



Social Media Business Plan for Small Business

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Every day I can guarantee that you will be impacted in some way by social media, there will be experts telling you, you need a profile on social networks like Facebook, and that Twitter is the best thing since sliced bread was invented, so you create a profile and you start to tell everyone and anyone who will listen about your latest product or service, but is that really the way to approach social media, doing the same thing you do every day on more traditional mediums?

Taking this approach to your social media strategy will do nothing more than waste your precious time, time that could be spent prospecting for new business opportunities and working with your clients face to face.

I know some younger business owners who think that social media and the Internet will replace face to face contact, the reality is it won't, however the very same principles you use face to face, apply to social media, the only difference being the method of delivery.

I know of some major companies who have launched their social strategy with profiles on this site and that network, yet their sites are full of their staff members or franchises congratulating themselves on such forward progress, but where is the consumer?, where is the engagement factor?, where is the interaction with the people that count the most, your customers.

This should be the reason you create your social media strategy in the first place, to create the local expert, the trusted advisor role, create and engage your community and to provide information and advice for the long term.

One question to ask yourself is, why do people interact within social network sites in the first place? Is it to get your latest product or service? No, No, No, they are there to connect, to engage and interact with other like minded people, to share experiences, to share activities and create a sense of community and to stay in touch with family and friends.

You as a business person need to understand this motivation and work with it to really maximise the return on your investment of time in creating a social media strategy for you and your business. So what is the best way to approach a social media strategy, firstly you need to work out why you want to have a presence on social networks, is it because everyone else is doing it? Is it because your competitor down the road is doing it so you should as well right? Well wrong actually, do it because it gives you another advertising medium to capture

the attention of prospective customers, do it because it is a huge billboard of opportunity to take your message to the masses, do it for you and the exposure it can bring you and your brand, do it because you are an expert in your field and do it because people are looking for an expert to advise, coach and motivate them.

Start by doing a business and digital media strategy and look at ways in which you'll start to build an audience, do you start a blog first, do you jump on Facebook and MySpace or do you start using Twitter and on what network sites do you create a profile.

How do you declare your brand identity? Remember, you should be focused on how you and your team help other people, being the business to call when requiring a service or product and raising the profile of you and your business on the web.

The first step, is create accounts on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. Check in and see where you fit in to the community, upload or add all of your contacts into Facebook and start a routine of regularly adding "friends" to your page, the goal is to get your personal contacts engaged and to start to follow and engaging with other local businesses, build a schedule so that you can allocate time each week to this, otherwise you will find yourself becoming overwhelmed with trying to keep up with all the conversations that happen.

As you become more familiar with the sites you learn that LinkedIn or Twitter may not be for you, that's fine, at least you are now more informed than you were when you started.

You are learning, next you can start to build your blog, your blog web site is your central hub with all roads leading to it, and everything you do should be designed to get people to your blog and interacting with you on your territory.

It's great to have a Facebook page but even better when you have both working for you; you are in a win win situation.

Remember, with your blog comes responsibility, you'll need to add content to it regularly and this takes time, so you should allocate at least 2+ hours a week.

Use the same strategy for all the social network sites you use, allocate time each week in your plan to update your sites and remember it's about engaging your community not only about promoting your latest product.

We can help you save time and money in building your social media business plan and setting up your pages and blog, we provide weekly coaching clinics that provide information and advice on content and tactics for social media. If you'd like to find out more about our social media integration plans and coaching clinics contact me at Mike Andrew Consulting and we'll design and set up a coaching plan for you.