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Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Oh my! To use social media, create a plan

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The social media gold rush is on for businesses everywhere. Facebook has 400 million members and is growing at five million members a week. LinkedIn has 60 million members and adds a million new members every twelve days. Twitter, blogs, YouTube, Flickr, Delicious...there are literally thousands of social media options.

But most businesses have not developed a true social media strategy. They create a Facebook fan page, sign up for Twitter and think their problems are over. The reality is most businesses are wasting their time and energy on social media and may be doing more harm than good.

Granted I'm more active in social media than most, but I get a dozen Facebook business fan page requests a week. I don't have the time or interest in joining all of them. It's a lot of clutter.

So here are some simple "musts" that will help you be successful with social media:

1. You must develop a social media strategy to tie into your marketing plan. If you don't know where you're going, no social media effort is going to save you.
2. You must do a social media audit. What are people saying about you? What are they saying about your competitors? What platforms are they using? You are not what you say your brand is any more. Your brand is what others say it is.
3. You must frequently adjust and update because social media is constantly changing. Last year, MySpace was the big thing. Now it's Facebook. Google recently added a social media component to Gmail. What's hot today will be outdated tomorrow.
4. You must have relevant content. All of us have found ways to avoid traditional advertising. We skip through the commercials because we don't want to be "sold." Your customer or clients won't come to you unless you have pertinent "must see" content.
5. You must run a remarkable business where clients and customers rave about your product or service. Companies will make their decisions based on experiences and recommendations of their peers. If your customers don't rave about you, your prospects will shut you out.

Social media works in all business categories-including business to business.

The good news is most small and medium companies do not have a social media strategy. You have a unique opportunity to own your space in the social media world. But time is running out. Get going before you are left out.



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