

Q&A Session for Social Marketing Success: How to Use The Top Two Online Social Networks to Significantly Grow Your Business – with Mari Smith

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Q: Which social media network should you start with? Should you focus on just one network or try to cover many?

A: It does depend where your target market is. The big four are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn. Facebook is the largest of them all with well over 300 million active users. However, it can be somewhat complex to fully optimize. You might start with Twitter first because it's easy enough to register your name/company name (crucial for branding purposes), add a custom background, fill out your bio and you're off and running. You can begin to grow your following strategically by using a directory like <http://twellow.com> and also the new Lists feature, see the top 250 lists at <http://vobios.com/twitter-lists/> and this Lists Directory <http://listorious.com>. You can follow up to 1000 people a day on Twitter and the majority of users will follow you back so you can grow your following fairly quickly. Then you can be building out your Facebook Fan Page and talk about it on Twitter to cross promote.

Q: How does Facebook compare to LinkedIn, which is almost exclusively business professionals?

A: Facebook has more emphasis on socializing, for sure. If your target market is more on the corporate/executive side, it's certainly important to be active on LinkedIn. There are useful features like Groups and the Q&A section. By optimizing your profile with keyword-rich content, you can come up high inside LinkedIn for key searches too. Facebook's best feature for businesses is Fan Pages. You can have unlimited fans, add fully customized content (using the Static FBML app, for example), and all content is fully indexed by Google. I'm a great believer in all businesses need to have a presence on Facebook because of the sheer magnitude of the site. At least a cross-section of your target market is bound to be active there.

Q: What is the difference between a Facebook fan page and a Facebook group?

A: Groups can be created by any individual and are generally for special interests and/or like-minded people to convene and connect. A Fan Page, though, can only be created by an authorized representative of a brand, band or organization and are purely for commercial use. Facebook Fan Pages are one of the most powerful features of Facebook and all businesses would do well to have at least one fan page.

Q: Where can I go to find a step-by-step tutorial on how to set up a fan page for my business?

A: You're welcome to view this post on my blog:

How To Create and Promote Your Facebook Fan Page

<http://whyfacebook.com/2008/09/25/how-to-create-and-promote-your-facebook-fan-page/> - though the layout has been changed since the post was written, much of the content is still just as relevant. I am shortly releasing a new Ultimate Facebook Fan Page Guide. Also, here's a post I wrote for MarketingProfs.com recently:

Ten Steps for Creating a FANtastic Facebook Fan Page

<http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2009/3086/ten-steps-for-creating-a-fantastic-facebook-fan-page>

Q: If I have a personal Facebook page, should I establish a separate page for my business that is linked to my business email account? If I establish a separate Facebook page for my business, should I use a picture of the logo or of the products for the identity?

A: Depending on the size of your business, I would recommend creating a Facebook fan page as an entirely separate login from your personal profile. Otherwise, what happens if you create a fan page while logged into your personal profile, you will now be the primary Admin for the page. And, say you have an employee do this for the company and then that person leaves the company at a later date. It can be quite the laborious process to remove that person as the primary Admin and have a replacement person assigned. So, what to do when creating a fan page, is log out completely, then click on the link right under the green signup button that says: [Create a Page](#) for a celebrity, band or business. Ideally, once you set up a fan page, add at least one other person as an Admin. Regards using a logo vs products etc., this all depends on how you are currently branded. Ben & Jerry's ice cream, for example, have Facebook fan pages and Twitter accounts for every flavor of their ice cream! Starbucks has one main Twitter account and one main Fan Page both of which just have the instantly recognizable Starbucks logo. For me, as a branded individual, I use my own headshot across all social networks even though I have a logo.

Q: Can people make negative comments on a fan page for all to see? If so, can they be removed?

A: Moderating comments on a fan page is a vital aspect of keeping your page fresh and appealing to your real fans. The good news is all comments can be removed by any of the Admins.

Q: Can you overdo the posting, no matter how "informative"? If people feel bombarded will they tune you out?

A: Yes, I recommend posting in moderation. A few times a day might be optimal, certainly once a day. You can always poll your fans to see what they prefer.

Q: Has ability to post business complaints backfired on companies that have Facebook fan pages as opposed to Twitter?

A: There have been incidences of companies not up to speed with social media where they found themselves at the receiving end of bad publicity. The best antidote is education – that is, educating every member of your staff about social media best practices and exactly what your company policy and activities are on social sites. Fortunately, reputations can be repaired. In this day and age of transparency and high engagement with businesses and big brands, consumers have come to expect better customer service and responsiveness to their complaints. For the best book on reputation management, see *Radically Transparent* by Andy Beal and Judy Strauss.

Q: How do you optimize a fan page on Facebook for the Search Engines?

A: All content on your fan page is fully indexed by Google. So make sure your status updates, imported blog posts (via the Notes app), wall posts, links etc., are all keyword rich. Use Alt tags for your photos and use keyword rich text for your custom tabs/boxes with the Static FBML app.

Q: How do I get more fans for my business? All my "friends" have signed up but how can I branch out beyond them?

A: It's important to generate buzz and interest inside as well as outside Facebook. You could experiment with Facebook's social ads and drive targeted traffic from the 300 million users back to your fan page. Other ideas for inside include using the "Share" button to post to your own personal profile and also encourage fans to share on their walls; ask fans to upload photos, videos, links and wall posts/comments – every time they do that content goes out onto their wall and their respective friends' News Feed. For outside of Facebook, be sure to talk about your fan page on your blog/website, on Twitter (in your tweets and on your Twitter background), your email signature file, newsletter, business cards etc. You might also create a contest, drawing or sweepstake to incentivize new fans to join your page. If you do public speaking, any time you're in front of an audience, get everyone to pull out their cell phone and text "fan xxx" (where xxx is your username) to FBOOK (32665). You first need a username for your fan page (sometimes called a Vanity URL); you just need 25 fans minimum, then go to <http://facebook.com/username> and register your brand/company name.

Q: What do you think about buying ads on Facebook? Would you use it to promote your fan page or your business's web site?

A: I have experimented with Facebook social ads with moderate results. Compared to Google Adwords, Facebook's ads can be even more targeted – however, the clickthrough rate may not be as high. Bottom line is because when we go to a search engine, we are in "search mode" and when we're on our social networks we tend to be in "social mode" and not necessarily looking to click on ads. It's definitely worth running some tests though!

Q: I'm a sole proprietor in a business-to-business niche -- I don't market to consumers. I'm interested in hearing how social networks might benefit businesses like mine.

A: Almost everyone I know in my own community is in your shoes! There are tens of thousands of businesses using social networks, often KEY decision makers. I recently met and befriended Jeffrey Hayzlett, CMO of Kodak via Twitter and at a live event. Because of the popularity of these social sites, as business owners, we are now just one or two clicks away from networking and building key relationships with anyone on the planet. By keeping your updates on topic to what your business is about (share your own tips/resources as well as related information from other experts), be engaging, open and friendly and you'll find your clients will begin to naturally gravitate towards you. Also, social networking is often referred to as "word of mouth on steroids." In other words, when you have one happy customer, he/she may become a raving evangelist for your company/product/service and you just never know when someone might have 50,000 followers on Twitter and bring you a flood of new business!

Q: How should you connect a traditional website to your social media efforts?

A: Use all the hip widgets and plugins! You might consider switching your regular website to a blogsite using Wordpress.org. Or add on a blog to your main website. For sure add the "find us on Facebook" and "follow us on Twitter" logos/badges *above the fold* on your website and blog. There are many Twitter badges you can use to put a tweetstream on your blog/website – Twitter offer their own at <http://twitter.com/goodies/widgets>. Be sure to add a Facebook fan box (which shows how many fans you have, the latest updates and a "Become a fan" button) on your site/blog. The fan box is available just under the avatar on your fan page once you have your page set up. Facebook Connect is also a powerful way to integrate the platform onto your website. Great examples include <http://huffingtonpost.com> and <http://jibjab.com> where Facebook members can easily click one button to log in and leave comments and post updates to their own wall.

Q: How should business look to monetize their social media?

A: Essentially, social media has now become an critical and integral part of your marketing efforts. By educating and engaging with your community via sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube you will begin to extend your brand's awareness, build social equity and drive traffic back to your key sites. My four-part formula for social media success is Quality Network (build your social communities with your target market plus key influencers) + Quality Content (share valuable information and resources related to your business) + Consistency (daily updates are ideal) + Genuine Authentic PASSIONATE Caring = Profitable Relationships. Giving your fans, friends and followers clear and specific instructions helps too – your objective might be to drive these different social communities back to an opt-in page for a free giveaway or event, and/or to subscribe to your blog/ezine. Ultimately, all these social sites are outposts to

let your network of prospects and clients know they can engage with you/your company and as they continue to build up the knowing, liking and trusting factor they are more and more likely to do business with you, keep coming back for more and tell all their friends about you too.

We talk about ROI in the social media world as “Return on Influence.” But before you have influence in the social mediasphere, you first have to have *visibility*. So, I call the new ROI, ROV: Return on Visibility.

Q: If you are not on some kind of "tour" constantly - celebrity, pro athlete, well known speakers, etc., how do you contribute to the community to reap benefit in return?

A: Share a mix of business tips related to your business/industry – these can be from yourself and/or others. Alltop.com is a terrific source of free, current content. See also Stufftotweet.com! And the three key areas people love to read about on social networks are family, travel and hobbies. It's not all about being a celeb or well-known person with a dynamic life. In fact, most people want to connect with people *just like them!* The main thing is to be real, dare to be vulnerable even! Follow @KeithFerrazzi for great advice in this area!

Q: How do you get more Twitter followers daily?

A: The new Twitter Lists feature helps with growing your followers – you can follow other people's lists en mass. See the top 250 lists at <http://vobios.com/twitter-lists/> and this Lists Directory <http://listorious.com>. You can follow up to 1000 people a day on Twitter and the majority of users will follow you back so you can grow your following fairly quickly. See also <http://twellow.com>, <http://wefollow.com> and <http://exectweets.com>. Do keyword searches too on <http://search.twitter.com> and watch the trending topics for popular subjects. Growing your Twitter following is something that can easily be delegated to an assistant – give him/her specific instructions on the types of individuals you want to follow.

Q: And how to find the time to devote to social media? How much time should someone devote to social media daily?

A: Initially, time will be a major factor as you'll want to see results right away and it may not happen. You have to be patient. Look for ROT – Return on Time. Depending on the size of your company, you may dedicate resources to have one individual manage your social media presence. In some larger companies, we're now talking about the importance of appointing a CLO: Chief Listening Officer. Tracking and monitoring the conversations that are already happening out there about your products, service, brand, staff and competitors is a vital component to making good use of social media dollars. Some brands appoint a “brandividual” – such as Scott Monty for Ford Motor Company or Frank Eliason for Comcast. These are individual voices/faces that represent the brand. See, consumers want to engage with other people, not a logo or office building.

Q: What is the best way to incorporate blogging in my plan?

A: First, know that Twitter is a micro-blog – so if you begin to build up your Twitter presence and content, you are already a blogger! :) Also, you can pull that same content into your Facebook fan page via apps such as the ones <http://involver.com> offer. Or, use the <http://facebook.com/twitter> app for pushing content from your fan page onto Twitter. But for a mainstream blog, my top pick is hosted Wordpress.org and ideally create an editorial calendar so you know exactly what you'll be blogging about when. See <http://socialmediaexaminer.com> and <http://mashable.com> for excellent authority blogsites – great layout, design, navigation and constantly fresh content.

For sure import your blog posts into Facebook using the Notes app and also the Networked Blogs app: <http://apps.facebook.com/blognetworks>

Q: How can you measure your ROI of your social media budget?

A: For one of the best posts on measuring social media ROI, see Mashable:

HOW TO: Measure Social Media ROI

<http://mashable.com/2009/10/27/social-media-roi/>

There is an excellent slide presentation embedded in this post by Olivier Blanchard, The Brand Builder, that shows how important it is to first begin measuring “non-financial impact” such as number of Twitter followers, blog comments, Facebook fans, YouTube views, website hits, click throughs, social mentions, etc. What social media engagement and integration allows you to do is first build up *social equity* then this can be turned into hard dollars over time.

Visit Mari's blogs and Facebook fan page for free e-courses and tips:

<http://marismith.com> | <http://www.whyfacebook.com> | <http://facebook.com/marismith>

Mari Smith is a Social Media Speaker, Trainer and Consultant, and President of the International Social Media Association. She helps entrepreneurs to accelerate their business growth using an integrated social marketing strategy, with particular focus on Facebook and Twitter.