

Adding Internet fuel to your marketing

WHAT BUILDERS AND DEVELOPERS NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

MANY BUSINESSES ARE DOING SOCIAL media marketing, with mixed results. Some builders and developers are curious about it, while others have tried it, and others still have embraced it with both arms. Regardless of which camp of interest or experience you fall into, here's what you need to understand about social media.

Why use social media?

Social media is used to develop Internet “buzz” about your company, products and services. Social media turbocharges word-of-mouth advertising within a well-established and fast-growing arena. Strategically placing your company within this massive sphere of interpersonal chatter can — and will — bring you interested buyers over time. What's more, these buyers come with personal endorsements from friends and family. Yet even more important for builders and developers — and this is the part many miss — building Internet buzz helps attract search engines to your web site and contributes to your ranking on the search engine results pages (SERPs). Good SERP results for key search terms, in turn, brings active, intentional shoppers, the best visitors your site can hope to attract.

How social media is used

Fortunately, the networks already exist, so you can create a website and a blog, and use free social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Your presence on these sites can be linked together and, within a short time, begin to drive interested traffic to your website. When set up right, you can quickly extend your message to real people who are searching for what you offer on search engines (intentional visitors) or learning about what you offer through friends, associates and family members on social media sites (casual visitors). The good news is that you've captured these prospects at a fraction of the cost of traditional marketing avenues. Add to that recent research that the primary audience using social media tools are women, ages 25-54 — arguably the most attractive home-buying demographic — and you have another compelling reason to dive into the social media pool.

And where traditional advertising sources such as newspaper, radio, TV and billboards are limited geographically, the Internet has no boundaries. For example, if your marketing campaign relies on a local radio station, a local magazine, billboards or on-site signage, your message is much more geographically limited. Assuming you've done a good job maximizing your web presence, if a couple in Sacramento wants to move to Durango, they are much more likely to find their ideal Durango community (yours) on the Web through

search engines, information portals or social media channels —all without having stepped outside their home.

Getting started

Let's assume that your website is properly designed and structured; it's positioned and optimized for search engine success and has a strong prospect capture and conversion strategy in place. Here are a few basic things you can do to get started:

- 1. Create a Facebook profile on Facebook.com** (it's much easier than you think). Develop a friend base of some size, then create a Facebook page for your company or community with you as the administrator and link it to your website. Post key phrase-laced news, updates and events once or twice a week and, on your personal profile, become a “fan” of that page. Ask your Facebook friends to become a fan of it, too. When they do, everyone in their friend pool will see it, and so on, and so on.
- 2. Establish a Twitter account at Twitter.com** (again, it's easier than you think) and submit short posts for new product introductions and coming events using your strategic keyword terms. With any social media site, be sure your message is value oriented, not promotional. Add a link to a specific related page on your website (you may want to use TinyURL.com to reduce the size of your link).
- 3. Post one- to two-minute videos on YouTube**, so others can share and pass it on to create buzz and interest about your offering. Your video should be interesting, engaging and unique, but not too polished. This takes know-how and forethought, and when done well, can be electric.
- 4. Use Wordpress.com or Blogger.com to create a blog** where you can post updates and stories about you, your company, industry trend and anything you feel is relevant. This allows customers to comment and interact. Be sure to post new content often.
- 5. Join and maintain other social networking sites**, now that you're a seasoned vet. From a professional standpoint, LinkedIn is a must.

Using these tools creates different information channels that direct both casual and intentional visitors to your website. The beauty of social media is that people who look at your Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and blog also have hundreds or thousands

TOP BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

- ★ Extends your message and brand exponentially
- ★ Attracts casual and intentional visitors
- ★ Offers great ROI with relatively low investment
- ★ Adapts easily to strategic changes
- ★ Broadens your reach to attract buyers from around the world
- ★ Enhances your overall marketing plan

of personal and professional connections on their social media sites and blogs. This opens up a galactic network of communication among friends and followers. If others like what you say and do, then you've created the potential for your messages to go viral, exponentially spreading through the social media universe and touching more prospects and followers than you could before.

Implementing a balanced and effective Internet marketing plan takes strategic thinking, time and yes, money. Sure, you can try to do it yourself. Or, as you would with other aspects of your business, you can outsource it to experts. Commit the time and money to implement these brave new strategies, carefully track your results (another topic for another time) and don't expect overnight results. These systems are flexible. When done right and over time, Internet marketing can produce a snowball effect. You can test what's working and quickly make adjustments. Social media marketing is not a fad — and it's not going away anytime soon. It's time to get started. The world is looking for what you have to offer. ■■

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