

Introduction

You sit back, sighing with relief that your Web site is running faultlessly, optimized for search engines, and producing traffic, leads, and sales. Maybe you've ventured into e-mail marketing or pay-per-click advertising to generate new customers. Now, you think with satisfaction, "I'll just let the money roll in."

Instead, you're inundated with stories about Facebook and fan pages, Twitter and tweets, blogs and vlogs, and all other manner of social media buzz. The statistics are astounding: Facebook closing in on 500 million active users; 126 million blogs on the Internet; more than 10 billion tweets sent on Twitter since 2006; 2 billion videos streamed daily on YouTube. New company names and bewildering new vocabulary terms flood the online world: Gowalla, Groupon, SocialMention, CoTweet, engagement, community building, content posting, and comment monitoring, for example.

Should your business get involved in social media marketing? Is it all more trouble than it's worth? Will you be left hopelessly behind if you don't participate? If you jump in, how do you keep it all under control and who does the work? This book helps you answer both sets of questions: Should or shouldn't your business undertake social media marketing? If so, how? (Quick answer: If your customers use a social media service, you should consider it. If not, skip it.)

About This Book

The philosophy behind this book is simple: Social media marketing is a means, not an end in itself. Social media services are new tools, not new worlds. In the best of all worlds, you see results that improve customer acquisition, retention, and buying behavior — in other words, your bottom line. If this sounds familiar, that's because everything you already know about marketing is correct.

Having the most "likes" on Facebook or more retweets of your posts than your competitors doesn't mean much if these achievements don't have a positive impact on your business. Throughout this book, you'll find concrete suggestions for applying social media tactics to achieve those goals.

If you undertake a social marketing campaign, we urge you to keep your plans simple, take things slowly, and always stay focused on your customers. Most of all, we urge you to follow the precepts of guerrilla marketing: Target one niche market at a time; grow that market; reinvest your profits in the next niche.

What You Don't Have to Read

You don't have to read anything that seems overwhelming or insanely complicated, deals with a particular social marketing service that you dislike or disdain, or doesn't apply to your business. Content following a Technical Stuff icon is intended for developers or particularly tech-savvy readers.

Reading the case studies in sidebars isn't critical, though you might enjoy reading about honest-to-goodness business owners who successfully use the social marketing techniques we discuss. Often, they share a helpful tip that will make your social media life easier.

If you have a limited budget, focus your explorations on the free or low-cost tools and resources that appear in various tables, instead of enterprise-level options, which are designed for large companies with large marketing budgets. Sometimes, however, a tool with a moderate price tag can save you lots of time or expensive labor.

You can skip any of the Books III, IV, V, or VI on individual social media services (blogs, vlogs, podcasts, Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn) if you don't include them in your social media marketing plan. If you decide to add one or more of them later, simply return to that book for freestanding information. Of course, if you're looking for a thorough understanding of the social media whirl, read the book straight through, from cover to cover. You'll find out all about social media — at least until a totally new service launches tomorrow.

Foolish Assumptions

In our heads, we visualize our readers as savvy small-business owners, marketers in companies of any size, and people who work in any of the multiple services that support social media efforts, such as advertising agencies, Web developers, graphic design firms, copywriting, or public relations. We assume that you

- ◆ Already have or will soon have a Web site or blog that can serve as the hub for your online marketing program
- ◆ Are curious about social media because it seems to be everywhere
- ◆ Are comfortable using keywords on search engines to find information online
- ◆ Know the realities of your industry, though you may not have a clue whether your competitors use social media
- ◆ Can describe your target markets, though you may not be sure whether your audience is using social media

- ◆ Are trying to decide whether using social media makes sense for your company (or your boss has asked you to find out)
- ◆ May already use social media personally and are interested in applying your knowledge and experience
- ◆ May already have tried using social media for your company but want to improve results or measure return on your investment
- ◆ Have a passion for your business, appreciate your customers, and enjoy finding new ways to improve your bottom line

If our assumptions are correct, this book will help you organize a social marketing presence without going crazy or spending all your waking hours online. It will help you figure out whether a particular technique makes sense, how to get the most out of it, and how to measure your results.

How This Book Is Organized

We've built this book like a sandwich: The first two and last two books are overviews of marketing or business issues, or of social media tools and techniques. The four books in the middle are how-to manuals for incorporating blogs, podcasts or vlogs, Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn into your social media marketing campaign.

Like most For Dummies books, this one enables you to get as much (or as little) information as you need at any particular moment on a specific topic. You can return to it as a reference guide at any time. However, unless you're certain that you're interested only in a specific social marketing service covered in Books III through VI, we recommend that you read Book I first to establish your goals, objectives, and schedule for social media marketing.

For information on a specific topic, check the headings in the table of contents or look at the index.

Book I: The Social Media Mix

Book I gets you off on the right foot. Chapter 1 explains what social media services are, individually and collectively, categorizes the overwhelming number of social media options by type, and explores how social media are the same and different from other forms of online and offline marketing. In the next two chapters, you define your own marketing goals, objectives, and methods for social media and research where your target audiences "hang out." This book includes three key planning forms: the Social Media Marketing Goals form, to establish the purpose of your campaign; the Social Media Marketing Plan, to select and document your tactics; and the Social Media Activity Calendar, to assign and schedule tasks.

Book II: Cybersocial Tools

Implementing and tracking social media marketing campaigns across multiple services is a daunting task. In the first chapter of Book II, we offer a variety of productivity tools to help you post content in multiple locations, notify search engines, and monitor your growing social notoriety. The second chapter deals in depth with integrating social media into a coordinated search engine optimization strategy, and the third deals with social bookmarking, social news, and social sharing as new methods of viral marketing.

Book III: Blogs, Podcasts, and Vlogs

In Book III, we show you how to set up a blog and create posts, procure the necessary hardware and software to create your own podcast, and determine which software and hardware you need in order to create a video blog. We also give you information about picking the right Web server, or securing a third party to host your blog, podcast, or vlog, and we give you information on how to gauge your success.

Book IV: Twitter

Twitter is one of the hottest social media spots on the Web. You send your message out, 140 characters at a time, to the people you're following. We show you how to use Twitter to market your goods and services. In Book IV, we show you how to get started on Twitter and network with a group of people who may become clients. We also show you how to customize your Twitter page and how to tweet (Tweetspeak for "create a post") using mobile devices.

Book V: Facebook

At the happy online community Facebook, you can find schoolkids talking about the latest singing sensation, soccer moms talking about their kids, and major businesses marketing their products. Facebook is indeed a viable tool for marketing virtually any product or service. In Book V, we show you how to set up a Facebook page for your business and show you how to use the many Facebook features at your disposal. We also show you how to create custom tabs, add photos and videos to your page, show your blog posts on Facebook, and more.

Book VI: LinkedIn

At LinkedIn, professionals network with other professionals. You can use LinkedIn to find clients for your services, establish relationships with businesses that support your industry, and more. In Book VI, we show you how to establish an account and set up your LinkedIn page, and we even show you how to mine gold with LinkedIn.

Book VII: Other Social Media Marketing Sites

In addition to the “big guys” covered in the Books III through VI are hundreds of social media services with smaller audiences. Some of them compete for a general audience, and some focus on narrowly targeted vertical markets. Book VII, which analyzes the value of working with smaller services and surveys many options, also includes chapters on Ning platforms for building communities, MySpace for social networking, Squidoo for topical blogs, and Flickr for photosharing.

Book VIII: Measuring Your Results; Building on Your Success

Book VIII returns to business principles with several chapters on important measurement tools: analytics to assess the performance of your social media campaign in Web terms and return on investment to assess its performance in financial terms. We discuss the integration of social media into other forms of online marketing, and the last chapter in this book concludes with a survey of up-and-coming social media techniques you might consider using in the future.

Icons Used in This Book

To make your experience easier, we use various icons in the margins to identify special categories of information.



These hints help you save time, energy, or aggravation. Sharing them is our way of sharing what we’ve figured out the hard way — so that you don’t have to. Of course, if you prefer to get your education through the school of hard knocks, be our guest.



This book has more details in it than any normal person can remember. This icon reminds you of points made elsewhere in the book or perhaps helps you recall business best practices that you know from your own experience.



Heed these warnings to avoid potential pitfalls. Nothing we suggest will crash your computer beyond repair or send your marketing campaign into oblivion. But we tell you about business and legal pitfalls to avoid, plus a few traps that catch the unprepared during the process of configuring social media services. Not all those services create perfect user interfaces with clear directions!



The geeky-looking Dummies Man marks information to share with your developer or programmer — unless you are one. In that case, have at it. On the other hand, you can skip any of the technical-oriented information without damaging your marketing plans or harming a living being.

Conventions Used in This Book

Doing something the same way over and over again may be boring, but consistency makes information easier to understand. In this book, those consistent elements are *conventions*. We use only a few:

- ◆ When URLs (Web addresses) appear within a paragraph or table, they look like this: `www.dummies.com`.
- ◆ New terms appear in *italics* the first time they're used, thanks to the copy editor.
- ◆ Navigation on Web sites appears as tab or option names in sequence, to indicate the order in which you should make selections, such as choose Tab Name↔Choice One↔Choice Two.
- ◆ Any text that you have to type is in **bold**.

Where to Go from Here

You can find helpful information on the companion Web site for this book at www.dummies.com/go/socialmediamarketingaio. From the site, you can download copies of the Social Media Goals and Social Media Marketing Plan forms, which you can use to develop your own marketing plans. You can also find an online Cheat Sheet to print and keep handy near your computer at www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/socialmediamarketingaio.

If you find errors in this book, or have suggestions for future editions, please e-mail us at books@watermelonweb.com. We wish you a fun and profitable experience going social!