

You aren't on social media???

Those of us who work in a communications-related field have been quick to embrace and promote social media. We use social networks actively, we counsel clients to get on social media, and here's the kicker, some of us frown on those who don't do social media.

But how important is it to business to be on social media?

Just this morning, I read how Gini Dietrich of Spin Sucks is now a Hertz customer because her former favorite car rental company, Avis, failed her on social media. It would seem that businesses are at peril if they ignore customer complaints expressed on social media.

The book Groundswell by Charlene Li also counsels that businesses must adapt to the reality that customers are on social media, and will talk about you whether you participate or not in the conversation.

And yet, there are many many successful businesses that don't have a Facebook page, that are not on Twitter, have never heard of Pinterest—and **don't care**. For example, there's an accounting firm in McLean, VA that created a website seven years ago and has barely updated it since and that has absolutely no social media presence. Or the marketing firm that has a blog last updated more than a year ago. Or the many solo practitioners I have met that don't even have a website.

The truth is you can be in business, and even be successful, without doing social media. Social media is just a platform, like television or radio. If you don't use it, you may not reach a certain segment of the population, but that does not mean that you aren't reaching your target audience.

The big issue is that consumers take to social media to voice their complaints (not so much their compliments) about

businesses. Those consumers figure that the amplification power of social media will shame businesses into fixing their problem. And in many cases, this is exactly what happens. Unlike the mass media of yore, social media allows for far more connection and interaction between businesses and consumers.

But what if your business is not a huge national brand? Does it matter? I don't think it does.

That said, I believe that being on social media is an asset to any business. Social media networks can help grow connections and create new relationships. Social media helps to market and grow a business, and expose it to new audiences.

Businesses do not need social media to thrive, but they should consider using social media to grow.

What do you think? Do you judge businesses if they aren't on social media?