

How to choose the best social networks for marketing

Being effective in social media marketing requires choosing the right social networks on which to spend time and effort (and money). And you do have to choose because a) there are too many networks and b) some will work better than others.

To choose the “right” social networks you should consider:

Your offering. Are you a retailer or a service provider? How much explanation does your offering require?

Your target audience. Who is buying your product or service? Where does the target prefer to receive information? Where is the target likely to make a decision?

Your strengths. Are you visual or do you like words? Are you more likely to take and post pictures or write a 1000-word blog post?

Where have you had the most traction? If you haven’t yet been measuring response, then start right away. Google Analytics will tell you where people are coming from, and this is very valuable information. If most of your customers are coming from a particular social network, it makes sense to focus your energy and effort there.

I met a blogger who writes about event planning, and she gets the most visits to her blog from Pinterest. So she focuses exclusively on building her Pinterest presence. Then there’s the women’s clothing and accessories retailer who gets most of her online orders through Facebook. She has decided to budget for Facebook ads and sponsored posts and it is really paying off.

In both cases, these people understand their product/service

and where to best market it. And they have decided to really focus on the social network that provides the most bang for the buck.

How many social networks do you focus on? Are you finding some work better than others?

You aren't on social media???

Those of use 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?

It's so basic, it makes sense!

Have you ever been to a networking event where you meet people, ask what they do and they give you a long rambling explanation or a very obscure description. You are then confused and ask them to clarify, and then they say this: Basically, I do [something you can understand].



Aha by Himmelskratzer on Flickr

Some people can just give you their job's title, such as chief counsel at xyz industries, and you can understand what they do. And some people have easy to understand professions such as doctor, accountant, insurance sales or real estate development.

Also, describing yourself as the "senior" manager or vice president does not help explain what you do.

But take for instance someone I met recently. He started off by telling me where he works (a company with advocacy in the name, but that doesn't actually advocate). Then, he told me they work with individuals who are looking to ensure their access to financing (or something like that). Then he said: "Basically, I sell insurance."

Generally, when you start a sentence with basically, you are about **distill the essence of something to its most UNDERSTANDABLE part**. Like a structural engineer who tells you that basically, she works to make bridges safer. Or the content strategist who tells you that, basically, he works with companies to find the most relevant information for their customers.

So before you go to your next networking event, or write your about page on your website, ask yourself: what is it that you do (or your company does), basically?

If it's basic, it generally makes sense!

UPDATE

Media trainer Brad Phillips has a great suggestion for improving your elevator pitch: start with the why. Here's a link to the post on the Mr. Media Training blog.

How to get more blog readers (and customers) fast

If there is one “secret” to get more blog readers (other than having a relevant, interesting, well written blog), it is this: be likeable. That's it.



Heart doodle by
findingthenow on Flickr

People tend to do business with companies they like. People hire people they like. And people read blogs they like.

If you've ever read Dale Carnegie, you know that one of the main tenets in his teachings is to be likeable. For example, Carnegie says it is better to not to try to win an argument—let the other person be right. He also suggests disarming critics by being nice to them.

Social network behemoth Facebook knows likeability is key. After all, you are asked to “like” pages and status updates.

How can your blog be more likeable? Here are a few suggestions:

Be easy to understand—Instead of throwing around fancy words and jargon, make sure people know what you are saying.

Show your expertise without showing off—If you have to tell people you are superman, then your super powers are failing you (and perhaps you left your superhero costume at the dry cleaners).

Have an approachable tone— People respond positively to cheerful, casual and caring tones, among others, while

sarcastic, acid and pedantic tones generally turn people off.

Leave combativeness to soldiers at war—You can disagree with something without attacking it wholesale.

What makes you like reading a blog? What makes you never come back? Let me know in the comments.

*Become a better blogger! Join me for the **How to Write Your Blog** workshop on April 1 (one week from today!) in Washington, D.C. Details and registration [here](#).*

Is Feedly picking up the feed? Test post.

As has happened multiple times already, Feedly has stopped picking up the feed to this blog. My last post, which I wrote on Thursday, March 20, has yet to appear. I am testing to see if this post will be picked up. It is a disaster when you depend on the RSS to work for your readers to be able to see your stuff. Feedly is failing me.

I apologize for any inconvenience if you are getting this through email.

How to lose blog readers fast

Have you ever seen a blog headline that says something like this:

How to lose 10 lbs. fast!

You quickly go check it out to find that the blog post doesn't really exist. You will not be losing 10 pounds fast, but you may be asked to pay ten pounds (if you were in England, perhaps 10 dollars here in the U.S.). In some cases, the blog post will consist of one line providing a bit of the information you are looking for, and then you will be hit with this: *click here for more*. The "more" is that you are likely being asked to buy a book, seminar, program, etc. to learn the many secrets of fast weight loss (or increasing sales, or whatever).

A variation on this is the pop-up that appears before you can even read the blog post asking you to sign up for a "free" newsletter or sign in as a "member" to read more. In this case, the blog owner wants your information to add to a database as an exchange for providing information.

I may not know how to lose weight fast, but I do know what makes blogs lose readers in a second:

Tease them or try to sell them.

Readers come to your blog to pick up some knowledge, insight, advice, tips or motivation. They do not come to your blog solely to buy something. They do not want to give you their name and email and credit card information. They don't want to be added to your email list. They simply want to learn.

If you aren't willing to give information to your blog readers for free, with no strings attached, I suggest you forget blogging and look to other methods of content delivery.

Am I suggesting you have to give away all your secrets for free in your blog? Of course not! But you must think of your blog as a way to help your readers learn something while showing them that you know your stuff.

You *can* promote your events and e-books and seminars, but not by teasing your audience or bullying them into giving you money now. Do it like I will below, and your readers won't be turned off.

*Avoid blog errors like this one. Attend my **How to Write Your Blog** workshop on April 1 in Washington, D.C. Early registration discount ends tomorrow at midnight, so register today to save \$10. More information and registration on the [Eventbrite page](#).*

Did Mad Men write this commercial?

Now, I should say upfront that I do NOT watch Mad Men, the AMC series about the advertising business in New York City in the 1960s. However, I do know that it shows the very real sexism of the time that ran rampant in advertising agencies. Women were generally in support staff positions rather than as creatives or agency principals (come to think of it, even in the 1990s, when I worked in advertising, the agency principals were all men...).

On the radio a couple of days ago, I heard a commercial for a

home security company. In the spot, a woman is narrating and telling the audience that since her husband started traveling a lot for business, she is afraid to be alone in her house. And because she wishes to retaliate against her husband for taking the job that makes him go out on the road so much, and leaving her all alone , she has decided to get a home security system so that she can feel safe. Now, if she hears a noise, she doesn't need to reach for the Xanax, but rather look at her computer screen and monitor all the rooms in the house. (I am not making this up, except for the Xanax part.)

The commercial makes several assumptions:

- 1.) Women are afraid to be alone (being the weaker sex and all).
 - 2.) Only men have (big, important) jobs that require travel.
 - 3.) Women can make the decision to buy something, but the husband (who is the breadwinner after all) is the one controlling the household finances.
 - 4.) Only married people own homes that would require home security (single people always live in apartments apparently).
- (I could add 5.) Marriage is only between a man and a woman , but this is so ubiquitous in advertising that it's a topic for another day).

When I heard it on the radio, I couldn't believe that a company wanted to advertise its services in this way in 2014. Women have been in the workforce for a long time and they travel for business. In fact, I found the commercial to be quite offensive. But clearly, in the mind of this sexist home security company, as a single woman who is not afraid of being in my own home by myself, I am not the target market.

What is particularly a bad marketing decision is to be so narrowly focused when home security is something that could be

sold to every home owner. This commercial not only is **too narrowly targeted but it could serve to turn off potential customers** due to the various outdated assumptions it makes.

Other companies are being more reflective of the reality of gender roles. For example, a national detergent brand has a TV commercial where the dad is doing the laundry of his very rambunctious (and dirty) little girls. Or the insurance company that shows a single mother shopping for life insurance.

We are not living in the 1960s. Companies that use dated (and sexist) notions are alienating potential customers...and that is not good for the bottom line.

*In the Washington area and looking to jump start your blog? Attend the **How to Write Your Blog** workshop on April 1. Sign up before March 21 to get early registration pricing. Registration [here](#).*

Is robotic social media worth it?

On Wednesday, I wrote about how some Twitter accounts seem to be run by Rosie, the robot maid on The Jetsons. But robotic social media happens on other social networks and even on blogs. Since so many people seem to be doing it, what is the value of robotic social media?

Robotic social media? That's a thing?

First, what do I mean by robotic social media? I mean social media that is cursory, unengaged, formulaic, uninspired, and there because someone thought it was a good idea to be present (but not active) on social networks. It's the one tweet a day that announces a new blog post. Or the automated "thank you for following me" tweet. It's the blog post that has no salient point and seems written just to have some new content on your site. It's the LinkedIn profile that has not seen an update in three years, since it was set up.

Robotic social media nearly always depends on some sort of "social media management tool" that usually cross posts for you, and basically handles social media by algorithm.

Why would you do that?

I have been thinking about why people would use social media in such a non-social way. There are probably several reasons, for example:

- For SEO purposes
- Too busy to manage social media on your own
- To check off social media on the communications plan tactics

Only one of these could have some sort of value: SEO. Certainly, due to changes in search engine algorithms, social media has impact on search results. The theory is that being present on social media *helps* your search results. However, I believe that search engines reward influence, and being robotic (unengaged) does not lead to influence.

Perhaps, it is even counteractive

I wrote about the woman who admitted she uses a Twitter management tool and that she really hadn't known she "knew" me from Twitter. Now, I know that there's no there there. So no more interaction. Davina Brewer in the comments on that post mentions something that happens every day, with big brands and

regular people: no response to direct tweets/messages. In fact, just this morning, I tweeted LinkedIn to ask a question, and still no response.

When I don't get a response, I assume that person/brand/organization doesn't care or doesn't even monitor their messages. I then stop interacting. I bet many people stop interacting or even following brands/organizations when their comments are not even acknowledged.

In my opinion, robotic social media is not worth it. To do something just because you think you have to, and then do it by proxy, is not going to accomplish any goals other than checking something off your to-do list.

As many have said before, social media is a platform not a strategy. If you don't use the platform, it doesn't mean you don't have a communications strategy. Use the platform well, on the other hand, and you will further your communications strategy rather than stymie it.

*Don't be robotic! Come learn how to blog with me in the **How to Write Your Blog** workshop on April 1 in Washington, D.C. You will learn what makes for an effective blog, how to come up with blog post ideas and how to connect with your audience. Details and registration [here](#).*

Is it real or is it...a robot?

Imagine you're having a party. You invite some friends and acquaintances. You crank up some music, put out some snacks and drinks, and your guests are milling around, having a good time. There's a knock on the door and Rosie, the robotic maid from the Jetsons is there. She's been sent in place of your

friend Jane Jones. Jane is sorry she can't attend but she is too busy. Rosie comes in and tells you that she has been instructed to follow people she might find interesting. She then starts walking behind a couple of your friends.



Rosie Love by Doran
on Flickr

At some point, a group of you are sitting and discussing your upcoming vacation plans when suddenly Rosie chimes in and says: My latest blog post is about how to maximize user engagement. One of your friends asks Rosie to share her top tip on maximizing user engagement. Rosie is silent. Everybody goes back to discussing vacation planning.

This scenario happens every single day on Twitter, as busy people try to participate in the Twitter conversation via robot (also known as Twitter management).

Are you using a Twitter Management tool?

Last night, I was at an event (in real life) and saw someone I follow (and who follows me) on Twitter. I went over and said hi. She looked at me blankly. I explained we follow each other on Twitter. She kind of laughed and explained that she uses Commun.it, something that automatically follows people for her, and even tweets for her. So in essence, I have been

interacting with a robot.

If your goal for Twitter is engagement, then having a robotic presence is a killer. I am not saying you shouldn't schedule some tweets or use something to let you find people to follow. But if you are not participating in it personally, and you are basically "tweeting by proxy," you are nothing more than Rosie Jetson—a robot bringing nothing to the conversation.

Perhaps you are too busy for Twitter

My thought is that if you are too busy for Twitter, perhaps it is not the best platform for you. Twitter is time intensive, no doubt. And if you use it well, you can develop real relationships with people all over the world. If you use it robotically, on the other hand, you get very little if anything from it. You may have a long list of followers and people you are following, but if there is no meaningful interaction, what is the point?

Do you use a Twitter management tool? Why or why not? If you do, what do you get from it? Please share in the comments.

*Looking to jump start your blogging? Join me for the next **How to Write Your Blog** workshop, taking place on April 1 in Washington, D.C. For more details and to register, check out the [Eventbrite page](#).*

5 mistakes to avoid on your blog

When you read as many blogs as I do, you see a lot of really great blogs. Great blogs have interesting and relevant content

and they are easy to read. But just as there are great blogs, there are many more mediocre blogs.



Forehead Slap by Terry Robinson on Flickr

What separates a great blog from a mediocre one? Avoiding these five mistakes:

1. **Being hard to understand.** Perhaps it's the excessive use of jargon, or the spelling and grammatical mistakes, but mediocre blogs make it hard for a reader to get the point.

2. **Not being scannable.** Web reading is different than print reading. We tend to favor shorter sentences and the ability to move down the page quickly. In short, web writing should be scannable, that is providing readers with with lots of headings, lists, bullets and short sentences.

3. **No dateline.** I have heard the argument than by not having a dateline on your blog posts the content seems evergreen. Perhaps. But evergreen content is always evergreen—the date shouldn't matter. In my opinion, blogs are a way of establishing timeliness and currency. If you don't have datelines, readers can't tell when you last updated your blog (which of course is your intention). If they can't tell whether your last post is from last week or last year, you are basically making it very hard to judge if you are still blogging or not.

4. **No author information or about page.** Have you ever gone to

a blog and tried to figure out who the author is? Well, you shouldn't have to channel your inner Sherlock Holmes in order to find out. There should be an about page or an author biography somewhere that is easy to find. People want to know who is writing the stuff they are reading. Even on corporate blogs you could have an author biography for blog contributors (you can use great plugins like the one I use, Biographia) plus a corporate/organizational "about us" page.

5. No sharing capability (or with limited sharing capability).

It seems unbelievable that in 2014, when it seems all brands are begging you to follow them on Facebook and Twitter, there are blogs that lack sharing capabilities. It's a plugin and it's free! What's the problem? I also can't stand blogs that only allow you to share to only one social network, especially when that network is Pinterest.

What mistakes do you see on blogs? Please share in the comments. I am sure there are more out there!

Avoid these mistakes! Come learn how to blog with me on April 1 in Washington, D.C. You will learn what makes for an effective blog, how to come up with blog post ideas and how to connect with your audience. Details and registration [here](#).