

# Social Media made simple

by

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# Introduction

Chances are the Internet has changed your life. But the Internet, young as it is, has drastically changed its own life. It has evolved and adapted to the expectations of the audience at a remarkable rate, and opened up beautiful marketing opportunities along the way. It has grown to become a collection of concepts and technologies that impact the way we communicate and collaborate.

In its infancy, the Internet did a lot of talking. Websites sprung up everywhere, email became a mainstream means of communication, and as technology allowed for your data points to be associated with you, the era of one-to-one marketing dawned. Suddenly, by means of personalized emails and dynamically generated website pages, companies began to talk to their customers in a clearer, more relevant tone.

Today, with the tools that social media provides, companies are not just limited to talking: they can also listen while the customers talk back. And customers are not just limited to talking to the companies: they can talk among themselves about the company, without ever meeting face to face. And they love it.

You are reading this book because you understand, or at least suspect, that social media marketing should be a part of your marketing plan. Perhaps you have heard the term thrown around boardroom discussions, or at the water cooler. Perhaps you are seeing your competitors enter the space. Or perhaps you are simply frustrated with the results of your thus far “traditional” marketing efforts.

Good for you. Social Media, Social Web, Social Networks, Web 2.0, New Media: jargon or not, these are spaces that you need to understand and use to maximize your marketing impact.

Your audience is no longer captive. Offline or online, your target customers are being given the tools to avoid advertising. Whether they are fast forwarding through your well thought-out 30 second prime spot commercial, or listening to their iPods instead of the radio, consumers are uniting together against banal, irrelevant, intrusive advertising.

But they all like a good conversation, be it with their best friend, or their favourite brand. And the Social web has given them the technology to hold meaningful conversations online, and they are flocking to it in droves. People, otherwise known as your existing or potential customers, are using the online environment to interact, participate, educate and create. They are reveling in their ability to use the voice that they always knew they had, but that nobody could really hear.

The people are not the only ones who are participating. Companies are realizing that the best way to speak to their target audience is to speak with them, and not to them. And the best place to do that, on a massive scale, is online.

The social web is like no other marketing environment which you know. It is governed by the masses, it is immediate, unforgetting and sometimes unforgiving. It requires you to relinquish control, It insists that you learn to listen, react, and respond to your audience. In fact, it wants you to understand that there is no more “you vs the audience” but rather “the audience, with you as part of it”. There is no hierarchy, and no pause button while you learn the rules.

Some will say that there are no rules, and perhaps that is the politically correct thing to say. But there are best practices, good strategy tactics and an urgent need for you to understand the space inherently. You do not need huge marketing budgets to make this a reality. The playing fields are being leveled. What you do need is a good understanding of the game, a clear strategy, oodles of creativity and a genuine desire to want to engage with your customers.

The rules of marketing might have shifted, but the principles are still the same. You want to get a message out to your target audience, and convince them to buy your product, so you can make a profit. There are plenty of steps along the way, with micro-goals of micro-campaigns, but at the end of the day you want to sell more tomorrow than you did today.

The web can help. And this book will show you how.

In **Part I** I will explain the intricacies of the social web, and show you why it is imperative that your company join the conversation that is happening online. I will define the social web, and show you how users all over the world are creating content that is entertaining enough to be consumed by even more users. You’ll read how other companies, in all types of industries, are using social media to a marketing advantage, and how the web’s measurability will help you run a more focused company.

In **Part II**, I will dive into the jargon, and explain all the tools that make up the social web. I will show you who uses them, how and why, and suggest how they can be used by you to spread

your message.

In **Part III**, once you are armed with the passion to apply social media to your marketing campaign and you have the knowledge of the tools available, I will help you set out an individual web strategy for your online marketing campaign. I will show you how to use your in-house resources, combined with your users' input to create a killer campaign that will achieve your campaign goals.

In **Part IV** I will help you assess your web space presence, and show you how to build on it in the long term for maximum results.

Throughout this book, you will read about successful companies that launched with a marketing plan that focused only on social media strategy. You will read about the top brands that are shifting their marketing budgets more and more towards new media. You will learn about the companies who were saved from imminent closure due to a social media campaign. In other words, there is plenty of evidence that Social Media Marketing works.

I will show you how it can work for you. Whether you sell paper clips or convertibles, there are tools and applications that will help you spread the word and increase sales. You will learn how to set up a conversation that your customers want to join, and one that will lead to more sales, more media coverage and more profits.

And you will see that the process of talking with – instead of to – your customers is one that is not only rewarding, but also a lot of fun. With the proliferation of broadband access across the world's homes and businesses, a good chunk of your audience is already online. And more people are getting on board every second.

Sooner or later, they will have cause to search for you online, As you assess the importance of social web marketing, ask yourself: what will they find?