

Business in today's day and age is dominated by customers and their demands. People prefer to see referrals, reviews over Google search results, or a website before purchasing a product. To stand by the flow, we need to learn what people say about us. You need to actively participate in relevant communities to interact and influence masses. You need to engage with social media to manage your online reputation. Social media marketing is a must to target a wider customer base and expand your business.

Social Media Marketing is the activity of driving website traffic through social media sites.

What is Social Media?

Social Media is a platform that lets us participate in social networking. We can share our posts on various social media platforms to improve business visibility. Today it is the best source for news updates, marketing, education, and entertainment.



History of Social Media Marketing

Social Media seems to be a new trend, but its roots stretch to the beginning of computer era. What we see today is the result of centuries-old social media development. **Usenet**, which was launched in 1979, was the first progenitor of social media, and the journey from Usenet to Facebook is a long one. Usenet allowed users to post on newsgroups. It was followed by **bulletin board systems** (BBS) which allowed users to login and interact. Online services like **prodigy** were the precursors to BBS. After online services, internet relay chat came into light which gave way to instant messaging.

In the 90s, dating sites and forums were on peak, which led to the development of social networks. But they did not let users make friend lists. **Six degrees** launched to overcome this feature. It allowed profile creation and listing peers. It was purchased and shut down after playing for a decade. Blogging emerged in this phase, creating a

sensation in social media. It is popular even today. Other sites like **BlackPlanet** (African-American Social Website) and **MiGente** (Latino) cropped up having provision to create profiles and add friends.

Modern social networks came into picture post 2000. Apple launched its **Friendster** in 2002. It has millions of users. **Hi5** and **LinkedIn** were launched in 2003. LinkedIn is a ground for professionals to reach out to one another. **MySpace** also originated in 2003 and became well known by 2006. Similarly **Facebook** was launched in 2004 and surpassed MySpace, Orkut, Multiply, etc., and is still expanding. This decade also conceived media sharing platforms like **photobucket**, **flickr**, **youtube**, **instagram**, etc., along with news and bookmarking platforms like **Digg** and **Delicious**.

Since 2000, Social Media has bloomed to horizon and is still expanding limitlessly. Along with media sharing, many other portals that provide real-time updates were introduced, for example, **Twitter**, **Tumblr**, etc. In 2007, Facebook launched its advertising system.

Importance of Social Media

The importance of social media is undebatable. It is a powerful channel of marketing – a game changer for any business. It provides us the flexibility to communicate at both personal as well as business levels.

Business owners can improve search rankings, leads, sales, and traffic using search media. This can be done at reduced marketing expenses. Besides business, it is a cool platform to connect with friends and dear ones.

SMO Strategy for Business

A wisely implemented Social Media Optimization (SMO) strategy can give a great boost to your business. To draw maximum benefit out of Social Media, you need to set clear and well-defined business goals and objectives. The following points are the backbone of any well-laid SMO strategy –

- Set measurable and achievable goals.
- Know your customers.
- Research over market and trends.
- Explore more social networking platforms. Reflect your presence on all.
- Choose core topics related to your business. Use them in content.
- Set Social Engagement parameters.
- Plan your resource use.
- Track your results.

SMO – Key Concepts

- Aim for building reputation by depicting yourself as a trusted source or business.
- Encourage more engagement and sharing.
- Be an authorized name in your industry.
- Gear up originality.
- Keep it social.
- Master over your media platforms.
- Optimize every single point that hinders your efforts.

Business Profile Creation

Create an impactful Business profile. Add a well-defined persona and proficiency statement of your business.

- Study competitors' business profile, analyze their strong points, and add them to yours.
- Add prominent features of your business that makes it stand out among others.
- Include the milestones achieved by your company.
- Add address and other details.
- Include data and statistics.
- List your renowned vendors.
- Add some keywords to it to get noticed by the web crawler.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is a degree to which your brand name is known. Brand name solidifies customers' trust. So, it is important that your brand name overshadows your products. Promoting the brand name helps your business grow and get over obsolete business state.

Social Media Marketing can help you in branding your business. It helps you increase your public profile as well. All you need is to

- Choose right Social Media Channel for your business.
- Finalize a social content strategy.
- Make a strong content strategy.
- Participate in good conversation with your customers to let them feel more connected.
- Keep track of all key metrics like potential reach, conversation share, links, etc.



Social Engagement

Social Media Engagement is the process of reaching out to potential customers and interacting with them through Social Media. It is primarily done in order to draw attention towards a particular product or a service. It is a two-way channel where a consumer can share a good relationship with the vendors.

To achieve optimum reach, you need to engage with your audience. It can be a relentless task. To grab more out of less, you need to strategize your social media engagement norms.

- Use 'Social Channels' to reach out fans.
- Use Social Media platforms to announce any event you are organizing.
- Entertain Posts your audience is posting.
- Use Social Media Circles to participate in valuable and educational conversations.
- Participate in Social Media groups.

Measure your engagement level to trace your engagement efforts. It is basically a ratio between the social platforms that you use and the social platforms that you don't use to engage. The higher is the level, the stronger is your bonding with the audience.

Viral Marketing

Any hot topic that is infectious is Viral Marketing. It is 'exposing an idea' for a cause. It is a message getting viral by passing it from one to another with an intention of boosting your business.

Social Media Viral Marketing is the use of social media channels to spread any message for creating brand awareness. Viral marketing rate may differ on each level.

Examples of Viral Marketing

ALS Ice Bucket Challenge – ALS Association received increased media attention by soaking the whole world. Even celebrities and entrepreneurs participated in it.

Ashton Kutcher hits 1M – Ashton has been a seeding strategist who influenced his fans by an influencing message that went viral.

Hotmail went viral – Hotmail team placed a link 'Want a free email account? Sign-up for Hotmail today.' in the footer of any mail sent from a Hotmail account. It was a viral hit.

Goal and Objective

Below is a list of 9 ultra-effective social media goals to help you maximize your returns from social media:

1. Increase brand awareness

According to our State of Social Media 2016 survey, brand awareness is the top reason marketers use social media. It's easy to understand why: The average person spends nearly two hours on social media every day, and therefore social media is one of the best places to grab consumers' attention.

Social media has also enabled marketers to have a more quantitative understanding of their brand's presence and reach in the online world. And now most social media platforms provide data on the reach of your content, allowing you to report your online presence more accurately.

2. Drive traffic to your website

One step further from having a brand presence on social media is driving visitors to your website or blog, who might turn into your customers.

Three in five marketers use social media to distribute their content and drive traffic to their sites. A team at HubSpot, for instance, grew their monthly blog traffic by 241% over eight months through social media experiments.

3. Generate new leads

Lead generation is typically used by companies with a long sales process, such as enterprise software companies.

According to HubSpot,

It's a way of warming up potential customers to your business and getting them on the path to eventually buying.

4. Grow revenue (by increasing signups or sales)

If you don't have a long sales process, you can use social media to turn your audience into paying customers directly. For example, social media advertising, such as Facebook ads, is becoming an increasingly popular strategy to boost sales.

5. Boost brand engagement

Engagement is the second top reason why marketers use social media. And research has found that social media interactions improve brand perception, loyalty, and word of mouth recommendations.

Furthermore, social media platform's algorithms, such as those on Facebook and Instagram, are prioritizing posts with higher engagement on their feeds due to the belief that users will be more interested in seeing highly engaging content.

6. Build a community around your business

Tracking audience numbers such as total followers and fans is great, but we've also noticed a rise in the number of closed communities and chats business have been focusing on over the past year-or-so. For example, we run #Bufferchat every week on Twitter, we also have a Slack Community (and some businesses are even

7. Effective social customer service

Having a good customer service on social media can help to increase revenue, customer satisfaction score, and retention. But in our State of Social Media study, only one in five respondents (21%) said that they use social media for customer support.

The trend of people turning to social media for customer support will likely continue, and we think there's still a huge opportunity for businesses to differentiate themselves from their competitors with great social media customer service.

8. Increase mentions in the press

Despite the fact that social media has enabled companies to own their news and share stories directly with their fans and followers across social media, the press and media can still drive significant results and PR still plays a key role in many businesses' marketing strategies.

9. Never miss a mention through social listening

Social media has brought businesses and their customers closer and now it is much easier for customers to share their feedback with companies than it ever has been before. It has become a common trend for customers to air their thoughts about products and companies on social media. By catching and replying to these posts, your customers will feel heard.