

Template

ONLINE MARKETING PLAN
WITH SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

YOUR COMPANY
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Overview

Your company needs an online Marketing Plan and today it should include a Social Media Component. This template is designed to help you walk through the process of creating this plan.

The first basic question has been “Why should I sell online?” I think we are far enough into the Internet era that this question is answered. If not ask Borders why they went from one of the top bookstore to the history books. Customers are looking for what they want online using Google, Yahoo, Bing and other search engines. This is called “inbound marketing.” Instead for throwing ads on TV or the print media and hoping for a 1% conversion rate (outbound marketing), people who are ready to buy are searching for the best place to buy.

Given that you must be online, we'll state something that should be obvious, but often isn't. (There might even be people who disagree.) **Your Website is your home base.** It is THE CRITICAL element in your online strategy. It must be clean, easy to use, have clear call-to-actions, monitored, etc. Everything revolves around your website!

The next question is “Why Social Media?” The traditional channels are drying up. Call blocking; Tivo and DVRs (to fast forward through the commercials) are killing the traditional media. Forrester Research estimates that by 2012, half of the newspapers will have ceased publication. Along with them go the full page ads, half page ads, inserts and the classified ads. For most of us, the Yellow Page books go straight to the recycle bin; still in the plastic bag they were in when they were left on the doorstep. People are asking their friends for recommendations – ON FACEBOOK and TWITTER. Companies have to get in the game.

As an aside, it is interesting to me that there is discussion about “outbound marketing” (traditional advertising) and “inbound marketing” (being found by search engines). It seems to me that Social Media is a new category (very tempting to call it “rebound” ☺, but “conversation-bound” is probably better.) Social media hinges on two-way communication. Traditional outbound and inbound are both one-way.

Before you ask. “No this template isn't complete.” Social Media changes daily, so it has changed since I wrote yesterday's draft. On the other hand, it should give you a good start.

By the way, don't be overwhelmed by the number of steps involved here. Like any other large task, you eat this elephant one bite at a time. The main reason for this document is creating a plan for taking those bites. The larger the task, the more important it is that you have a step-by-step plan laid out in advance. This is NOT to say that you shouldn't change your plan as you go along, it just means that you need to lay out a road map. This can save you massive amounts of wasted time. It is vital to have the large picture firmly in place before you start in on the details.

This is a large elephant, so expect to take several months to get a working system in place.

In this document, I'm actually short changing the standard online marketing side of things to focus on the Social Media side of things. I don't think they should be separated, so both are being covered.

STEP 1 - Getting Started - Branding

When you start looking at Online Marketing, you should always create a brand. This means having one logo, one tag line, one header and one color scheme for your website, one corporate philosophy, etc. You might branch out for selected products, but when someone who knows you sees a new site that belongs to you, they should immediately recognize you.

This is also true of Social Media. You need a Social Brand Identity. If you are a very small business, this should probably be a professionally done, smiling headshot of your spokesperson. The headshot, the logo, the tag line, etc. should be the same wherever you are on the Internet. When someone who knows you on Facebook sees you on a blog or on LinkedIn or in an Email they should recognize you immediately. Be consistent in order to build your Social Brand Identity recognition.

Another part of branding in Social Media is interlinking. You link each of the pieces together so that people who like you don't have to search for you. If I like your blog and you ask me to join your newsletter email list, I may very well do it. If you don't ask, I probably don't even know that you have a newsletter. Linking your Facebook with your Twitter with your Blog with your website with your landing pages is a critical part of making Social Media work for you.

Here are some of the places you need to be sure you have your Brand Image. We might as well make this the first checklist. We'll come back and fill it in later. For now it just gives you an idea that there are several places to check for your Social Brand.

- | Social Media Site | Social Brand Correct? |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Facebook | |
| • LinkedIn | |
| • Twitter | |
| • Your Google Profile | |
| • Google Plus | |
| • Meetup.com | |
| • Skype | |
| • Oovoo | |
| • Your Blog(s) | |
| • Your website | |
| • Your Landing pages | |
| • Other 1 | |
| • Other 2 | |

Business Goals – Online and Social Media

Let's walk through a simple 6-step process here. These steps (or something like them) are covered in MUCH more detail in other documents written by people who specialize in these things.

1. Write a Vision Statement
2. Write down the company Mission Statement?
3. Write several (more than 2 and less than 11) objective statements
4. Write down a description of your primary products/services
5. Write down a description of you ideal client.
6. Do a SWOT analysis on numbers 4 and 5.

Vision Statement

Businesses should have two levels of “Goals.” The first is a Vision Statement and doesn't have time bounds or measurements. “Be the best PR Company in the world” is a vision statement. How the heck would you measure something like that where everybody agreed that you were in fact number 1. On the hand a vision statement like that certainly helps give direction to everything you do.

Mission Statement

This should be a statement of why you exist (organization) or what you want to be (person). This is your purpose. Ideally it should be one sentence, easily repeatable, and inspiring. Can you boil your essence down to one thing?

Objectives

The second level of “goals” is what many people call objectives. These are in fact time bounded and measurable – e.g. “Have 30 clients each spending \$10K/month by the end of the year.” Once you have done this, you have a target to shoot at and a way to track your progress. You really need to get a handle on what you are trying to do with Social Media. This is where most companies fall apart. It all needs to revolve around quality content. With quality content, you can do things like: Tell great stories that help brand recognition and understanding (branded content); add value to your products (full descriptions and reviews, quality images and videos); create loyalty among your clients; improve your Search Engine

Optimization (SEO); stimulate social interaction (Comments, ReTweets, Likes); extend the presence of your messages and offers; and develop new services and revenue opportunities.

STEP 2 - You need to have all three of these – written on paper and prominently displayed where they become part of your life.

Product/Service

It never ceases to amaze business consultants how many companies don't really know what it is they sell. You need to have a very clear description of what you are doing. One of my favorite management quotes comes from Peter Drucker. Mr. Drucker (like ALL management authors) has a definition of efficiency and effectiveness. He says efficiency is doing something well and effectiveness is doing the right something. (Yawn – yada, yada, yada). Now comes the neat part, he went one step further and painted a word picture. “I don't care how efficient your buggy whip factory is, it is not an effective way to make money today.” (Now I understand.) People usually spend almost all of their time trying to make something more efficient (cost effective, less wastage, better email campaign...) and virtually no time looking at the big picture. So look at your big picture and then how your products and services fit into that picture.

STEP 3 – write a short description of exactly what you are selling. Include slogans, tag lines and special benefits of YOUR product/service.

Ideal Client (we are going to come back to this topic shortly)

Who are we trying to sell to? – Stay at home moms? Salesmen? Homeowners? You should have this written down as well. You may very well need to segment your customers if you have several major (hopefully related) products. If you must segment, then treat each segment as if they were your only type of client. Each page of your online presence should focus on ONE segment.

SWOT Analysis

You can Google for SWOT Analysis and find lots of easy to follow instructions. Here is a definition from the Wikipedia.

- **Strengths:** characteristics of the business, or project team that give it an advantage over others
- **Weaknesses (or Limitations):** are characteristics that place the team at a disadvantage relative to others
- **Opportunities:** *external* chances to improve performance (e.g. make greater profits) in the environment
- **Threats:** *external* elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the business or project

The bottom line is to ask the question “**Can I sell this product/service to that audience with the resources I have and in this business environment?**” If you don’t like the answer you need to change something and try again.

STEP 4 – do a SWOT analysis

I’m going to skip over the rest of the business (you know those trivial details like staffing, offices, manufacturing, shipping,) and move on to the Internet marketing.

MOBLE DEVICES

This is too important to skip and to large to weave into the rest of the document. Mobile Internet access is growing MUCH faster than traditional laptop and desktop computing. People are checking their email and browsing the web from their smart phones and tablets to the point that in many cases most of the access to websites and social media sites is through mobile devices.

This has some ramifications to what you do. Things like making sure websites don’t require graphics to work, optimizing for small devices, providing text versions of videos and webinars, titling ALL of your images are important considerations. You should even consider having a special purpose smartphone application written for your product or service.

One service worth mentioning here is a company called odesk.com. They out-source services like transcribing webinars. This gives you a text version for those that can't (or won't) watch the video. The prices seem very reasonable.

STEP 5 - Your website is your Home Base – the most important online resource you have.

Every one is talking about Social Media, Facebook, Tweeting and somewhere in the shuffle it is easy to lose sight of the fact that your website is still your focal point. This is where you have the most complete presentation of who you are, what you sell and your call-to-actions. Did I mention **Call-to-Actions**? This is where people buy or join. There may be other peripheral places, but this is still the primary site. (Think of the sidewalk sales and main-street parties that brick and mortar stores participate in. The store makes some sales there, but it is extremely rare where someone can close the store and depend of these peripheral sales for their business.)

People have been writing books on creating user friendly, consistent web sites for years. I'm not going to try to rehash that work here.

What we will focus on is **KEYWORDS**. Today, most sales on websites result from people looking for a product or service with a search engine like Google. You have to be found or you won't make the sales. In order to maximize the number of times your web site will be found, you focus on Search Engine Optimization (SEO). This is made up of two parts – on-site optimization and in-bound links (who recommends you and links to your site.) The links are the more important part of the equation today, but they take a little longer to develop. The on-page SEO portion is under your control immediately and you should start there.

Content is King

One message has been loud and clear for the last few years – Google and the other search engine gurus have been watching the SEO experts “trick” their search engines into giving high rankings to sites that the customers don't particularly like. The sites have been optimized for the search spiders, not the consumers. As a result the search engine writers have been heavily focused on finding ways to identify sites with new, useful, interesting content. They rank these sites highly in spite of the tricks that SEO experts try. If your content is new, useful and

interesting you run a better chance of having a high ranking. Content really is king when you are talking about search engine results.

On-page SEO

You can download a very good “blueprint” at <http://www.hubspot.com/blueprint/> (Note, their free material is outstanding. Their prices start at \$3500 so when they contact you to start the sales pitch, be honest about your budget early on. They have a website called a Web Grader that will give you an idea about how far you have to go.) Another comprehensive article is <http://www.seomarketing30days.com/seotips/seo33.shtml>

STEP 6 – Do on-page SEO

Off-page SEO

This is one of the more difficult aspects of Search Engine Optimization, yet it is reported to count as much as 75% of your score when Search Engines rate your site. Here are a few techniques for raising your off-page score.

- On-line Profiles – Link to your site everywhere you post your profile (Google Profile, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google +, etc.)
- Free directory Services – Google for DMOZ – this is a huge directory, but it takes a little work to get listed.
- Google Maps (If you are a brick and mortar establishment your REALLY need to have a Google Maps entry.)
- Article Writing – when you write you are allowed to have a link in your bio that points to your website
- Link Exchange – you post mine and I’ll post yours – You are inviting people to leave your site with “their link”, so this may not be a good idea for you.
- Forum Posting – your signature can have a link.
- Blog posts – again your bio (and even sections in your post) can link to your site. Guest blog posts will get you a link from a different site.
- Reviews – ask your best customers for reviews and give them a link to put in their review. (BTW these are very important for Google Maps)

STEP 7 – Start your plan for Off-page SEO

STEP 8 - Exercise

Pretend you are your ideal client and walk through the entire purchasing experience. I.e. I'm sitting at home and I think... through "Thank you for the RMA number."

Optimize for Social Media

You really need to balance two influences when you are considering optimization. First you need to optimize your sites to fit your product or service. Just as important and sometimes in conflict, you must optimize for your target audience. This is especially important when we add social media into the mix. If I am searching for something and the website where I find what I'm looking for is a little clunky, I'll probably stay and complete the sale. If I'm referred to "an interesting site" by a social media friend and it is clunky or aimed at a different age group, I'm probably outta there.

Review Sites

Jumping ahead a little, but while we are talking Social Media, it is worth mentioning how review sites interact with Social Media. In 2009 Nielson Media Research showed that 70% of consumers trusted online reviews, 62% trusted TV and 61% trusted newspapers. Consumers search for reviews when getting ready to made anything more than a minor purchase. When someone on a Social Media site asks a product related questions, often their friends do review searches and comment back on what they found. The bottom line is that a glossy advertisement image and a price on your web site will have zero impact on the Social Media world. You need reviews that talk benefits and features.

Measuring

I'll leave this section with one question. If you are not measuring something, why are you bothering to do it? You must measure and adjust your online efforts just like you do everything else that important in your life.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Paying for ads (e.g. Pay Per Click – PPC) is another avenue to consider.

Your Social Media Strategy Should Tie into Your Business Goals and Your Current Website.

It should be obvious that your social media strategy and your website should be designed to help you achieve your business goals. It is easy to lose sight of this. One problem-solving tip I learned years ago goes like this: “Problem solving is about answering questions. When you focus the problem solving efforts down to exactly the right question, the answer is obvious.” For example, we might start with a question like “Why won’t my car start?” In the process of researching the problem we notice that the battery cable has become disconnected. The final question is “How do I tighten the battery cable so that the car will start?” We get our wrench and a minute later we are done. The first question might take an expert. The last question is very easy to answer. If you know what your company is trying to do, it should be fairly simple to determine what your social media strategy should be doing.

STEP 9 - Exercise

We are going to 1) list our objectives, 2) rank our objective and 3) identify who we are measuring progress.

Business Goal	Rank	Measuring Tool
• Convert more traffic into leads (put some numbers on this for your sit.)	_____	_____
• Convert more leads into sales (put some numbers on this for your sit)	_____	_____
• Increase brand awareness and conversations (how many positive comments per month?)	_____	_____

- Increase referrals to _____ per month _____
- Increase email database to _____ by _____
- Increase blog following to _____ by _____
- Increase website Traffic to _____ unique per mo. _____
- Grow online e-commerce sales to \$_____ per month _____
- Reduce attrition of current clients to _____ per month _____
- Improve up-sell/cross sell to _____ % of sales _____
- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

Part of being congruent with your business goals is being congruent with your brand and your look and feel. We discussed this before, but you need to have ONE logo, ONE image people will see on various social media sites, etc.

Clarify Your Ideal Lead or Customer

There are two ways to go here. One is probably better for your website and the other is better for your social media strategy.

Define Relevant Criteria

What criteria do you use to identify a good lead? You need to 1) identify the criteria and 2) identify the ideal categories in each criterion. For example the criterion might be “age” and the best ages are 20 to 35. You may be talking about ideal companies (B2B) or ideal individuals (B2C). You can look at your current clients since it is usually easier to “get more of the same.”

STEP 10 - Exercise – List 10 criteria and then identify the “ideal” within each.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Note that it is critical that you identify all of the usual decision makers and target all of them. The child might love your product, but mom does the buying. There are often influencers who are not the decision makers, yet their needs must be addressed. Another example is culture differences. In some cultures EVERYONE is involved in decisions that other cultures feel are very private and personal. You have to know your customers.

Avatars or Buyer Personas

The other method of working with idealized customers is to create Avatars or Buyer Personas. Here you take the criteria you identified above and turn them into people. It is easier to write a blog to a specific hypothetical person than it is to talk to some amorphous group like “college bound youth.”

STEP 11 - Exercise

Create three ideal customers. Give them a name, a back story and write enough that you feel that you almost know them.

STEP 12 – Do Social Media Research -Find your tribe

Once you have identified your Avatars, you need to find out where people just like them hang out. What do they want? What are they talking about? How can you engage them? What do you have or what can you develop that they want?

Listen

While you are trying out the various sites, it is important to LISTEN first. Get to know the protocols and how things are done. Each site has a personality and “newbies” are sometimes treated harshly.

Learn how to search the various sites. They all have ways to find people with similar interests. There are tons of articles on finding things in Twitter, in Facebook, in LinkedIn. Read, digest and search.

Social media is about for building relationships with prospects and customers. Companies or individuals that come in and always try to sell something are shunned.

Here is a partial list of sites you might want to check out as you get started. Once you have searched and listened, assign a priority based on the presence of your prospective customers and the specific business goal you're trying achieve. Once you have identified the

Social Media Site	Priority
Facebook	_____
Twitter	_____
LinkedIn	_____
Google Profile	_____
YouTube	_____
Google Plus	_____
Article Site 1	_____
Article Site 2	_____
Article Site 3	_____
Meetup	_____

- StumbleUpon _____
- FourSquare _____
- Gowalla _____
- Delicious _____
- Digg _____
- Reddit _____
- Blog _____
- Blog _____
- Blog _____
- Forum _____
- Q & A Site like Yahoo Answers _____
- MySpace (if you are involved in Music) _____

If some of these are new to you I would recommend the following paperback book: “The Social Media Marketing Book” by Dan Zarrella. He does a good job of giving a brief overview at the various types of sites along with a little history.

Here are some search engines you can use.

TWITTER

- Search.twitter.com
- Twilert

- Twazzup

FACEBOOK and LINDEDIN

Use their organic search

MESSAGE BOARD AND FORUMS

- BoardReader
- BoardTracker

BLOGS

- Google Blog Search
- IceRocket
- BlogPulse
- Backtype

MULTIMEDIA

- YouTube (the second largest search engine)
- Tuveo
- MetaCafe
- Viral Video Chart
- Flickr
- Photobucket

STEP 13 - Exercise - Set up some GOOGLE ALERTS

A very interesting resource that you should start to use very early on is Google Alerts. You set this up with keywords that interest you and your company (like your name or your company name) and you will get an email every day showing you where your keywords appeared on the Internet.

STEP 14 – ID Major Pieces of Your Online Presence

While you are doing your research, you can also be looking into the different aspects of your online presence and deciding which ones to implement and the order they should be implemented in. Here are some ideas. You need to expand or contract based on your particular situation (and budget – time and money). After the ranking, there are some spaces for a checklist.

- Brand Image (Y/N) - did you use the Social Media Brand Image
- Brand Logo (Y/N) - did you use the Social Media Brand Logo
- Profile (Y/N) - did you fill out the profile with a message consistent with the rest your Social Media messages
- Tag (Y/N) - did you use the Social Media Brand Tag Line
- Header (Y/N) - did you use the Social Media Brand Header (look and feel)

Obviously we are looking for a consistent Social Media image. When someone sees your entry they should recognize you!

NOTE: I included some Facebook “Official Pages” These are landing pages that you create for your company. You need to decide how many you want and how they are differentiated.

Component Name/Description	Rank	Brand Image Y/N	Brand Logo Y/N	Brand Tag Y/N	Consist. Profile Y/N	Consist Header Y/N
1. Website (required IMHO)	1					
2. Facebook						
3. Facebook Official Page 1						
4. Facebook Official Page 2						
5. Facebook Official Page 3						
6. Company Blog 1						
7. Company Blog 2						
8. Company Blog 3						
9. Twitter						
10 LinkedIn						
11. Google Profile						
12 YouTube Channel						
13 Google Plus						
14. Article Site 1						

15. Article Site 2						
16. Article Site 3						
11 Meetup						
12 StumbleUpon						
13 FourSquare						
14 Gowalla						
15. Delicious						
16. Digg						
17 Reddit						
18 Blog 1						
19 Blog 2						
20 Blog 3						
21 Landing Pages						
22 Article Sites						
23. Email Campaign 1						
24. Email Campaign 2						
25. Email Campaign 3						
26. Newsletter 1						
27. Newsletter 2						
28. Newsletter 3						

If this looks a little overwhelming, there is a simple reason – it is. And we haven’t even thought about linking these together. That is a whole new topic.

The good thing is that you do NOT have to do it all. And you certainly don’t have to do it all to start with.

As usual, we just nibble on the elephant – one bite at a time.

- Rank the items.
- Determine those where you must have a presence.
- Determine which ones are critical.
- Determine the best tools to work with
- Determine if you need outside help
- Go to work.

Quite often the initial decision will be between starting a company Blog and starting with Facebook (and Official Landing Pages). We will cover these in more depth here.

STEP 15 - Launch Your Business Blog(s)

Earlier we said “Content is King” and fresh content is absolutely critical. Blogging is the way to deliver fresh content, which in turn will drive inbound traffic to your site.

Hub Spot data indicates that companies that blog regularly attract:

- 55% more site visitors,
- 97% more inbound links and
- 434% more indexed pages.
- 126% more lead growth

HOW DOES BLOGGING WORK?

Here is my take on the philosophy behind blogging. In traditional online selling you placed a page on your website focused on a product and a customer would find that page. There is a one to one correspondence between what you are trying to do (sell your product) and what the customer is trying to do (buy the product). You focused on presenting your product in the best light possible and they focused on getting the best product at the best price.

With blogs, the one-to-one correspondence between the seller and the buyer is different. As the seller you are interested in either becoming an “expert” or a “trusted friend.” You find information that you have that potential customers want and provide it to them. For example if you sell golf clubs, your customers are probably interested in tips on how to improve their golf game. You blog giving them these tips. Along the way you mention that you have top quality golf clubs and when they are ready to buy, you would be happy to service them. It’s like being out with your friends. If you are a house painter you want them to remember that you paint houses, but it doesn’t come up in the conversation often. If you hammer them with how you paint houses, they will find a new friend. On the other hand if they have questions about the paint on their homes, you are Johnny-on-the-spot to answer those questions. When they do need a paint job, they are more likely to think of their helpful (but not pushy) friend.

So how do you get started?

- First you find some key leaders in your field who are blogging and subscribe to their blog. Once you have listened for a while, you start commenting regularly. This gives you backlinks to your website and starts the process of name recognition for you or your company.
- Next you pick a topic. This is harder than it sounds. If you don’t find a niche that you are passionate about and that you can (eventually) dominate, you will burn out and your blog will fall by the wayside, regardless of your best intentions.

- Create the blog. Wordpress seems best and sites like HostGator will host several blogs for about \$10/month. You might need some help here. There are lots of plugins that you will need to add to the basic package. We talked before on how critical it is to reflect your Social Media Identity on this site. Use the same image, logo, tag line, slogan that you use in other places. Brand yourself.
- Review your ideal client avatars – get to know these “people” very well.
- Start posting – directly to your avatars. Talk to them about what they are interested in. You should usually 1 to 3 posts per week –every week – rain or shine – vacation or not.
- Note again, you DO NOT promote your product or service. You are providing education and interesting information as a way to establishing yourself as an expert or a trusted friend.

There are lots of articles available on what to post and what kind of posts generate the most traffic: how to articles, lists, breaking news related to your topic are usually good topics. This is where your measuring and monitoring comes in. you should watch and record which types of articles

- Attract more comments
- Attract links
- Are mentioned in other blogs
- Get shared via social media
- Get the most reads.

Part of your blog posting philosophy should be to create a bank of useful information. You can then link back to earlier posts when you are writing later posts.

STEP 16 - Exercise

One interesting suggestion is to list the top 10 questions you ideal client might ask. Now answer these questions – one per post. These become ideal links to place in the middle of later posts since these questions and issues will be ongoing.

LINKAGE

There is one more thing (there is always **one** more) to look into. You need widgets such as “Follow our Blog via Email”, “Follow our Blog via RSS”, “Share with a friend”, “Follow us on Facebook”, “Like our Facebook Page”, “Follow us on Twitter”, etc.

STEP 17 - Set up Facebook Account & Build a Following

Your initial focus when getting involved with social media should be to build relationships, have conversations, and establish connections. Once you have a following, you can share links to your own content via your social media accounts, in order to drive traffic to your website.

Go to <http://www.facebook.com> and create an account. You need to create a personal profile first and then you can add a business page. As with any of the Social Media sites, the more complete your profile is, the more often others will find you. Facebook tends to be a little more relaxed and personal than sites like LinkedIn, but you can still connect with colleagues, join networks, join common interest groups, engage in discussions & build relationships.

Be sure you use your Social Media Identify – the same image, logo, tag line, slogan, etc. This is especially true on the business page, but the image should be identical on all of the Social Media Sites.

When you create your business page, you need the same types of linkages listed for your Blog site – things like “Like us”, “Share with a friend”, “Follow our Blog”, or “Follow us on Twitter.”

There is a learning curve with Facebook (just like everything else worth doing), especially if you plan to market using Facebook. We’ll take a little more time here since the over 800 million users – many of whom use daily – make Facebook the number one Social Media site. We will go into these steps in more detail below.

The first thing you need to do is learn the lingo. The vocabulary is unique (they have even turned some nouns into verbs in the English language) and for people with extensive computer background, some of it is counter intuitive.

Short Vocabulary List.

Lets start with the three big areas- Profiles, Business Pages (Fan Pages) and Groups

Profile Pages – individuals have Profile Pages. This will have your branding image and information about you. You are trying to describe yourself so that 1) you will be found by others and 2) people will know who you are. People look for others that went to the same High School, live in the same town, read the same books, etc. You need to have this information available so they can find you when they try to “find Friends”. You establish a connection with a Profile Page by “friending” them. Every profile has a “wall” which is where you place your “posts” – see below. Profile pages also have a News Feed. This is where you see other people’s posts. This is how the two-way communication possess works.

Business Pages – businesses have Business Pages. These are similar to profile pages and were called Fan Pages. You often hear them referred to that way. You establish a connection with a business page by “Liking” it. Pages also have a Wall.

Groups – Groups have different capabilities than Pages. People join groups to share information with others who have similar interests. Some groups you can join, others you need to ask to join and some ask you. Again, groups have a wall.

The Next Critical term is Post – Posting is where you enter a statement, photo, video or even an application onto (into?) a particular wall. This is how you communicate with other Facebook users. Note that while Facebook has over 800 million subscribers, your posts only go to those who have friended your profile, liked your page, or joined the same group. All of your posts go to the Wall (see below) you posted on and some of them (see EdgeRank) are seen by others on their News Feeds.

Application – Facebook allows you to insert small programs into your page. There are thousands of special purpose applications you can either use freely or buy.

Chat – Facebook will show you who of your friends are on-line and allow real-time chat between individuals or small groups.

EdgeRank – Not all posts go to all friends. EdgeRank is the algorithm used by Facebook to determine which of your friend's posts will be shown on your News Feed.

Fan – People who press the “Like” button and become a “fan” of a business page

Friend – 1.) (n) a person you have a connection with Facebook; 2.) (v) to add a Facebook user as a connection. In other words you see (some of) their posts and they see (some of) yours.

Friend List – You can categorize the people who have friended you and then send posts to only those you belong to one or more of your lists. You can click on one of your lists and just see posts from members of the list. This area has been under major development in response to Google Plus and their groups.

Like – 1. (v) you press the Like Button on a business Page to become a fan of that page (and see activity on that page); 2. (v) when reading posts you can indicate you “like” the comment; 3. (n) the number of users who have liked your page; 4. (n) outside of Facebook, to like something using special software that in essence takes you to a particular business page and presses the Like Button for you. Facebook is adding to this category so that you can have “read”, or “watched” or “listened” to different things rather than having one category called “like”.

Network – a special kind of group Facebook users who attended a school or had the same employer.

News Feed – a constantly growing stream of wall posts from your friends and the groups you belong to.

Open Graph – this is the API that allows outside web sites to interact with Facebook.

Plugins – This usually refers to small sets of code that can be installed in a website that is not Facebook. You can have people Like your page or view the posts from your page right in your website. See <http://mashable.com/2011/03/22/facebook-social-plugins-2/> for more information

Security – one of the ongoing issues with Facebook is security. You have many controls in the settings for your profile page that let you decide how public each piece of information about is.

Subscribe – This is a new feature in Facebook. If you have enabled Subscribing in your user settings, people can tell Facebook that they would like to see your posts or your comments, even if you are not officially they “friend”.

Tag – You can click on a face in a photo and indicate that one of your friends is in the photo. This will show up in the News Feed. Facebook has made several changes over the years to allow more privacy. The person you tag now must agree to allow the post before it becomes public.

Ticker – The Ticker is a scrolling list down the right side of your screen that shows you – in real time – the posts that your friends are making right now. You can hover over one of the posts and make a comment or join the conversation.

Timeline – Facebook is coming out with a change to the User Profile. They are working on a graphic picture of your life. You indicate – on your timeline – major events in your life.

Others - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook_features#News_Feed - the Wikipedia site has other features and terms – some in beta and some very esoteric (like Easter Eggs).

Marketing

Selling on Facebook is VERY tricky. If you throw traditional ads at your friends, they will unfriend you in hurry. The 80/20 rule is in affect here. 80% of your posts should have NOTHING to do with business. Do Happy Birthdays, comment on others posts, put up pictures of your vacation, repeat pithy quotes, etc. Then occasionally you can point people to a link that will either take them to your Business Page or to your Web site. Many authorities talk about using 90/10 as your guideline. The bottom line is that you don't want to be seen as a person/business that ONLY want to sell something.

Goals

As has been said throughout this template, you have to start with goals and objectives. Here are some: (Check off those that apply to you.)

- 1. Connect with your friends – current and past.
- 2. Find new friends and connect with them
- 3. Get found by people searching for your product or brand
- 4. Find people who would benefit from your product or brand
- 5. Engage current customers
- 6. Engage potential customers
- 7. Create a community around your product or brand
- 8. Improve customer service
- 9. Promote other sites you may have (blogs, or web sites)
- 10. Generate leads for your business
- 11. Follow current trends
- 12. _____
- 13. _____
- 14. _____

MORE DETAIL

STEP 1 – Create an Account

Create your personal profile – remember profiles are for people and pages are for businesses. Go to Facebook.com and enter the information. You will automatically have a personal profile. (Also note that Facebook wants you to have ONE personal profile.)

STEP 2 – Edit Profile

Once you have signed on, click on the PROFILE in the upper right corner and fill in the basic information they ask for. This information helps people find you so usually you want to enter the town you were born in and the town where you currently live. Be sure to use your branding photo.

STEP 3 – Join Networks

Click on Account in the upper left corner and then Account Settings. Under that, click on the Network Tab that will appear at the top of the screen. Find some networks you belong to, like the High School you attended.

STEP 4 – Connect with Friends

Click on Friends in the left hand menu. You will see Find Friends. You can import lists from your email contact list, use the suggested friends that Facebook provides, enter individual people (now you know why you kept those yearbooks all these years) and search by people who attended certain schools or who currently live in your town. You may find that your church has a group and you can ask those people to be your friend. One thing commonly recommended when you do connect with an old friend is to look at their friend list. There is a good chance that you will find some of your old friends there. It is interesting to note that calling an old friend on the phone is very difficult (they wonder – “Why is he/she calling me?”). Making the same connection on Facebook is easy and usually they are happy to join. It is suggested that you put a personal comment on each request you make and don't make over 10 or 20 requests per day. There is a magic limit that Facebook uses to determine when someone is a Spammer. They don't advertise what that limit is, but you don't want to run into it.

STEP 5 – Set Up a Business Page

There are lots of articles and books written on Facebook marketing, you should probably buy and read a couple. For example: <http://www.inc.com/guides/201103/how-to-create-an-effective-company-facebook-page.html>

Here are some basic steps. 1) Log on to your profile account. 2) In a browser go to <http://www.facebook.com/pages/create> 3) choose a name for your page (you can change this until you get about 25 fans), 4) choose a classification (from categories which are currently Local Business/place, Company/Organization/Institution, Brand/Product, Artist/Band/Public Figure, Entertainment, or Cause/Community.) The category will help you be found by the search engines. 6) Agree with the Terms and Conditions and click on Get Started, and 7) Edit the page and the information.

Here are some interesting articles that show you some top rated Business Pages.

<http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/top-10-small-business-facebook-pages-2011-winners/>

<http://www.jeffbullas.com/2011/08/26/10-top-small-business-facebook-page-designs-to-inspire-you/>

<http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/10810/7-Awesome-B2B-Facebook-Pages.aspx>

<http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/9469/20-Examples-of-Great-Facebook-Pages.aspx>

And here is an article with statistics about brands that really engage people.

<http://www.allfacebook.com/facebook-engaging-brands-2011-10>

You will probably want a Welcome Page and Custom Tabs. There are special iFrame applications that allow you to do that. Wildfire, TabSite and ShortStack are some of the more common one. You can Google for these and many more.

It is possible you might want a group. It is interesting to know how groups differ from business pages so here is a list.

Topic	Groups	Pages
Purpose	People with a common interest.	Product Brand, company other central org.
Communication with members	Message – emails are sent to members and placed on the group wall	Update – Shows on the users Requests and on the page wall.
Profile Visibility	Shows as a text link in your profile	Shows as a Text and Image in your profile
Visibility in Searches	Front page only is publicly searched and indexed	All pages under all tabs are publicly searched and indexed
Visibility in New Feed	When members join or engage (like, comment, post) the action is distributed in the News Feed from the individual (not the “group”).	When a person becomes a fan or engages on the page it is distributed on the News Feed. Updates and posts by the administrators are distributed to the News Feed from the Page (not the administrator’s name)
Visibility of Administrators	Group Administrators are visible in the group. Posts that they make come from them personally.	Administrators are not listed on the Page. Posts made by them come from the Page. (Possible to modify this in the settings.)
Applications	There are a few basic applications available.	There are thousands of applications available. Quizzes, contests, games, etc.
Ability to Hide	Groups can be Secret. You must be invited to even know they exist.	Pages are always public.

STEP 6 – Listen, then start Commenting and Sharing Information

You should try to send several friend requests every day. Look for old colleagues; people in your current town, people from your hometown, and members of groups that focus on things you are interested in. You should be looking to friend your Avatar – your ideal client.

Here are some rules of thumb for business posting:

1. Be fun. Use interactive posts. Ask questions.
2. Use videos – people like them. Be sure to embed them instead of sending the user off to YouTube.com. You don't want them to leave your page if you can help it.
3. Create Contests – people like the interaction
4. Integrate Facebook into your traditional advertising. Use the Facebook logo and encourage people to Like and Join your page.
5. Grow you email list with Facebook.
6. Tie your posts back to your blog or website.
7. Have a Call-to-action. Ask for likes or comments or clicks.
8. Use full links when linking to other sites. For Twitter you use abbreviated URLs, but on Facebook, you get better results with full links.
9. Give your Facebook fans special incentives. Special discount codes or revealing new products on Facebook first is a great way to interact with your fans.
10. Welcome new visitors
11. Handle objections and problems with dignity.
12. Show links to your other material on your Page. Many won't see it otherwise since they rarely leave Facebook.
13. Time of Day is important. Early in the morning is good. Middle of the day is good and early evening is good. Other times tend see your posts pushed so far down the list that people never get to them.
14. Short posts (less than 80 characters) seem to work better than longer posts.
15. Photos and Videos get the most attention, followed by links, followed by status updates with questions.

Facebook is not about selling. It is about engaging. Let people know that you care about them and what they have to say. You can place links to your sales sites along the way.

If you are selling a product, you well be tempted and probably should engage with people who express a need for your product. One suggestion is when someone makes a comment that seems like a perfect opening to introduce one of your products, it is usually better send a private message to that person. That way you aren't seen as constantly bringing up your products. Each person you talk to only sees the one product post that you sent directly to him or her.

EdgeRank

While posting it is important to understand EdgeRank. Facebook realized a long time ago that they could not show every post to every friend in the News Feed so they have an algorithm that decides which posts your fans and friends see. The formula has three parts a) affinity – how

often to interact with another person or page. – If you often like or comment on someone's posts, you have a higher affinity, b) weight – how many “edges” a post has (comments, likes, reposts) and c) time delay – how current the post is. You can influence the affinity and the weight portion by asking for “likes” and posting questions on topics where people want to share their answers and comments.

There are several types of posts that encourage responses. 1) Ask open-ended questions, 2) Ask questions with fill-in-the-blanks, e.g. the first thing I do in the morning is _____? You can also link to neat stuff (people will “like” that), show photos, videos and inspiring quotations – especially if they are displayed in a nice image. Make things FUN!

It's been reported that only 2 in 1000 of the Facebook post you see in your News Feed will actually be placed there. That makes it critical to understand EdgeRank and work hard to improve rating of your posts. This is being called News Feed Optimization (NFO) and is similar to Search Engine Optimization (SEO). For a more in-depth discussion try <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2010/10/18/the-facebook-news-feed-how-it-works-the-10-biggest-secrets.html>

Step 7 – Find You Target Audience

Go to <http://www.Facebook.com/search> and click on Pages on the left. Now use key words to find groups and pages that might be of interest to your target audience. Think about your Avatars here. What would interest them? You can also try <http://www.Fbinstant.com>.

STEP 8 – Use Applications

Go to <http://www.facebook.com/applications> to see some of the applications you can add to your page. While most of these aren't business related, this article on the 101 best applications is interesting: http://www.techdigest.tv/2007/07/the_101_best_fa.html Other interesting sites are <http://TheInvolver.com> (several apps – Twitter and YouTube) and <http://apps.facebook.com/blognetworks> for an app that imports your blog into your page.

STEP 9 – USE Facebook Ads

Go to www.facebook.com/advertising and fill out the click the Create an Ad button. These ads are very similar to Google ads. The one key difference is that you can get VERY specific as to whom you want your ads to be displayed to. They will give you an “estimated reach” to tell you how many people meet the criteria you set up.

STEP 10 – Monitor

Google Analytics can be used, but Facebook provides Insight. You should monitor this regularly. It will tell you how many new Likes you received, how many unsubscribes and information on engagement. You can track the engagement against what you where doing to see what works and what doesn't.

Okay- that is a brief overview of Facebook. Enough to get you started.

STEP 17 - Set up Other Social Media Accounts & Build a Following

Twitter - Go to <http://www.Twitter.com>, create a username and a profile that is consistent with your Social Media Image. Now you are ready to tweet! A few things to note:

1. Tweets are limited to 140 characters and should be meaningful and interesting to your Avatar – ideal client personas. Links to other sites often draw more attention than just 100 characters of text.
2. Follow others whose tweets are useful and informative. Again you should be looking for your ideal clients or people who are influential with your ideal clients. You should retweet these to your followers and respond to their comments.
3. Use free Twitter clients (such as Tweetdeck and Hootsuite) to organize whom you are following into more meaningful groups and to automatically follow those who follow you.

If you are not familiar with Twitter, one commonly used supplementary site is <http://bit.ly>. You can create a free account, give them a long URL (e.g. <http://mywebsite.com/Information/Newsletters/issue-52>) and they will give you back a short URL like bit.ly/Hb3435ba. You can use this URL in your post and save a considerable number of characters. You can also go to bit.ly, sign into your account and see how many times the link was clicked on.

Twitter Tip: Search words are very important in Twitter. People search for posts on their interests. Compile a list of the 100 top search keywords (remember we started with Keywords?) and try to include those words in your posts.

LinkedIn - Go to <http://www.LinkedIn.com> and create an account. Complete your personal profile (and your company profile, if that is your responsibility). Again the profile should match your Social Media Identity. You should aim for 100% completion! The more complete you are, the more likely it is that others will find you. Here are some activities you can do in LinkedIn to build business relationships and promote your company:

1. Invite Friends / Trusted Colleagues to join your network
2. Join Groups (up to 50) – Ask and Answer Questions to increase your image as either a trusted friend or an expert.
3. Add add-ons like SlideShare and share PowerPoint presentations you or your company have made.
4. Request and write recommendations.

Others – you identified others earlier. Work on them in the order you ranked them. (Yelp and their badges and podcasts come to mind for certain companies.) Press Releases are critical for others.)

STEP 18 - Email Newsletters and Autoresponders

In many cases you will decide that you need to create one or more email newsletters. If you do, you should investigate one of the companies that specialize in email campaigns – Constant Contact, IContact, GetResponse and others specialize in helping you to send professional looking emails, with graphics and videos. They help you track how many people respond and open your newsletters and handle things like unsubscribing.

Autoresponders are emails that you set up in advance and when someone asks to join your newsletter or get more information or be sent a copy of a special incentive, the prepared emails will automatically be sent out. You can schedule several to go out based on one request. You can use this to provide tips for the next weeks etc.

Capturing Leads, Incentives, and Capture Pages

One common way to build an email newsletter database is to offer people an incentive to give you their name and email address. The incentive could be a discount coupon or something on the Internet. Common incentives are eBooks, White Papers and access to How-To Webinars.

STEP 19 – Exercise – Identify and create 3 Incentives

The process usually involves three steps.

1. You give a teaser in an email, in Facebook, in a Tweet, actually any place you can think of. When the person clicks on a link in your teaser they are taken to a Capture Page.
2. A Capture Page is a one page website. It has its own URL. This page describes the offer. It often has a video where you can up close and personal describing what the person will be getting. There is a form on the page. When the person fills out the form and clicks the submit button, they receive the incentive.

3. An autoresponder usually sends them an email welcoming them to the email list, the newsletter, the organization or whatever. The information from the form is automatically fed into your customer database.

Often times a Business Page in Facebook is used as a Capture page.

STEP 20 – Exercise – Set up at least one Capture Page.

Implied in this section is the fact that you need to be thinking of incentives that you create that will have value to your Avatar/Ideal Customer. The incentive is usually not product specific.

STEP 21 - YouTube, Flickr, Photobucket, Slideshare, and Webinars – set up the ones you need.

People expect to see videos today. In most cases you should create your own personal Channel on YouTube. You can store and share your short videos there. The advantage of having your own channel is that if you send someone to YouTube to see your video, the other suggested videos are all yours.

YouTube is one of the most active search sites on the Internet. In many cases it is in your best interest to have a presence there.

Flickr and Photobucket allow you to store and share photographs. Flickr is the most viewed, but Facebook has the most photographs stored.

SlideShare allows you to store and share your PowerPoint presentations. This can be linked into LinkedIn as well.

Webinars can be created in numerous ways. Large screen sharing companies like GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar will record a webinar. For about \$50 you can buy a product called Snagit and it will save a video of what is happening on your screen along with audio. You can also use free programs like Webinaria or CamStudio. (BTW – there is a relatively new product out call FreeScreenSharing.com – this is very easy to use and handles about 96 people. FreeConferencing.com is also free, handles up to 1,000 viewers, but is more complex.)

STEP 22 – Social Media Linkages

You need to find, create or buy widgets (small pieces of code) to leverage your own material. When someone reads your blog, you should offer him or her the opportunity to connect with your other social media. Here is a chart with some of the possibilities. Use this as a check sheet.

Linkage Check Sheet

	Blog	Follow Blog Via Email	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn	YouTube	News letter	Email	Personal Contact
Blog	XXXX								
Follow Blog Via Email		XXXX							
Facebook			XXXX						
Twitter				XXXX					
LinkedIn					XXXX				
YouTube						XXXX			
Newsletter							XXXX		
Email								XXXX	
Personal Contact									XXXX

Use the area above to diagonal to check off that the item on the top is linked with the item on the left.

Use the area below the diagonal to check off that the item on the left is linked with the item on the top.

NOTE: You can also place links in your Email Signature.

STEP 23 – Exercise – Go back to page 2 and check off the items.

STEP 24 – Exercise – Check all of your sites for mobile device access.

STEP 25 – Scheduling Your Social Media Efforts

Social Media requires regular maintenance. It is not free since it takes time to set up and then regular time to read/ write/ comment/ respond/ monitor/ adjust.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Blog 1					
Blog 2					
Follow Blog 1					
Follow Blog 2					
Twitter					
LinkedIn					
Facebook					
Newsletter					
Other 1					
Other 2					

In social media, it's imperative that you take action every day.

- Use tools like FeedBurner so that when you write a blog post, a tweet gets created automatically telling people about the post.
- Be sure to comment on the blogs that you regularly follow. (Example, I know a blog that gets over 1,000,000 hits per month. There are fewer than 20 comments on a given day. Do you think that people would start to recognize your name if you responded regularly?)
- Connect with people you meet on LinkedIn or Facebook.
- Have you read or seen something interesting? Share it on Facebook or Tweet it

Frequent the Q & A groups and ask questions and answer them

Here is a sample schedule from an on-line article by John D. Leavy: <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/220678>. Most of us would add regular posts on Facebook to this list, but it is a good starting place.

Twice Daily in the Morning and Afternoon

- Check Twitter via a program like HootSuite. Respond when necessary. Follow the @replies that makes sense.
- Check LinkedIn. Reply to emails and comments when appropriate.
- Scan Twitter followers for relevant conversations to join.
- Check [your business's](#) Facebook Page for questions and respond when necessary.
- Scan Google Alerts for brand and company mentions. Respond as appropriate.

Weekly or on Weekends

- Build Twitter Lists to better organize ongoing discussions and special interest groups. Set up saved searches in Hootsuite to find out if people are talking about you or your company.
- Scan LinkedIn questions from network connections and respond when appropriate.
- Catch up on LinkedIn discussions. Add to discussion when appropriate.
- Send LinkedIn invitations to connect with clients when beginning a new assignment.
- Ask for LinkedIn recommendation after successfully completing a project or [engagement](#).
- Add new content to Facebook like videos or photos.
- Think of ways to repurpose this content and energy to reach a larger audience with the social networking gospel.
- Keep an eye open for new social networking venues, tools, and functionality that will make the social networking experience more enjoyable and easier to traverse.
- Identify new social networking influencers and build relationships where appropriate.

Through the Week

- Mondays: Schedule [tweets](#) through HootSuite to go out three times per day at regular intervals.
- Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays: Join one hot trend conversation on Twitter, if appropriate, and add new content to Facebook (new items you are selling, photos, discounts and other promotions).
- Tuesdays and Thursdays: Respond to blog comments.
- Fridays: Check traffic at your blog or website.

STEP 26 –Monitoring, Assessing and Adjusting

We have covered a number of Key Performance Indexes (KPIs) that you can use to determine how your strategy is working. The critical thing is that you set your objectives in terms of KPIs and then track them.

You need to regularly review the statistics and determine if you are getting the results you are working for.

You should create a table with KPIs on one side and months on the other. Fill in the boxes with data as the months go by. This table is going to be quite different for different companies.

Conclusion

Internet marketing, especially when you add Social Media into the mix, is a large undertaking. The thing to remember is that you need to take it slow, divide it into small steps and nibble away at it.

Dr. Hale Pringle Ed.D.

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Draft 1

I am an entrepreneur working with Market America. I have over 40 years experience in System Analysis, Research, Small Business and Marketing.

As I set out to enhance my web presence I started looking for a Template that would help me put together a comprehensive plan. I didn't find one that met my needs, so I took from a number of places and developed one.

If you have any suggestions my email is HalePringle@gmail.com

If you are interested in a home based business visit <http://HalePringle.com>