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# Social Media

## Why You Should Care & Where to Begin



WEBSITES THAT MEAN BUSINESS

## Social Media. Why You Should Care & Where to Begin.

### ■ The Purchasing Funnel

When a customer decides to buy a product or service, whether it's a candy bar or a large screen television, there are three core steps they take:

- Awareness where they realize they need or want an item
- Consideration where they weigh and research their options and decide which product and company to go with
- Purchase where they actually make the transaction

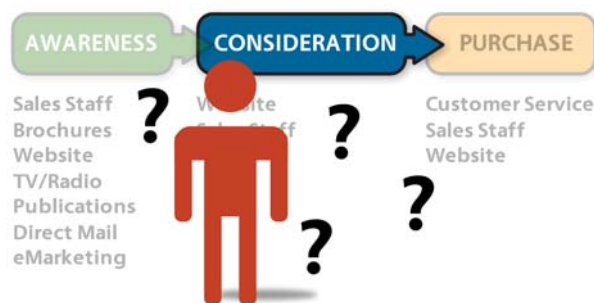
### ■ Traditional Marketing

Using traditional marketing practices, you as a company, aid your customer's awareness by crafting an entire marketing plan using publications, brochures, Web site(s), e-marketing and more. To help facilitate the purchasing process, you also have a fully experienced sales staff and customer service department. But, there's a huge component you're missing.



*The Purchasing Funnel: Adapted from Social Media Marketing, An Hour A Day.)*

### ■ The Reality



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The reality is that between your carefully crafted awareness marketing and the actual purchase, your customers are on their own as they consider whose product or service to buy. **Social media is quickly growing as a channel they're turning to help make these decisions.**

## ■ Social Media

Let's look at the multiple ways your customer's (we'll call him Jim) purchasing decisions are being influenced and determined by social networking interactions every day.

Jim has decided he wants to buy a product you offer. As he starts to look around (**awareness stage**), he doesn't just encounter your marketing efforts, he is also bombarded by all your competitors. Jim is quickly overwhelmed. So he does some research by talking to friends and unbiased parties to determine his best options. MANY of these conversations take place **online**.



*The Purchasing Funnel: Adapted from Social Media Marketing, An Hour A Day.)*

Over his lunch hour, Jim gets on the web and searches for product information. Because

your product is mentioned in so many **blogs, forums,** and Web sites, it comes up near the top of the search results so he clicks on it. He lands on a blog discussing your product.

He's inspired by the information he reads, so he links to that product on your Web site. While there, he sees the **customer reviews** and is able to gain helpful information from unbiased parties.

The next day, a friend sends Jim (and 30 other people) a link to **YouTube** with your competitor's product's video. But while he's playing around he finds a "how to" video about your product.

At lunch he gets a **Twitter** update on his phone with a coupon for your product.

He checks out your site again and finds your **Suggestion Box**. Here existing customers and employees have submitted ideas and suggestions for new products, services and improvements

and can vote on the ideas they like best. Jim's really impressed to find that you've implemented some of these ideas and feels you take your customer seriously.

At this point, he's developing a stronger idea of which company he'll purchase from, but still has some questions. He posts a question to your [online forum](#) and gets very helpful feedback. This helps answer the question that was concerning him most and further seals the deal.

In two days, Jim has talked to his friends, been directly affected by social media marketing, and been able to pose his questions to experts and unbiased consumers. He's researched your competitors and read what previous customers had to say about products. "Unlike traditional media, social media connects with and involves the consumer from awareness all the way through consideration. Not only can an interesting forum, blog post or YouTube video be the starting point through which a customer gains awareness, often right in the same location a more substantive validation that supports the purchase decision takes place" according to Social Media Marketing, An Hour A Day.

Does this replace your traditional marketing efforts and sales team? Absolutely not! Social Networking is by no means a magic bullet. It's just one part of an interrelated process. But you can choose to engage in and influence the conversation already happening **or** you can let your competitors help your customers make their decisions.

## Getting started with Social Media for your Business

So where do you start? Which ones should you use? What do you say when you're on there? What do you do when you get negative feedback?

### Step 1: Listen

You've always wondered what you're customers are saying, now's your chance to find out!

Learn what they are they talking about ... what do they like? ... what frustrates them? ... what do they need and desire?

The first step is to build an “ego” search. Start by searching on your company’s name, product, etc. Next, do the same for your competitors. Then find feeds on your industry, related business categories, etc. and begin to LISTEN. (Social Media Starter Kit: The Tools You Need. Marketing-Prof)

### Step 2: Plan

Now that you know what’s being said and where, you can determine which networks will work best for your business. What are your goals for each network? For example, will you use Twitter to distribute coupon codes, create an expert blog for awareness, and a suggestion box for those in consideration and post purchase modes?

Sinking Your Teeth Into Twitter and Facebook reminds us to “make sure that whoever is handling your social media presence knows how to handle people in a professional way, ... (including) seeking coworkers for advice before any knee-jerk reactions. ”

### Step 3: Engage with your customers

Each social networking channel and audience has a unique approach. But here are some tips on how to get started.

1. **Enter once:** Multiple applications are available to enter your information once and distribute it to multiple social networking channels. Instead of adding the same information to each network, use feeds to enter it once and disperse it to all your sites at once.
2. **How to be heard:**
  - a. **If you’re going to build a community,** don’t center it around your products but around something relevant to your users. A passion, cause, event, or a contest. Nike setup a running site which is largely driven by visitors. The site includes photos of them running marathons, virtual contests, play list uploads. 40% converted to



Nike shoes.

- b. **Emphasize listening over “loud speaking”**
- c. **Be more conversational, less “market-speak”**
- d. **Unleash the wisdom of your user:** Let your fans do some of the work for you. Turbo Tax created a customer service wiki where customer could answer other customer’s questions. 40% of turbo tax questions are now answered by other customers and at a higher rate of accuracy (CEO, Intuit)

### 3. **Promote:**

- a. Make sure your email signature, business card, website and e-marketing include your media URL(s). It’s about reaching the people with your conversation.
- b. Make sure your site and all your media points back to you, so folks know who you are, where you are, how to reach you, and what you are all about.
- c. Generate an incentive for your customers to follow you. Offer a chance to win a drawing for signing up, educational information, etc...

4. **Twitter:** When using Twitter, provide useful content for those that choose to follow you and reply to every tweet directed at you. Twitter is being used for everything from simple networking to running weekly contests to alerting hungry customers about the location of taco trucks.

### 5. **Facebook and MySpace**

- a. Use Facebook and MySpace to point people towards your primary media. Use these services to tap into audiences that might not find your work otherwise. Seek out like-minded people who are making similar media, and share attention with them (that is, give them attention and offer your media as something they might like as well).
- b. Facebook: The benefit of Facebook is that it’s a place with millions of active users and has a powerful growth curve in the last several months: ···Facebook is a good place to find people who might like what you’re doing.
- c. Myspace is appropriate if you have a youth element to your project.

- 6. Video:** For videos to go viral you must have content that is either VERY uncommon, unexpected, comical or compelling. Blendtec and Dove Evolution are examples of these. However, How-To videos are also very helpful once a consumer is in the consideration stage.

(Sources: Marketing Profs, Five steps to a successful Twitter presence, Lessons form 9 Viral Videos and Second Acts, eMarketer)