to four times larger.



YouTube—Share Your Videos



YouTube is a video sharing website on which users can upload and share videos. YouTube uses Adobe Flash Video technology to display a variety of user-generated video content, including movie clips, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogging and short original videos. Most of the content on YouTube has been uploaded by individuals, although media corporations including CBS, the BBC, UMG, and other organizations offer some of their material via the site, as part of the YouTube partnership program.

Unregistered users can watch the videos, while registered users are permitted to upload an unlimited number of videos. Accounts of registered users are called “channels”.

YouTube accepts video in numerous formats and can display videos in low resolution, high resolution, and for mobile devices. YouTube videos can also be embedded on blogs and websites.

According to comScore internet research, 100 million people use YouTube, on average 14.8 billion videos are viewed a month, and the average length of a video is three to four minutes.

Blogging—Share your Opinions



Blogging might be considered the grandfather of SM. A blog (short for “web log”) is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries or posts, commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Content is commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order.

Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject while others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art (artlog), photographs (photoblog), sketches (sketchblog), videos (vlog), music (MP3 blog), and audio (podcasting).

Some of the features of blogging software are:

- Tagging
- Categorizing
- Linking
- Search engine optimization



- Commenting
- Subscribing and more

Many consider their blog to be “home base” for all their other Social Media. This is the place they drive customers and constituents to in order to foster deeper and ongoing relationships.

How Social Media Can Be Of Benefit

Many in leadership expect a quick return on investment (ROI) when delving into SM. The reality is it often takes six months to a year to see true ROI. Early on you will want to measure return on engagement (ROE). The SM dialogue drives interaction between you and your donors and constituents. You are building trust and loyalty—the offspring of these results in ROI.

Take time to develop quality networks and quality content. Your donors and customers will appreciate your passion and caring. Creating and “openness” with your constituents does not go unnoticed. A stronger loyalty is forged and people feel closer to your organization as a result. This sense of personal connection turns into more profitable relationships.

Maybe you are thinking, “This is not for me or my organization right now.” Mike Hyatt, CEO of Thomas Nelson Publishing, says you are not alone. Mike describes from experience, the SM lifecycle he went through:

In my experience, corporate executives go through five stages in adopting new communication technologies.

Stage 1: Ridicule.

The executives initially think these technologies are silly. In the 1980s when I started using email, one of the executives in my company made fun of me, because email didn’t provide (he thought) a permanent record. “Besides,” he said, “Not everyone has it. It will never catch on.”

Stage 2: Control.

The executives grow concerned about abuse of the technology and try to control it. With email, the company I worked for issued a formal “email policy.” You had to have a legitimate business reason to use email. You then had to get approval from a Vice President. Finally, you had to sign-up for your own AOL or CompuServe account and pay for it yourself. (We didn’t have a corporate email system at the time.)



Stage 3: Experimentation.

The executives begin experimenting with the technology themselves. Again, to use email as an example, as more and more people started using email, I saw executives begin to tip-toe into the water. I remember one executive who had his secretary print out his emails and put them in his physical inbox. He would then dictate a response.

Stage 4: Adoption.

The executives start using the technology themselves. Eventually, executives learn that the technology is not so scary, and they can actually be more productive if they use it themselves. Some executives are figuring this out with Twitter. They can use it as a competitive advantage to be more responsive to their customers, employees, and even vendors. Besides, it's kind of fun.

Stage 5: Dedication.

The executives wonder how the organization could function without the technology. Can you imagine joining a company today and not being given an email address? It's now standard operating procedure. Everyone is expected to use email. No one I know would even think about sending a paper memo any more.

Though my colleagues may disagree with me, I wouldn't be surprised if it [social media] eventually replaces email altogether—just as FedEx replaced conventional letters, faxes replaced FedEx, and email replaced faxes. The trend is always toward faster, more immediate communication.

Hyatt, M. Where Is Your Organization In The Twitter Life Cycle?. Retrieved Septmeber 2007, from <http://michaelhyatt.com>

Like yours and many other organizations, tapping into new markets is a challenge. With SM you will have access through your social networks to these new and emerging markets. And guess what? You will have a direct line to your customer and he/she can be a powerful advocate and marketer for you. People will be on your side and will open doors for you. This will bring new donors and customers—all with a relatively small investment of time and energy.



First Steps

If you or your organization is not already involved in SM, here are some first steps to get you started:

1. Determine your purpose and goals for utilizing SM—this is where you think about your strategy.
2. Become familiar with the environment. Set up a Twitter account and see how people interact. Read several blogs and participate by adding comments.
3. Find out where your customers “hang out”. This can be accomplished with a well-built survey linked to your web site.
4. Decide where people will get to know you best. For some it is your web site while for others it is your blog. Wherever you decide, think of it as “home base.”
5. Set up your first “outpost” environment. This could be a Facebook Fan Page, Twitter account, or YouTube channel. From your outposts you will point people to your home.
6. Work with your communications and marketing staff to create consistent messaging that drives people back home and to action.
7. Start tracking your results. Are you gaining Twitter followers or Facebook fans? Are they subscribing, commenting, and interacting?

How Can We Help?

5Q wants to help serve you and your organization. We see social media as an easy win with huge upside potential. We would love to help you think through your social media strategy and how it fits with your mission and vision.

We believe you can have a strong community of followers, excellent customer service, constituents talking about you and raising brand awareness, and advancing into markets you never dreamed of before.

Contact us today and we'll get your strategy started with our social media questionnaire. Email sales@5qcommunications.com or call 800-747-4214.



About 5Q



5Q Communications is a full-service Web Agency founded in 2004. 5Q specializes in building, maintaining, and growing online brands. We employ experienced staff from both North and South America with expertise in web and social media strategy, consulting services, SEO, usability, custom web design and development, custom application programming, and eMarketing and measurement services. Our passion is partnering with mid-sized organizations and media ministries to help them succeed in their web endeavors. As a result,

5Q is privileged to partner with over a hundred clients like Joni and Friends, Revive Our Hearts, Ambassador Advertising, GoCentury, CBMC, Biblica, ReFrame Media, Angel Ministries, and the Billy Graham Center.



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<http://www.5qcommunications.com> | 1-800-747-4214
email: sales@5qcommunications.com