

HOW TO

CREATE A DIALOGUE WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO SPARK CONVERSATIONS

Word-of-mouth marketing has long been a highly effective way to get the word out about whatever it is you're trying to sell. Today, that form of marketing has hit a whole new level with the emergence of social media—Facebook, blogs, Twitter, YouTube, and all of the other sites that millions of people use to share information and interact with each another every day.

Social media is a great platform for connecting with customers—social media tools are not only free, but they are also extremely popular with Internet users of all ages. But the relationships you build with social media—just like real-world relationships—are two-way streets, with more give than take. If you are open, honest, and display a good sense of humor, customers will return the favor. Here are some ways you can take advantage of some of today's most prominent social media sites:

FACEBOOK

Facebook is one of the most popular social media Web sites. When the site was founded in 2004, membership was limited to college students, but the site now boasts more than 350 million members and continues to attract a diverse audience. In fact, adults who are 55 years or older now make up the fastest growing segment of Facebook users.

Facebook offers limitless potential to reach new and existing customers, and establishing your business on the site is simple. Begin by setting up a profile for your company or even just a single product (for example, independent filmmakers often set up Facebook pages for their movies). Then, use your Web site or email list to invite customers to become “fans” of your company. Once you've started to build a community of fans, you can use your Facebook page to provide information about your company, communicate special offers, respond to questions, and more.

TWITTER

Twitter is one of the Internet's fastest growing social media sites—in just one year, Twitter went from about 500,000 users to more than four million, a number that has continued to grow.

So what's so special about Twitter? The site allows users to “tweet”—that is, write very short updates limited to 140 characters—that spread information quickly and easily (this is also called “microblogging”). Twitter is a great social media tool to use if you want to give your customers frequent updates about new offers, products, promotions, and support.

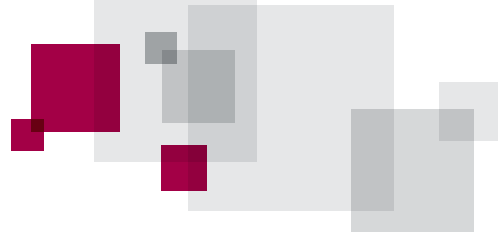
SIMPLE RULES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Whether you're Facebooking, tweeting, or participating in other social media opportunities, there are some unwritten rules for businesses you should know:

- Be honest and transparent
- Talk about your company consistently across different media
- Always think twice before publishing—remember that what you say online will be available for a very long time

Check out the [Word of Mouth Marketing Association](#) to get more information on the basic rules of social media marketing.





VERISIGN STRATEGIES FOR SMALL BUSINESS

For example, a florist might use its Twitter account to alert “followers” (Twitter-speak for people who sign up to receive your tweets) about special offers for upcoming holidays, like Valentine’s Day or Teacher Appreciation Day.

YOUTUBE

More than 100 million viewers visit YouTube every month, making it the most popular online video site. By setting up a YouTube account, you can tap into that vast audience and use video to demonstrate products or services, provide product maintenance tips, or offer testimonials from satisfied customers and clients.

For more information about how you can use online video to grow your business, download Show Your Stuff with Online Video, our small business strategy guide focused specifically on Web-based video.

BLOGS

Establishing a blog to share your knowledge—whether it’s about products, services, or the industry or interest group you serve—isn’t difficult, but it does require a steady time commitment. User-friendly sites like [Blogger](#), [WordPress](#), and [TypePad](#) offer attractive templates that can help you set up a blog in a matter of minutes, but you must make it a point to update your blog regularly, at least once a week (if not more). Readers trust experts and want to get their take on products and services—and they also like to buy from them—so go ahead and start sharing your expertise.

A social media strategy firm called Ning provides a good example of how a company blog can provide a vital connection with customers. [Ning’s blog](#) not only includes lots of good information about how to create and improve your own social strategy, it also showcases all kinds of groups who are actively using social media technology.

Using social media tools is fun and can be a highly effective way to get more people interested in your products and services, but visitors also need to know that your Web site is trustworthy. VeriSign Trust Seal can help you establish that trust and give you an edge over your competition. To learn more, visit the VeriSign Trust Seal Web site at www.verisign.com/trust-seal.

LEARN MORE

For more information about how VeriSign Trust™ Seal can bring trust to your business online, please call: 866-878-7847, 650-426-5333 or email: trustteam@verisign.com. Visit us at www.verisign.com/trust-seal for more information.

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