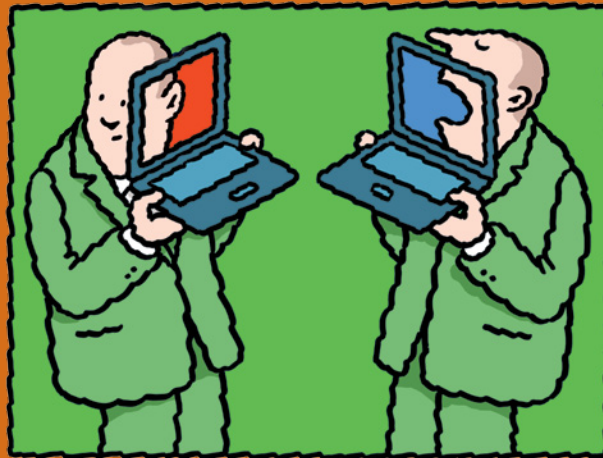
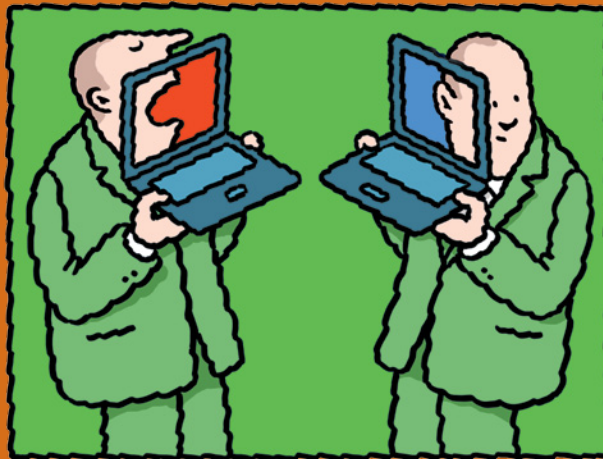


LET'S TALK

Social Media for Small Business

Version Two



Written by John Jantsch of *Duct Tape Marketing*

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A note from the sponsor...

When used properly, social media can be a great tool to help your business reach untapped, potential customers and stay connected to current ones. But there are a few things you'll need to know to help you get the most out of social media as well as your online presence in its entirety. Microsoft Office Live Small Business sponsored the creation of this eBook in an effort to help break social media down into easy-to-understand pieces, so you can make sense of and make use of this powerful resource in a way that grows your business. Let's talk.



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Small businesses: Feed the Social Media “Beast” and you’ll see it pay dividends

Not long ago, social media seemed so new and different that it was treated as an appendage of sorts—a kind of marketing that should be tried only by “experts.”

While that view still exists to some degree today, it’s become clear to many that social media is no longer marketing’s new thing. It’s now simply part of the way we do marketing today.

I believe that the proper way to view social media from a small-business owner’s point of view is as more of an evolution than a revolution.

Traditional marketing tactics such as advertising, referrals, and public relations are still very important, but social media tactics have now become a part of everyday marketing’s fabric and need to be considered at the strategic level of your marketing decision-making process.

So, rather than asking yourself if you should or should not use [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#), the question is: “How can Facebook and Twitter help you achieve your marketing objectives?” It’s the same as asking how direct mail or having two more salespeople might fit into the plans.

From this integrated viewpoint, social media participation can start to make more sense for each individual marketer’s needs and goals.

Is social media simply today’s hot thing?

Think you can sit the social networking craze out? Consider the following statistics.

According to the online competitive intelligence service [Compete.com](#), social media growth continues to skyrocket.

- The top three social networks—[Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#)—collectively received more than 2.5 billion visits in the month of September 2009 alone. Twitter grew by more than 600% in 2009, while Facebook grew by 210% and LinkedIn by 85%.
- As of this writing, [Google](#) and [Yahoo](#) are the only websites that receive more daily traffic than Facebook. Current trends suggest that may not last much longer.
- In fact, if Facebook were a country, it would be the world’s fourth largest.
- The most recent count of blogs being indexed by [Technorati](#) currently stands at 133 million. The same report also revealed that, on average, 900,000 blog posts are created within a single 24-hour period.
- It’s been reported that [YouTube](#) is likely to serve more than 75 billion video streams to around 375 million unique visitors during 2009.
- The online photo sharing site [Flickr](#) now hosts more than 3.6 billion user images.
- The online bookmarking service [Delicious](#) has more than 5 million users and more than 150 million unique bookmarked URLs.

So, you see, perhaps this social media thing is going to catch on after all.

How exactly do you define social media?

Well, that's a good question. And the complete answer could fill pages without really delivering the clarity that a small-business marketer might desire.

So here's the simple definition for the purpose of this document. Social media is the *use of technology to co-create, know, like, and trust*.

Social media, and by that I'm lumping together blogs, social search, social networking, and bookmarking, presents the marketer with a rich set of new tools to help in the effort to generate new business.

What's changed?

Well, c'mon, just about everything, right?

If you studied marketing in the textbook world, you likely covered the 4 Ps of marketing—you simply created a product, figured out how to price it, got it placed in the market, and promoted the heck out it.

Today's approach to marketing, the approach infused with social media, leans much more heavily on the 4 Cs of marketing. Tons of relevant, education-based, and perhaps user generated **content** that is filtered, aggregated, and delivered in a **context** that makes it useful for people who are starving to make **connections** with people, products, and brands they can build a **community** around.

Content + Context + Connection + Community = Social Media Marketing

An integrated social media strategy

It's important to have a new media strategy attached to your new media tactics—or you'll find yourself running around in circles and left with a sense that all this online networking stuff is a big fat waste of time.

Here are some worthy marketing objectives where new media tactics can excel:

- Do you want to spread your content and expertise to new audiences?
- Do you want to network with like-minded individuals and companies?
- Do you want to build a community of evangelists?
- Do you want to involve your customers and prospects in co-creation?
- Do you want to automate the process of repurposing content?
- Do you want to reach new audiences in the exact way they choose to communicate?
- Do you want to be seen as a thought leader in your industry?
- Do you want ways to aggregate and filter content so you and your people can digest it?
- Do you want to easily hear literally everything that's being said online about your brand, products, or industry in real time?
- Do you want to be seen as a trusted source of information?

I think the best way to look at social media is to view it as a way to open up new access points. These points can then be leveraged to create content, context, connection, and community. Do that well, and they can also add to lead generation, nurturing, and conversion. And that's the payoff of social media. But get the order wrong, get the interaction wrong, get the participation wrong—and you may never see much return on the time you invest.

Social media conversations are just that—open, honest, transparent conversations, not sales pitches or shouting festivals.

The online hub and spoke model

Much of what this document deals with is creating outposts of content and connection on social media sites. But, there is one element that pulls this strategy together and that's your primary Web hub. You can't depend on the contacts you make in most social media activity to serve as the primary trust-building connection that ultimately leads to a sale.

Your primary website or blog is the tool that ties all of your social media activity together. Your activity on social media sites or spokes functions primarily as a way to lead prospects back to the much more fully developed content that resides on your website.

Your hub is the place where you can engage your prospect in a total education-based campaign that helps them understand that you have the solutions they are seeking. In fact, you can think of a great deal of your social media activity as a way to create awareness and an initial level of trust substantial enough for someone to want to know more. Social media and social networking may be the ultimate permission-based marketing tool when viewed in this light.

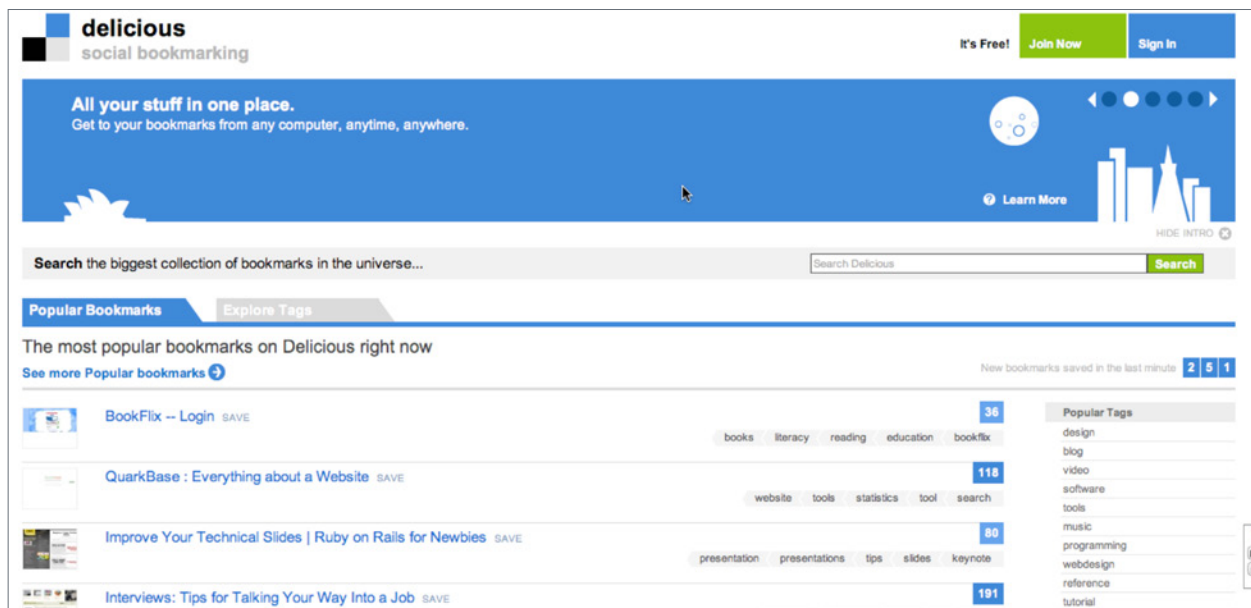
The hierarchy of social marketing

One of the things that small-business marketers struggle with around the entire topic of social marketing is trying to jump into the next new thing without enough analysis of what they should focus on. I happen to think this is an important, evolving, and essential area of marketing for small businesses, but there's a hierarchy to it. In other words, there is a logical progression of utilization that comes about much like Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Nature.

As Maslow theorized, the ultimate potential of your marketing or human self-actualization couldn't be achieved until the most basic human psychological needs such as breathing, eating, sleeping, and sex were first met. In fact, safety, love, and esteem all come before transcendence. Now, before I edge too close to the deep end here, I'm simply comparing what I think is a bit like progressing up the social-marketing hierarchy.

Most small-business owners should look at the following progression or hierarchy as they move deeper into social-marketing tactics. So, jump in, but do it in this order and don't move on until you have the basics of each stage down and working for you.

- 1) **Blogging:** The foundation of the pyramid. Read blogs, comment on blogs, and then blog. This is the doorway to all other social marketing.
- 2) **RSS:** Aggregate and filter content around subjects and use RSS technology as a tool to help you repurpose, republish, and create content.
- 3) **Social Search:** This is often ignored in this discussion, but I think it's become very important for small-business owners. You can participate and should stimulate and manage your reputation here.
- 4) **Social Bookmarking:** Tagging content to and participating in social bookmarking communities can be a great way to open up more channels to your business as well as generate extra search traffic. But it takes work.



Delicious is a popular social bookmarking site

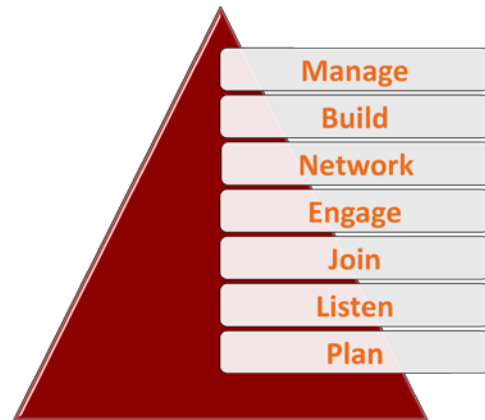
- 5) **Social Networks:** Branching out to take advantage of the numbers of potential prospects that you might find in sites such as Facebook or MySpace will frustrate, at least as a business tool, if you don't have many of the above needs met. These networks take time to understand and thrive on ideas and content. You've got to have much to share if you wish to build a business case.
- 6) **Micro:** Platforms such as [Twitter](#), [Thwirl](#), [Plurk](#), and [FriendFeed](#) have become a very important part of the social media mix as they allow for quick tracking, joining, and engagement. However, they still reside at the top of the pyramid because without content, such as that created on a blog, the engagement on Twitter may not go very deep.

Another way to view the pyramid

As the actual social media tools, blogs, RSS, and social networks evolve over time. (Twitter is more useful when more people use it.) As this occurs it can also be helpful to view the same pyramid idea less from a tool standpoint and more from an objectives standpoint.

Until you create a social media strategic plan based on marketing objectives, and find ways to use social media tools to listen and join the conversation going on in your markets, you may find it harder to engage and network and ultimately build relationships and sales through the use of social media tools.

I believe the process for meeting long-term marketing objectives through social media is universal, but the tools needed to meet them are not. Twitter may indeed be a primary social media tool for some, while the Facebook platform or a blog is what allows another to progress through these stages. A third organization may find it can strategically move through the hierarchy by integrating every tool in the toolbox with its offline initiatives.



5 tips for getting more from social media marketing

I think it's helpful to finish the overview section of this guide with a few tips on using social media strategically. But don't worry, we'll get to the tactics as well.

- 1) Integrate:** Don't treat your social media activity as something separate from your other marketing initiatives. Feature links to your social media profiles in your email signature, on your business cards, in your ads, and as a standard block of copy in your weekly HTML email newsletter. In addition, make sure that links to your educational content are featured prominently in your social media profiles and that Facebook fan page visitors and blog subscribers are offered the opportunity to subscribe to your newsletter and attend your online and offline events. Make your social media profiles a part of your address copy block and you will soon see adding them to all that you do as an automatic action.
- 2) Amplify:** Use your social media activity to create awareness for and amplify your content housed in other places. This can go for teasing some aspect of your latest blog post on Twitter or in your Facebook status, creating full-blown events on [Eventful](#) or [Meetup](#), or pointing to mentions of your firm in the media. If you publish a biweekly newsletter, in addition to sending it to your subscribers, archive it online and Tweet about it too. You can also add social features to your newsletter to make it very easy for others to [retweet](#) (tweetmeme button) and share on social bookmark sites such as [Delicious](#) and [digg](#). I would also add that filtering other people's great content and pointing this out to your followers, fans, and subscribers fits into this category, as it builds your overall reputation for good content sharing and helps to buffer the notion that you are simply broadcasting your announcements. Quality over quantity always wins in social media marketing.

- 3) Repurpose:** Taking content that appears in one form and twisting it in ways that make it more available in another, or to another audience, is one of the secrets to success in the hyper info-driven marketing world in which we find ourselves. When you hold an event to present information, you can promote the event in various social media networks and then capture that event and post the audio to your podcast, slides to [SlideShare](#), and transcript (I use [CastingWords](#) for this) as a free report for download. You can string five blog posts together and make them available as a workshop handout or a bonus for your [LinkedIn](#) group. Never look at any content as a single use, single medium, single act.
- 4) Generate leads:** So many people want to generate leads in the wide world of social media, but can't seem to understand how or have met with downright hostile reactions when trying. Effectively generating leads from social media marketing is really no different than effectively generating leads anywhere—it's just that the care you must take to do it right is amplified by the "no selling allowed" culture. No one likes to be sold to in any environment—the trick is to let them buy—and this is even more important in social media marketing. So what this means is that your activity, much of what I've mentioned above, needs to focus on creating awareness of your valuable, education-based content, housed on your main hub site. You can gain permission to market to your social media network and contacts when you can build a level of trust through content sharing and engagement. It's really the ultimate two-step advertising, only perhaps now it's three-step—meet and engage in social media, lead to content elsewhere, content elsewhere presents the opportunity to buy. To generate leads through social media marketing, you need to view your activity on social sites like an effective headline for an ad—the purpose of the headline is not to sell, but to engage and build, know, like, and trust. It's the ultimate permission-based play when done correctly.

One glaring exception to this softer approach for some folks is [Twitter search](#). I believe you can use Twitter search to locate people in your area who are asking for solutions and complaining about problems you can solve and reach out to them directly with a bit of a solution pitch. People who are talking publicly about needing something are offering a form of permission and can be approached as more of a warmed lead. The same can also be said for [LinkedIn Answers](#). If someone asks if "anyone knows a good WordPress designer," I think you can move to convincing them that you are indeed a great WordPress designer.

- 5) Learn:** One of the hangups I frequently encounter from people just trying to get started in social media marketing is the paralysis formed when they stare blankly at Twitter, wondering what in the world to say. The pressure to fill the silence can be so overwhelming that they eventually succumb and tweet what they had for lunch. If you find yourself in this camp, I'm going to let you off the hook—you don't have to say anything to get tremendous benefit from social media participation. If I did nothing more than listen and occasionally respond when directly engaged, I would derive tremendous benefit from that level of participation. In fact, if you are just getting started, this is what you should do before you ever open your 140-character mouth. Set up an RSS reader and subscribe to blogs, visit social bookmarking sites such as [BizSugar](#), and [Delicious](#) and read what's popular. Create custom Twitter searches for your brand, your competitors, and your industry, and closely follow people on Twitter who have a reputation for putting out great content. And then just listen and learn. If you do only this, you will be much smarter about your business and industry than most and you may eventually gain the knowledge and confidence to tap the full range of what's possible in the wild and wacky world of social media marketing.

They don't use social media in my industry



Many small-business owners still think they can take a pass on the power of online social media tools, particularly if they reside in seemingly low-tech industries such as plumbing, fishing, or lawyering. I want to share a quick interview I did with Jason Brown, 23-year-old cofounder of [Brown Lures](#). That's right, they sell fishing lures to guys and gals that probably don't call hanging out at Web 2.0 conferences a good time. (I'm just guessing on that though.)

Brown credits his blog with changing the way people find him. He created a podcast that gives him great "fishing stories" and loyalty from guides up and down the Gulf Coast, he uses RSS and content tagging to automatically produce fresh blog content, and email marketing to blow his competition away at trade shows.

Using social media in industries that are still slow to adopt it is the killer competitive advantage.

In Brown's words:

"We have been running waiting lists for products for about a year now, and no one has any clue how we are doing it without spending big advertising money. I love this stuff . . ."

Alas, I can still hear the cries from the cynics: "We don't need no stinkin' social media, we just need more sales."

The changing face of search engine optimization

Search engine optimization has changed dramatically in recent years.



The shift is from one of Web page optimization and link-hounding to content and engagement optimization. In short, search engine optimization and social media are now undeniably intertwined. It has become extremely difficult to achieve any measure of success for important keyword phrases without the use of social media. (Of course, the flip side to that is organizations that take advantage of social media can dominate, particularly within industries slow to adapt.)

I'm not suggesting that Web page optimization and inbound links are no longer important, they are, they just might not be enough anymore. It is rare these days to do any kind of normal search that does not return results from social media sites. Blog content dominates many question-related searches and videos, audios, and images are routinely mixed in on page one searches on both Google and Yahoo.

What this means for the typical small business is that you must add a blog and podcast to the mix, upload, tag, and thoroughly describe images on sites like [Flickr](#). Create customer testimonial videos housed on [YouTube](#). Write articles and press releases to submit to [EzineArticles](#) and [PitchEngine](#). Create and brand optimize profiles on Facebook, [LinkedIn](#), Twitter, [Google Maps](#), and industry-related social networking sites. And, get very proactive about generating positive reviews on sites such as [Yelp](#), Google Maps, and [Insider Pages](#), or you're not really online anymore.

Any attempt to garner positive search results for your primary website must be accompanied by a strategy to optimize your entire Web presence through the effective use of social media. We can have another conversation altogether about the effective use of social media for engagement, but the first step is getting immersed in the content creation and optimization game.

Blogging: The front door to social media

Do I really still need a blog? This is a question that still comes up these days, in fact, with all the talk of Twitter and social media, blogs may have seemed to fall out of favor.

What's really happened is that they have worked themselves into the fabric of everyday marketing. People don't fire up their browser because they want to read your blog, but they do go to [Bing](#) and other search engines to find answers to questions and challenges and to find local suppliers. Blog content is what they are finding.

A blog primer

In simplest terms, a blog is software that allows anyone who can type to post content to a website or blog home page. The content is generally displayed much like a journal might be written, in reverse chronological fashion.

This content can be anything the author chooses to write, or post, as it is referred to in blogging terms.

Now, on the surface, what this means is that anyone can update a website that has this blogging software installed and that's a great thing. Websites benefit from change and blogs make it easy to change, update, and add content.

But, there's much more.

Blog software also allows:

- Readers of the blog pages to make comments and add their own content.
- Readers of the blog to subscribe to the content so that they are automatically notified whenever the content is updated.
- Search engines to receive notice or pings whenever the content is updated.

All of the above items happen automatically once the software is configured.

Blogging is such a great tool because it allows you to more easily accomplish many of the marketing objectives that today's small business must address.

A blog is your ticket to creating:

- Content
- Context
- Connection
- Community

And if that isn't enough, know this—**search engines love blogs!** If for no other reason, consider creating and frequently posting relevant, keyword-rich content to a blog, hosted on your domain, because it will dramatically improve your chances of ranking well in the search engines.

The image shows a screenshot of a blog post on Chris Brogan's website. The header features the 'chrisBROGAN' logo with a speech bubble containing 'C' and 'B', and the tagline 'community and social media'. A navigation menu includes 'HOME', 'ABOUT', 'SPEAKING', 'NEWSLETTERS', 'CONTACT', and 'BEST OF'. A search bar is labeled 'Lijit Search'. The main article title is 'When Should You Use Your Own Language', dated 'SEPTEMBER 30, 2009' with '40 COMMENTS AND 125 REACTIONS'. The article features a red 7up sign with the slogan 'PEOPLE LIKE IT... IT LIKES YOU'. The text discusses brand language and includes a quote: 'Marketers do this all the time. They use the current reigning champ's language and write counterpoint to it. Lesser brands draft off the bigger brands' positioning. We take (whether consciously or not) from the value of what we're doing when we phrase it in other people's language.' Below this, it says 'And yet (and this is a big "and yet"), there's something lovely about when phrases and words catch on. I love that people are using terms like trust agents in the wild. I love that people talk about workshifting (client) as a verb that makes sense to them. When we talk about things like the tipping point and purple cows, it's a shared language.' The right sidebar contains a subscription form, social media links for RSS and Twitter, a book recommendation for 'TRUST' by Chris Brogan and Julien Smith, and a 'Learn about... THESIS' WordPress theme advertisement.

Chris Brogan writes a very popular social media blog

The best way to start blogging

If this document has convinced you to jump in and start blogging, let me advise you that the best way to start is not to start. I know that's a little counterintuitive, so let me explain.

Here's the three-step process for getting started and note that step 3 is to start blogging.

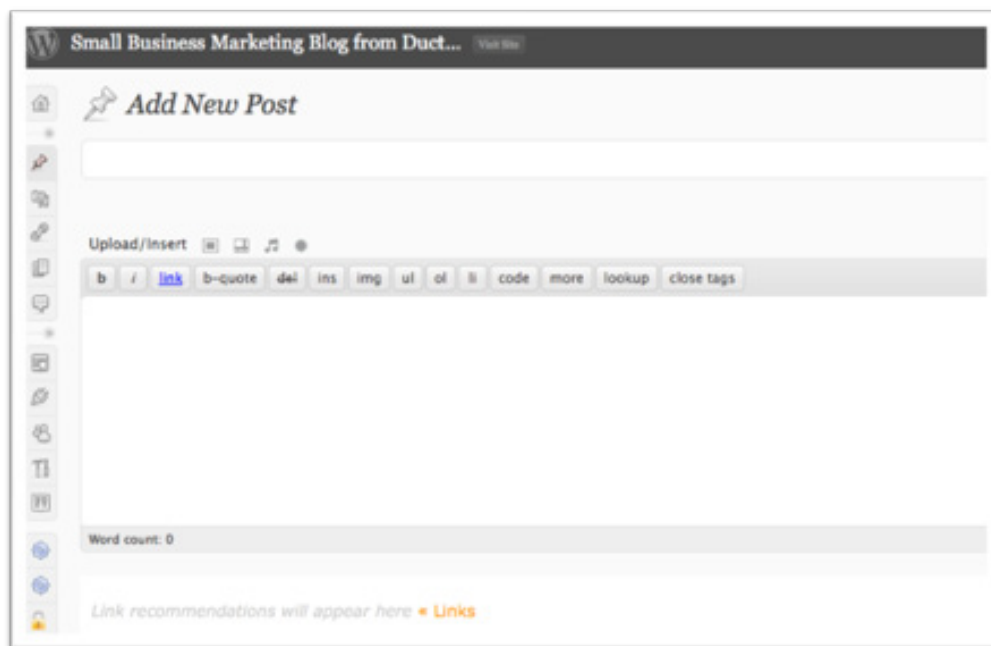
- 1) Monitor a group of relevant blogs:** Use a blog search engine and RSS reader such as Bloglines.com or Google Reader/BlogSearch to locate and subscribe to a dozen or so relevant blogs—blogs in your industry, competitors, experts, etc. Learn how people blog, what they write about and how they engage their readers.
- 2) Comment on a group of relevant blogs:** Visit some of your chosen blogs and add relevant comments. Engage in the conversation going on inside these blogs. This, by the way, is an important part of online networking and may help get your blog noticed down the road.
- 3) Create your own blog and start posting content:** Only after you've engaged in steps 1 and 2 for a couple weeks do I advise entering the blogging pool.

Blogging software

As mentioned previously, blogs are run by software, so one of your first chores is to determine what software you want to use and get it set up.

A quick search for blog software will turn up dozens of options. But for the sake of this publication, we are going to focus on just a few of the leading choices:

WordPress.org: WordPress.org offers a free, open-source blogging tool that has many things going for it. This is the tool I use on my blog and it's hard to imagine going wrong with this tool. This is software that you download, configure, and upload to your Web host. Because it is open source there are also many beneficial add-ons and plug-ins that can add even more power to the software.



The downside, if there is one, is that you must be able to get through a bit of technical tinkering to make it work, but it's very straightforward.

WordPress.com: This is a hosted version of the WordPress software that allows you to easily create a blog that is hosted by WordPress. The benefit of this approach is that there is no real setup, you simply sign up (it's free), choose a theme, and start blogging.

The downside with hosted blogging platforms is that they are not as flexible and might not deliver as much search engine benefit because the content does not reside on your website domain.

TypePad.com: TypePad is another great hosted service with many features and a simple startup process.

Compendium Blogware: Business-targeted blog system that works around targeting keywords and phrases.

Windows Live Spaces: Based on simplicity and familiarity, Windows Live Spaces offers users a free, quick, and easy way to get started blogging.

5 tips for getting more from your blog

- 1) Read, follow, and listen.** You probably won't get much in the way of results from blogging until you know what and how to write. The best way to do that, and by the way something I've done and continue to do daily, is read lots of blogs. Follow lots of people who point out interesting reads, listen using RSS and bookmarking sites like Delicious, and read every question your prospects and customers voice. Use an RSS reader such as Google Reader to make it very easy to listen to lots of content and then get a little notebook and carry it with you at all times so you can jot down every question customers and prospects ask.
- 2) Write what people search.** If you're one of those folks who has resisted blogging because you don't think anyone would read your blog, don't worry; they probably won't. Most blogs aren't read like a magazine, or like you might view it. They are found. In other words, post the answers to the questions, problems, and challenges that you know your market is asking and seeking and your blog content will become the single greatest online lead generation tool in your mix. Discover the exact phrases people in your market are using when they search and write valuable content around that and people will find your blog before they know your competitors exist.
- 3) Ask for participation.** Blogging is one of the first ways to build an engaged community. People talk about building community on Twitter and other social sites, but few things can compare to the engagement that can surround healthy debates, reader-generated content, and suggestions in blog comments. Write your blog posts in ways that invite people to comment. Ask for their ideas, and even ask them to give their opinions. Often, some of my points are amplified and made better through the comment stream that can surround them. Over time, you will build community participation and you may find that blogging is more fun when it becomes a conversation.
- 4) Engage your comment community.** When people take the time to offer thoughtful comments you should take the time to respond when appropriate. If a debate is in order, it's OK to start one. Visit the sites of your comment community and engage in their writing. Link to their content in your blog posts and on Twitter. You might also find that using comment enhancing plug-ins such as [Disqus](#), the commenting system I use, or [Top Commentators](#), which shows a list of the people who comment the most, can make your comment community more active.
- 5) Amplify your message.** One obvious way to get more exposure for your blog is to post links to Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn with each new post. As long as that's not all you do, this can be an effective traffic strategy. Another great way to amplify and broaden the exposure for your blog is to guest blog. Many, sometimes high traffic, blogs welcome well-written content from guests. Look for blogs that should have your same type of reader and offer samples of your writing. Be sure that your posts will receive a byline and link back to your blog and then also promote the heck out your guest appearance.

My blog must-have plug-in list



- [Add to Any](#): a tool that makes it very easy for people to subscribe to your blog.
- [Disqus](#): interactive commenting system.
- [Twittertools](#): automatically adds your new blog posts to Twitter.
- [Google Sitemaps Generator](#): creates a sitemap of your blog in XML format and pings search engines.
- [Akismet](#): helps fight comment spam.
- [Related Entries](#): creates a list of blog posts related to your current one and inserts the list into your post.
- [All in One SEO](#): adds features that allow you to make each blog post even more SEO friendly.

How to get more blog comments

One of the best reasons to blog is to open up an interaction channel with your customers, prospects, and contacts. The fact that your readers can comment and add relevant content to your site via blog comments is a major breakthrough in the communication process. It's why everyone is talking about social media these days. Blog commenting was one of the first mass, one-to-one conversation starters, and made people hungry for even more advanced forms of social interaction.

Active commenting is one of the first signs that a blog has some real life—with it comes more readers, so put in the work it takes to grow this important tool.

Small business owners can easily take advantage of this tool now that so many people know what it is and know how to interact, but...you can do a few things to stimulate this interaction and draw more conversation.

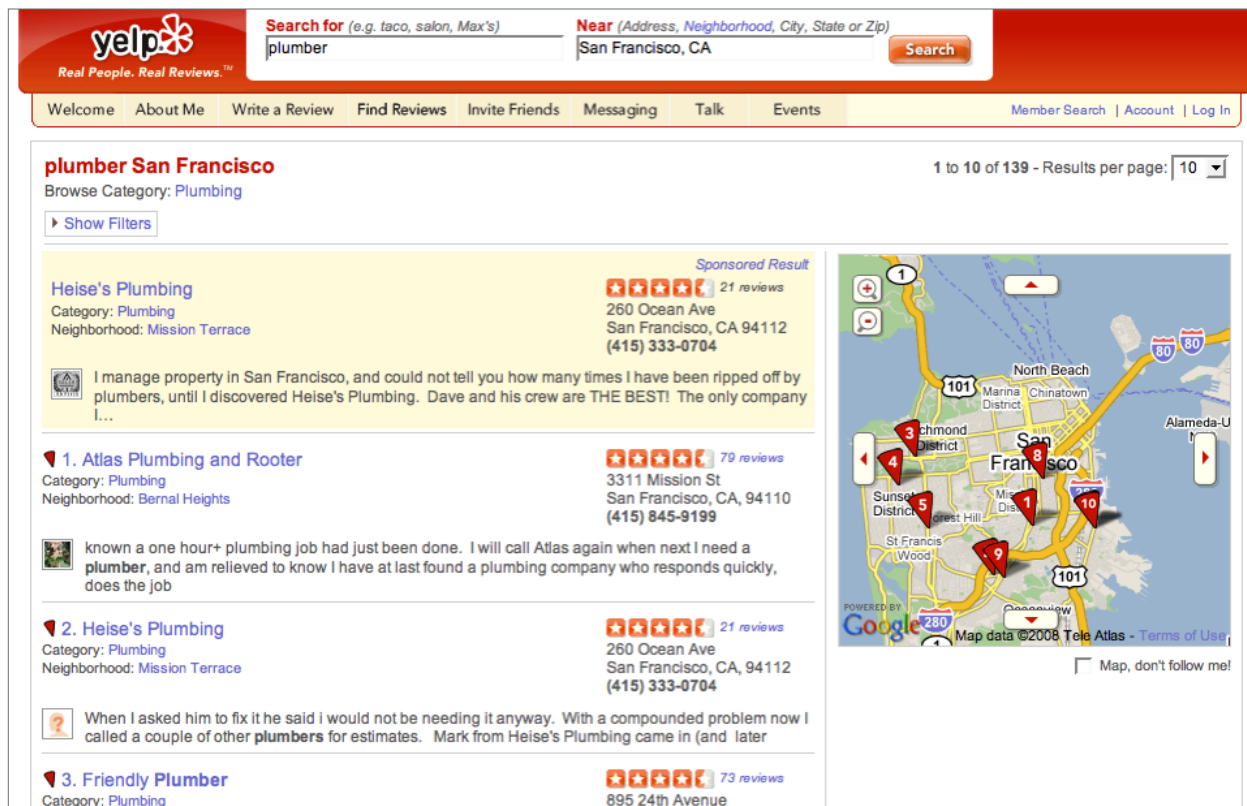
- 1) Ask for comments.** Sometimes just creating a post and inviting your readers to add comments can be just what you need to get them flowing. Commenting is a habit that you need to help build in your readership.
- 2) Ask questions and seek opinions.** From time to time, ask your readers what they think of something or what they have done that works or how they have addressed a particularly challenging situation. You don't need to have all the answers.
- 3) Comment on comments.** When readers comment, you can encourage additional conversation by responding and showing that comments are welcome, even if the comment calls something you said into question. I'm guilty of ignoring this far too often. I'll get better, I swear!

- 4) **Show some humanness.** No matter what your blog topic is, readers like to know that the author is a human being. It's OK to let that show and to add personal thoughts. Only you can determine how far to go with this, but I know that your readers will connect the more they know your story
- 5) **Stir the pot from time to time.** You don't have to be a celebrity gossip blogger to stir up a little controversy. Often some of my best interactions come from topics that people are decidedly passionate about.
- 6) **Make comment participation a game.** Keep score and reward your most active commentators. I have installed the WP Top Commentators plug-in that keeps track of how many comments a particular reader makes and rewards them with a link. You can see it in the left sidebar.
- 7) **Make sure commenting is easy.** Publish your comment feed and consider adding a Subscribe to Comments plug-in so that people get a notice when someone else comments on a post they are active on.

Social search

One of my favorite small-business search topics is something called “social search.” A social search engine is one that lists small businesses and allows people to rate and review them.

I guess we can call these types of sites “directories,” but what is clear from the discussion is that people aren’t really looking for directories; they are looking for answers, recommendations, and user experiences. Social sites ask members and visitors to rate their experience, good and bad, with a business and post that information for others to view. Depending upon who you listen to, actual purchases made over the Web only make up about 3% of all commerce, but buying decisions are made every day through research on the Web.



The screenshot shows a Yelp search results page for "plumber San Francisco". The search bar at the top contains "plumber" and "San Francisco, CA". The page displays a list of search results, including a sponsored result for Heise's Plumbing and three organic results: Atlas Plumbing and Rooter, Heise's Plumbing, and Friendly Plumber. Each result includes a star rating, number of reviews, address, phone number, and a short review snippet. A map on the right side of the page shows the locations of these businesses in San Francisco, with red pins and numbered markers (1-10) indicating their positions relative to major landmarks and highways.

plumber San Francisco 1 to 10 of 139 - Results per page: 10

Browse Category: Plumbing

Show Filters

Sponsored Result

Heise's Plumbing
Category: Plumbing
Neighborhood: Mission Terrace
260 Ocean Ave
San Francisco, CA 94112
(415) 333-0704
21 reviews

I manage property in San Francisco, and could not tell you how many times I have been ripped off by plumbers, until I discovered Heise's Plumbing. Dave and his crew are THE BEST! The only company I...

1. Atlas Plumbing and Rooter
Category: Plumbing
Neighborhood: Bernal Heights
3311 Mission St
San Francisco, CA, 94110
(415) 845-9199
79 reviews

known a one hour+ plumbing job had just been done. I will call Atlas again when next I need a plumber, and am relieved to know I have at last found a plumbing company who responds quickly, does the job

2. Heise's Plumbing
Category: Plumbing
Neighborhood: Mission Terrace
260 Ocean Ave
San Francisco, CA, 94112
(415) 333-0704
21 reviews

When I asked him to fix it he said I would not be needing it anyway. With a compounded problem now I called a couple of other plumbers for estimates. Mark from Heise's Plumbing came in (and later

3. Friendly Plumber
Category: Plumbing
895 24th Avenue
73 reviews

Prospects are turning to sites such as Insider Pages to find sources for everything from plumbers to piano tuners in almost every community in America. Highly rated small businesses appearing on social sites are starting to get noticed! This is a great new medium. There is no cost involved and the benefits far outweigh the little bit of work you may put in to start building your online reputation. Smart small businesses are starting to encourage online reviews. (Merely point out to your happy customers that they might want to share the love.) Other businesses are printing and using their online reviews offline. Businesses with the most ratings and reviews seem to do the best. Coupons and offers are a great way to get noticed too!

You need to start exploring this avenue now, if for no other reason than to manage your online reputation. Some businesses fear the impact of a negative review. I mean, you can't make every

customer happy, right? Most of the social directories have processes in place to fight spam and competitive revenge type reviews, but nothing works like a good offense. Make sure you are building reviews from happy clients. Send offline customers online and teach them how to use a site such as Judy's Book.

Some of the more popular social/local directories include:

- [Craigslist](#)
- [Judy's Book](#)
- [Insider Pages](#)
- [Smalltown.com](#)
- [Yelp](#)

My advice: Get proactive with social search

- 1) Make sure you are listed on the major social media sites and that your profile and business information is up to date and as accurate as possible.
- 2) Make note of the URL for your listings and start promoting these sites and stimulating positive reviews from some of your most loyal customers to get the ball rolling in your favor. (Some of the review sites appear to list businesses with more reviews above others when people do local searches.)
- 3) Start publishing your positive reviews in other forms of communication (maybe a T-shirt!). These testimonials can add to your marketing message and act as subtle reminders to other happy customers that they might want to post reviews as well.
- 4) Add a few reviews of your favorite local businesses, particularly those you may have strategic relationships with.

Social networks

Facebook

Facebook for business

[Facebook](#) has become the most widely recognized name in social networks. Social networks allow people to join, and “friend” members or invite others to join and then share and exchange information.

The tools that run social networks have some tremendous business applications when you understand what’s behind them.

Networking has always been an important marketing skill and online networking bares some similarities with a set of power tools. A lot has been publicized about social networks used by teens and dating services, but it’s the application of the tools that you need to focus on to understand the business value of participating in a network such as Facebook.

3 ways for businesses to get a return from Facebook

Facebook continues to grow in popularity with small businesses to the point where it’s no longer a matter of “if” you should be utilizing this platform as “how.” It’s really no surprise to me that Facebook is generally deemed more useful for the small business than other social media tools, such as Twitter. The Facebook platform and applications are such that a business could feasibly build its entire Web presence there—particularly now that Fan pages can be viewed publicly by non-Facebook users.

So, the question I want to dive into today is this: What’s the best way to approach Facebook for your business?

Of course, I’m not entirely sure there’s one correct answer, so I’ll outline three approaches that might make sense.

1) Facebook business account only

Business accounts are designed for individuals who only want to use the site to administer pages and their ad campaigns. A Facebook business account allows you to build a simple business presence by creating public business pages, but you have limited access to the profiles of people who interact with or “fan” your page, as well as little access to other features on the site. (Note: If you already have a personal profile account, this option is not available.)

Here’s the Help Center [FAQs on business accounts](#). This can be a decent option for people who don’t want to do anything more than create a presence on Facebook. If you do not already have a Facebook personal profile you simply [create a page or ad here](#). Once you create a Facebook page via business account you will always have the opportunity to convert it and create a personal profile.

2) Personal profile for personal use, and business fan page for business use

Some people created a personal profile because they realized what a great tool Facebook

is for keeping up with college and high school friends or sharing details about life with family and friends. When these same folks started realizing what a nice tool Facebook is for business, they faced the issue of mixing too much personal with business and vice versa.

For these folks, the addition of a Facebook Fan Page is the most obvious solution. The fan page allows you to create a business only page with a great deal of functionality and settings that allow you to open your page up to the world far beyond your current Facebook friends. In addition, your updates and posts on your fan page spread to the wall of all those who become a fan on your page making your business presence even greater.

Of course, the way Facebook is set up there is still a very close relationship between your personal profile and the fan pages you administer. In this case, privacy settings on your personal profile probably become very important. You can visit your [Facebook Profile Privacy Settings](#) to make updates.

Consider these privacy tips for business use:

- a) Use the “Friend List” feature.** This feature allows you to make lists to group people based on how or why you know them—family in one group, business contacts in another, cooking club in another, etc. The main reason this is so important is that you can issue different privacy settings per list and therefore be very selective about, for instance, what your business-related contact might see.
- b) Turn off photo tagging.** An often-used feature on Facebook is to tag photos with the people in them. If you don’t want all your business contacts to see you kicking back with a few beers, than make sure photo tagging is limited in your privacy settings.
- c) Protect your photos.** Change the settings on your photo privacy (a separate page) so that your darling two-year-old’s birthday pics are kept in the family—unless of course you want to share them with business contacts.
- d) Don’t share who your friends are.** Even before someone becomes a friend they can, by default, see who you are friends with, just without any details. You don’t have to make this information public and there might be some good reasons in this case not to. You can change your profile setting called “Friends” to show select groups of none at all.
- e) Choose who can see contact info.** Many people put personal contact details in their personal profile, and as your business use increases and your start approving people you don’t know, you may not want them to have your personal email address and mobile number.
- f) Control your wall settings.** It’s a good idea to control who can view posts to your personal wall. If you allow your good friends to add comments, photos, and updates, you may not want the business contacts to view this—change who can see wall posts from friends using the lists you build by visiting your profile settings page. You can also control who can post to your wall page, but this shouldn’t be a big issue if you control who can see posts. Of course, you can also ban individuals from posting.

3) Personal profile for business and Fan Page for business

When I started using Facebook, my intent was strictly for business. (To my knowledge there are no pictures of me in hula skirts on my personal profile.) When fan pages came along it became clear that this was also a great business tool, so I added that as well.

I think this approach of all business is a fine way to take advantage of all that Facebook offers to those who choose to use this platform.

My personal profile is open and public and I welcome friend requests from people who see this as a business page. I don't reach out to family members and don't have friend requests sitting in my daughters' inboxes. I business-stream content into my personal page, including my Twitter, FriendFeed, and blog posts. These streams create a fair amount of interaction with friends, which I try to participate in.

I use the fan page to create additional awareness, answer questions, post video, and publish events, including audio and video archives from those events.

Here's the link to my [Personal Profile](#) and here's the link to the [Duct Tape Marketing Fan Page](#) (consider becoming a fan!).

The interaction and crossover of friends versus fans is likely pretty high, although I've never tried to gauge it. This all-business approach allows me to continue to participate and build a stronger Facebook foundation as this platform continues to evolve.

Intro to the personal profile

Your profile is the starting point for Facebook. Think of it as your front door. It's very important that your front door on Facebook be in sync with the front door of your brand. Just because you can put all kinds of cute things on your Facebook profile, you still must ask yourself what makes sense in terms of your business and your business objectives. It's common sense really, but it's easy to take your eye off the ball with all the toys and applications available once you learn how to navigate Facebook.

Create a profile that helps tell your business story and then enhance it with tools and applications that allow you to branch out and connect with like-minded individuals.

The image shows a screenshot of the Facebook website's login and sign-up interface. On the left, there is a login form with fields for 'Email:' (containing 'john@ducttapemarketir') and 'Password:', a 'Remember me' checkbox, a 'Login' button, and a 'Forgot Password?' link. The main content area features the Facebook logo, the tagline 'Facebook is a social utility that connects you with the people around you.', and a section titled 'Use Facebook to...' with four icons and text: 'Keep up with friends and family', 'Share photos and videos', 'Control privacy online', and 'Reconnect with old classmates'. Below this is a 'Find your Friends on Facebook' section with a search box and a 'Use the Friend Finder' link. On the right, there is a 'Sign up for Facebook' form with the text 'It's free and anyone can join.' and fields for 'Full Name:', 'Your Email:', 'New Password:', 'I am:' (with a 'Select Sex:' dropdown), and 'Birthday:' (with 'Month:', 'Day:', and 'Year:' dropdowns). A 'Sign Up' button is at the bottom of the form, with a small disclaimer below it: 'By clicking Sign Up, you are indicating that you have read and agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy.'

Friends

Friends in the world of Facebook are simply people who are also members who grant you permission to view their profile and contact them directly. This is really at the heart of the networking aspect of Facebook. Without any friends, your Facebook efforts won't be as useful.

The first step is to connect with people who already know you and then you can start to connect with friends of friends and other recognized thought leaders in your industry.

Don't forget to send friend requests to journalists in your industry as well.

Once someone accepts a friend request you can begin to share information with them and view the information they make available. A word of warning here: The Facebook culture, as is the case in many social network environments, frowns on direct promotion. The connections you make should be much more about networking and building trust.

Creating your Facebook Fan Page

Anyone with a Facebook profile has the ability to add something called a Fan Page to extend some content beyond the profile page. Creating a Facebook Fan Page has become a very smart practice for business owners as it allows you to create a flexible business outpost on Facebook.

Fans and non-fans alike can view and join the conversation by commenting on activity and creating activity on your page's wall. I believe this level of engagement gives pages much more dynamic community-building functionality and helps your fan page behave much like the rest of Facebook.

Facebook, in general, has taken on a Twitter-like feel to the status update. But, the new status update being added to fan pages gives businesses the ability to put updated content out and on to the profile pages of fans. This alone should get your attention. If used properly this should give businesses the ability to more effectively, yet still gently, promote within Facebook.



Custom tabs mean custom landing pages

Another significant feature is the tabbed interface that can be lined up to focus attention on important elements of your page. You can create tabs for things like videos, photos, discussion, and events. By doing so you can build out subpages with a specific focus. These tabs use common Facebook applications, such as Events, to drive the page content and are simple to set up and edit. Each tab has a unique URL giving you the ability to promote particular events or photos as well as create some custom landing page functionality.

Tricking out Boxes with FBML app

A default tab called Boxes holds lots of potential for businesses as well. Think of a box page as a free-form scratch pad. You can add up to 10 of what Facebook calls FBML elements (you must add the Facebook Static FBML application to your apps to edit these). FBML is Facebook's mark-up language but these elements will take any HTML as well. So you have the ability to add newsletter sign-up forms, eBook downloads, and other HTML-based elements. (You can add any of the default elements such as video or discussions as well.)

Once you create the elements you can slide them around the page to get them to display as you like. Here's a quick example [Facebook Fan Page with Boxes](#).

Note: If you clicked on the example link I just gave you, it took you directly to the tab page I wanted you to go to. So, in effect, you can create and promote custom landing pages inside of your Facebook Fan Page and promote them as entry points. Great place to offer non-fans a reason to become a fan. (Tech note: You can edit the Boxes page by dragging the elements around, but you must go to the wall page and hit Edit in the page to edit an individual FBML element.)

Facebook applications for business professionals

- [Telephone](#): With Telephone you can call, send, and receive voice messages through Facebook, just like having voice mail on your phone. All you need is the application and a microphone and you can start sending messages to your friends.
- [CircleUp](#): This is a lightweight collaboration app for groups and events. This tool facilitates some of the communication needed to promote your group activity and events on Facebook and elsewhere. This is particularly useful if you've created and maintain your own group on Facebook or often promote teleseminars and workshops.
- [Free Conference Calls](#): Use Free Conference Calls to organize a business meeting on the fly. With a free conference call, you can call in from anywhere; your home, mobile, Skype, or any VoIP service. Using this app inside of Facebook can help make some immediate connections a little deeper.
- [Facebook Video](#): Facebook Video provides a high-quality video platform for people and pages on Facebook. With Video, you can upload video files, send video from your mobile phone, and record video messages to your friends. This application is so easy to use that it makes sending video introductions or messages a powerful way to network on Facebook.

- [Testimonials](#): Use Testimonials to gather your personal and professional references in one place. Encouraging customers and contacts to post testimonials about your work and expertise adds great marketing content to your profile.
- [Introductions](#): Introduce your friends to each other and make new ones. Ask for an introduction to a Web programmer or good lawyer. Then make introductions for your friends. This application speeds the process of effective networking by helping focus on giving and receiving introductions in a systematic way.
- [Business Cards](#): Business Cards helps you network better on Facebook. Personalize your card and attach it to your Facebook messages! View postings and network with others! This application is much like the signature common in email messages. It's just one more way to say business when using Facebook.
- [My LinkedIn Profile](#): Makes it easy to promote your LinkedIn account with a badge on your Facebook profile. Cross-promoting social network activity is a great way to extend your reach.
- [What I Do](#): Allows you to promote your services/products to your Facebook network. Display your skills/wares on your profile box and list yourself in a business directory. Recommend your colleagues services and products too.

Using Facebook's Twitter-like tagging feature

Tagging or bookmarking websites, images, and people is a tactic that is somewhat synonymous with social media. When you send an @reply through Twitter you are effectively tagging that person and linking to them in your tweet. It's an effective tool on Twitter and allows the Twittersverse to see your link to that person as well. An effective way to draw some attention to your Facebook activity is to tag people in your images. The act of tagging puts it on their wall, your wall, and sends a notice to the person being tagged. Some folks use this very effectively as an awareness activity. Hint: take pictures with well-known folks you meet at conferences and then upload and tag them and you might draw some attention from the wall of your taggee.



Facebook has added tagging in a way that I believe will be very useful for business purposes. When you update your status on your personal page, business page, or on any business page where you share information, you can tag any of your followers in your update and it will automatically create a link to your follower's page, publish the status update to that person's wall, and send them a notice that they were tagged. Do you see how that might be useful?

A couple rules: The folks you tag must be following you and a tagged person has the option to delete the tag. Try this out, but don't overdo it!



The way you invoke the tag is where the Twitter-like comparisons really come into play. You start typing your status update and then add the "@" and the Facebook system will drop down a list of possible people to tag as you start typing that person's name. The @ sign does not appear in the update like on Twitter but it signals Facebook that you are trying to use the tagging feature.

Using Facebook ads for content awareness

Ads on Facebook have been around for a while now and based on reviews coming out from some users, results using Facebook ads are mixed. I personally find them to be an effective and intriguing option for many small businesses.

Here's why



You have a very large universe on Facebook, but you can target your ad to be shown based on the location, sex, age, education, and keyword interests of the Facebook user, making this a potentially narrow ad buy, particularly for the local business. If you want to show your ad to business type folks only in Denver, Colorado, so be it.

Some detractors claim that Facebook ads don't convert to sales, but I would suggest that is the wrong way to think about it and to use this tool. Think of your Facebook ads, or ads in any social media space, as content that is intended to create further awareness about more content. See, Facebook ads don't have to link out to your sales page, they can be associated with content right there on Facebook. For instance, if you use the events application to promote an event you are hosting, such as a webinar, you can associate ads with that event and drive targeted people to find out about or even directly RSVP to your event on Facebook. The same is true for the video application. Use Facebook ads to drive people to a video on Facebook that gives great content and invites them to learn more at your primary Web hub.

You can also tightly integrate your ad campaigns with the largely revamped fan or business pages options to create outposts for your fan pages and invite narrowly defined target audiences to become a fan on Facebook.

When you use these internal ad plays, your ads, complete with social features, become more like tiny bites of content instead of sales pitches and help prospective customers get to know, like, and trust you a bit more before you ever ask for business.

Facebook allows you to buy your ads on a cost-per-click or cost-per-thousand impressions basis and provides decent real-time reporting so you can adjust your ads as needed.

If you already have a Facebook profile and/or fan page you can start running ads today from the [Facebook Ads page](#).

5 tips for getting more from Facebook

- 1) Fan page.** Facebook had personal profiles and groups from the start, but a few months ago they added to the function called fan pages and made them more business friendly. Any business on Facebook should create a fan page for their business and start optimizing additional content there. The cool thing about fan pages is that it's now a lot like having another website. You can add applications, newsletter sign-up pages, and events, and promote them to your friends on Facebook. When someone becomes a fan of your page, your updates on the page show up on their wall giving additional exposure.
- 2) Custom HTML.** This one's a little more technical but when you create a fan page you will see that your page comes with tabs for various categories of content you create (each tab has its own URL so you can promote each section on your fan page around the Web). Using the Facebook Mark-up Language (FBML), you can create custom boxes of HTML content, like newsletter sign-up pages, blog RSS feeds, and white paper downloads just like you might on your website. [FBML is a Facebook application you can get here](#). I've also done a quick little video showing you how to add [FBML custom HTML here](#).
- 3) Special content.** Give your Facebook fans a little something extra they might not find on your blog or website. Upload images from your PowerPoint presentations, articles from the local publication you contribute to, or on-the-fly videos created using the Facebook video application. You're bound to find some crossover from other social networks like Twitter, so give the Facebook users something unique. I know some people caution about reposting Twitter here, but I think it's perfectly fine. I get lots of comments from people who just happen to like to use Facebook more than Twitter and this way they still get updates.
- 4) Events, videos, and apps.** Use the heck out of all of the Facebook applications. Promote events, upload or record video, hold contests and polls. All of this extra engagement is so easy to do using pre-built tools. And don't forget to integrate your Facebook activity back to your website and blog using a Facebook Fan Box—I wrote about the [Facebook FanBox tool here](#).
- 5) Ads for awareness.** I think that Facebook has built one of the better ad targeting tools going. You can target ads to Facebook members on all kinds of criteria and run pretty low cost campaigns. The trick though is to run campaigns that are compelling and promote your Facebook Fan Page instead of trying to sell something. Promote your white paper, events, and educational content—create awareness about your great content and you will get the chance to earn the trust it takes to actually sell something to someone. Here's where you go to find more info about [Facebook ads](#).

LinkedIn

LinkedIn for connecting

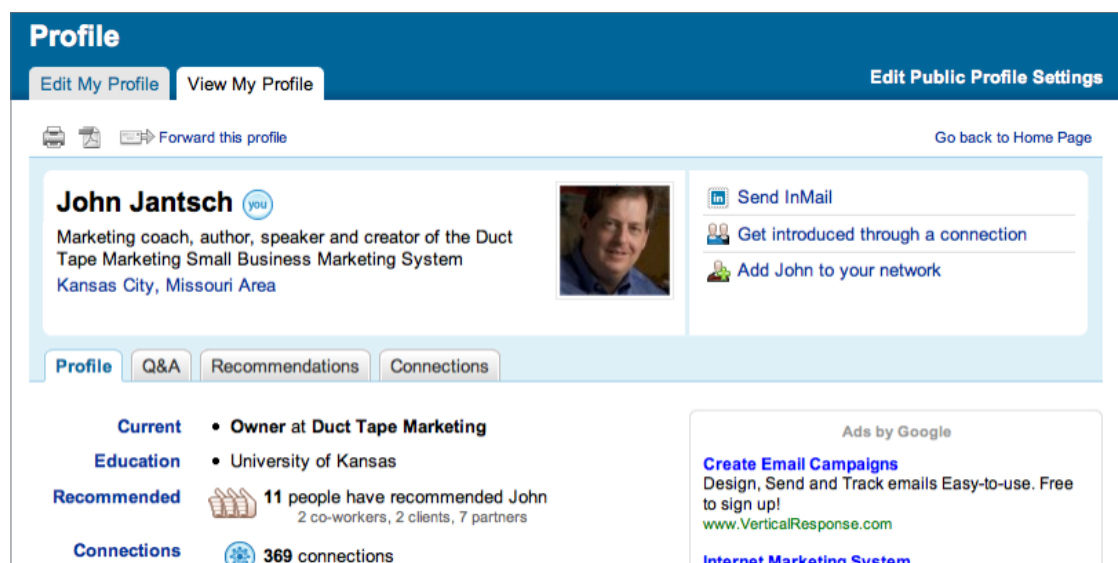
[LinkedIn](#) is often billed as the largest network of business professionals. It certainly has a much more focused business participation than many social networks and is a great place to network and do research on specific organizations and opportunities.

Probably the biggest difference between Facebook and LinkedIn is the focus on introductions. Ingrained in the LinkedIn culture is the ability to see who knows whom and who can make an introduction.

As is the case with any social network, it's important that you take a little time and get to know the culture and the accepted norms. This is often done by lurking a bit. Use the time to build your profile and your network of current friends so you can see firsthand some examples of how people connect and reach out on your chosen network. From there you can begin to contribute and seek out connections with demonstrated leaders within the network.

For the business professional there are some pretty good reasons to make LinkedIn a part of your overall social media outreach:

- 1) Find clients, help, and deals.** For some industries LinkedIn is a great place to locate prospects and network partners. Many individuals openly promote relationships and deals that they are in the market for.
- 2) Build up buzz.** Once you've established a following within LinkedIn you can begin to promote specific happenings around your organization.



The image shows a screenshot of a LinkedIn profile for John Jantsch. The profile header includes the name "John Jantsch" with a "you" badge, a profile picture, and a description: "Marketing coach, author, speaker and creator of the Duct Tape Marketing Small Business Marketing System Kansas City, Missouri Area". Navigation buttons include "Edit My Profile", "View My Profile", and "Edit Public Profile Settings". Below the header, there are tabs for "Profile", "Q&A", "Recommendations", and "Connections". The "Current" section lists "Owner at Duct Tape Marketing" and "University of Kansas". The "Recommended" section shows "11 people have recommended John" with subtext "2 co-workers, 2 clients, 7 partners". The "Connections" section shows "369 connections". On the right side, there are buttons for "Send InMail", "Get introduced through a connection", and "Add John to your network". An advertisement for "Create Email Campaigns" is visible at the bottom right.

- 3) Hire professionals.** Often people think of social networking only in terms of making marketing connections. LinkedIn has become a great place to network and find great associates, partners, and vendors.
- 4) Get feedback and research.** One of the most effective ways to tap your newly built social networks is to use them as a resource for research and feedback. Simply putting questions out to your group is a great way to get a feel for areas where you want input.

5 tips for getting more from LinkedIn

A pretty common question these days is: “Which social network is the best?” And to that I usually say, “The one that helps you meet your marketing objectives.” And in that regard, many are great, but for different reasons.

LinkedIn: I really like some things about LinkedIn. It has always tended toward the service-oriented professional, in my opinion, but it has plenty to like in the brand asset optimization world that all businesses live in as well. My advice for most business owners is to find a social network or platform that seems most suited to your business objectives and dive in pretty deep, focusing more casual attention on the others, at least initially. Going hard and deep into one network, like LinkedIn, is the only way to gain the momentum delivered by consistent work and engagement.

So, when it comes to LinkedIn, here are five tips to get more:

1) Your profile

This is a great brand asset so don't waste it. Make it informative and optimized for search.

- **Add a photo:** Nothing says nobody's home faster than the default icon.
- **Get the branded URL:** Something like this is what you want <http://www.linkedin.com/in/ducttapemarketing>—it's something you pick during editing.
- **Use links with Anchor text:** Link to your blog, products, workshops, etc., through the “other” tab and you can add anchor text for the link.
- **Be descriptive:** Use the “Summary” to tell your story in a compelling way and add lots of keywords in the “specialty” section.
- **Keep it active:** LinkedIn has a status update feature, much like Facebook and Twitter, that you should update routinely.
- **Link to it:** Put links to your profile in your email signature and other online pages. Optimization is a two-way street.

A screenshot of a LinkedIn profile's 'Websites' section. The word 'Websites' is in bold black text. To its right, there are three blue bullet points, each followed by a link: 'Small Business Marketing Blog', 'Small Business Workshops', and 'Small Business Marketing Tools'.

Websites

- [Small Business Marketing Blog](#)
- [Small Business Workshops](#)
- [Small Business Marketing Tools](#)

The image above shows the links on my profile with carefully selected anchor text that links to pages on my site. LinkedIn is one of the few social profiles sites that allows this.

2) Give to get

When people view profiles one of the top features is something called recommendations. While these may feel a little fluffy when you read them, lack of them can be a competitive issue. You should acquire some recommendations and I find the best way to get them is to give them. Choose people in your network that you've worked with and write an honest statement of recommendation. Don't be surprised if you receive some in return.

3) Show what you've got

An overlooked feature on LinkedIn, in my opinion, is the Question and Answer function. By jumping in and answering questions thoughtfully you can demonstrate a given expertise while potentially engaging contacts that are drawn to your knowledge. The key phrase is thoughtfully answering. LinkedIn even has a rating system to reward people who give the best answers with some added exposure.

The flip side of this tip is to ask thoughtful questions. This can be a great way to get useful information, but it's equally powerful as a tool to create conversations, discussion, and engagement with like-minded connections.

4) Lead a group

Anyone can launch a group on LinkedIn and lead discussions and networking on a specific topic of interest. If you take this tip to heart and put some effort into a niche group you can gain added influence with your network, but groups are also open to the LinkedIn universe as a whole and some folks find that this is one of the strongest ways to build their network. Building a group around an established brand is also a great way to bring users or customers together.

5) Repurpose content

Since members of your network, and those of the larger LinkedIn community, may only experience your brand on the LinkedIn platform, it's a great idea to enhance your profile with educational information. This is best done using some of the third-party applications that LinkedIn has collected for this purpose.

- [Blog Link](#): displays your latest blog posts on your profile
- [Box.net](#): allows you to create links to files such as resumes and marketing kits
- [SlideShare](#): embeds slideshow presentations and demos
- [Company Buzz](#): scrapes Twitter for mentions of your brand or other topics you assign

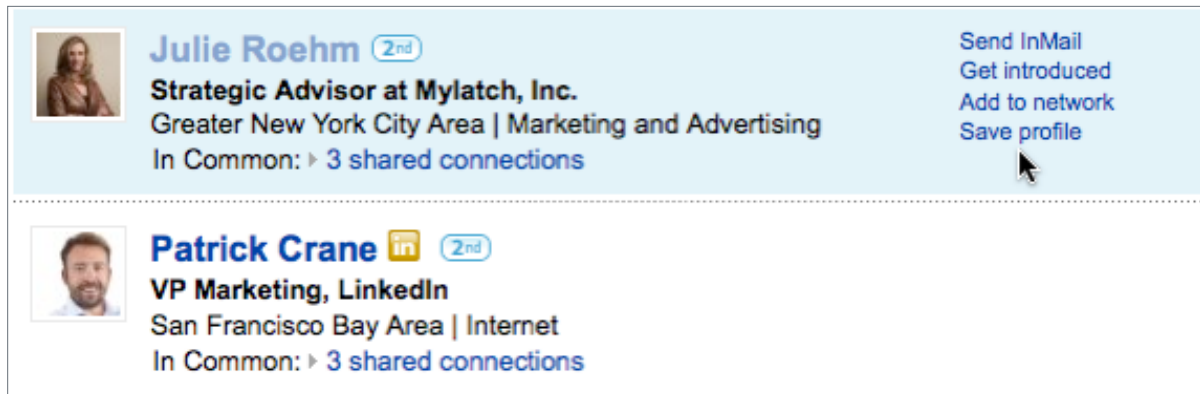
Premium feature makes LinkedIn more like a CRM tool

LinkedIn has an upgraded feature that makes it a much more powerful small business prospecting and relationship tool, in my book.

When prospecting on LinkedIn in the past you could type in a keyword or specific company search and locate people you might want to reach out to. For many folks this is the greatest benefit of LinkedIn participation. The tough thing was you had to look at the details of each profile you might find and make a decision about contacting them right then as there wasn't a convenient way to save or group your chosen profiles for future use.

LinkedIn added a tool in the paid version that allows you to create searches and then save the profiles that look interesting to folders in what it's calling your Profile Organizer. So, let's say you are scouting out journalists at a certain publication. You can do a search, set up a folder, and save all the profiles you like in that folder for later contact. LinkedIn also added a "note" feature so you can jot something of interest to yourself or even something that was said when you contacted

them last. I think this feature makes the paid version worth a look. Of course, they've also made it free for 30 days. You activate the free trial by simply using the save profile feature.



Search on the term marketing—hover over a profile and save it to your marketing folder (click image to enlarge).

In profile organizer you can make notes on any saved profile (click image to enlarge).

The Profile Organizer shows up as a workspace under the contact tab and once active you'll see "save profile" as an option any time you are looking at an individual or group of profiles.

The thing I like most is that this allows you to work in LinkedIn any time you have 10 minutes and makes that 10 minutes much more efficient. For me, researching and contacting are two very different activities and take different frames of mind when doing them. I like that fact that I can organize all the profiles as I feel like it and then come back and do laser-focused reaching out when I'm in that mood. The note-taking field is what makes this CRM like to me. (Note: You don't have to be connected to someone to save and note their profile either.)

Twitter

Using Twitter for business

Maybe you're sick of hearing about [Twitter](#). But there's no denying it's become a hot business tool and with some pretty good reasons—as long as you think about how it will help you achieve your objectives!

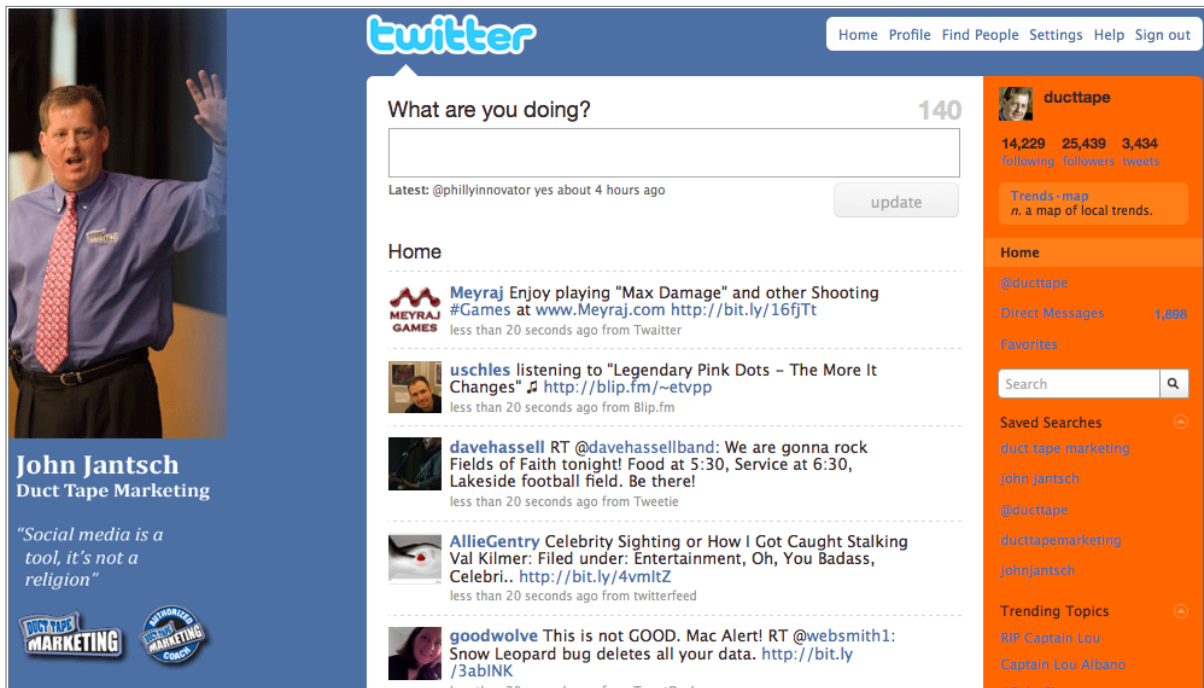
What is it?

In simplest terms, Twitter is a free service that allows anyone to say anything to anybody in 140 characters or less—it's the "what are you doing right now" kind of micro-blogging that permeates online social communication.

So, now the question is—is that all? Well, no, not exactly. While people are using it to tell no one in particular what they had for lunch, millions are leaning on Twitter pretty hard as a way to network and communicate with contacts new and old. Twitter is outfitted, like most social media tools with the ability to subscribe, share, friend, or follow as many Twitter feeds as you like. In addition, developers are swiftly creating tools that allow users to bend and twist the feeds in creative ways. More on that shortly.

How do I use it?

First thing, sign up for an account. It's very painless. See <http://Twitter.com/account/create>.



Once you create an account you will be given a home page and a profile page—i.e., my profile is <http://Twitter.com/ducttape>. So my Twitter handle is @ducttape. From these pages you can find other Twitter streams to follow, post your own messages, and even watch the entire public stream of comments flow by. (I don't recommend that unless you are really, really bored.)



It's a good idea if you are going to jump into social media sites that allow you to build profiles to create a 100 x 100 px image, or avatar as they are called, to use on your profile and often with your activity.

Why would I use it?

Now that is the real question isn't it? Many people look at Twitter on the surface and conclude that it's just one big waste of time. I can't say I disagree completely, but like all social media and marketing tactics, before you can determine if something makes sense you need to analyze your objectives. So, instead of asking why you would use it, ask how it might help you achieve some other already stated objectives.

- 1) Would you like a way to connect and network with others in your industry or others who share your views? It's a good tool for that.
- 2) Would you like a way to get instant access to what's being said, this minute, about your organization, people, products, or brand? It's a good tool for that.
- 3) Would you like a steady stream of ideas, content, links, resources, and tips focused on your area of expertise or interest? It's a good tool for that.
- 4) Would you like to monitor what's being said about your customers to help them protect their brands? It's a good tool for that.
- 5) Would you like to extend the reach of your thought leadership—blog posts and other content? It can be a good tool for that.
- 6) Would you like to promote your products and services directly to a target audience? Not such a good tool for that.

Before you really jump into a service like Twitter, it's important that you identify at least, and initially only, one objective from the list above and focus your efforts on learning how to use the tool to that end.

See this great article from Chris Brogan for more ideas: [50 Ways to Use Twitter for Business](#). Also, see "[8 Tips for Using Twitter for Your Business](#)," by Office Live Small Business Monte Enbysk.

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Some basic Twitter terminology

Tweet: When you post or write your 140 characters on Twitter and hit send it's called a tweet or tweeting.

Handle: That's your Twitter name @ducttape—balance short with descriptive and no matter what your business handle is get your personal name if you can even if you don't plan to use it right now. It's like your URL and will have value someday.



Follow: This is simply the act of adding someone to your list of people you are following—this makes their tweets show up on your home page.

Replies: This is what it is called when someone writes a tweet directly at your handle—@ducttape cool post today blah blah—this is often an invite to engage with a follower.

Retweet: This is a tactic of republishing someone else’s tweet—the original tweet along with author stays intact, but you are basically showing someone’s tweet to your followers—many people find this a great way to add content and acknowledge good stuff from the folks they follow.

DM: This is a message that is sent directly to another user. They must be following you for you to DM them, but this is a very useful tool for private messages and generally a good choice when you start going back and forth with someone on something your entire base of followers might not find interesting.

Hashtag: This is a way people categorize tweets so that others might use the same tag and effectively create a way for people to view related tweets—it will look something like #marketing—more on this in search.

Who do I follow?

In Twitter terms, following someone simply means that their posts, or tweets as they are called, show up on your home page (or text messages via mobile phone option).

To make Twitter more useful for many of the objectives above you need to follow others and begin to have others follow you. Some people take very aggressive and, often, time-consuming leaps into this and try to follow and be followed by everyone on Twitter. Again, back to the objectives, most often quality over quantity is best.



While you can upload your current contacts (a good place to start) and search for people you know on Twitter, I would suggest that you take a look at two sites that will help you locate people with focused interest.



[Twellow](#) is like a Twitter phone directory that sorts people by industry. This can be a great way to find people in your industry.

The profiles also tell you a little about each person, including how many followers they have. Sometimes following people with large followings can lead to people following you, but if your goal is networking, be realistic and find people who may also just be getting started. If your goal is to keep

tabs of what industry leaders are saying, then focus on industry leaders. The Twellow site has a link to each profile on Twitter so you can click on the link and go to a Twitter page to follow the

person you have chosen and then jump back to Twellow to keep looking. If you want to get listed on Twellow, use this link: http://www.twellow.com/user_add.php.

[Tweepsearch](#) is an option as well and focuses on searching through Twitter bios and profiles to help you locate folks that might be of interest to follow.

Another directory can be found here: <http://Twitterpacks.pbwiki.com/>. The nice thing about this directory is that you can also add your Twitter links if you aren't afraid to edit a wiki.

What do I say?

Another tough question. Whatever your answer, it needs to be 140 characters or less. So, let's go back to the objectives, shall we?

If, for instance, you want some immediate feedback on things, you may choose to pose some questions. This often stimulates conversation but it can also do a great deal in terms of helping your make a decision—a bit like a poll. I have received some great ideas for blog content and often cross-post a response or two from Twitter in a blog post.

If you want to promote an event or post or idea don't simply link to it, add a twist, ask if people have any thoughts, pose an interesting thought.

Filtering Twitter to make it make sense

One of the most important and frequently underutilized objectives for Twitter is as a way to monitor your brand and reputation. Anytime anything is being said about your company, products, people, or services you can track it and respond instantly. You can also use a set of readily available tools to track what's being said about any search term you like. This is another way to find people with shared interests.



[Twitter Search](#): This little tool allows you to monitor anything you can search. I use it to see what's being said back to me @ducttape and then do searches like "duct tape marketing" or "john jantsch"—now for some this may feel a little vain, but this is a great way to stay in touch and even network with folks who have an interest in your products and services.

Some large organizations such as Dell use Twitter very effectively to communicate with customers—happy and sad alike. This has become a major customer communication tool for them because they can respond immediately.

Lastly, Twitter search allows you to create RSS feeds from your searches so you can have them sent directly to your RSS reader or you can republish a stream of content on your website or blog and add the collective Twittersverse to your content creation.

Mining Twitter for leads

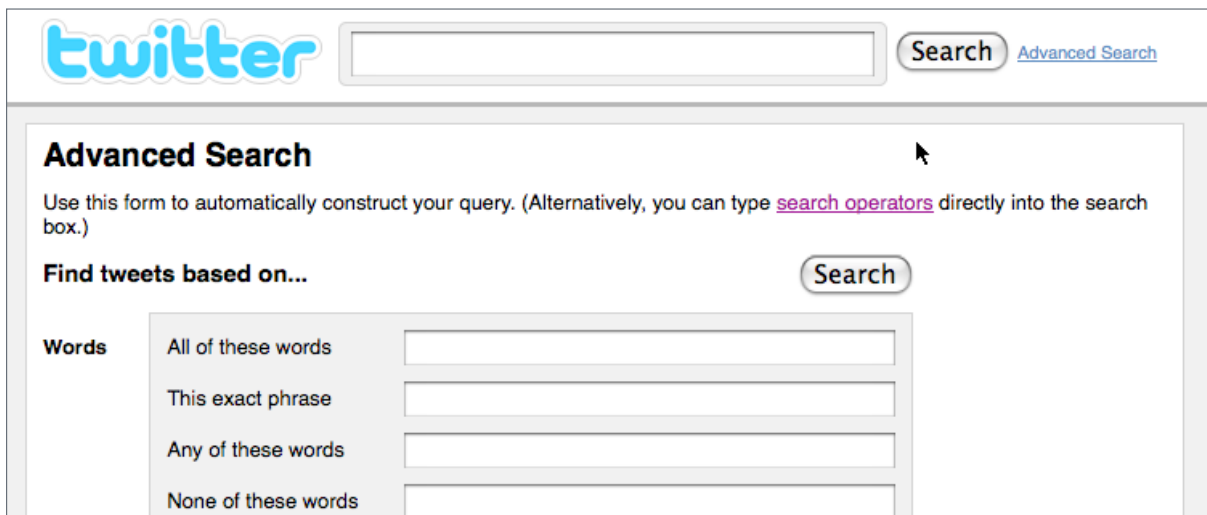
Getting leads and business by participating on sites like Twitter is a very intriguing notion. Now I'm not talking about barging in and hocking your wares to anyone with an @—you wouldn't do that in an offline setting, say at a cocktail party, would you? But, think of that same cocktail party, you're having a chat with someone who is going on about how they can't get good help to staff their business, and you just happen to have the answer for them. You might suggest a great solution and *voila*, land a nice piece of business.

Well, that virtual cocktail party is going on all day long on Twitter. The problem is, it's a bit like a party held in the Rose Bowl, if somebody in section 101 needs what you do, but you're in section 334, you'll never meet each other.

This is where some powerful Twitter and third-party tools can come to help you make sense of it all.

[Meet Twitter Advanced Search](#)—the basic Twitter search function is a great time-saving filter and allows you to set up searches on your name, company name, brands, competitors, all the basic stuff, so you can monitor your business and reputation and even know when people are replying to your tweets.

Advanced search, however, is where the real data mining comes to life.



The image shows a screenshot of the Twitter Advanced Search interface. At the top left is the Twitter logo. To its right is a search input field with a "Search" button and a link to "Advanced Search". Below this is the "Advanced Search" section, which includes a heading "Advanced Search" and a mouse cursor. Underneath is a sub-heading "Find tweets based on..." with a "Search" button. The main content area is titled "Words" and contains four radio button options, each with a corresponding text input field: "All of these words", "This exact phrase", "Any of these words", and "None of these words".

Advanced search allows you to filter everything that's being said for your keyword phases in your town, for example. Think that might be useful? Let's say you are a network server specialist in Tucson, Arizona. If you set up an advanced search for people in Tucson, Arizona, complaining about their server, and you got those complaints in real time, could you develop some hot leads? [Here's the search for that.](#)

Creating advanced searches around topics that would identify someone as a hot lead is really pretty easy using the form on the advanced search page. Or, you can use a host of [operators](#) in the basic search page to create some interesting searches. For example, want to know if anyone in Detroit is asking about marketing—your search would look like this: [near:Detroit within:50mi marketing?](#) Note the question mark after the word “marketing.”

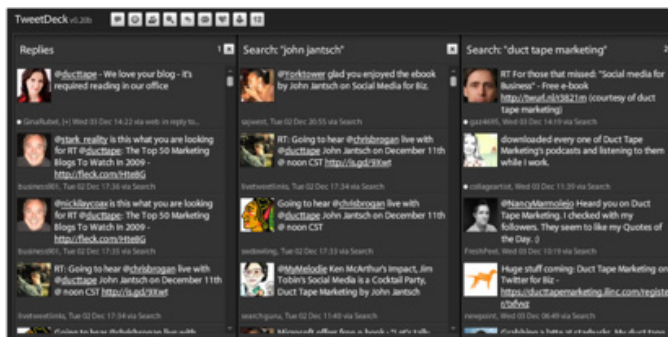
People are asking questions, complaining, and searching for stuff in every corner of the world on Twitter and these people are often more than happy to hear from someone who can provide an answer locally. With a little practice you can set up a series of tweets that might turn up leads for your business every single day.

Again, this is not an invitation to spam people, but with a little care and the fact that you can identify people through the flood of tweets, people expressing needs and wants, you can proceed to target and educate these folks by starting a conversation and answering their questions thoughtfully.

Managing your Twitter activity

Once you start using Twitter, you’ll want to explore ways to make it easier to follow what’s going on and respond to @replies and searches you’ve set up.

There are a number of third-party desktop and mobile applications that make this a snap.



TweetDeck: This is a piece of software that you run on your desktop. You can post tweets from it, respond to replies from others and, this is what I really like, set up various searches and get updates in real time when someone tweets on a subject or phrase you are following.

monitor your brand or jump on opportunities connected to your specific topics of choice without having to hang out on Twitter all day.

Tweetie 2: This mobile application allows you to do much of what you might on a desktop but from your iPhone.

TwitterBerry: This is the mobile app of choice for BlackBerry users.



Hashtag use

There is a pretty useful trick that Twitter insiders use all the time called a hashtag. The roots of the #tag are buried somewhere in IM coding, but it's what you can do with it using Twitter that matters. ([More on hashtags](#), if you want some techie stuff on this.)

The hashtag or #tag added to a tweet acts as way to create categories, groups, or topics for tweets that others can use as well. This way, tweets can easily be grouped together using the [search.Twitter.com](#) feature.

Let me give you a very commonly used tactic for this. Let's say a group of folks are attending a workshop and tweeting their notes in real time. If everyone at that workshop were asked to add something like #mkt101 to their tweets, everyone present or not can see and share all the notes in one place.

During earthquakes and fires hashtags are a great way for people to get news.

Promoting events and product launches via a hashtag helps keep the word in context.

Companies often use hashtags as a way for remote employees to use Twitter as a communication tool for all the stuff people should stay on top of.

I use a hashtag for each of my live webinars and then people tweet and ask questions via Twitter and I have a back channel of conversation and notes and another source of relevant content to support the webinar.

You can also find hot trends via hashtag at [search.Twitter.com](#). The homepage lists the trending tags. More than one Twitter user has found that jumping into a hot trend conversation is a great way to connect with folks on something of shared interest.

Anyone can create a hashtag by putting # in front of anything. Keep it short so you don't use up your 140 and try for something unique. If you use a tag that others are using you will mingle your results with others.

Popular third-party Twitter tools

- [TweetDeck](#): desktop Twitter client
- [Seismic Desktop](#): another desktop Twitter client
- [Tweetie 2](#): iPhone app
- [TwitPic](#): share images in tweets
- [TweetStats](#): analyze your Twitter activity
- [Hootsuite](#): business oriented
- [CoTweet](#): multiple accounts
- [Objective Marketer](#): advanced analytics

Managing the Social Media Beast: The system is the solution

One of the hardest challenges for many people just entering the world of social media is to determine how to accomplish the seemingly endless list of new tasks that they find themselves asked to complete.

Participating fully in social media as a business and marketing strategy requires discipline, automation routines, and a daily commitment. Now, you've got to balance that with the fact that much of your activity is about building long-term momentum and deeper networks, and that doesn't always make the cash register ring today.

The following is an example of such an automated routine and may provide some insight into how you can best integrate your social media activity into your overall marketing plan.

Twice daily

- Check Twitter via TweetDeck—preset searches for @ducttape, john jantsch, and duct tape marketing—respond as I see fit, follow some @replies that seem appropriate.
- Scan [MyBlogLog](#)—I obsess over traffic, but this reveals trending links and stumble surges in real time so I can react if appropriate.
- Respond to comments on my blog.

Daily

- Write a blog post—RSS subs get it, Twitter tools sends to Twitter, Facebook gets it, FriendFeed updates
- Scan Twitter followers for relevant conversations to join
- Scan Google Reader subscriptions to read and stimulate ideas
- Share Google Reader faves—these publish to Facebook and you can subscribe
- FleckTweet any blog pages from my subscriptions that I love—this goes to Twitter
- Bookmark any blog pages from my subscriptions that I love—delicious using Firefox plug-in for right-click posting—this goes to FriendFeed
- Stumble any blog pages from my subscriptions that I love—this goes to Facebook and FriendFeed
- Scan Google Alerts for my name, brand, and products—in Google Reader as RSS feed—respond as appropriate
- Add comments to blogs as appropriate—mostly response types—Google Reader and [BackType](#)

Weekly (end)

- Scan LinkedIn Questions from my network and respond when appropriate
- Scan delicious, digg, and [mixx](#) popular and select bookmarks for content ideas and trending topics
- Consciously add comments to conversations I want to join—hot topic focused
- Join one Twitter hot trend conversation if appropriate—search.Twitter.com shows these in real time

Set your system up and work it, day in and day out—whatever that means for you. You will then start to understand the vital role that social media can play in your overall marketing strategy.

Good luck managing the beast!

Let's get social

If you would like to connect with me on one of the following social networks, here are my profiles.

Plurk: <http://www.plurk.com/user/ducttape>

LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/ducttapemarketing>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/ducttapemarketing>

StumbleUpon: <http://jjantsch.stumbleupon.com/>

Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ducttapemarketing>

Twitter: <http://www.Twitter.com/ducttape>

YouTube: <http://youtube.com/jantsch>

Slideshare: <http://www.slideshare.net/ducttape>

Digg: <http://digg.com/users/jantsch>

FriendFeed: <http://friendfeed.com/ducttape>

In the end

As you can see, when technology is leveraged to facilitate and enhance social interaction, a great deal of value can be created. But tread carefully. This savvy audience can be turned off if approached in the wrong way. Use these new tools properly and they'll prove to be invaluable in your effort to strengthen existing customer relationships and capture the hearts and minds of new consumers.

About the Author



John Jantsch is a marketing and digital technology coach, award-winning social media publisher and author of *Duct Tape Marketing—The World’s Most Practical Small Business Marketing Guide* published by Thomas Nelson, with foreword by Michael Gerber, author of *The E-Myth*, and afterword by Guy Kawasaki.

He is the creator of the Duct Tape Marketing small business marketing system and Duct Tape Marketing Authorized Coach Network.

His Duct Tape Marketing Blog was chosen as a *Forbes* favorite for small business and marketing and is a Harvard Business School featured marketing site. His blog was also chosen as “Best Small Business Marketing Blog” in 2004, 2005, and 2006 by the readers of *Marketing Sherpa*.

His “Hype” column can be found monthly in *Entrepreneur* magazine along with his podcast on Entrepreneur.com.

He is a presenter of popular marketing workshops for organizations such as the Small Business Administration, American Marketing Association, Kauffman Foundation, Painting and Decorating Contractors of America, Associated Builders and Contractors, National Association of the Remodeling Industry, and the National Association of Tax Professionals.