

Social Media Marketing Pros and Cons

Pros:

- You can learn how to improve your products and services. By encouraging open communication through public comments, you can learn what you can do to make your products and pitch more palatable.
- You can build brand loyalty. Not only can you use social media to build your brand, you can use it to demonstrate your personality, interact with customers and show them that you care, which, in turn, breeds loyalty. Social media marketing can also boost your reputation and build relationships.
- You can reach customers that traditional marketing misses. You never know who will direct a friend to your blog, Facebook page or social bookmark post, so your potential for reeling in new leads is unlimited.
- You can learn more about your target audience, not only by their comments but also by studying visitor analytics.
- Relationship building. The one-to-one dialogue you can have in social media makes it a powerful platform for building a closer affinity with customers and brand loyalty
- It's where your customers are. Facebook isn't merely a domain filled with teenagers and 20 year olds. It now attracts all demographics and ages. In fact, Facebook's fastest growing segment is the over 55s, making it optimal for your business.
- Word of mouth/ viral marketing. Social media can spread your offers and messages amongst 1000s of people very quickly. And the best part is that it's your customers spreading them for you.
- Give your brand personality. Posting messages everyday can develop people's perception of your brand's personality very quickly through your writing style and tone of voice
- Learn more about customers. By listening and participating in their online conversations you can find out more about your customers' problems, likes and dislikes and preferences
- Low cost of entry. Creating profiles and pages on Facebook and Twitter is quick, easy and free to do, although advertising directly on these sites requires money.
- Customer service. People don't rely on email and the phone to get their questions answered anymore. They're now posting messages in blogs and forums to get them resolved. Engaging with social media enables you to respond to the evolving nature of customer service, and improve loyalty as a result. But keeping up with customers is vital.
- Crisis marketing. When something goes wrong, your customers want to know how you're going to put it right. *Many aren't going to wait for a press release or newspaper article before they start forming a negative*

opinion about your lethargic response. Twitter can be used to get your apologies out fast, and enable you to answer concerned customers' questions.

Cons:

- Information on the social web moves fast, but often at the expense of deeper personal relationships. Marketers, while they can reach customers in new ways and get feedback from them faster than ever before, still aren't personalizing communications and engagement to the benefit of customers and the organization.
- A fan or a follower isn't a business objective. Social media has enabled marketers to chase metrics that don't impact their business. Do we really NEED social marketing to attract prospective clients?
- It is very time consuming. There are so many social network sites to be involved, interactions to make, relationships to build, tasks to get done, content to write...almost on a daily basis. Realistically, this isn't really what you need to do in a day.
- Viral Negative Publicity. The viral nature of social networking can be both on the positive and negative side. Negative publicity spreads faster in social media these days than in traditional media.
- Reduced content = reduced traffic. In social marketing, the value that you provide through content really does matter a lot. Once you begin to be inconsistent in this area, you will see a decline in the number of your audience and number of visits to your blog.
- You lose some control of your marketing efforts. Anything you publish is up for grabs, and others can easily criticize you.
- Social media marketing places high demands on your talent. It can be difficult to constantly come up with innovative exciting content that interests a variety of readers and, without relevance your efforts will be wasted.
- Social media is a long haul strategy. It could be months, or even years, before you start seeing it translating into increased customer loyalty and sales

Advice:

- Being too direct in your sales pitch could scare people away. So, think passive, think indirect...help people with "how to's" "why's". Listen, share and be humble. Bragging about the money you are making is not going to win you friends.

- When people add comments in response they might need a response from you. If available, follow or subscribe to the hot feeds that you have contributed to. This is vital to retaining customer loyalty and satisfaction.
- Make it easy and non-threatening for your audience to participate. Not only does your content matter on the social web but your personality matters, too. In other words, you need to be accessible and approachable in all of your social media marketing communications. Don't talk at people, talk with them, and do so in a manner that makes it clear that you want them to join the conversation.
- Acknowledge and recognize your audience. The power of social media marketing comes from the relationships you develop with your online audience (who will become brand advocates and will talk about your business, champion it, and defend it against naysayers). With that in mind, you must acknowledge people when they reach out to you.
- Integrate all your marketing efforts. All of your marketing efforts should work together to present consistent brand messages and lead to your ultimate marketing goals. You should also cross-promote your various marketing efforts. For example, feed your blog content to your Twitter and Facebook profiles using a tool like www.Twitterfeed.com. Promote your Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn profiles by including "Follow Me" buttons in your blog's sidebar that link to your profiles. Include your Twitter ID in your printed ads and link to your blog and social media profiles in your e-mail signature.
- Do not harass your followers with a constant flow of updates.
- Focus on relevant promos that will appeal to your customers.
- Give free stuff... a lot of it.