

We print it and put it together beautifully.



The UPS Store

WE ♥ LOGISTICS™

Entrepreneur®

[Click to Print This Page](#)

10 Steps to Getting Started in Social Media Marketing

Like it or not, you need social media to develop and protect your reputation, and to grow your business.

Susan Gunelius | November 25, 2010

URL: <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/217578>

When it comes to using social media marketing to build your business, the worst action is no action, and your biggest problem is being invisible, not being talked about negatively. As long as you're part of the conversation on the social Web, you can hear what's being said about you and massage negative perceptions about your business. But if no one is talking about you, you have no chance for growth. That means you need to get involved on the social Web as soon as possible, not only to capitalize on the opportunities that it presents to your business, but also to develop and protect your reputation.

It's a good idea to start with a plan that has goals and an organizing framework to keep you on track. If you start down a path on the social Web and hate what you're doing, you can change things around. Just as you change networking and conversational approaches in person, you can do so on the social Web. The only differences are that on the social Web, you're talking through your keyboard, and your potential audience is much, much larger.

Here are 10 steps to get you started.

1. Determine your goals.

What do you want to get out of your social Web participation? Why are you doing it? Are you trying to generate direct sales? Are you trying to offer a form of customer service? Do you want to build relationships with customers and boost loyalty? Your answers to these questions greatly affect the type of content you publish and the activities you participate in on the social Web.

2. Evaluate your resources.

Who is going to create your content? Who is going to maintain your social media accounts? Who is going to respond to questions and be the face of your business online? Do you have the technical ability in-house to join the online conversation? If not, are you willing to learn? Can you or someone who works with you write well? You need to be sure you have the necessary people in place to execute a social media marketing plan before you start.

3. Know your audience.

Where does your target audience spend time online? What kind of content and conversations do the audience members get most vocal about? What kind of information do they want from you? What do they dislike? Remember, you're not just publishing marketing messages on the social Web. You need to find out what your audience wants and needs, so you can provide the kind of content they find useful and interesting. However, you also need to be personable, so they actually want to interact with you.



4. Create amazing content.

Once you know where your audience spends time and what kind of content audience members want, take the time to give them more of that kind of content. Don't give up. You need to continually offer your audience amazing content, which also comes in the form of conversations, in order to build a loyal following of people who trust you as a source that can meet their needs and expectations.

5. Integrate your marketing efforts.

All of your efforts at social media marketing should feed off each other. Cross-promote your efforts both online and offline, and make sure your social media and traditional marketing efforts work together seamlessly.

6. Create a schedule.

Allocate specific times during your day to devote to social media marketing. For example, spend five minutes on Twitter before you check your e-mail each day and another five minutes before you leave work each day. When you create a schedule, it's easier to stick to it and make sure you don't skip your social media marketing activities each day.

7. Adopt an 80-20 rule.

Always spend at least 80 percent of your time on social media activities that are not self-promotional and no more than 20 percent of your time on self-promotional activities.

8. Focus on quality, not quantity.

It can be easy to get caught up in the numbers, but don't become a slave to followers and subscribers. It's better to have 1,000 highly engaged, loyal followers than 10,000 followers who sign up to follow you but then never acknowledge you again.

9. Give up control.

You must let your audience take control of the online conversation and make it their own so they develop an emotional attachment to you, your brand, and your business. Remember, on the social Web, apathy or invisibility is a bigger problem than negativity.

10. Keep learning.

You can never stop listening and learning. For success in social media marketing, you need to be flexible and accept that change is good.

This article is an edited excerpt from [30-Minute Social Media Marketing](#) by Susan Gunelius (McGraw-Hill, 2010).



Susan Gunelius is CEO of [KeySplash Creative Inc.](#), an Orlando, Fla.-based marketing communications company, and the author of [Kick-ass Copywriting in 10 Easy Steps](#), published by Entrepreneur Media, and other books.