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JOHN BECK on the Canadian Construction Business

SOCIAL MEDIA and SMEs

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EDITORIAL

Social media is the principal theme of this issue of the SMEE Review. Every day we are invaded by the consequences, favorable as well as unfavorable, of this new tool of communication. In a study of the adoption and use of social media in German small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Meske and Steglits (2013) mention that 44% of American SMEs use social media (24% in a structured way and 20% in an informal one) in comparison to 47% of German SMEs that use it. Their empirical study of close to 200 German SMEs reveals that 80 enterprises that used social media did so for the following goals, in the order of importance: communication improvement and fast access to in house information and knowledge, collaboration improvement, positive influence of corporate culture, fast access to in-house experts, and reduction of travel costs[1]. Michael Fertik (2014)[2], founder and CEO of Reputation.com and industry commentator with guest columns in Harvard Business Review, Reuters, Inc.com and Newsweek, expressed the following opinion about the use of social media by SMEs that, "I'm fairly unconvinced that social media is a game-changer for every business. Yet I do think a defined digital presence – coupled with realistic expectations – can be a source of significant support for most, assuming a thoughtful approach is taken". This opinion was given after observing results of a survey of more than 1,235 American small business owners by Manta. According to Fertik, it was found that despite the fact that nearly 50 percent of businesses surveyed had increased their time on social media, more than 60 percent reported no return on investment. This calls for cautious and realistic use of social media by SMEs.

The majority of papers in this SMEE Review issue examine the social media impact on the small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurship. In the first paper, Gary Bizzo presents the most important platforms of social media and the ways it invades our daily lives. Carolyn Brown demonstrates, in the second paper, that social media is a tool that the members of a community can use to communicate with each other. Also, this author gives advice on the best way to take advantage of this communication means. The third paper by Craig Liu describes the content of five readings that could be of interest to anyone wanting to understand what social media is and how it can be used successfully for the benefit of SMEs and entrepreneurship. This paper is followed by an interview with John Beck, one of the successful Canadian entrepreneurs in the area of construction. This businessman draws on his personal experience to give tips on the ingredients of entrepreneurial success in the current fast changing environment. The fifth paper presents the case of an external review of the development, design, and implementation of a social media project at the Maryland Automobile Insurance Fund (MAIF). Finally, in the last paper, we present a document prepared by the government of Ontario province to help SMEs to be involved in social media.

I would like to thank Professor Andrew Gaudes, dean of the Faculty of Business Administration, University of Regina, for his continued support to the SMEE Review. Many thanks to Bruce C. Anderson, director of the Centre for Management Development and Associate Vice-President, Development at the University of Regina, for his involvement in the different steps leading to the production of this issue. Congratulations to Bruce in his new role on the leadership team of the University of Regina and we wish him all the best for the future of his career. As well we extend our thanks to Craig Liu and Raza Hussain, and Zachary Perras respectively former and current student consultant managers at the CMD. Finally, thanks to Kelly-Ann McLeod, for taking her time to proofread the manuscript of this issue of the SMEE Review before its publication.

By Jean-Marie Nkongolo-Bakenda
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1 Christian Meske and Stefan Stieglitz, 2013. Adoption and Use of Social media in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. In F. Harmsen and H.A. Proper (eds.). Practice-Driven Research on Enterprise Transformation. PRET. Springer: 61-75.

2 Michael Fertik, 2014, Is Social Media Worth It For Small Businesses? Forbes, http://www.forbes.com/ 8/21/2014 @ 1:05PM. Accessed on 20 November 2014.

ÉDITORIAL

Les médias sociaux constituent le thème principal de ce numéro de la Revue SMEE. Nous sommes chaque jour envahi par les conséquences, favorables ou défavorables, de ce nouvel outil de communication. Dans une étude sur l'adoption et l'utilisation des médias sociaux dans les petites et moyennes entreprises (PME) allemandes, Meske et Steglits (2013) mentionnent que 44% des PMEs américaines utilisent les médias sociaux (24% de manière structurée et 20% de façon informelle) en comparaison avec 47% des PME allemandes qui les utilisent. Leur étude empirique de près de 200 PMEs allemandes révèle que 80 entreprises qui ont utilisé les médias sociaux l'ont fait pour les objectifs suivants, dans l'ordre d'importance: l'amélioration de la communication et de l'accès rapide à l'information interne et aux connaissances, l'amélioration de la collaboration, l'influence positive de la culture d'entreprise, l'accès rapide à des experts internes, et la réduction des frais de déplacement[3]. Michael Fertik (2014)[4], fondateur et PDG de Reputation.com et commentateur de l'industrie dans Harvard Business Review, Reuters, Inc.com et Newsweek, s'est exprimé comme suit sur l'utilisation des médias sociaux par les PMEs : bien que n'étant pas convaincu que les médias sociaux puissent servir d'éléments déclencheurs de changement dans toutes les entreprises, je crois néanmoins qu'une présence bien encadrée sur la toile - couplée des attentes réalistes - peut être une source de soutien important pour la plupart d'entreprises si une approche réfléchie est adoptée. Cette opinion a été donnée après l'observation des résultats d'une enquête auprès de plus de 1235 propriétaires de PMEs américaines par Manta. Selon Fertik, il a été constaté que malgré le fait que près de 50 pour cent des entreprises interrogées aient augmenté leur temps sur les médias sociaux, plus de 60 pour cent n'ont rapporté aucun rendement sur l'investissement. Ceci invite à une utilisation prudente et réaliste des médias sociaux par les PME.

La majorité d'articles de ce numéro de la Revue SMEE examine l'impact des médias sociaux sur les petites et moyennes entreprises et l'entrepreneuriat. Dans le premier article, Gary Bizzo présente les plus importantes plateformes de médias sociaux et la façon dont elles envahissent notre vie quotidienne. Carolyn Brown démontre, dans le deuxième article, que les médias sociaux sont un outil que les membres d'une communauté peuvent utiliser pour communiquer entre eux. En outre, cette auteure donne des conseils sur la meilleure façon de profiter de ce moyen de communication. Le troisième article de Craig Liu décrit le contenu de cinq articles qui pourraient être d'intérêt pour tous ceux qui souhaitent comprendre ce que les médias sociaux sont et comment ils peuvent être utilisés avec succès pour le bénéfice des PME et de l'entrepreneuriat. Cet article est suivi d'un entretien avec John Beck, l'un des entrepreneurs canadiens prospères dans le domaine de la construction. Cet homme d'affaires se fonde sur son expérience personnelle pour donner des conseils sur les ingrédients de la réussite entrepreneuriale dans le contexte actuel caractérisé par de changements rapides. Le cinquième article présente le cas d'un examen externe de la mise au point, la conception et la mise en œuvre d'un projet de médias sociaux à la Caisse d'assurance automobile du Maryland (MAIF). Enfin, dans le dernier article nous vous présentons un guide préparé par le gouvernement provincial de l'Ontario à l'intention des PMEs sur l'utilisation des médias sociaux. Je vous souhaite une bonne lecture de ces articles.

En votre nom, je tiens à remercier le professeur Andrew Gaudes, doyen de la Faculté d'administration des affaires de l'Université de Regina, pour son soutien continu à la Revue SMEE. Un grand merci à Bruce C. Anderson, directeur du Centre for Management Development (CMD) et vice-président par intérim à l'Université de Regina, pour son implication dans les différentes étapes menant à la production de ce numéro. Félicitations à Bruce dans son nouveau rôle dans l'équipe dirigeante de l'Université de Regina et nous lui souhaitons la meilleure des chances pour l'avenir de sa carrière. En outre, nous tenons à remercier Craig Liu, Raza Hussain, et Zachary Perras, respectivement anciens et actuel gestionnaires des Étudiants Consultant au CMD. Enfin, nous exprimons nos grands remerciements à Kelly-Ann Mcleod, pour avoir pris son temps pour relire les manuscrits de ce numéro de la Revue SMEE avant leur publication.

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3 Christian Meske and Stefan Stieglitz, 2013. Adoption and Use of Social media in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. In F. Harmsen and H.A. Proper (eds.). Practice-Driven Research on Enterprise Transformation. PRET. Springer: 61-75.

4 Michael Fertik, 2014, Is Social Media Worth It For Small Businesses? Forbes, http://www.forbes.com/ 8/21/2014 @ 1:05PM. Accessed on 20 November 2014.

Social Media and Its Impact on Canadian Business:

Is Social Media Simplifying or Complicating Business?

By Gary Bizzo

Gary Bizzo is based in Vancouver where he is Management Consultant, Business Mentor, Coach and CEO for Hire. He wrote the book "How to Start a Successful Business - The First Time" to address the issues and problems his clients faced in setting up a business through to the day to day operations of their businesses (contact CEO@garybizzo.com or visit http://www.garybizzo.com/).

Abstract

In this paper, Gary Bizzo describes new practices introduced by social media in the marketplace in general and in entrepreneurship in particular. Also, he demonstrates how this new communication tool invades all our everyday lives before presenting its most important platforms. The text is interspersed with many examples illustrating the author's arguments.

Résumé

Dans cet article, Gary Bizzo décrit les nouvelles pratiques introduites par les médias sociaux dans le monde des affaires en général et en entrepreneuriat en particulier. En outre, il montre comment ce nouvel outil de communication envahit toute notre vie quotidienne avant de présenter ses plates-formes les plus importantes. Le texte est émaillé de nombreux exemples illustrant les propos de l'auteur.

Social media has created a paradigm shift in terms of how we do business and what tools entrepreneurs can use to market to the Canadian consumer. Some may argue that the rise of social media is, in fact, the greatest 'invention' since the computer. Social media has created a new way of doing business not just in promoting our businesses or us.

85% of clients expect companies they buy from to be on social media and 82% trust companies more if they are on social media.

I will discuss defining new strategies to take a business to market, digital branding versus traditional marketing, and the top mediums for social engagement, and the benefits and downfalls of social media.

In the 1960's Marshall McLuhan gave us the famous line, "the medium is the message'. In the new millennium, the message is definitely 'the content' and social media tools like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn have changed the way we not only do business but how we engage with others in our life.

Traditional marketing like flyers, brochure, TV, radio, business cards and static websites have been replaced in recent years by YouTube, social media mega players and a new focus on inbound versus outbound marketing. Outbound, the traditional marketing method, relied on the entrepreneur to get his message out to the masses in the hopes the buyer would be swayed by the message they put forth. Billions of dollars are still regularly spent to garner the dollar of the consumer although social media savvy marketers are moving their marketing budgets to social media instead.

Inbound marketing has changed the face of advertising because social media draws people to the entrepreneur and his company with content that the consumer desires and is actively seeking on the Internet. Forrester Research released its 5 year forecast detailing that social media advertising spending in the US is expected to reach $16.2 billion by 2019 up from $7.3 billion in 2014, growing at a five-year compounded annual growth rate of 17.4%. This represents a 10-fold increase from 2009.

Canada's largest sports retailer, Sport Chek, conducted an experiment this year. For 2 weeks the prolific flyer company didn't print a single flyer; rather it converted its marketing to Facebook instead. Sport Chek's market research had indicated only 17% read their flyers delivered the traditional way through fillers in newspapers. In those 2 weeks the retailer showed a spike of 12% in sales and featured items jumped 23% over the same period last year. Based on these findings they are soon to divert 25% of their annual $20M ad budget to social media. In comparison Canadian Tire

spends $100M a year just on flyers. These market giants are still hesitant to divert their entire budgets to digital since consumers find flyers a tough habit to drop. The savings to a small business owner is staggering.

Clearly these numbers are significant and show a shift to the Internet when one considers that the major benefit of social media marketing is that it is free. The advertising revenues noted indicate traditional markets for large corporations are now shifting their spending patterns to reflect the new delivery methods.

Social media and entrepreneurship:

What does social media do for the entrepreneur? It has created a fast and effective channel to build and enhance your brand and reputation. It builds visibility, established brand credibility and can be effective in creating a special type of customer loyalty based on word of mouth engagement.

Does social media make the journey easier for the entrepreneur? It is much like the early days of computers when we all felt computers would reduce the 'paper' in our lives. One could easily say that the rise of social media has made connectivity and engagement easier but has taken over a portion of our lives that in the past has been private.

Social media is your new Rolodex; it's a source for global crowdfunding via Indiegogo and Kickstarter. Imagine financing your business from investors $5 at a time through a global network of like-minded people who see your vision and are happy to invest in your product instantly. Crowdsourcing is the ability to find the right partner for your business as if borders didn't exist. FiveR is a tool that allows you to peruse classifieds of people who will do work for you for five dollars, fast and efficiently. Imagine 10 years ago having your logo designed for five dollars or having your resume reviewed by a professional for five bucks. FiveR has arrived, is effective and is guaranteed. iStockphoto has taken the lucrative copyright incomes of photographers and reduced them to pennies a photograph by opening up stock libraries to the world. Instead of charging $100 for a one-time use, the photographer can sell the same image hundreds of times for a dollar. While the market has changed, the photographer has not lost his livelihood because of commodities of scale.

Virtual offices via smartphones have replaced the expensive downtown offices with our wireless connection to the world and customers. Business cards are still a source of brand identity but likely include a QR bar code on it somewhere which, when scanned by a smartphone, can take the viewer directly to a blog, website or special offer on the Internet. Some serious marketers like Canada's Boston Pizza have an app that sends people signed on to their site updates on job opportunities. Your phone is indeed your Rolodex.

Social media in our daily life:

Social media has changed the way we perceive and are perceived personally and for business. It is an agent of change for others. We are familiar with the social media campaign of President Obama who admitted that social media played a major role in his first election. The death of pop icon Michael Jackson was first reported by a Tweet. Social media in the form of Foursquare allows marketers to use GPS to lure customers to their retail establishment using proximity offers and gamifies the experience so people stay engaged in the hunt for good deals.

Of course, we use Facebook to connect with old friends and build new ones. LinkedIn is more of a professional resume for business people and raves that 54% of all job recruiters are followers. This is a good indicator of its relevance to job seekers and employers. Twitter with its incredibly succinct 140 characters is also immediate and subject to viral and trending situations.

Social media has created a situation where everyone can make a difference in the world. Imagine a world where everyone is accountable and anyone can question officials in both government and industry – it is here now. In the early 2000's Diane Urquhart became a major whistleblower for Canadian government fraud but remains insignificant and largely anonymous because her expose happened before social media. We are all aware of the two top whistleblowers, cum heroes, Snowden and Wikileaks Julian Assange. They saw injustice and sought to expose it to the world. In today's world privacy is one of our most cherished assets. Social media became the catalyst and the unifying force behind the 'Arab Spring' and other rebellions from the grassroots of society.

I read an article on page 17 of Canada's Globe & Mail newspaper by two journalists about the high salaries and perks paid to NGO charity CEO's like the Salvation Army and Save the Children. I was incensed and began a social media campaign to get the news out using twitter and my blog. Unknown to me, CTV picked up my social media feeds and got the interest of a Toronto MP. She presented a Private Members Bill to the House of Commons and it passed First Reading. I know the sequence of events because she called me and asked me to present a brief to the House of Commons about my efforts. I did and Bill C-470 passed,

albeit watered down a little, to make charities more transparent. The bottom line? One person can make a difference.

Business and social media provides some interesting statistics. According to Stats Canada, 85% of clients expect companies they buy from to be on social media and 82% trust companies more if they are on social media. In 2003, 22% of people trusted 'people like me'. In 2014 that number has risen to 92% according to Forbes. With the top three social media platforms, Facebook, Google and Twitter, garnering almost two billion followers it is unwise for an entrepreneur to ignore social media and its effect on the marketplace.

Canadians have embraced social media ahead of most other industrial states. Some more statistics from Forrester Research indicates, 86% of Canadians are on social media, we average two hours and 19 minutes on social media per day, 89% of us use our Smartphones for local internet searches and 27% of Canadians have made a purchase on their Smartphone in the past year. One would think these numbers alone are compelling for entrepreneurs to embrace and join the social media wave.

Social medial platforms:

We should talk of the different platforms. The website which has been the mainstay of entrepreneurs to get 'the word out' is dead. Its static format where information becomes stale as soon as the site is created is not interesting and once its information is viewed becomes a boring lifeless Internet experience. The blog format with its changing content has made blogs not only dynamic and changeable but has a built-in ability to add custom pieces that can allow you to gather customer information, build lists, and get feedback while providing potential customers with great information which they seek. Customers return often to see what has changed on the site and if they find the information useful they will pass the site on to others via social media or word of mouth. This free marketing is considered grassroots guerilla tactics. Guerrilla marketing was initially used by small and medium sized businesses, but it is increasingly being adopted by big business. The concept of guerrilla marketing rises from an unconventional system of promotion that relies on patience, energy, and imagination rather than a big advertising budget.

Entrepreneurs are consumed by demographics. Business owners find it a constant battle to find new customers and although social media has given them free tools and access to a wide expanse of potential clients social media is still on the edge of being fully utilized. There is endless data indicating that Twitter has had an increase of 79% since 2012 in baby boomers (those aged 55-64). Google has shown a slightly lower 56% increase in users 45-54 and Facebook at 46% for the same age bracket. The older generation is now embracing social media like never before and marketers are clearly taking notice with media buys directed at this segment. Gone are the kids who dominated early social media. Youth between 12-17 now account for only 11% of social media users on Twitter.

The delivery of Twitter's tweets is a source of its popularity. With the maximum message size of 140 characters it has always been a challenge to get the message out to reach your customer about your service or product. Gone are the days when 'tweets' consisted of what you had for breakfast. It is now the domain of corporate branding. With Twitter you can 'follow' or reach 1000 new customers a day. Can you visualize reaching that number with Facebook, mail or phone?

In conclusion, what is at stake?

Social media has changed the face of customer service for entrepreneurs. In the past your reputation was solid as long as you could keep clients happy one at a time. I had a recent issue with Delta Hotels. Bad service led me to complain on social media and with vast numbers of followers behind me I made quite an impact. When the President of Delta Hotels called me on a holiday to assuage my issues I knew I had hit a nerve and he finally understood the impact of social media on customer service and retention.

What does the entrepreneur need to do to keep a positive social media outlook? One needs to have a blog with a 'call to action' (a form to fill in, something for the potential customer to do for more information, etc.). Your dynamic blog needs to be professional looking with good graphics but more specifically great content that changes on a regular basis. Search engine optimization needs to be part of your maintenance plan and have links to your social media. Optimize your site for mobile phones because people are shopping with their phones while they wait for the bus, sit at the airport and even while sitting in their backyards. The primary focus of any social media program is to engage, engage and engage your viewer at every opportunity. Make them want to follow you, visit your blog and most importantly buy from you.

The bottom line with social media is that it's all about social. Engagement equals likeability and customers. Your content needs to be great and remember your audience. This is the age of enlightenment for entrepreneurs – carpe diem!

Taking Care of Business Through Social Media

By Carolyn Brown

Carolyn Brown has a Bachelor of Journalism and a Graduate Diploma in Public Administration. She is an accredited editor in the Life Sciences ELS and a Certified Professional Editor (CPE). Carolyn Brown is also a publishing consultant, specializing in scientific and medical publishing operations. Before starting her own business, she was with Canada's two largest scientific publishers, Canadian Medical Association Publications and NRC Research Press. Contact: carolynbrown@editors.ca.

Abstract

In this paper, Ms. Brown considers social media as another means that people have found to communicate each other as members of the community. The author graciously offers some tips for an effective use of this new tool in our times of knowledge based economy.

Résumé

Dans cet article, Ms. Brown considère les médias sociaux comme un autre moyen que les gens ont trouvé pour communiquer les uns les autres en tant que membres de la communauté. L'auteur offre gracieusement quelques conseils pour une utilisation efficace de ce nouvel outil à notre époque de l'économie basée sur la connaissance.

1. Introduction

While some businesses fret about social media — whether to use it, how to use it — others simply see it as an extension of what they do all the time: deal with people.

Any human endeavour exists in a social milieu, and most businesses fulfil many of their functions collaboratively. They are situated in a context of overlapping communities. (The diagram is just an example of the types of communities a business may recognize.) Businesses communicate with these communities, often extensively. However, their messages and approaches may differ depending on the community membership.

More and more, businesses are not selling a product or a service, but a lifestyle or knowledge. The business can serve as a hub for members of its various communities, sharing knowledge, connecting people, and moving the entire network forward.

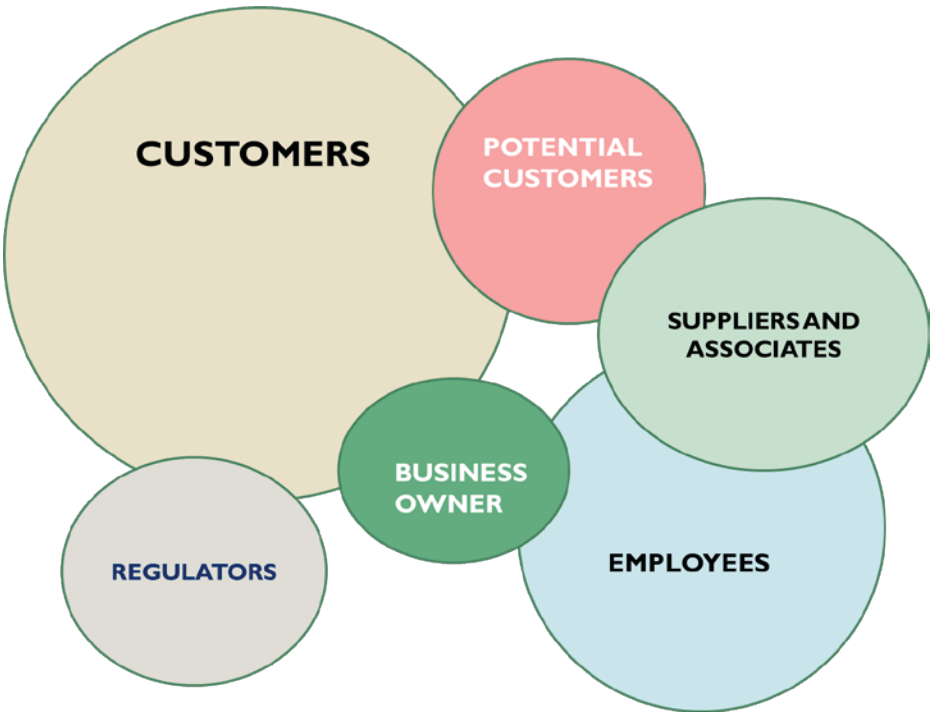

Figure: Business community members

Traditionally, businesses have used a variety of approaches. Storefront businesses communicate through personal interaction with walk-in customers, signage, window dressing and so on. Professionals providing a service hand out cards and fridge magnets, and put an ad in the Yellow Pages. For the past 20 years, many businesses have had a website, and this has become pretty much de rigueur. If a potential customer cannot find the business' website, he or she may think the business has ceased operations.

Now we have added social media to the mix. Where does it fit in?

Technology can be categorized by whether it is additive or transformative. Some of the new digital technologies simply add to what business is doing now: they just expand the business' reach. Others can lead to profound change in the way a company does business.

2. Adding to the way you do business now

For example, a Yellow Pages advertisement is now on the Canada 411 search engine, making it easier for potential customers to find and popping up in searches. Potential customers can be more easily targeted by geographic location from Canada 411. Another example is using Twitter very much the way a company uses its website or customer email list: for announcements of sales or events. A Facebook page that announces new products is similar to the online catalogue on a company's website. These uses of social media are additive. The company continues to communicate with its customers, but through new channels.

This is not to dismiss these additive functions of social media. In fact, they can be a great way to inform existing and potential customers, as well as the business associates, suppliers, and others in the business' network.

A few tips on using social media for communication:

Decide which social media you wish to use. Many businesses use all of them, and their websites are festooned with the icons for Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and others. But each social media platform takes work to maintain (more on this in a moment). So businesses would save a lot of time and trouble if they asked themselves which social media are worth the effort. Where are the business' network members? Are they on Facebook or LinkedIn? Do they keep Twitter running during the day, or do they prefer photo-sharing or recipe sites?

One association I know of began with a Facebook page, but soon figured out its members were not using Facebook but LinkedIn because they were business professionals. The association discontinued its Facebook page and started a LinkedIn group, which was much more useful among its members.

Do put those icons on your website as they enable your customers to let their friends know about your products and services. They do the advertising for you, and the best kind of advertising, which is personal recommendation.

Once you have decided on targeted social media, decide how often you will post new information to it. Businesses need to post occasionally so that their communities keep them top of mind. This is real work, and should be part of someone's job description so that it isn't neglected. But posting information very often, especially if the information is not relevant and has nothing new to say, is experienced as annoying. Users of social media will stop following Facebook pages and Twitter feeds that take up social media real estate with trivial verbiage.

What works in social media postings? Surprisingly, what works in regular media. Content is king, people like to read information, not sales pitches. Writing in the style of newspaper headlines or magazine article titles really works. If you are not a great writer, there is probably someone around your office or business network who has worked in journalism or advertising and can write copy.

The idea is to write something that lures in the reader to click on a link to the company website. I work in scientific publishing, and I'm astonished at how staid scientific journals can draw me in.

Try these tweets (the first two are from *Nature*, and I wrote the third for the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*):

Analysis reveals largest trees are the fastest-growing trees

Fish have feelings too

Low immunity in adults behind H1N1 resurgence

By the same token, avoid retweeting or reposting. Some social media users think reposting makes them appear plugged in and up to date. However, readers are interested in and impressed by original content, not the fact that the business' social media person spends the day reading Twitter and hitting the "retweet" button.

On Twitter, especially, many users discover messaging (@) and hashtags (#), then start to add numerous hashtags and messaging to their tweets. These tend to distract from the content of the tweet and should be used sparingly, only when they will really help to direct the message to its intended readers.

3. Transforming the way you do business

When social media becomes really interesting is when it starts to transform the way business people do business, or even the business itself.

The overlapping communities around a business are an ever-evolving network. More and more, businesses are not selling a product or a service, but a lifestyle or knowledge. Their connections with associates and suppliers may be as important as those with their customers. Their employees may be a bigger asset than their inventory. The business can serve as a hub for members of its various communities, sharing knowledge, connecting people, and moving the entire network forward. The business is sought out by potential customers because it has become the "go-to" place.

One restaurant became very successful by posting its recipes on recipe-sharing sites. Although you might think that it was giving away the secrets that make people pay for its fine food, in fact it became a mecca for "foodies" looking for a certain type of cuisine. This led to a cookbook, something the restaurant had never considered doing, that won an international award.

A pet food store used social media to communicate about animal nutrition, never mentioning its products or its store (easily found on its website).

Some businesses use social media to discuss their environmental stewardship or their charitable work in the community. One optical store promoted a program to donate used eyeglasses to developing countries. Customers connect with the business because of their shared values, and this is the first step to patronizing the business.

Social media works for business because businesses are about people and about communicating. Social media users identify with a friendly face, a word of advice, or a member of their community. They are suspicious or simply bored of sales pitches and discount announcements. Make your business the hub of a virtual community, and you might be surprised where your business goes.

Social Media and SMEs: What is at Stake?
Suggested Readings

By Craig Liu

Craig Liu is a former student consultant manager at the Centre for Management Development at the University of Regina.

Abstract
In this text, Craig Liu has selected five papers of interest for practitioners on different topics on social media. Issues raised in the papers relate to the definition and benefits of social media, the legal problems, and the use of social media in business functional areas such as marketing and human resources management.

Résumé
Dans ce texte, Craig Liu a sélectionné, pour les gestionnaires, cinq articles d'un certain intérêt sur certaines questions relatives aux media sociaux. Les questions soulevées dans les articles que M. Craig vous suggère de lire portent sur la définition et les avantages des médias sociaux, les problèmes juridiques, et l'utilisation des media sociaux dans les certains secteurs fonctionnels d'entreprise tels que la gestion du marketing et des ressources humaines.

Individuals and organizations are captivated by social media. People often speak about tweeting or information and picture sharing using smart phones, tablets or computers. But what is social media? What could be the benefits or challenges for a SME?

To answer to these questions, we identified papers with the potential to give comprehensive information on the topic. This paper is a compilation of information gathered from these papers. The papers are referenced at the end. We have reviewed papers that are short, with information we think is worthwhile for practitioners.

1. How Small Business Can Benefit from Social Media/Networking Sites, by David Wallace

In this paper David Wallace affirms that sites offering social media are numerous and fast growing. They can offer some advantages to SMEs, namely: securing your brand name, building link popularity, attracting traffic, and interacting with the public. In addition the author focuses on his own experience with Twitter. Despite some disadvantages, he felt that Twitter helped him to put a human face on his company, reach out to the community, promote his product/service, manage his brand, and facilitate surveys and polls.

2. Internal Control Issues and Guidelines for Social Media, by Henry Lin and Brian Patrick Green

After referencing the definition of social media from Wikipedia as "a web-based and mobile technologies that turn communication into an interactive dialogue, and allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content", Henry Lin and Patrick Green give a list of risks and challenges of this new technology-based practice. These challenges are related to information technology security, corporate information loss, brand hijacking, legal/regulatory compliance, litigation exposure, loss of productivity, and other future potential risks. To mitigate these risks, these authors suggest that SMEs: develop a social media policy, set the control environment, document its current and future use, perform risk assessment, and carry out social media training and monitoring.

3. How Social Media Saved My Business Soci@lology, by Bridget McCrea

In this article Bridget McCrea provides success stories of small businesses using social media to increase their sales and simultaneously minimize their marketing costs. The author also provides a story of how social media reversed the situation when her small business was facing difficulties. The article provides several suggestions from top management teams on how to use the different social media platforms and how to best convey information using each of these different tools.

4. Social Media in Branding: Fulfilling a Need, by Jack Yan

Jack Yan provides the reader with a thorough and systematic, yet understandable and practical shortcut to branding a business using social media. The author illustrates important historical events, such as the development of the World Wide Web, to explain why current businesses or celebrities use social media as a powerful tool to build and maintain (personal) brands. In addition, Yan helps readers to have an in-depth understanding of this tool by suggesting nine goals in branding through social media as well as the practicalities of using social networking with branding. On top of those suggested goals, the challenges and concerns of implementing social media initiatives are also explored in the article.

5. Making social media join the workforce: Technologies can play a big part if businesses do their homework.

By showing several company stories, this article in Strategic Direction gives readers an understanding of how social media serves as a powerful tool in both external and internal communications. There are examples of companies using social media or its concept to build a platform or knowledge reservoir, where the companies profitably and productively use social media. There is also an example of a company building a virtual community where SMEs can socialize with each other and share their information. According to the article, internal use of social media as a tool to communicate depends on the "media richness", which leads various communication forms to be more or less effective depending on the desired outcome.

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An Interview with John Beck

By Craig Liu

This is an interview with Mr. John M. Beck by Craig Liu, the former student consultant manager at the Centre for Management Development, University of Regina.

Mr. Beck was the keynote speaker at the annual Hill Business Dinner in 2013. During his time in Regina Mr. Beck was interviewed for the SMEE, addressed the Faculty's Leaders Council group and imparted his wisdom to students and members of the business community at the dinner.

Abstract:
Mr. John Beck, now Executive Chairman at Aecon Group Inc., was then Chief Executive Officer of this company. From his start in a small family run precast concrete firm in 1960s, Mr. Beck has developed a company that has become one of the Canadian leaders in construction and infrastructure development today. Besides his activities in this company, Mr. Beck has served on the boards of different organizations such as the Ontario Power Authority, the Canadian Council for Public Private Partnerships, the Ontario Financing Authority, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute for Public Policy, the Canadian Olympic Foundation, the Advisory Council of the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary, and the Canadian Council of Chief Executives.
In this interview Mr. Beck identifies key success factors and challenges for an entrepreneur in our current fast changing environment. Also, taking from his personal experience, he gives advice on different aspects of management that all entrepreneurs can take advantage of.

Résumé
Ceci est une interview avec M. John M. Beck par Craig Liu, ancien directeur des étudiants Consultants au «Centre for Management Development» de l'Université de Regina.

M. John Beck, maintenant président exécutif chez Aecon Group Inc., était alors chef de la direction de cette société. De ses débuts dans une petite entreprise familiale en béton préfabriqué dans les années 1960, John M. Beck a développé une entreprise qui est devenue l'un des chefs de file canadiens dans la construction et le développement des infrastructures aujourd'hui. Outre ses activités dans cette société, M. Beck a siégé aux conseils d'administration de différents organismes tels que l'Office de l'électricité de l'Ontario, le Conseil Canadien pour les Partenariats public-privé, l'Office Ontarien de Financement, l'Institut Macdonald-Laurier pour les Politiques Publiques, l'olympique canadien Fondation, le Conseil Consultatif de la School of Public Policy de l'Université de Calgary, et le Conseil Canadien des Chefs d'Entreprise.
Dans cet entretien, Mr. Beck identifie les principaux facteurs de réussite et les défis pour un entrepreneur dans notre actuel environnement en rapides mutations. En outre, s'appuyant sur son expérience personnelle, il donne des conseils dans les différents aspects de la gestion, conseils dont tout entrepreneur peut rirer profit.

1 As a successful business leader, how do you define success? What factors or experiences have influenced you the most and led to your success?

- Success is multifaceted – there are many aspects to it. I want Aecon Group to be the premier construction and infrastructure company in Canada – to be the company that people want to work with and associate with and have a long term relationship with.
- I have been in business for 50 years. There are four things that really stand out for me. The core factors that I have experienced and have led me to what I consider to be a successful career:
  - The first one, and the most important one for me, is relationships from all walks of life. There are relationships with people in industry; relationships with the community in general; relationships with clients; relationships with government bodies, government entities, government organizations, and politicians; and relationships, most importantly, with human beings which have led to opportunities to create long-term partnerships and strategic relationships, some of them lasting for decades.
  - The second one is perseverance. There are times in life and in business life when things aren't going to go the way you are expecting them to go, sometimes by your own doing and other times due to external influences. Persevering towards the goal is very important even when things are extremely difficult.
  - The third one is risk. If you are going to grow a business there will be decisions you have to make which will entail taking risks. They must be managed risks and you need to understand the worst case consequences. If the risk measurement and caution associated with the risk is always there, you must be willing to take risk and move forward. Status quo is never an option when you are running a business.
  - And the last one is the aspect of flexibility. That means an ability to adapt to changing circumstances, to get out of situations that are not going to lead anywhere, and to get into those situations that you believe through instinct, judgement and advice may lead to more opportunities.
- The combination of those four are, for me, the critical factors that have led to success.

2 What has been the biggest challenge for you as the key person in Aecon? How did you identify and overcome the challenge?

- There are obviously many challenges that you encounter over the years. But as you grow, it's all about the people. It's always about every employee, every executive, and every manager in the company. The biggest challenge is always developing a very deep set of employees at every level, and at the most senior levels of the company to make sure they are cohesive and that they are all part of the team moving forward to the common goals.
- You are never fully done building the team – it is always a work in progress. You are always building the human capital and the human resource of the organization. As the company evolves and grows, your management team has to continuously evolve and grow with that growth. So it's a work-in-progress. I think we are clearly on our way to becoming the best in the business, but there is still always room to improve.

3 Change management and LEAN initiatives seem to be important issues in Saskatchewan business. Has Aecon been in a situation of needing a dramatic change? How did you or the management team manage the change(s)?

- Yes, many times. They were always related to the growth of the company. As we have grown, we have had to expand. We have ensured our processes and our resources are used effectively as we move forward. We are now in the process of developing an internal project to standardize all of our information services processes called the "One Aecon Strategy". The goal is to pull together all activities of our company into one cohesive whole so that we can meet the need of our client, no matter where across Canada and no matter what sector and we can have a common response. Obviously, as you grow and as you change and evolve, you need a lot of communication and you need workshops at all levels. You need to have common values and culture as you move forward. Not to exclude different ideas, not to exclude the outliers. They are all important, but there has to be cohesiveness as we move forward. It's a challenge because it means that people who used to do it another way, the old way, the way

they are comfortable with, now have to change their ways, not only for the benefit of the organization but for their own benefit as we move forward.

4 Aecon is a multinational corporation, what are the challenges in building public-private partnerships around the world? How is Aecon able to successfully navigate in the global market?

- The challenges would be that in any different country there will be issues around the differences in legislation, differences in the way business is done, and differences in cultures. Things like health and safety standards will be different. The political environment can be volatile. There could be public sector or government agencies that are not as developed and sophisticated as we are used to in North America. You need to find out where the checks and balances are between the various interests. Public private partnerships include private sector financing. Lenders would have to be comfortable with the way that we would make the partnership work between the government and the private sector. The ability to successfully build these things also requires skilled tradesmen, technical people and engineers on the ground, which is another challenge that needs to be addressed in order to successfully navigate in public private partnerships outside of Canada.
- You need to be very selective in finding the right kind of project. The right kind of project means something we have already done successfully in North America. We don't experiment when we are overseas – it is enough to experiment with the different environment so we want to at least know what our subject matter is. The project also has to be of the right size. Too small will mean a lot of effort and money expended for very little return. Too big might mean putting the company in too much risk. You must also have the right partners. Inevitably, it has to be local partners who understand the culture, the political system, the health, safety and labour issues and who are close to the activity on the ground. Most importantly, for me, is developing a very close relationship with the decision makers on the government side, and that would be the bureaucracy and the agencies involved and the politicians. One has to develop a deep level of trust and respect. It means that the foreign entity (we are the foreign entity) has to show a respect for the way they do things and the way they expect us to do things in their country. We are the guests and they are the hosts and we together have to find a way to trust each other as we operate in the spirit of partnership.

5 How do you close the gaps and optimize relationships within a complex organization like Aecon? How do you or your team manage to effectively facilitate communication among people with different backgrounds, cultures and geographic locations?

- The one overall concept is communication – it is at all levels, all the time and is never enough. It is important to have wide open communication at all levels, all the time. You need to keep people informed, to remove the mysteries and black boxes. Since we are a public company there are things we have to be careful about because of securities laws. The door to my office is always open and anyone can come at any time and ask me questions. We are a big organization and have 12 thousand people so we use online portals to connect with people across Canada and internationally. All kinds of communication are going on all the time. Resource sharing between the different organizations within the company is also important. The "One Aecon" concept we talked about earlier opens up access to resources to everybody. We have strategic internal communication, including a company magazine, company news, and lunch and learn programs. We have all kinds of conferences. We are always bringing people together in part because we want them to communicate with each other but also to have that flow of information right across the organization. We use every possible mechanism that is open for communication. I would add one more thing – all levels of the company from the top right down to the bottom hold monthly meetings. In each case these monthly meetings come with social activities so that people can interact in not only the business environment but also a more human, person to person environment. It's never enough. There's always somebody who is going to feel that he's not fully informed. We just keep learning and coming out with new ideas and spreading the news.

6 How does Aecon use mass media to its advantage? What are the challenges of dealing with worldwide mass media?

- First of all, we are business to business. So we don't use mass media in terms of our business development, because our clientele is not at the consumer level. As a public company, we have to be careful about disclosure of information and how that gets spread, we have many relationships with trade and business media, so anything our clients might be reading or might be interested in or might be searching for on their websites. We have relationships and we make sure that they are fully informed as to what we do. We participate in whatever those trade communications would be – sometimes they are industry communications; sometimes they are special interest communications. For us the mass media campaigns are mostly applied to support our recruitment initiatives. We are a consumer when it comes to hiring people. We will communicate with high schools, colleges and universities, because we are always trying to find people to join us through co-op in the university years then to get into the training programs with us. We have something called Aecon University where everyone can participate and learn. It's not just about recruiting, it's also about retaining and motivating people as the company grows.

7 What strategy does Aecon use to develop leadership for the next generation?

- As I mentioned, Aecon University is a big training program. It's very active and is always being developed and updated to the latest development. We have a formal mentoring program. There is also the concept of reverse mentoring: meaning older people learning from younger people about the way life works today given the social media presence – the older executives are not as adept and experienced at using that as the younger crowd is. More and more you are finding the older generation learning from the younger generation in terms of how to deal with today's communication and social media reality. We also have a formal alliance with the Ivey School of Business. We have a joint venture with them for a tailored leadership program that they offer. We also have a program where we give academic scholarships to the children and grandchildren of our employees so they could pursue post-secondary studies in Canada. We recruit very early. I've mentioned high school, colleges and universities, and we encourage these co-op programs where people can work with us get a taste for the business summer after summer.

8 What advice can you give to small and medium sized companies to help them use social media, such as Twitter or LinkedIn, more effectively?

- We share our good new stories very effectively by using social media. We do that internally and externally. We empower employees as ambassadors of the brand, so we want every employee to be out there and use social media to promote the company, promote our values, and promote the opportunity to recruit. We want to be "liked". We manage the social media but we don't over use it. Again, we are not a consumer retail business, so we want to maintain the balance between those two. We very much like the idea of linking back to drive the web traffic that's taking place in the organization back to the central website. So we're building that core level of community interest in the company and in its progress.

9 What would you look for in a small or medium sized Canadian (or international) business who is wanting to develop a business partnership with Aecon?

- There are some basic ones. We are looking for a company with strong business ethics. It has to be a match in our values – needs to be a best in class human relations program as we want to make sure we are one of the top 50 best employers in Canada. We want to make sure they have the same sensitivity to the importance of the rule of people in the organization. We want people who innovate, who always test the boundaries or who are looking for the next thing because we are innovators and we have always been ready to get involved in the next thing provided it's related to our business. We have a very strong commitment to safety. It's our number one value. We have 12 thousand employees working every day and in different environments, some of which can be dangerous and risky if they are not careful. So safety is extremely high and important. The obvious ones, as I mentioned, are cultural fit, by that we have to really understand each other in terms of our level of ability to take risk and our ability to deal with difficulties when they come. That's how the culture really gets tested. That fit also has to be a complementary fit so they have to add things to what we do and we have to add thing to what they do. So that is a complementarity, and therefore a win-win on both sides. The other thing is a respect for the sustainability aspects, environmental policies and making sure that everything we do in our industry is sustainable and fits with the sustainable model. But the most important for me is that the leadership of the organization that wants to have a relationship with Aecon has to have an entrepreneurial spirit – it has to have a driving force to progress and move forward.

10 Do you have any advice for entrepreneurs to help them succeed in today's complex and global business world?

- Develop relationships that would lead to long-term partnerships with mutual respect and trust.
- Have perseverance when things don't quite go your way. You need to put your head down and keep moving forward. Act on the insistence that your goal is the right goal – if your gut tells you that it is the right thing then continue doing it.
- Be willing to take risks. Again, they have to be intelligent risks, they have to manage risks, but you'll never move forward and you'll never progress unless you take some risks.
- Most important is adaptability and flexibility. As things change, as cycles change, as the demand for your services change, you have to be able to not only be flexible and adapt with them but be in front of them and try to anticipate them, so you're ready when they do come.

The Role of Social Media in a Government Agency

By Andrew Mangle, Morgan State University, USA. Jigish Zaveri, Morgan State University, USA

This business case was initially published in Journal of Business Case Studies. 2013. 9(2): 141-144. We thank the Clute Institute and the authors for their permission to re-publish it in the SMEE Review. See the authors' bios at the end of the paper.

Business case studies are an important part of student learning at the Hill & Levene Schools of Business. The following case is a great example of a case our students might encounter during their program, offering them an opportunity to put their learning to work by studying real-world challenges.

Abstract
This case is based on the authors' external review of the development, design, and implementation of a social media project at the Maryland Automobile Insurance Fund (MAIF). Both public and private sector companies are seeking social media as an additional approach to engaging customers. The use of social media, in this case, will provide students with an opportunity to examine and analyze the issues and challenges encountered by MAIF and similar organizations' foray into social media. The case immerses the reader in the development of a social media project, requiring project analysis, evaluating multiple solutions, and assessing the challenges posed by alternative approaches. Additionally, the reader will have to propose a planning strategy that will build support consensus among the varying stakeholders while aligning with MAIF's mission. The case allows a professor to discuss possible solutions and encourage students to develop their own individual approaches. Students will be able to outline the objectives of the project and then provide a supporting strategy.

Keywords:
Social Media; Project Planning; Project Implementation; Stakeholder Analysis

Résumé:
Ce cas est basé sur l'examen externe, par les auteurs, de la mise au point, la conception, et la mise en œuvre d'un projet de médias sociaux à la Caisse d'assurance automobile Maryland (MAIF). Toutes les entreprises tant du secteur public que privé utilisent les médias sociaux comme une approche complémentaire à l'engagement des clients. Cette étude de cas fournira aux étudiants l'occasion d'examiner et analyser les questions et les défis rencontrés par la MAIF et les organisations similaires immergées dans les médias sociaux. Le cas plonge le lecteur dans l'élaboration d'un projet de médias sociaux, exigeant une analyse de projet, l'évaluation de plusieurs solutions et celle des défis posés par d'autres approches. En outre, le lecteur devra proposer une stratégie de planification qui va mener à un soutien consensuel de différents détenteurs d'intérêt tout en demeurant en harmonie avec la mission de la MAIF. Le cas permet au professeur de discuter des solutions possibles et d'encourager les étudiants à développer leurs propres approches individuelles. Les étudiants seront ainsi en mesure de définir les objectifs du projet et de fournir une stratégie de soutien.

OVERVIEW OF THE MARYLAND AUTOMOBILE FUND'S (MAIF) SOCIAL MEDIA PROJECT

Mrs. Ann Dormer, Public Information Officer of the Maryland Automobile Insurance Fund (MAIF), was directed to create a social media presence by CEO Mr. Kirk Knight. MAIF is unique among automobile insurance companies because the state government created it as a support agency to sell insurance to those individuals whose driving history precluded them from being insured in the private market. As a secondary responsibility, MAIF manages claims involving uninsured motorists. Also, as a government agency, MAIF is charged with the mission of contributing to the safety of Maryland's driving public. MAIF has not previously participated in social media.

Mrs. Dormer must determine how to use social media to accomplish the mission of MAIF. In responding to the challenge, Mrs. Dormer had to operate within the government's restrictions on MAIF, identify potential project participants, engage key stakeholders, garner project support, and generate a proposal for implementation. The most significant restrictions were that MAIF was not allowed to compete with the private insurance providers and could not directly solicit customers.

In Mrs. Dormer's efforts to identify key stakeholders and to better understand their positions on Mr. Knight's directive, she interviewed several employees and end-users. Mr. Mark Allen, Network and Support Manager, was initially against MAIF's engagement of social media. The Executive Board, in the past, had resisted an internet presence other than a static homepage. However, Mr. David Fritz of MAIF's Human Relations Office was an early supporter of MAIF creating a social media system. Mr. Frank Drake, despite being an intern and not in a regular prominent or influential position, became a key individual advocating for a MAIF social media strategy extending beyond restricted postings. The analysis of the employee feedback was an important consideration as Mrs. Dormer moved forward with the project.

LAUNCHING MAIF'S SOCIAL MEDIA PROJECT

"Make it happen!" were the last words Mrs. Ann Dormer heard as her manager, Mr. Kirk Knight, walked out of her office. Mrs. Dormer was just presented with a high priority project with little direction on how to meet his high expectations. In the past, Mrs. Dormer had accomplished multiple projects with tight deadlines, including team-focused collaborations, but she was not prepared for the challenges presented in implementing a complete social media project. This was a major test of her experience and flexibility to develop innovative solutions. Mr. Knight wondered how the Maryland Automobile Insurance Fund (MAIF) could interact with the public through Facebook and asked "Why doesn't MAIF have a Facebook page?" "We need to utilize social media as soon as possible. We're missing out on a great opportunity. Start a MAIF page by the end of the month." Without fully understanding how MAIF would be able to create a social media presence or why it would be beneficial, Mrs. Dormer was determined to meet the expectations and enthusiastically replied, "You will be MAIF's first fan!"

MAIF OVERVIEW

The Maryland Automobile Insurance Fund (MAIF) was created in 1972 by the Maryland State Legislature and is unique among automobile insurance companies. MAIF is at a disadvantage due to government restrictions on direct marketing, limited resources, and minimal service area. MAIF is required to actively encourage drivers to return to the private insurance market after three years of accident-free driving; the organization must make annual contact with policyholders to remind them to consider alternative insurance providers and persuade them to seek outside insurance coverage. MAIF has the overall goal of encouraging safe driving and promoting public awareness of traffic dangers while not competing with the private insurance market.

Kirk Knight -CEO -Project Sponsor

Mr. Kirk Knight, MAIF's CEO, had been following the latest industry news and trends about small and medium-sized businesses using social media to connect and build relationships with their customers. Policyholder awareness is a concern for MAIF, the State of Maryland, and the general public. MAIF has a state mandated obligation to inform the public, as well as individual drivers, about the potential risks of driving without or with insufficient insurance. Furthermore, Maryland drivers are to be aware of the role MAIF plays in resolving claims in accidents involving an uninsured, under-insured, or unknown driver. Mr. Knight envisioned Mrs. Dormer developing and implementing a social media strategy that would facilitate in attaining MAIF's goals.

Ann Dormer -Communication Specialist – Project Manager

Mrs. Dormer has led MAIF's outreach efforts and developed internal and external opportunities, such as employee volunteer events, fundraising campaigns, and management of correspondence with other state agencies. She believed that increased public contact, using social media, will enable MAIF to provide better protection to drivers and improve the overall safety of the community. Even though Mrs. Dormer was familiar with social media through personal involvement, the development of a plan and strategy for an enterprise social media project was challenging and complex.

Mrs. Dormer relied upon the contributions of MAIF team members to support her development of the social media project. Mrs. Dormer chose to initiate the project by meeting with key decision-makers. During her interactions, she listened to the insights of colleagues regarding their beliefs about the potential impact of MAIF's participation in social media. Without prior systems development experience, a key to her success was following an established planning process. A detailed understanding of the key stakeholders' initial positions on the proposed project enabled Mrs. Dormer to manage and reduce resistance.

Mark Allen -Network and Support Manager

Mr. Mark Allen was in charge of MAIF's internal and external networks, as well as overseeing the IT support group. As part of the IT senior management team, he has an active role in all technology-based projects. The Network and Support team reviews and approves all IT projects before implementation. When approached by Mrs. Dormer about the project, Mr. Allen was hesitant to encourage the development of projects that would require support from his unit. Mr. Allen was also opposed to participating in social media due to MAIF's position as a state agency with limited resources. He believed that without significant investment of time and personnel resources, a MAIF Facebook page or another social media platform would never generate enough benefits to justify the efforts. Mr. Allen recommended an alternative approach of creating a single Facebook fan page which would redirect all correspondence and communication through MAIF's homepage. Mrs. Dormer listened to the suggestion and proposed discussing other possible alternatives at the next Executive Board meeting.

MAIF's Executive Board

The Executive Board -the governing body responsible for approving policies and procedures -is in charge of individually reviewing, revising, and approving MAIF's technology projects. When MAIF had set up their original homepage, the Executive Board had expressed concern over the security, potential release of misinformation, and the overall management of the webpage. The Executive Board requested that the website be protected from malicious users as well as separated from the operations of the organization. Another concern was the potential for sharing outdated or incorrect information that could hurt the MAIF brand and endanger Maryland citizens. The Executive Board alternately proposed static profile pages on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. On each MAIF page, basic information, including hours of operation, directions, and contact information, would be posted. Customers, agents, employees, and friends of MAIF could friend, follow, and 'like' the pages, but no dynamic information would be posted.

David Fritz -Social Media Contributor

After the Executive Board meeting, the HR director recommended that Mrs. Dormer talk to one of her staff members, Mr. David Fritz, who had – unsuccessfully -requested approval from the Board for an interactive Facebook page to represent MAIF's HR office. Mr. David Fritz was an avid participant in social media and maintained several different social media accounts that corresponded with his external activities and interests. Mr. Fritz had advised individuals about several different social media platforms for personal use based upon his personal experiences independent of MAIF. When Mrs. Dormer approached Mr. Fritz for his input on starting a MAIF page, Mr. Fritz exclaimed, "Social media would be great for MAIF! When can we set up the accounts?" He was quick to support the notion of MAIF initiating a social media project. "We could upload photos of events, videos, and helpful links." When Mrs. Dormer asked Mr. Fritz how he would handle the questions raised by the Executive Board, he asserted that someone could be designated as the content monitor as part of his job duties. The selected employee could be notified of any posted content. The meeting between Mr. Fritz and Mrs. Dormer ended with a recommendation for her to speak with Mr. Frank Drake, an intern.

Frank Drake -Social Media Entrepreneur

Frank Drake was a junior, majoring in Business Administration at a local college. Mr. Drake's passion was electronic music, specifically sampling and sharing tracks using social media. Mrs. Dormer asked Mr. Drake about his approach to designing a successful social media system. Mr. Drake supported an open approach where anyone could post and share information, saying, "Everyone should be able to freely interact using social media." When asked about the risks of negative feedback, including inappropriate posts and abusive behavior, he replied, "the community polices itself and, in the worst case, any post could be deleted." Mr. Drake managed several social media accounts and encouraged Mrs. Dormer to consider creating multiple accounts for the numerous departments in MAIF. Mr. Drake closed the conversation in a reassuring manner, stating, "What's the worst that could happen with social media? -someone doesn't 'like' the MAIF page?"

CONCLUSION -NEXT STEPS

Mrs. Dormer was reluctant to start a social media engagement project knowing the complexities involved with managing this type of information system. When Mr. Knight had first presented her with the idea, she was flooded with a wide range of thoughts, perspectives, and strategies. These ideas became more controversial and complex as she solicited and obtained the views of the different stakeholders. Even though MAIF has a vast array of resources, the planning, developing, and implementing of the system needed to be coordinated and executed effectively. As Mrs. Dormer pondered potential approaches and solutions, the project deadline was looming. Mrs. Dormer must leverage her knowledge of MAIF and social media, her available technology resources, and the stakeholders' concerns in order to develop a successful social media system for MAIF. How does the Public Information Officer accomplish the social media directive in one month?

TEACHING NOTES

Supplemental teaching notes are available from the corresponding author. The teaching notes include recommendations on required knowledge, prompts and questions to encourage class participation and discussion, information on decisions made by MAIF staff, and proposed time frames and assignments for two undergraduate classes. Additionally, an epilogue, including MAIF's selected social media solution, is also available.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

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SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SMALL BUSINESS

The rapid adoption of social media is becoming more apparent by the day and is changing the way we do business. It is no longer a matter of asking "should" you use social media to market your business, but "how" you should. This booklet will help you craft a social media strategy as part of your overall marketing mix.

Key Concepts

Social media is a broad term used to describe all the different online technology tools that enable people to communicate easily via the Internet through sharing information and resources. Methods used include posts on blogs or forums, sharing of photos, audio clips, videos and links, creating profiles on social networking sites, and posting status updates -- usually with a feedback mechanism. Although social media started out as a medium for friends and family to share information, smart marketers quickly caught on to how they could leverage it.

Key Social Media Platforms and Tools

There are many different types of social media. The following graphic highlights these various types and some corresponding examples that are popular now. However, this is a rapidly changing landscape and new social media sites are popping up all the time. Be on the lookout for new and emerging resources.

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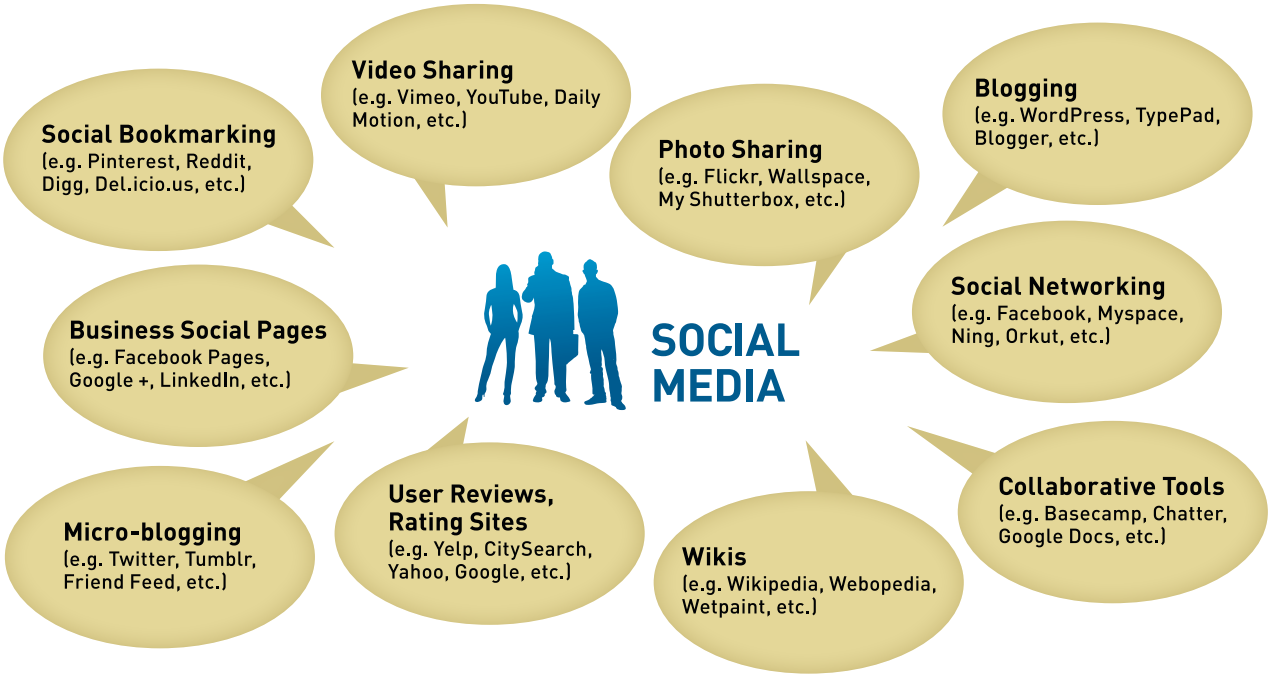

Depending on the industry you are in, certain types of social media may be more relevant than others. For example, those in the travel industry will find a site like Trip Advisor a useful social media tool. In addition, the use of social media may be more prevalent in some industries than others and will work differently for businesses in different fields. It is important to do your research to find out if and how your customers and prospects are engaging with social media.

Benefits of Social Media

From a marketing perspective, social media tactics can help you:

- Extend your marketing reach affordably.
- Increase brand awareness.
- Drive traffic to your website.
- Personalize customer service.
- Create excitement for events.
- Promote product/service launches.
- Build a community of customers who, by virtue of membership, endorse your products/services.
- Test market ideas.
- Open up new markets.
- Complement other marketing efforts such as paid marketing campaigns.
- Integrate a social element in your business by personalizing your company.

Getting Started

1. Planning

If, like many small business owners, you find social media overwhelming, don't try to do it all at once. Take small steps when you are starting out and bear in mind that it will take time, because it's all about relationship building. Before using or expanding your use of social media, answer these questions:

Are You Ready for Social Media Marketing?

- Does your target audience use social media and, if so, do you know where your prospects congregate online?
- Do you know what goals you are trying to achieve by engaging in social media?

- Can you allocate time and budget?
- Is there someone well suited to be your voice in social media?
- Do your employees require training?
- Do you need to hire or outsource a social media manager?
- Do you have clear key messages and branding to disseminate in the social media realm?
- Can these various online tools integrate with your offline marketing methods?
- Do you have a plan in place to guide your use of social media marketing?

2. Steps for Creating a Social Media Strategy

Having a solid social media strategy can really make a difference to the success of your marketing campaigns. Note that your plan will likely evolve and change accordingly as you learn what works for your business and what doesn't.

1. **Conduct your research.** Listen to the conversations and identify the industry thought leaders you want to follow so you will learn how to participate.

2. **Define your goals and metrics.** What is it you want to achieve and how will you measure its effectiveness? For example, are you trying to drive real targeted traffic to your site? For your Facebook metrics, the number of "Likes" to your Facebook page and the amount of shared posts or status updates will tell you if you are successful. Or perhaps you are trying to build a community of followers who will promote your products or services. If so, good measures of success will be the number of your followers within the social platforms.

3. **Develop a strategic message and method.** For each objective, you may need different methods and messaging to reach the target audience. For example, driving traffic to your site will require a campaign such as a contest or submitting a request form for a free white paper download. Or, if you're trying to build a community, you'll need to first build trust and credibility by being authentic in your dialogue and sharing valuable content.

4. When evaluating the success of your efforts, first review the goals you established in Step 2. Do the metrics show success? You might need to adjust some elements of your online activities to stay on course. Be sure to keep track of metric trends over time and don't be afraid to experiment.

3. Resources Needed to Implement

Contrary to popular belief, social media marketing is not free. The platforms may be free or inexpensive, but the following resources are needed to do social media marketing well:

- **Budget.** Getting started with social media marketing is a very simple and inexpensive process, requiring only an email address. Most, if not all, of the applications are free to use but there are hidden costs such as your time or hiring someone to run your social media strategy. Some additional costs may include professional versions of plugins (small applications) that expand the functionality of the core application. For example, these plugins could include the ability to sell online or control spam.

- **Proper training and polices.** Getting familiar with the workings of social media tools tends to be time consuming for most business owners and their employees. Proper training and social media policies should be put in place and key players assigned to manage your social activities. Even if you only select a few voices to represent the company, it is important that everyone from the top down is familiar with the policies, brand message and vision for the company.

- **Self-editing website.** Having a self-editing website or blog is paramount in order to frequently change the content you share on social media sites. Facebook and Twitter offer posts and micro-blogging tweets that can support your in-depth articles. These can be teasers that lead traffic back to your site to not only to read the full article or participate in viewing a video, for example, but to showcase the full offerings on the site.

Other hidden costs include the time to monitor your reputation online, to track results and to expand customer service.

4. Do-It-Yourself Option

Getting involved in social media is easy. The do-it-yourself (DIY) option is viable because social media tools are the most affordable and easy-to-implement technical offerings available online, and can be totally controlled by you. *(See details in Nuts and Bolts Section below).*

Tips for Maximizing Success When You Start on Your Own

- Attend DIY workshops on online resources to find out how social media tools work and how they can be applied to your business.
- Consider your time involvement and whether you will incorporate a "social" business where everyone participates and has a role (for lead generation, customer service, peer-to-peer networking, etc.) or whether you will assign one person or a few select people to represent your company. The trend now is towards socializing the whole team.
- Offer social media training to your staff, and put a social media policy and schedule in place.
- Integrate ways to bring social media into all areas of your business—including customer service, sales, marketing and public relations.
- Ensure there is buy-in throughout your company.

5. Choosing a Specialist to Work With

Typically, small businesses do not hire a specialist initially, but eventually you may decide you need extra help if you lack the expertise and time in-house. Whether you are hiring a social media manager or outsourcing this work you will need to look for certain skills in order to represent your brand online powerfully.

What to Look for in a Specialist:

- Experience with these tools as a user
- Strategic mindset and marketing smarts, with an understanding of how to effectively utilize the tools within the bigger marketing picture
- Good leadership skills, with the ability to work with people in your company
- Strong communication skills to create effective posts, tweets, interactive videos and campaigns to meet your objectives
- Project management skills to integrate the various tools both online and offline

6. Understanding Best Practices and Pitfalls

Do's

- Listen to the conversations related to your type of business and industry on social media sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook. For example, if you have graphic design offerings, you should follow other graphic artists or marketing companies to see how they are conversing with their audience.
- Whether you receive positive or negative comments, always respond in a professional manner and learn from the writer's input or comments.
- Participate—be authentic, transparent and consistent in all your communications.
- Have a content posting schedule in place.
- Create high quality content to share.
- Be consistent with your branding and messages on all social media platforms.
- Create comprehensive, keyword-rich profiles to share on social networking sites.
- Place calls to action within your posts—that is, include links back to your website so visitors can read something valuable like a good article.

Don'ts

- Refrain from blatant promotion and selling.
- Do not spam.
- Avoid being too personal or social rather than business-oriented.
- Don't react emotionally online to negative comments about your brand or product or service.

Nuts & Bolts

1. Becoming Social Online

There are many players and platforms to choose from in the rapidly evolving social media landscape. Each is unique and presents a different opportunity to engage with your target audience. Keep in mind though that companies come and go as they jostle for position and what is popular today may fall by the wayside tomorrow. You need to track emerging trends and be ready to adapt quickly.

Currently popular social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube and LinkedIn all contribute to helping businesses with their branding, positioning, networking and collaboration efforts. Check them out to see what they offer and if your customers and prospects are there. Each has its particular use and effectiveness based on the type of audience and how that audience engages with them. For example, Twitter is a one-to-one customer and prospect engagement tool, excellent for real-time customer service, Facebook is a powerful community manager and LinkedIn is good for creating professional alliances and for recruiting employees.

So where do you start? The process itself is quite straightforward. To start along the path, all you need is an Internet connection. Start by setting up a profile on any of the various platforms. Your success will depend on your ability to develop new relationships by following and engaging with those you make connections with. Always try to share quality information, and be transparent, honest and authentic. Here are some tips to get you going.

- Sign up to the various social media platforms such as LinkedIn www.linkedin.com, Twitter www.twitter.com, Facebook www.facebook.com, Google Plus, https://plus.google.com. When you create your company profile, briefly explain what you do and incorporate keyword phrases. Include a link back to your website or a specific landing page on your site.
- Research using keyword phrases to find the conversations in your subject areas, to listen carefully and to identify thought leaders to follow by signing up for RSS feeds.
- Once you feel ready to participate in conversations, start introducing yourself by sharing quality content and building relationships. Participate in Yahoo Answers, LinkedIn QA and discussions, comment on other people's blogs and be a guest blogger.
- Write your own quality blog and share articles on ezine directories, incorporating "share" or "like" buttons on your blog.
- Share video content on YouTube www.youtube.com, Vimeo www.vimeo.com or Viddler www.viddler.com and share images on Flickr www.flickr.com, 500px www.500px.com, SmugMug www.smugmug.com.

Social Media and Networking Platforms

The tables below provide information about various social channels, including micro-blogging, social networking, business social networking, video sharing and photo sharing. Review the details provided to determine which channels would work best in order for you to achieve your goals.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking refers to websites that individuals use to socially engage through chatting, status updates and meetup. Within these virtual communities, users create home profile pages and share comments and links directly with other users. Examples include facebook.com, myspace.com, ning.com, orkut.com, cafemom.com, badoo.com.

Description	To Do's	Uses	Benefits
• Allows users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. • Enables users to engage through status updates and instant messaging. • Businesses can reach their target audiences by identifying particular profiles likes/dislikes and target their ads accordingly.	• Set up your profile and customize your account page. • Set up "like" button to post on site, for users to share content. • Build custom Facebook page for specialized content and branding. • Optimize Facebook for search (e.g. keyword-rich phrases in page name, vanity URLs, wall and profile). • Post regular status updates with valuable content to share with fans/friends.	• Embed pages from your website so that selling online can be brought into Facebook environment. • Promote business through Facebook Advertising or Sponsored Stories that are tied into target audience location, age, likes and needs. • Build reach by leveraging contests and campaigns.	• Networking • Customer engagement • Driving web traffic • Reputation management • Customer retention • Another commerce outlet • Viral marketing • Personalizing of your business • Collection of more detailed analytic and demographic information through Facebook Analytics

Best Practices

- Build a strategy that is social by design.
- Create an authentic personalized brand voice.
- Make your page interactive.
- Nurture your relationships.
- Respond to feedback and continue to monitor what others are saying about you.
- Schedule your status updates through content schedulers like hootsuite.com, ping.fm.

BUSINESS SOCIAL NETWORKING

Business social networking provides business owners and employees an opportunity to brand themselves virtually and share content with other like-minded individuals. Examples include LinkedIn linkedin.com, Google Plus google.com/plus, Ning http://ca.ning.com/ and Sprouter www.sprouter.com.

Description	To Do's	Uses	Benefits
• Interactive online communities that connect individuals based on shared business needs or experiences. These can include sharing knowledge, exchanging ideas and opportunities with contacts directly or through group discussion forums and job boards.	• Sign up and fill out the profile details completely to maximize effectiveness. • Update your status frequently and link to your blog articles, Twitter, Facebook or YouTube accounts. • Join a group, participate and build your trust by providing valuable input. • Exchange recommendations with your contacts. • Set up a Google Plus account and Business Page with a Google account. • Set up "Circles" (select groups or segmented audiences) and "hangouts" (planned sessions or impromptu gatherings), as well as search and ripples (graphics containing information in a visual format), that let you know what people are talking about across your social network). • Get a Google Plus vanity URL, (www.gplus.to).	• Use as a research tool to find connections and get introductions • Post career opportunities. • Connect with allied industry players. • Create multiple audience segments. • Showcase video in the company profile. • Answer LinkedIn community questions. • Promote professional events. • Utilize some of the key applications to showcase your products and services (e.g. SlideShare to present key product/ service messaging; Polls to engage your LinkedIn associates). • Communicate through a video conferencing feature in "hangouts". • Use for training. • Provide customer service. • Build relationships, alliances.	• Dramatically grows your network, including reaching allies globally with ease • Excellent market research tool • Find new hires, screen prospects. • Check out competitors and who they are linked with. • Review industry trends • More business oriented than Facebook • Can have segregated lists for targeted communications • In early stages of business adoption, so custom page name availability still high • Google tends to favour Google+ in its rankings. • Fosters real-time positioning in Google search results.

Best Practices

- Keep your profile as professional as possible, but with a personal touch.
- Be willing to share your contacts, participate in referrals and make sure your privacy settings allow people to find you.

- To drive traffic to your site, create specific and relevant to the conversation landing pages for your LinkedIn audience.
- Use privacy settings to manage what is public and what is not.
- Manage Notification settings to reduce spam.
- Draw attention by using formatted (bold, italics) text.

MICRO-BLOGGING SITES

Micro-blogging is similar to blogging but with a limited number of characters available for each post. These posts can be easily shared and searched, and profile pages can be designed to fit your brand. Examples include Twitter, Tumbler, Friendfeed, Posterous and Cirip.ro.

Description	To Do's	Uses	Benefits
• Sites that provide succinct direct messaging that personalizes a company through an approachable online presence. It's all about conversational content, utilizing calls to actions (e.g. link back to company website to read full story, or sign up for subscription or free download).	• Set up your profile and customize your account page. • Group like-minded people together through hashtags # identity. • Hold private conversations through direct messaging (DM). • Send mass messages to all followers. • Send messages to someone outside your follower list by including an @ sign + username. • Retweet or reblog to pass message on (viral effect).	• Marketing (e.g. share relevant, quality content by adding short form links*) • Public relations (e.g. promote events, product launches, Awards) • Customer service (e.g. real-time feedback, reputation management) • Tracking and analyzing your campaigns • Researching industry conversations	• Enhances customer service. • Builds and promotes brand. • Creates exposure to your other online presence. • Builds partnerships/ alliances. • Identifies influencers and thought leaders in your industry. • Boosts credibility and trust among followers, showcasing your expertise. • Provides powerful search features.

Best Practices

* Short form links—some links tend to be very long addresses, so consider shortening them by going to either of the following sites—www.bit.ly or goo.gl/

- Be authentic and transparent, truthful and personable.
- For effective re-tweeting, keep your messages to 100 characters in length, to allow for easy sharing.
- Monitor what people are saying about your brand and react professionally.
- Segment lists of followers to target marketing efforts.
- Don't follow too many people at once.

VIDEO SHARING

Video sharing refers to social networking websites where users can upload and share videos. Examples include YouTube youtube.com, Vimeo vimeo.com, Viddler www.viddler.com, Sohu sohu.com, Daily Motion dailymotion.com/us, and Metacafe metacafe.com.

Description	To Do's	Uses	Benefits
• Video sharing sites offer individuals the ability to upload clips of video to share publicly or privately.	• Set up a YouTube channel by using your Google account; use a separate business Google account to link with your channel. • Update your channel information. • Upload videos which can then be embedded into your website or other 3rd party sites. • Google YouTube also offers Video Advertising for your business. AdWords for Video 1 allows you to create video advertising campaigns with your YouTube videos.	• Product or service demos • Promotional clips • Speeches and presentations • "How to" seminars • Teasers/Trailers • Video testimonials • Product support videos, or technical support • Brand recognition and engagement • Viral campaigns • Video sharing, rating system	• Powerful, visual method of engagement • Potentially viral • Global and local audience • Demonstrates your expertise. • Aids in overall SEO and boosts rankings in Google. • One of most cost-effective strategies for marketing your products/services

Best Practices

- Leverage reach of YouTube—make it accessible, link from all your social accounts, embed in your website.
- Set your settings to auto-play your video on your channel.
- Make your web address the first word in the video description.
- Title your videos with a keyword rich phrase to help target your video.
- Offer a text summary or consider captioning to make the video more accessible.

PHOTO SHARING

Photo sharing sites give users the ability to upload and share photo images with others. Examples include Flickr flickr.com, Pinterest www.pinterest.com, Wallpost wallpost.com, My Shutterspace myshutterspace.com, and Picasa https://picasaweb.google.com/home.

Description	To Do's	Uses	Benefits
• Image sharing sites offer individuals the ability to upload images to share publicly or privately.	• Upload photos and tag them for easy search capabilities. • Use to edit, rotate, send to blog, add notes, have different sizes, send to a group. • Use 'Notes' for descriptions and reviews. • Set up groups (e.g. friends, families) for private photo sharing. • Choose photo set for easy organization of photos for search. • Download mobile version for on the go publishing.	• Use candid shots to promote office culture, or "behind the scenes" of your company. • Design more engaging Power Point presentations with photos. • Show your customers or your portfolio as a Flickr stream. • Display product designs for feedback from clients or end-user testing.	• Business promotion • Social sharing—real time imagery • Ability to comment on other people's photos, build relationships

Best Practices

- Add keyword rich titles and descriptions to photos.
- Include relevant photo name, rather than number.jpg.
- Categorize photos to make search easier.

2. Social Media Aggregators

These are tools or platforms that enable users involved in social networking to catch up with their network activity all in one place. They will save you time if you are trying to monitor multiple social media sites and are also helpful for your content planning. Examples include:

- **FriendFeed:** A popular application that allows you to share content across Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and other social networks (www.friendfeed.com).
- **HootSuite:** A web-based social media aggregator for tracking and posting updates (www.hootsuite.com).
- **Minggl:** A browser add-on that lets you manage and interact with all your contacts from one place (www.minggl.com).
- **Tweetdeck:** An app that provides real-time social web access, allowing users to connect with Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and MySpace (www.tweetdeck.com).

3. URL Shorteners

As a blog post typically uses the title as the URL it can be quite long. Services like https://bitly.com or http://goo.gl will not only shorten your link but will also give you statistics on how many people actually clicked on the link.

4. Social Bookmarking and Content Sharing

Social bookmarking is a method for you to organize, store, manage and search for bookmarks of resources online. Tagging is a significant feature of social bookmarking systems, enabling users to organize their bookmarks in flexible ways and develop shared vocabularies. It usually involves users assigning keyword descriptors to "tag" each bookmark or link they want to share, and then saving them to a public website. You are not actually sharing the "file", just the "reference link" to it. This allows other people to search by those terms and find those pages. Most social bookmark sites organize their bookmarks with informal tags. You can get up-to-date bookmarks if you subscribe to the social bookmarking site feeds.

The best marketing strategy for a business is to place an icon of one of these bookmarking sites alongside an article, so site visitors can tag the article. The more times this web page is tagged, the higher the popularity ranking of the page. A high popularity ranking draws attention and drives traffic back to your site.

Here are some examples of popular social bookmarking and content sharing sites:

- **Pinterest** – a bulletin/pin board type of social media sharing based on themes. Useful for interior decorators, artists, crafters, etc. (www.pinterest.com).
- **Reddit** – a social news website where registered users submit news or articles and other users vote on whether they like them (www.reddit.com). The most popular ones display at the top of the list.
- **Technocrati** – an Internet search engine that searches blogs. Technorati tags are added to your blog postings; the more viewers click on them, the more authoritative your blog content is deemed (www.technorati.com).
- **Digg** – a social news website which allows submission of stories and voting privileges, also known as "digging" and "burying" (www.digg.com).
- **StumbleUpon** – a "discovery" search engine allowing users to discover and rate web pages, photos, videos, using peer-sourcing and social networking principles (www.stumbleupon.com).
- **Del.icio.us** – a social bookmarking web service for storing, sharing, and discovering web bookmarks (www.delicious.com). Web users save what they like using the Delicious bookmarklet in their browser bar to add websites to "themed stacks" for easy sharing.

5. Blogging

The difference between a blog and a website is that a blog is frequently updated with commentaries, news, articles with images, videos and text, and therefore is an excellent way to share information and expertise with your target audience and engage people. In addition, readers of your blog can leave comments and, by replying, you will start a dialogue.

The layout of blogs is typically different from a website layout, offering widgets, like a calendar, or plugins, like sidebar testimonials, to expand its functionality.

There are many blog application programs available for you to choose from: ones that are hosted by a blogging program such as wordpress.com, blogger.com, typepad.com or tumblr.com; or ones that you can set up within your existing website hosting service.

Below are some quick tips on using your blog to promote your business:

Tips for Using Your Own Blog to Promote Your Business

- Create a professional looking blog.
- Keep your blog posts positive and to the point.
- Create useful content for your target audience. Write about your area of business expertise. Provide updates about your business, and your products and services.
- Provide links on your blog to the sales section of your website.
- Make content available in an RSS feed to permit syndication of your blog material, making the material available to other websites.
- Think carefully before posting your entry. Is it respectful? Professional?
- Follow sound customer service principles.

- If you have your own blog you can write about upcoming business events and sales.
- Link to other relevant websites and blogs.
- Claim your blog at www.technorati.com. This can help ensure that you are indexed in blog search engines.
- Track your progress. Review your web traffic and where your web traffic is coming from (i.e. referring domains).

For more details on blogging, see the *Blogs for Small Business* booklet.

6. Creating Content

Like most business owners, you may feel challenged when it comes to what to write about to engage your target audience. Maybe you are accustomed to creating content for one-way dissemination of information, but have not considered writing content to develop conversations and build relationships. There are actually endless topics to write about; it is just a matter of being creative and listening to your followers and fans—who may or may not be your existing clients.

Find content ideas by: looking at your competitors' blogs to see what they are writing about; reading blogs in directories or ezines on your subject matter; and following like-minded individuals on social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. It is also a good idea to set up a Google Alert on your subject area.

Here are some sites you can visit to get content ideas.

How to Get Content Ideas	
Competitor Sites	www.compete.com www.opensiteexplorer.org
Blog Directories	Google.com (click on "Blogs")
Article Ezines	ezinearticles.com/ www.submityourarticle.com/course/ezinedirectories.php
Twitter Search	twitter.com/twittersearch https://twitter.com/#!/search-advanced www.tweetdeck.com/ www.twellow.com/
Facebook Groups	www.facebook.com/search.php facebook.com (click on "Groups")
LinkedIn Groups	www.linkedin.com/directory/groups/
Google Alerts	www.google.com/alerts

Guidelines for Creating Content

- **Use tools.** If you are just starting out, you can access the above tools to first identify the keywords that your audience would use to search for your offerings. Once you have identified five main keywords, investigate various blog directories, or type "http://keyword:blog" in the search bar, or go to Google search, type in the keyword, then select blogs in the filter. This will give you a feel for what people are writing about in your industry. You can also set up Google Alerts, which will email you whenever something is being written about a particular topic.
- **Develop a content schedule.** Choose 10–12 key topic areas for developing content once a month, and then expand on them. Remember to develop conversations around what people are asking or commenting on.
- **Develop segment-specific content.** When setting up your lists, circles or groups, develop content that is specific to people's interests.

- **Repackage content.** You can repurpose material in a variety of ways for the social media world. For example, write and post a 300–400 word article on your blog, then extract from that 10 tips to post on Twitter over a given period of time, one-by-one. From that same article, you could also do a frequently asked question/answer discussion on LinkedIn. You could also create a video from the article, perhaps even incorporating a customer's testimonial.

Proven Writing Tips for Social Media

1. **Use keywords.** Incorporate your keyword phrases within your titles, body copy of your posts, status updates, tweets and group discussions. Make sure to add tags to your blog posts and YouTube videos. These are like keywords that people use to find you.
2. **Have clear titles.** Keep titles simple and short, and incorporate numbers when appropriate – for example, "7 Tips to Social Media Success".
3. **Be short and to the point.** Most of the social media tools have limited character length. Focus on one idea.
4. **Avoid sales lingo.** Social media is not the place for blatant pitching or selling of your products and services. It can be used to help support the pre and post sales experience, but should not be used as a sales channel.

7. Syndication of Web Content

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) syndicates your web content to other sites and builds inbound links, making RSS one of the most effective SEO strategies today. You or your developer can create a special file such as an RSS file along with a link to it, which creates a "web feed". Most blog, calendar and news content developed in a blog or content management system can be syndicated to be shared with others. Note: each RSS feed requires a Title, Description and Link.

Once you have syndicated your blog or web pages, it is important to market the fact.

- Let your website visitors know you have RSS feeds. Put the orange RSS icon on all pages that have a feed and place a prominent link on the home page so that your visitors know that you have feeds and offer syndicated content.
- Promote your RSS feeds through email and encourage your readers to learn more about RSS Readers or about receiving feeds directly into their email account.
- Ensure you have a visible RSS icon in side bar of your syndicated blog posts so that your audience can subscribe.

8. Impact of Mobile Devices (including QR Codes)

People are increasingly using their mobile devices to micro-blog through their Twitter and Facebook accounts, as well as activating various mobile apps for entertainment, productivity and commerce. Mobile usage by the Generation X-ers and Boomers is rising, with many participating in instant commenting, restaurant and spa reviews and other similar services and even using mobile devices to gather like-minded individuals to help support their causes.

What are QR Codes? How can they be incorporated in your marketing mix?

QR (Quick Response) Codes are two-dimensional bar codes typically found on print materials, but increasingly on other things such as mugs, posters, store-front windows and even architectural structures. QR Codes offer immediate access to what is relevant. When people scan a QR Code with their mobile device, they link to digital content that is found either on your blog, website or other online medium. It can also activate a phone call or text message. The ability of QR Codes to connect people to each other and to multimedia digital content is very useful for businesses and consumers alike. There is no limit to how you can use QR Codes for your business, including sharing content, building community (e.g. Likify – www.likify.net), promoting special offers and helping improve your overall search engine optimization.

Example of QR Code usage

Google Places – When you register your local business with Google Places (www.google.com/placesforbusiness) you receive a decal for your place of business that includes a QR Code to your company website. Be sure that the QR Code links to the most relevant information potential customers are interested in such as hours of operation and current specials and offers. *(Source: www.socialmediaexaminer.com)*.

9. Going Local – Couponing

Group buying sites such as Groupon and Living Social leverage group discounting, which enables local businesses to offer big savings to consumers. These sites are very popular and successful for both consumers and businesses. Many offer short-term daily deals that discount products and services by more than 50% and typically sell-out of such offerings within just a few hours. Some of the group sites promote sharing discounts with friends and provide a free product or service if the buyer signs up three friends. They also allow the buyer to purchase gift certificates. All coupons have expiry dates.

The types of businesses that can best leverage these sites include retail, spas, health care, restaurants and travel services. To participate as a vendor, you can sign up at any of the participating sites. A chart of group buying sites can be found at http://tomuse.com/group-buying-sites-comparison-chart.html.

10. Recruiting and Job Hunting

Social media tools like LinkedIn have revolutionized the recruiting and job hunting environment. Not only can businesses use them to post job vacancies, but much of the pre-interview work can be done easily by researching candidates' social footprints. LinkedIn isn't the only social network that helps in the job search process—Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google+ have all been used by people to land jobs in innovative ways.

Measuring Your Social Media Efforts

Increasingly, businesses want to know if their investment (time and money) in social media is doing more than raising awareness. Is it driving profitable revenue growth? Revisit the goals you set out in your social media plan to establish some benchmarks and to gauge your performance compared to your other marketing efforts. When evaluating the metrics, look to the overall return on investment (ROI) you stated in your objectives as the indicator of success or failure. Sometimes, due to overlap of various marketing efforts, you may not be able to clearly determine what contributes to the success or failure of your plan.

Your social media activities can't be measured just in terms of activity—like the number of visitors. Focus instead on the quality of relationships you have built rather than the quantity. The level of engagement of your target audience with your business is a more meaningful measure of how well you are doing.

Here are three levels of engagement to monitor—the higher the level, the greater the engagement and likelihood of action.

Level	Measurement
Level 1	• Followers/fans • "Likes" and comments
Level 2	• Retweets • Repeat comments/track-backs • Number of shared posts • Number of search engine referrals generated by a piece of your content
Level 3	• Registrants (e.g. those who subscribe to a feed or download a white paper) • Influencers/advocates (those who promote your business)

If you want to benchmark against others in your industry, here are some performance indicators you can use to measure against your competitors or peers:

Distribution – visibility	Interaction – engagement	Influence – branding value
Questions to ask – What social media channels are you using, how can people reach you, are you visible? • Number of followers • Number of fans • Number of mentions • Type of reach • Number of social bookmark listings • Number of inbound links • Number of blog subscribers	**Questions to ask – How likely are followers going to engage, spread your message and interact with your brand?** • Retweets • Forward to a friend • Social media sharing • Comments • Like or rate something • Reviews • Contributors or active contributors • Page views • Unique visitors • Traffic from social networking sites • Time spent on site • Response time	**Questions to ask – How do attitudes change due to the social media activities? This is the branding value that should convert into sales.** • Number of conversations shared • Extent of customer loyalty • Level of customer satisfaction • Type of customer sentiment (positive, negative, neutral) • Number of brand evangelists

**Source: Priit Kallas, www.dreamgrow.com/48-social-media-kpis-key-performance-indicators*

Competitive research resources

http://seesmic.com, http://hootsuite.com, http://monitor.wildfireapp.com, www.howsociable.com

It is important to integrate all these metrics with the comments, conversations and sentiments you are hearing in the social media world. Then think about what you can do with all this information you collect. Here are some things to consider:

- Are there new marketing and PR opportunities that surface?
- Can you identify customer service issues or unmet needs?
- Do you see any themes pointing to the need for content changes on your web site or in your social media efforts?
- Is there a need to revisit your social media channels and make any changes, based on where you are getting the best results?

Bringing all of this together will help you deepen your understanding of your customers and give you a better handle on measurements that matter. Remember that measurement is an ongoing process. You have to keep listening to the conversations in social media over time, responding and adjusting your efforts.

Where is Social Media Heading?

Watch for these trends:

- Businesses will demand more social management and measurement tools (e.g. Social CRM like Sales Force Social CRM, Nimble, Pivotol and Hootsuite allow real-time tracking and connection to your database).
- Better measurement tools will constantly be introduced to meet the demands of business owners for more accountability in their social media efforts and for a return on investment (ROI).
- Businesses will need to consider how to integrate social into the whole culture of the business from top to bottom. Regardless of its size, all members of the business should be on board and understand and follow a common policy when working in the social arena.
- Video and mobile will continue to forge ahead in the social sphere, creating new ways to engage and communicate with customers and prospects.
- Social is now being integrated beyond websites or mobile devices. Look for increased uses in your car, home and entertainment devices (e.g. 3D television) that let you share what you are watching.
- Niche social sites are emerging, providing deep community engagement to learn and share with groups that have the same interests. For example, Pinterest has become a popular social photo sharing website fashioned around the age-old concept of the pinboard.

- Shopping via social will continue to grow. Peer review and word of mouth will become a more powerful buying incentive than traditional marketing and advertising channels. Businesses will have to find ways to shift this trend to their advantage.
- Social will continue to change rapidly with new platforms and players coming on board (and disappearing just as quickly). Businesses will need to stay on top of emerging trends and be ready to adapt.
- Social search results will command as much attention as all other search results. If you don't have a social presence, you have less chance of achieving a high search engine ranking. (See the *Increasing Traffic to Your Website through SEO* booklet).

Related Topics Covered in Other Booklets

- *Creating a Dynamic Web Presence*
- *E-commerce: Purchasing and Selling Online*
- *Integrating Mobile with Your Marketing Strategy*
- *Increasing Traffic to Your Website through SEO*
- *Blogs for Small Business*

To view or download these booklets visit Ontario.ca/ebusiness.

BEST PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Listen and participate in social media conversations to understand the rules and market landscape.
2. Develop a plan for what you want to achieve with your social media efforts.
3. Create compelling, high-quality content that resonates with your audience.
4. Contribute, collaborate, inform, educate but do not sell.
5. Network with industry influencers who will share good content and promote you in the process.
6. Optimize your social media efforts by tracking results and fine-tuning your strategy accordingly.
7. When responding to a negative comment, don't argue or become personal. Always reply in a professional manner and learn from the writer's input or comments.
8. Always address issues as they arise within the social media. Don't stay silent as this will cause more challenges.
9. Don't sell! Be informative, transparent and authentic. Share quality content.

Glossary of Terms

@username: When posting a tweet to a subscribed Twitter user, this format will address that particular user and is still visible to all others who follow that particular user.

Blogging: A personal journal published on the Internet consisting of posts typically 300-500 words in length. Can incorporate video, audio or other multimedia and typically is displayed chronologically and categorized for easy search.

Call to action: A catch phrase to express the process of getting a web viewer to fulfill an action within the web page - for example, filling in a form, clicking on a button or paying for a transaction.

Circles: Terminology referring to the Google+ social networking tool. Circles are groupings of people that you share your thoughts, links and photos with. You can have different circles of like-minded individuals.

CRM: Customer relationship management (CRM) is a business strategy directed to understand, anticipate and respond to the needs of existing and potential clients in order to grow the relationship value.

Direct message (DM): In the Twitter program this is a way for users to send private messages to each other.

Ezine directory: A searchable database of various electronic newsletter articles or electronic magazine articles categorized by theme or niche topic area. Articles submitted to these directories increase your traffic exposure, build awareness and credibility.

Facebook: A social network that connects people with friends, family and business associates.

Facebook "likes": Instead of writing a comment for a message or a status update, a Facebook user can click the "Like" button as a quick way to show approval and share the message.

Facebook timeline: The new Facebook format for personal profiles. It is essentially a digital scrapbook of a user's life, displaying their profile in an actual timeline format. This way friends and fans can see exactly the point in time when something occurred.

Facebook wall: Typically on the homepage of one's Facebook account when logging in, there is a wall of posts, including images, text, video and links that have been posted by friends of that account.

Google+: This is Google's social networking site, similar to Facebook, but it uses Circles, hangouts, streams and many other features.

Google Alerts: A method to track whether someone is talking about a particular subject and keyword phrase. This is good way to measure if someone is "Talking about you."

Guest blogging: Blogging on other people's blogs through invitation, posting articles, video, podcasts, etc.

Hangouts: Collect people together who happen to be online; they can come from different circles and they just want to hangout. Similar to if you were in your local cafe and bump into a few friends and then join them to "hangout".

Hashtags (#): Add them in-line with your twitter post to aggregate other like-minded or already grouped posts together to be able to follow more easily. Example: #DigitalConference12 – All those attending this conference can follow the conversations pertaining to the activities and impressions of the event.

Hootsuite: Application that allows you to manage multiple Twitter profiles, pre-schedule tweets and view metrics.

LinkedIn: A business-oriented social networking site that is mainly used for professional networking.

Micro-blogging: Broadcasting short length character messages such as tweets restricted to 140 characters.

Plugins: A set of software components that add specific capabilities to a larger software application and are frequently found in blog applications like WordPress.

Quick Response Codes (QR Codes): 2-D bar graphs that when scanned by a cell phone can link to information on the Internet. Typically seen on business cards, promotional print materials, on products, shop windows, etc. Also widely used for marketing campaigns like contests, event, registration, etc.

Reddit: Social news website with content that is user generated and is voted on by users. The most interesting content displays at the top of the news list.

Re-tweets (RT): On the social networking service, Twitter. The message is reposted or forwarded to your followers.

RSS Feed: A, series of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works, like blog entries, news headlines, audio, etc. in a standardized format. RSS feeds benefit publishers by letting them syndicate content automatically.

Social media monitoring: The process of monitoring and responding to mentions related to a business that occurs in social media.

Spam: The use of electronic messaging to send unsolicited mail messages typically in bulk to unsuspecting individual email addresses. Spam has now extended beyond email and can be sent through online forms, directories, blog comments, etc. Someone who sends spam is known as a spammer.

Spam control: Software scripts or plugins help to reduce the amount of spam that comes in from input-forms (e.g. contact us form or request for proposal form, etc.) from your site. Blacklisting/Whitelisting (safeguarding email addresses that are valid and blocking those that are not) and allocating specific words to watch out for are methods for spam control.

Stream: The stream centralizes all the conversation you are having with the people in your circles. You might see text, video, etc. The content that you share within your circle will appear on this stream.

StumbleUpon: A platform similar to Digg, Delicious and Reddit. When you rate a website that you like using StumbleUpon, you automatically share it with like-minded people around the globe.

Tweets: The name of the 140-character message post sent via Twitter.

Twitter: A platform where users share 140-character-long messages publicly. Users can "follow" others by subscribing to each others' messages. Additionally, users can use the @username command to direct a message towards another Twitter user or Direct Message DM.

Vanity URL: In some of the social media platforms, business pages can be developed and a specific web address or vanity URL can be set up. See specific details in the Help sections of each of the platforms to understand the procedure. Having a vanity URL is helpful in keeping with your overall branding.

Viral marketing: Refers to marketing techniques that use pre-existing social networks to produce increases in brand awareness or to achieve other marketing objectives through self-replicating processes.

Widget: An element of a graphical user interface that displays an information arrangement changeable by the user, such as a window or text box.

WordPress: Popular blogging platform to publish posts but can also be used as a content management system for a website.

AUTHOR GUIDELINES

Purpose

The Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Entrepreneurship Review is focused at owners and operators of small and mid-sized enterprises (SME), those working in support of SMEs, and those interested in the practice of entrepreneurship. The journal has been created by the Canadian Council for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (CCSBE-CCPME) in partnership with the Centre for Management Development, Faculty of Business Administration, University of Regina to publish articles and information directly useful to "practitioners" – those in business and interested in business.

Content

All articles have a practical orientation and are written for practitioners. While this is not an academic journal, all articles should be theoretically and/or empirically grounded. Content should address areas of interest to practitioners, such as:

- Innovation
- Start-up
- High growth and innovative SME financing
- Financing of intellectual property-based enterprises
- Internationalization
- Succession
- Market information
- Leadership
- Corporate social responsibility
- Ethics
- Strategic alliances
- E-business
- Government relations
- Human resource practices

The journal publishes articles profiling the experiences of other SME managers and entrepreneurs as well as those popularizing recent research and theories on SMEs and entrepreneurship or providing information on markets and best practices.

Submission Guidelines

The following is a summary of the guidelines:

- Electronic submission in Microsoft Word Format, Time New Roman Font size 12 (.doc or.rtf).
- 2000-2500 words (including references and notes) written in a normal, non-technical style. The intent is to communicate useful useable information to entrepreneurs and those that provide support and advice to them.
- Submissions should include the mailing and e-mailing addresses and one paragraph summary of the article.
- SMEE Review is bilingual and accepts English and French articles published in the language of their submission with a summary in the two languages.
- Attractive layout including effective use of headings and graphics (ex. Tables, etc.).

All articles will be reviewed by an editorial board composed of academics, practitioners, and service providers in the area of SMEs and entrepreneurship.

For detailed guidelines and style formats, please contact:

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Please send in your comments to SMEE.Review@uregina.ca and we'll publish in our next issue.

Nous vous encourageons à nous faire parvenir vos commentaires sur n'importe quel article paru dans ce numéro de la Revue PMEE

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The Canadian Council for Small Business & Entrepreneurship (CCSBE) is the only national membership-based organization in Canada whose goals are to promote and advance the development of small business and entrepreneurship through research, education and training, networking and dissemination of scholarly & policy-oriented information.

The organization was established in 1979 as the first affiliate of the International Council for Small Business (ICSB). Its members include academics, educators, representatives of small business support organizations, researchers, government officials, students of entrepreneurship, and policy makers.

The Canadian Council for Small Business' mandate encompasses the following objectives:

- Facilitating networking among shareholders;
- Encouraging research in the field;
- Disseminating knowledge and research findings; and,
- Furthering the cause of entrepreneurship and small business in the educational system.

CCSBE membership includes the following major benefits:

- Four issues annually of the Journal for Small Business & Entrepreneurship (JSBE)
- Issues of the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise and Entrepreneur Review (SMEE)
- Three issues of the CCSBE Electronic Newsletter
- Participation at the annual conference
- Eligibility to vote in elections and to run for the Board of Directors

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- Four copies per year of the Journal of Small Business Management (JSBM)
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