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Introduction

By now, you're no stranger to the fact that social media is a powerful tool for business, both on and offline. Whether you're brand new to the Internet marketing game, or you're looking to learn more about how to leverage social media to enhance your business, this book is for you.

Benefits of Using Social Media to Internet Marketers

Social media marketing carries many benefits to Internet marketers, including:

ESTABLISHING A BRAND AND RAISING AWARENESS

The majority of people on the Internet today are using at least one social media network, such as Facebook, Twitter, or Google+. A good bit of them are using two, or even all three of those social networks. Getting your brand out there on those platforms is a good way to let people know you're around.

SPYING ON THE COMPETITION

By following your competition, you can see what kind of deals they are offering customers, and keep up to date with other things they have going on. Just be sure that whatever you have to offer is better.

CONDUCTING MARKET RESEARCH

Social media can help you listen to what your customers have to say about your products or services. By tracking what they click on and what they avoid, you can see what your customers like and are responding to. People will share their thoughts and opinions on social media websites, so you can use the information to your advantage.

ENHANCED CUSTOMER LOYALTY AND TRUST

Social media allows you to speak to your customers on a more personal level, which makes them feel more important to you, and more valued. In turn, customers are more likely to trust you, which means they are more likely to do business with you, instead of the competition.

INTERACTING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

People visit social media websites for the interaction with their peers, not to be bombarded with ads. This allows you to pitch your products and interact with your audience in much more authentic way. You can use the platform to ask customers to share their thoughts and opinions, which makes them feel like you're listening, and you end up being real connections and relationships with your customers.

BRINGING ATTENTION TO YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE

Social media moves at lightening speed. If you want to promote your product, doing so on social media is one of the quickest ways to get attention to it. If you offer a money saving promotion, it's even better because your sales will skyrocket!

HIGHER QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Social media platforms allow you to address customer concerns directly, and in a timely manner. When a customer doesn't have to wait hours to get the answers they need *and* they get a personal touch, they will be more satisfied, which means you'll have better customer service. And, you'll be able to save money on toll-free lines and long distance fees.

ESTABLISHING YOURSELF AS AN EXPERT

If you're passionate about a certain topic—whether it's your professional field or a hobby, the Internet can help you establish yourself as an expert by giving you a platform to share information. People will be coming to you for information on the topic, and telling their friends about you.

BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL REPUTATION

Social media allows you to get your name out there, and talk about the various things that matter to you. This is key to building a good online reputation, which is critical if you intend to find a job or make new business connections.

BUILDING AND ENHANCING PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Social media allows you to build and enhance both personal and professional relationships. You can use it to connect with other industry experts, or find old friends from high school you're looking to reconnect with.

SHARING INFORMATION WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

Distance is no longer a barrier. You can connect with professionals in your field that are in the same city, or across the globe, as if they were next door neighbors.

Facebook vs. Twitter vs. Google+

It can be hard to decide where to market, and how to market to your customers with Internet marketing. Of course, we're making it a bit easier on you by dedicating a chapter in this book to each of these social media powerhouse networks, but before we get ahead of ourselves let's do a quick comparison of

each of the networks, so you can understand where they are alike and where they are different, to truly understand their value to you as an Internet Marketer.

FACEBOOK

Strengths

- **Critical Mass:** Facebook is the largest social media network, and often competes with Google as the most trafficked website on the Internet. Many people joined because so many other people and businesses they know are already on the platform. At last count, there were more than 750 million users—and the thing that makes this so important is they don't just use the site—they use it often, and when they do, they stick around for a while.
- **Keeping Up with Everyone:** Keep up with what's going on with everyone in your life—friends, family, acquaintances, and business connections.
- **Brand Promotion:** When someone “likes” your business Facebook page, they are essentially advertising it to their friends for you.
- **Internal Analytics:** Facebook includes data about how users interact with your page and how many users see the information right from within its dashboard.

Ease of Engagement: Users can share an opinion about something with the click of a button. That one click advertises an item to the users entire social circle, with additional comment being optional.

Weaknesses

- **Segmenting Your Life:** There's no easy way to separate contacts from your personal and professional life. Google+ has this covered with its Circles feature, which we'll discuss later in this book.

- **Privacy:** Facebook's privacy settings and mechanisms are constantly changing—without announcement at that. Without staying up-to-date on how to protect your information from prying eyes, the best thing you can do is assume everything you say or do on the platform is public.

Environment: Facebook is known for its old interface style, though they are currently undergoing some changes to bring it more current. Facebook still, despite its high usage level, has a low satisfaction rate. While we're not ready to say it's going to become another MySpace, it's certainly worth mentioning the battle with Google+.

TWITTER

Strengths

- **Following Interests:** Through the use of hashtags (#hashtag), Twitter makes it exceptionally easy to follow topics and issues without actually following the people in the conversation. This way you can keep up with hot button issues in your industry.

Brevity: The character limit is ideal for short attention spans, so people can quickly scan for the information they need.

Weaknesses

- **Brevity:** While some love it, the 140-character limit can be frustrating because it's hard to whittle down important points.
- **Information Overload:** If you have a large following, there's potential to miss a lot. With frequent tweets, you're going to see a lot stream by fast, which is enough to overload you, quickly.

- **Platform:** While Twitter has made improvements, the system does overload and shut down from time to time. Even though it's temporary, sometimes only lasting a few seconds, it's frustrating.

Internal Analytics: There is a lack of internal analytics data available for you to see.

GOOGLE+

Strengths

- **Segmenting Your Life:** Easily keep your family separate from your friends, and your work contacts separate from your personal life.
- **Video Chats and Hangouts:** Meet face-to-face without ever leaving your living room or office!

Integration with Other Google Services: Google+ fits right in with all their other services, including search and maps.

Weaknesses

- **Difficult to Scan:** The home screen of Google+ is difficult to scan. As you add more people to your circles, you'll have to scroll more and more to be able to keep up with what is going on.
- **Lack of Brevity:** While the lack of a limit on status update length is nice for some, others will abuse the privilege, making it that much more difficult to scan and digest information.
- **Lack of Critical Mass:** While Google+ is gaining ground every day, there's still nowhere near as many people there as there is on Facebook or Twitter.

Why Use It? As the Google+ platform becomes more clearly defined, the answer to this question will arise. Many marketers see great potential and use it to their advantage, while others are still wondering what it really has to offer. We'll cover it more thoroughly its own chapter, so you can decide for yourself.

Now that we've covered the basic strengths and weaknesses of each social media platform we're covering in this book, let's dive right in and take a closer look at how to make them work for you.

Facebook

What it is

Facebook is the largest social networking website, designed to help people connect with friends, family, and businesses. It began in 2004, initially open to only college students, but is now available to anyone. People can create profiles and connect with friends, and businesses can create pages to connect with customers and advertise their products and services.

Benefits to Internet Marketers

CONNECTING AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Facebook offers both a live chat and a private message platform that can be used to connect with clients, colleagues, and prospects. Savvy Internet marketers will use this feature to create and nurture relationships.

BUILDING BRAND CREDIBILITY

Your business page will allow you to share as much information as you want. Logos and pictures can be used to fortify brand awareness. You also can use the page to share your core brand message with fans, and by interacting with fans, you're sharing your message with all their friends and followers as well.

FREE ADVERTISING

There is no upfront cost to create and run a Facebook page. The cost lies in the time investment you'll make in managing the page on an on-going basis. Your reach becomes massive in a short amount of time. Paid advertising is available,

which we'll discuss in a bit, but this can give you a jump against the completion if you have the room in your budget.

ANNOUNCING IMPORTANT EVENTS

Using your Facebook page, you can announce events, such as conferences, appearances, schedules, product launches, discounts, and other special promotion. Fans can recommend the event to friends, to help spread your message further.

Setting Up Your Fan Page

Without a fan page, there's no way to reach the masses. While you likely already have a Facebook account for personal use, using a real profile for business and promotion is against the Facebook terms and conditions, so you'll need to create a fan page for your brand/product/service.

1. Visit [Facebook.com/page](https://www.facebook.com/page)
2. Select your category from the list of options:
 - a. Local Business or Place
 - b. Company, Organization or Institution
 - c. Brand or Product
 - d. Artist, Band or Public Figure
 - e. Entertainment
 - f. Cause or Community
3. Fill in Information: business name, location, website, date launched/founded, hours of operation, etc.

4. Add Photos
 - a. Profile Main Image: 160px x 160px This is excellent for your logo.
 - b. Cover Photo: 851px x 315px Do not include contact information.
 - c. Pinned Post or Story: 403px x 403px
 - d. Milestone/Highlighted Story: 843px x 403px
5. Suggest the Page to Your Friends: This is a good way to get a jump on the number of likes you have, to start spreading your message and brand presence.
6. Import Contacts: Import email contacts to suggest your page to people you know who are not already your Facebook friends.
7. Start Writing Content: Post status updates, share links, etc. to start engaging your fan base.

When you have enough fans, get a vanity URL so it becomes easier to remember/advertise. A vanity URL allows your fan page to be found at <http://facebook.com/yourbusinessname> rather than the auto-generated URL Facebook assigns.

Getting Likes

Without “likes” from fans, no one will see your message. Facebook’s new algorithm displays your message to only a small percentage of your fan base, unless they’ve elected to see all your updates, or unless you’re willing to pay real money to promote the status update. Getting likes doesn’t have to be a difficult undertaking, however. Use these ideas to get started.

- **Post a status update.** Tag your business page in it and ask your friends to like the page, and share it with their friends.
- **Get fans to upload and tag photos.** Encourage your fans to upload and tag photos of themselves with your business page.
- **Offer an incentive.** Whether it's a discount on your products or services, or a free eBook/report related to your industry, people will be more likely to "like" your page when they get something in return.
- **Install a page badge.** Quick, easy way to link to your Facebook page.
- **Install a Facebook "Like Box" on your website.** This enables website visitors to become your fan on Facebook without having to visit Facebook itself, or leave your website.
- **Install a "Like" button on your website.** When users click this, your website (or blog posts, or whatever they click) will show up in their stream, advertising you to their friends.
- **Connect the page to Twitter.** Anything you post to Facebook will post to Twitter, allowing you to convert your Twitter followers into Facebook fans.
- **Link to your page as a place of employment.** This enables you to link to your page on your personal profile.
- **Include your Facebook page URL in your email signature.**
- **Include your Facebook page URL on your business cards.** This is a good way to promote offline.
- **Link to your Facebook page when you leave blog comments.** This will build backlinks, to help you increase your rank. Plus, when people see the comment, they can click the link and may "like" your page.

- **Link to your Facebook page from your profile.** It keeps the link visible to your friends who do not “like” your page already.
- **Run a “fans only” contest.** People will become fans just to get in on the contest prize.

Advertise your page. Use Facebook advertising to promote your page to people outside your network.

You may run across companies out there promoting fans for purchase. This is typically a practice we shy away from recommending, because the fans are generally fake profiles, and even if they are real people, they are not likely to be targeted customers. You’re much better off with a smaller fan base that’s more likely to listen to you or make a purchase from you, than you are a higher fan base that doesn’t convert to sales for you. Use this tactic at your own risk.

Facebook Advertising

Much like a Google Ad campaign, Facebook has a platform that allows you to pay for ads based on impressions (the number of times they are served) or clicks (the number of times the ad is clicked.) Using Facebook’s ad platform, you can super target your ads based on any number of demographics, including: age, location, gender, marital status, interests, etc.

You can set a budget, and when you reach that budget, stop running the ad. The ads are served either on the sidebar of the page, or could be used as a sponsored story. You will have to bid on cost per click, so the lower your bid, the less likely your ad is to be served. The first time you run an ad, it will be approved by Facebook before going live.

With the basics of Facebook down, let’s move onto Twitter.

Twitter

What it is

Twitter is one of the most popular social networking platforms on the Internet today. It is considered a micro-blogging platform, as there is a limit on the number of characters you can use in each update. It can be used to communicate with people you know, to develop connections with people you want to know, and to keep up to date with the latest trends. Internet marketers use it to drive traffic to their websites, and engage with customers.

Benefits to Internet Marketers

RESEARCH

With the use of hashtags making it easy to research nearly any topic imaginable, the built in search feature is a valuable research tool. While the functionality will not replace the competitive research tools out there on the market today, it can help gather information about what's hot in the market, and where needs are within a particular niche.

DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE

Many people will tweet their new blog posts out to their followers. However, just tweeting about your new blog post doesn't mean people will listen and click. For this to work, you need to be actively involved in the network, and sharing valuable information your network is interested in or is looking for.

ENGAGE WITH CUSTOMERS

Businesses can communicate with their customer base, and get feedback in a causal, and cost effective way. Find out what your customers love (or hate) about what you have to offer, and make changes to improve it for them.

NETWORKING

Twitter enables you to connect and communicate with friends and family, but it can also be a powerful professional networking tool. In addition, it can be a great way for employees within the same organization to communicate back and forth because it is so short and to the point.

BRANDING

Matching your Twitter handle to your business name, and using custom graphics on your Twitter profile can be a great way to reinforce your brand, and to help raise awareness in its early stages.

Getting Followers

- **Make sure what you post has value.** People will ignore you if it's garbage.
- **Use hashtags.** This categorizes what you're talking about, which makes it easier for people to find.
- **Tweet on topic most of the time.** At least 80% of the time, talk about your business niche. This helps establish your credibility.
- **Make use of your profile space.** Describe who you are, and link to your website.

- **Link to your profile from other social media profiles.** This helps people see that you are on Twitter.
- **Include your Twitter link in your email signature.** This too, helps people see that you are on Twitter.
- **Advertise your twitter link on your business cards.** This helps with offline marketing efforts and may bring additional followers.
- **Use Twitter search.** Find people who you want to connect with. See who's talking about what, and jump in the conversation.
- **Use @s.** @twitterhandle lets you engage a person directly. Do this often!
- **Use Follow Friday (#FF)** Not only will this help you suggest other people to your followers, you may find some awesome new connections this way.

Follow Friends of Friends. This can help you find other relevant followers to engage.

Making Tweets

- **Use a URL shortener.** Something like bit.ly or owl.ly will shorten your URL to save you characters in your tweet, and it'll help you track the number of times it was clicked.
- **Share information of value.** Whether it's yours or not, share something you think your followers can use. You'll get more respect when you're not tooting your own horn all the time!

Use HootSuite or something similar. Programs such as HootSuite and TweetDeck will allow you better manage your social media efforts. You can track several things on one screen, and even schedule tweets ahead of time, so you don't actually have to be in front of the screen to share

information. Just be sure you're actively communicating with people who respond to your tweets—don't set and forget!

With the two veteran social networks out of the way, let's take a look at the newcomer to the market, Google+.

GOOGLE +

What it is

Google+ is Google's answer to Facebook. It's a robust social networking website with many similar features, and additional features designed to help give it an edge over the social media leader. While it doesn't quite have the critical mass we see with Facebook, it certainly has the potential to beat out Facebook as the number one network, and is well worth watching.

Benefits to Internet Marketers

STATUS UPDATES ARE INDEXED QUICKLY

Since Google owns and operates the network, you can bet your status updates are indexed quickly. It's a great tool for building backlinks, and helping boost your overall SEO.

+1 BUTTON

This is essentially the same thing as the "like" on Facebook, or the re-tweet on Twitter. It is a vote of confidence for something you've seen online. To Google, it means you found it helpful, or valuable in some way. When you get people clicking the +1 button on your content, you are increasing its visibility in the search engines.

CLAIM YOUR AUTHORED CONTENT

You've likely already seen images of people you know, or don't know, next to content in the search engines. Google+ allows you to link your Google+ profile to your website so that your name and photo appear next to any result from your

website in the search results. This is great for name and brand recognition. To learn more about how this process works, [click here](#).

Features

CIRCLES

Circles are the way you segment your life on Google+. You can create an unlimited number of circles, and control which circles see what information. No one knows what circle they're in, or what you've called it. For instance, you can have a circle for Friends, Family, Prospects, Current Clients, Creepy Stalkers to Avoid, etc.

HANGOUTS

Hangouts are video chats hosted in Google+. You can connect with up to 10 people.

Getting Followers

POPULATE YOUR PAGE WITH CONTENT FIRST

Take some time to fill out your profile, and share useful content on your page first. Though no one will see it at first, it is much better to add followers to a page that already has content on it than to send them to a page that looks brand new. If your page is too blank, it looks like you're not an active user, so you'll come off as spam.

PROMOTE YOUR GOOGLE PLUS PROFILE ON OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS

Since Google+ is so new, there are many people who are still unaware of the fact that it exists. Much like you're using your Facebook and Twitter profiles to advertise each other, you should do the same thing with Google. It will help people see that you're involved over there, and encourage them to follow you there. If they don't already have an account, it may even promote someone signing up just so they can stay in contact with you there, too.

LEVERAGE HANGOUTS

Though it may not seem like it, there are several ways you can leverage video chats to your advantage.

Host a Live Hangout to Connect with Members of Your Community

Periodically host a live hangout to connect with members of your community. Share about who you are, your company, etc. Or, create a themed meeting every month and ask people to join for discussion.

Offer Online Coaching Sessions

Offer a one-on-one coaching session to teach your clients something of value. For instance, if you're teaching Internet marketing basics, offer a coaching session that shows how to setup a WordPress site on a domain.

Create Video Interviews

Writing an eBook for your next marketing venture? Host a hangout with a respected person in the field, and use the resulting video as part of your promotional material for the book.

Hold Meetings

Work with people all over the country? Get them together in one place at the same time with a hangout where you discuss business.

Create an Online Game

Use the platform to launch a video contest.

Enhance your Customer Support

Use Hangouts to troubleshoot issues with your product or service.

Give Presentations

Share your screen, play YouTube videos, etc. to make an otherwise boring presentation pop. Your prospects will remember it far better than a traditional slideshow presentation.

Hold Virtual Office Hours

If you're teaching something, provide virtual office hours where your students will be able to find you.

ENGAGE FOLLOWERS

Just like with Facebook, your business can have a Google+ page. Be sure to engage followers by posting relevant content on a regular basis. Ask questions to spark conversation. Post visual content, such as infographics. Follow the same guidelines you would use to engage followers on any other network. Provide value!

WRAP UP

There's no doubt social media is a powerful tool for Internet marketers who want to promote their business. We've scratched the surface of three popular social media websites: Facebook, Twitter, and Google+.

All three networks have their purpose in your marketing efforts. While each network has its pros, each network has its cons.

Use Facebook for its reach. Use Twitter for its simplicity. Use Google+ for its enhanced segmentation, indexing speed, and video features.

Create a strategy for how you will use each of the networks independently to strengthen your brand. Then, develop a plan for how these strategies will work together to develop your social media marketing plan overall.

Social media marketing takes time to learn, and what works for one niche may not work for another. Play around with your options until you find the groove that works best for you.

Good luck!