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Social Media for your Business

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**How to get started with Social Media,
build a remarkable brand and claim
your online authority.**

An Introduction to Social Media and this Book

Social media has come a long way since its inception around the mid 2000's but the history of the social web dates all the way back to the very beginning. The web has always been social, in some ways, through various channels such as forums, chat rooms, instant messaging and email but it wasn't until revolutionary platforms such as blogging, Twitter and Facebook that the web, at large, took notice.

Type "social media" into search engines and you will be bombarded with countless articles, blog posts, news editorials, videos and features that cover the countless social platforms; it can be downright dizzying!

There seems to be a new social platform being released nearly every day. You may never know if it will take off or fall flat on its face. One thing that's for sure is that social media is here to stay. You can no longer avoid it; especially in business.

The longer you wait to join the social web the further your communities (and customers) flee from your grasp. Your competition is already represented on many social platforms; your absence can be the proverbial 'nail in the coffin' for your business.

This guide is going to make a promise: By the end, you *will* have a thorough understanding of social media, how to connect to your community and even how to use social media to improve (and increase) your business.

If the sound of free marketing, unlimited research, potential game changers and brand awareness sounds good for you than be prepared to join the world of *social media*.

Chapter 1: Social Media has Changed *Everything*

Social media has changed *everything*. The world, as you know it, is in a rapid stage of evolution which has begun to take the power away from the “big boys” and back to the mom & pops.

How so? Here are but a few of the monumental changes caused by social media:

- People have shifted from ‘expert reviews’ to those from their friends and family.
- People use search engines less frequently in place of social platforms to discover the web.
- Business can now engage in a one-to-one dialog with thousands of their customers.
- A seemingly endless well is available to be tapped for market research and business decisions.

Social media has given the buyer (and seller) the ability to completely avoid the “middle man” of traditional media.

People now go directly to the source when they have a problem, tell their friends in real time what they think about a business and its products, discover the most unknown players in the market and have a true voice in the future of a company.

Businesses, on the other end of the spectrum, now have the ability to create marketing campaigns on the fly with very small budgets. Businesses can engage their best customers and cultivate a life-long relationship. Businesses can perform incredible amounts of market research, on their own, on a day to day basis.

Social media truly has changed the way that we interact on the web (and even in much of the real world). The power is back into the hands of the consumer. The power is back into the hands of the small business owner.

The world has come full circle back to word-of-mouth marketing; the time where the customer could engage with the business owner and vice versa. The time where a great experience was told to anyone who listened (and a bad one to everyone within earshot). The time when it was less about numbers, on the front end, and more about customer satisfaction, which builds a successful business for the long-term.

The power of business is back into your hands. You now have full control over the radio. You now have full control over the television. You now have full control over print media. Everything, in essence, is the same but now it’s on the web and the easiest way to reach the people that support your business is a simple message away.

Chapter 2: How to Get Started with Social Media

The big question you've been waiting to get answered: "How do I get started with social media?"

Well, to be honest, it's a little difficult to fully "teach" you how to use social media because it will take a large amount of dedication on your part. To make social media "work" you'll need to be ready to invest time and resources into platforms which may not necessarily seem as if they deliver a positive return. Likewise, you'll need to get out of the "me" mentality and begin to focus on the "you".

Social media is 100% about creating a unique experience with others. Selfishness gains no traction in an interconnected world. People are quick to call out B.S. and will be relentless on telling others when they have a bad experience with a business.

On the flip side, however, a positive reaction from people will create great opportunities to build solid relationships, spur additional sales, increase brand exposure and create a feedback loop that will help your business grow over time.

The Platform Doesn't Matter; Your Participation Does

The overall platform you choose to reach your community doesn't matter nearly as much as your participation. After all, there's no sense in joining dozens of social media platforms if you sit idly by as your community evolves and your competition gains authority.

It's more important to simply choose a platform which your community frequents and jump right in.

With that being said, there are three major social platforms which your attention should be guided toward:

- **Facebook**
- **Twitter**
- **LinkedIn**

Each of the mentioned platforms will give you a voice to reach a larger audience than you could have ever imagined. Each provides a unique experience which may not necessarily transition to another but all of them have incredible impact for your business and brand.

Let's take a further look into the "big three" for business:

Facebook 101

Facebook is a monster when it comes to social media with more than 800 million active users. You can find anyone from celebrities to your High School crush; it's guaranteed that you will find a large portion of your community active on Facebook.

Facebook is simple in design and practice; it gives you a wide variety of options when promoting your business and connecting with customers on the social network, including:

- **Fan Pages/Business Pages** – Fan pages are where you can create a page, dedicated to your business, where users can 'like' and invite others. Your page can become a great platform to update followers on what's happening at the business as well as sharing great information (or experiences) with the rest of the community.
- **Advertising** – Facebook has a robust advertising platform that's unmatched. Your options for selective targeting can be as miniscule as someone's hair color; this sort of power is incredible for targeted campaigns. Combined with fan pages, your advertising on Facebook can build into a massive campaign.
- **Events** – Events are as the name implies. Your business can create and share events with other members of your community which can be as simple as a new product launch or a full-on get together in a public area. Events can be great to bring out the human side of business and social media as it happens in the real world.

The first essential action with getting started with Facebook is to get signed up. Once you're profile is setup and you've played around with the interface it's time to really take the social network to the next level by creating a fan page for your business.

Your Facebook Fan Page is a place where you can gather followers and keep them updated for the latest updates in your business like new product releases or contests. Fan Pages are simple to set up and can be done in less than 10 minutes. Treat your Fan Page like you would your website; fill it with great content, interact with your followers and use it to build a following. Get started with building a Facebook Fan Page by visiting the [Facebook Page creation webpage](#).

Secondly, it is worthwhile to invest in Facebook advertising. Facebook advertising is similar to many other advertising platforms; you choose a keyword, create ad copy, fund your advertising budget and let it roll. Your Facebook advertising campaign can reach millions of users or just a few based on your targeted selection. Advertising on Facebook is infinitely powerful from the amount of filters you can set when targeting your desired customer. To get started, visit the [Facebook Advertising page](#) and sign up.

Finally, you can use Facebook to create events. Events are localized and can be used if you are having in store sales. Although this may not apply for your online business it can still be used for your local customers if you are willing to let them come into the offices. Get started by visiting the Facebook Event creation page.

Twitter 101

Twitter is a microblogging service that allows you to communicate with millions of people, in real-time, using 140 characters or less called 'tweets'. Twitter has caught on because of the micro format; it's easy to get started and the short messages help people readily communicate without wasting time such as the long-form commonly found in email.

Twitter is one of the easier social networks to pick up; you can understand the majority of it within an hour. There are a few parts of Twitter that you should understand, such as:

- **Tweet** – A tweet is a message you send on Twitter.
- **RT** – RT stands for ReTweet which happens when someone forwards your message.
- **DM** – Is used for Direct Messaging, for example "DM @John Hello!"

There are many other little nuances of Twitter but at its core you are communicating with others as if it were a chat room; except, this chat room is public for everyone. Twitter, for business, is a little different than personal use but there are many parallels. Your business can use Twitter to keep people informed about new content on your website, communicate with customers, follow industry leaders, and keep up to date on news. There really isn't any specific purpose for Twitter other than what you make it. The best way to get started with Twitter is to sign up ([click here](#)). Fill out your Twitter profile with a real picture of yourself. Add a description that explains your company and what you have to offer. Link to your business and make any other modifications to your background (such as adding a custom design to help your Twitter stream stand out).

From this point, it's all about the conversation. You can use [Twitter Search](#) to begin finding people that fit into your community. Search for keywords which apply to your business and follow those people that are talking about what applies to your business. Begin talking to these people by messaging them and asking them questions. The name of the game is conversation.

Twitter should be seen as a long-term investment. The greater value you deliver to your community the more you will get in return. Steadily build your followers and tap into your Twitter stream to discover new ways to improve your business. Reach out to people and create a relationship with them. Use Twitter to learn as much about your customers as you can; you have a direct connection to them so use it to your advantage!

LinkedIn 101

LinkedIn is a social network that pulls together professions and business owners to one, central place. LinkedIn has become a secondary for business cards; it has a mature audience in regards to those offered by the aforementioned social networks.

LinkedIn is one of the greater social networks for business owners as it provides access to other business owners. The relationships you create on LinkedIn can lead to very large business decisions. There are many opportunities to find customers on the LinkedIn network.

Here are a few ways LinkedIn can benefit your business:

- **Research competitors** – Use LinkedIn to research your competitors and their employees; find out what kind of developments and connections they have; use this knowledge to your advantage when implementing new features into your products or services.
- **Build brand awareness** – Use LinkedIn to bring awareness to your business by talking to relevant business owners in your niche. You can find many great connections that can lead to others talking about your business with their customers; try setting up joint venture deals!
- **Connect with real customers** – Your customers may also be professionals with their own business. Find them on LinkedIn by importing your customer list and use the network to easily contact your customers in a professional platform.
- **Learn from business owners** – Follow influential business owners and learn from the information they share. Join discussion groups and participate in conversations; give back to the community by sharing your own knowledge and utilize tips and tricks others have shared.

LinkedIn is a professional network so you should always retain your composure when interacting with others. Unlike many social networks, it's much more about the quality of your message rather than trying to get as many as you can out into the network. A few followers can have profound effects vs. the follower race you would find on Twitter or Facebook.

The Next Logical Step ...

The above only touched the tip of the iceberg when it comes to social media platforms but if you take away the design and nuances you're still, in short, connecting with people.

Once you begin to understand how social networks work you will be able to try others. But, as noted, it's more important that you *participate* rather than sit on the sidelines; actions speak louder than words.

Choose one (or all three) of the social media platforms mention. Jump right in by signing up, filling out your profile and play around with the interface. Find people in your industry and listen to what they have to say. Don't be afraid to jump into the conversation. Share your best information and reward people when they follow you. Get active; that's the most important step in using social media for your business.

Chapter 3: The Essential Tools of the (Social Media) Trade

Time is a factor when it comes to social media. The world is connected 24 hours a day and many of your best customers may be active when your business is closed. Luckily, there have been many tools created to help improve your social media experience, reduce the overall time you must invest and even help you earn additional revenue from your interactions.

You're not required, by any means, to use the tools listed in this section but they will certainly help you in the long run. You are, after all, a business owner and that means that your time is extremely precious; anything that can shave off an hour or two from your day means that you can stay focused on the important things.

Here is a hodgepodge of social media tools worth your time:

- [Bit.ly](#) – Bit.ly is a URL shortener that's bundle with simple tracking analytics. Many social platforms restrict the size of your message; URL shorteners such as Bit.ly allow you to save up valuable on-screen real estate. The built-in analytics will also show you how many people click through your links and at what time; perfect for anyone that needs to track the impact of their social media presence.
- [Twellow](#) – Twellow is a Twitter user search engine where you can find other members of the social network and pull up information about each user. Twellow is great for finding influential people within your network or potential customers.
- [Klout](#) – Klout is a tool to help determine your social media influence. You can use Klout to see your overall impact on social media networks like Twitter and Facebook. Additionally, you can seek out people within your niche that would be worthwhile to follow and interact with.
- [BackType](#) – BackType is a tool to search who is talking about your business or website on Twitter. BackType is especially resourceful to find people that engage with your content so you can reward and follow them; it's a great tool to help build your follower count.
- [HootSuite](#) – HootSuite is the ultimate tool for keeping your social media profiles in check. You can update your statuses right within the HootSuite dashboard and monitor multiple keywords and conversations in real time. HootSuite is perfect for the power social media user.

- **[SocialMention](#)** – SocialMention is an online tool to find out who's mentioning your business online. Much like the other tools, you can use SocialMention to find potential followers and connect with your audience.
- **[Google Alerts](#)** – Google Alerts is an email based notification service that will send you an update whenever keywords, of your selections, are mentioned. You can type in keywords that relate to your brand which gives you an advantage of getting the jump on joining a conversation.
- **[Topsy](#)** – Topsy is a real-time search engine for Twitter that lets you dig back through archives on the keywords and conversations of your choice. The Twitter Search tool is powerful but Topsy takes it to the next level.

The tools mentioned above will greatly save you time, each day, when being active on social media platforms. Social monitoring is a very important aspect of using social media in your business. Knowing who mentions your brand and where they do this will let you instantly jump into the conversation where you can display your value and help with any questions or comments your potential customers may have.

Tools are very helpful when using social media but remember to use your greatest tool: your head. Do the things that are right for your business. Find real people and have real conversations. Make social media work for you; don't turn it into another daily task that seems like a 'job' each day. Have fun with social media.

Chapter 4: Build a Remarkable Brand with Social Media

Social media participation is your chance to shine and build a remarkable brand. In the old days, big business would pour millions of dollars into their marketing campaigns to sway the consensus of the public. It was easy back then to build a brand if you had the money because there were so few players in the market.

However, the tides have turned. Small business can now run circles around big business because social media has given businesses, like your own, direct access to its customers. You no longer have to rely on huge budgets to run TV, radio and print ads. You can use free platforms, social media, to connect to your core audience and build a remarkable brand.

There are three fundamentals to building a remarkable brand today:

- **Culture** – People don't want the generic run-around that many big businesses push on them. Today, people want to interact with businesses that actually care and have a unique stance in the market. The core element of reaching out to this new generation of customers is through a strong company culture. Your culture will represent every element of your business from the content it creates to the way your employees interact with your customers. A great company culture trickles down from the top; caring employees will care about the business' customers, customers will care about your business and all of this builds a strong level of trust. Trust becomes authority, authority becomes a powerful brand.
- **Consistency** – The consistency of your message is vitally important. You can't say one thing today and change it around tomorrow; you throw people through a loop and this gives them nothing to attach themselves to. If you say something you have to mean it. You have to be consistent in your message at all times because consistency breeds familiarity and this is the core of people remembering your business (and brand).
- **Content** – Social media is built on content and communication. People utilize social networks like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to interact with one another but also to share content. Your business needs to create the best possible content that shares its greatest secrets. Businesses that share their best information aren't giving away the "honey pot"; they are providing valuable information that displays their expertise and stance in the market. A business that is willing to give away its best information makes people interested to seek additional products and services. Their thought is "if this is what they give away

for *free*, I wonder what I get when I *pay*". Building a social media presence based on an exchange in value creates instant recognition in your brand.

Once you have mastered the three items above it really only comes down to doing it over and over again, every day. At first, you may not see a return on investment but if you stick with it, your business will begin to build its social media presence. It's a marathon, not a sprint.

Building a remarkable brand begins to develop opportunities which weren't accessible to many small businesses just a decade ago, including:

- People freely sharing your marketing message through word-of-mouth
- Brand ambassadors that will fight tooth and nail for your business
- Wildly passionate customers that will be with your business for life

Once you've built a brand, with social media, you will begin to make waves on the web. Every message you share will pull the attention of the industry. Every person you help will add to your perceived value. Every new product you release will be met with anticipation. Branding truly is all powerful; social media is the tool that has finally put the power back into the small business owners' hands and given them an edge against big business.

Chapter 5: Social Media for Small Businesses

The beginning of this book shared that social media is changing the way we do business. Until this point, you've learned how to get started with these networks and dip your toes into the possibilities that each provide. Now is the time to take social media to the next level and turn it into one of the most important elements of your small business.

There are no definitive guides for using social media for your business but there have been countless campaigns that have been wildly successful time and time again. Each of the following will need to be adapted to your own brand and business but if you put time and resources towards them it will pay off in the long run.

- **Social media for customer support** – Services and platforms like Twitter, Facebook and even LinkedIn can become a great source for solving customer problems or helping with support. Many businesses have taken to social media to connect with their customers in a real-time environment to quickly respond to customers. The added benefit of customer support on social media is that each of your interactions are done so in a public environment which shows your value, to the industry, and may lead to future relationships with those that find you and your business authentic.
- **Creating excitement from social media campaigns** – In the past, companies would hold contests and require customers to enter through mail, calling in or showing up to an event. Today, huge contests and events can happen in real time with a tenfold of community participation. Information spreads like wildfire which allows your social media campaigns to pick up epic momentum; each person that shares your event will simultaneously share it with their own followers. Your social media campaigns can take on a viral effect that brings incredible brand awareness (and potential sales) to your business.
- **Gather customer feedback and suggestions** – Research gives you the insight into where you can take your company; this may include the products it develops, pricing, audience and even its marketing endeavours. Social media is perfect for conducting real-time research. Log into your preferred social media platform and begin asking your followers what they would like to see from your business. Have people interact with your brand and follow discussions; this information is invaluable because it comes directly from your consumer. Take the information you've gathered to make accurate decisions for how your business will evolve.

- **Increase traffic and brand awareness to your website** – Utilize social media to drive traffic to your website and build a better understanding of your brand. Sharing content on social networks give people insight into what your business has to offer and its company culture. Every new piece of content you create for your website should be distributed on the social networks; this gives people information they seek and pulls people to your business. Additionally, be ready to share your follower's content because social media is a combination of give and take. The more you give the more you will receive; this goes for both sides and a happy medium is the best way to make a great impression on your followers.
- **Stay in touch with your industry and its customers** – Use social media to keep up on the latest updates in your industry. Markets, these days, shift almost over night; if your business isn't ready it could be left in the dust. Monitor social media for upcoming trends and how your customers react to new changes in the industry. Use the information you've gathered to update your own business practices. Keep in touch with your customers to make sure they are getting what they want; a happy customer is a long-term customer.

If you noticed, there is one thing missing from this list: *selling*.

Selling is often the first item that comes to mind for business owners when social media is presented but it's like water and oil – it doesn't mix. There are times when you *can* make a direct sale to another social media user (such as when they actively ask for suggestions) but it's best to treat your social media experience as a long-term forum of engagement.

Directly selling to others, on social networks, gives businesses a black eye. Social media users frown upon pushy tactics which were commonplace in traditional media; it's one of the main reasons why people shifted away from those platforms.

With all temptation should you resist the urge to bombard social networks with your marketing message; it's best to let people naturally flock to your business. People *will* become customers if you show them respect and deliver them a great experience.

A remarkable experience with a business that's shared on social networks and further improved through active dialog between all parties will have a much greater impact for your business to earn revenue than trying to sell to an individual and off-putting thousand of other members.

In conclusion, your social media usage, for business, really comes back to the mom & pop attitude. Your participation in social media will be more about creating a great feeling with customers and community so they *want* to come back rather than being *told* to. The items listed above will put you on a correct path when using social media for business; you just have to stay on course.

Conclusion and Thanks for Reading

Throughout this book, you've learned many things:

- Why social media is important.
- How to get started and connect with a community.
- Building your brand and increasing your business.

In all, it may be a bit overwhelming at first but the more you participate, in social media, the easier it becomes. The times when you felt as if you were completely lost will seem like a thing of the past after the first few days of using social media. You'll become addicted to interacting with your community and marvel at how much you can give and get back from so many people.

Persistence truly is the most important trait you must possess when using social media for your small business. The early days of your usage will seem like it has no return on the time and resource you pour into it but over time it will certainly add up. You will discover new things about your business that can greatly improve your success, revenue will begin to climb and people will naturally follow your brand into future endeavours. It's at this time you should wrap up any notes, sign up for a social media platform and jump right into finding your community. Get going; get going *now*.

Thank you for reading this book and may success come to you and your business.

*With Gratitude,
Ann-Marie Cheung*



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Creative Solutions that Work!

Ann-Marie Cheung, sole proprietor of [Flash Goddess Media](http://FlashGoddessMedia.com) has over 12 years experience in multimedia and web design and development. As a graduate of the Ontario College of Art & Design, Ann-Marie contributes her unique design sensibility and creativity to all her projects. She has worked on e-learning projects, corporate presentations and projects for major financial institutions, and has creatively assisted many small to medium sized businesses.

At [Flash Goddess Media](http://FlashGoddessMedia.com) we help businesses create an attractive, effective online presence with a modern identity. We do this through website design and development, graphic design, and social media. We offer creative business solutions that work to help you gain more customers.

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