

Social Media for Business

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Introduction

By Lois Arbogast, Vistage International

One year ago, the words Twitter, Facebook and YouTube were just big buzz-words taking their turn in the spotlight. But as the year progressed, businesses found ways to use these social media sites to reach customers. What appeared to be a fad, has become a valuable marketing and PR tool for companies.

While researching this white paper, I had the opportunity to discuss social media successes with CEOs of companies from several industries. The one commonality among CEOs using social media is a trial and error process that leads to a way and use for social media that works for their particular company. Business owners are using social media to:

- Find and engage prospects
- Provide technical and customer support
- Understand the needs/wants of customers
- Increase brand awareness and publicity
- Bring together brand loyalists to share their stories

Business owners that want to do business better, faster, and smarter need to adapt and incorporate social media opportunities into their corporate strategies. This white paper includes advice from the Vistage community of leaders and experts on how to apply social media techniques and practices to your business plan.

“There is no better way that I know of to instantly and cheaply reach tens of thousands of people the way you can through social media.”

—Guy Kawasaki, AllTop, *I am Paddy Blog*, 1/09

“The 2009 customer is unrecognizable from the 1999 customer. Consumers in all age groups are moving from offline channels to online.”

— Social Media Survey, *PR Week*, 10/09

“People connect with companies and brands they can relate to and have a relationship with.”

—David Binkowski, MS&L Digital, *PR Week*, 10/09

“If you are not managing your brand, someone else is.”

—Tonya Garcia, *PR Week*, 10/09



Five Easy Ways to Jump Start Social Media for Your Business

By Lois Arbogast, Vistage International

Confused about social media? You are not alone. Many business owners feel overwhelmed by the idea of establishing a presence in the social media world. But, it's not really that complicated. At a recent Vistage webinar for its CEO members, social media experts said your company is missing out on a prime opportunity to engage customers in social conversations. Below are basic tips on where to start and how to engage.

#1 Check out your competition

Check out your competition before beginning your own social media campaign. See what they are doing and how they are doing and, if applicable tailor it to your needs. If it works for them, it could work for you! Learn from their activities and adapt them to fit with your company.

#2 Listen Actively

Search for your company name on social media platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook to see what your clients like and dislike about your services and then jump into the conversation. Be positive and let them know how you'll improve. Social media is a great place to learn what consumers are saying about your product, customer service and company philosophy.

#3 Be Transparent

Approach online conversations about your product openly and engage in conversations with full disclosure that you are the one representing the brand. Ask what they think about your product. You are there to listen and engage, not to sell.

Consumers utilizing social media platforms aren't looking to be "sold" on your product. What they are looking for is candid advice, exceptional customer service and real-life connections.

#4 Link. Link. Link

Link to your social media presence on your Web site, in your signature block and even on your business card. Include your [Twitter handle](#) at the end of any article or blog comments you leave. Create a [Facebook fan page](#) for your product and post a button linking to it on your website. The more places you link to your social media presence, the larger following you'll develop.

#5 Once a day does it!

You've done the legwork to set up your network. Now spend 15 minutes per-day updating



each platform with relevant information and interacting with your followers. Be sure to keep your content fresh.

What can all this do for you? Raise your brand awareness and brand loyalty. When people connect with you online in positive ways, they spread the word and help you grow your business. Need a daily reminder? Print these steps out and post them in your office as a step-by-step process to get you started.

And if you are still not sure about where to look for guidance on what constitutes good social media, turn to the experts and keep listening until you are comfortable diving in yourself.



Interview With a CEO: Why You Can't Ignore Social Media

By Lois Arbogast, Vistage International

I recently had the opportunity to interview a Vistage member whose company was an early-adopter of social media and has seen great success because of it. Sid Banerjee's company, Clarabridge, sells text-mining software to help Fortune 500 companies better track and analyze customer experiences. Much of that customer experience text is mined from social media sites. This shift in where customers voice themselves forced Sid to think seriously about having a presence on Facebook and Twitter to grow his own company. After some experimentation, Clarabridge now uses social media not only to monitor its own reputation online, but also to gain new business.

Here, Clarabridge CEO and Vistage member, Sid Banerjee discusses how he developed a successful social media presence.

Q: How do you use technology to keep in touch with employees and customers?

A: We noticed early on that our prospects were looking to social media before they bought a product to see what others were saying. They relied on the insights of customers, bloggers, and analysts, and were often using social media to educate themselves before making purchase decisions. We also found that a lot of people went to their social networks, whether it be in an online service chat, via twitter or through industry blogs, to get tech support and service advice. This made us realize that we needed to have a presence in that space if for no other reason than to help our customers find solutions to any difficulties they'd experienced with our products.

Q: Can you tell me about some of the successes your company has had using social media?

A: About a year and a half ago, I was just starting to delve into Twitter and understand how it could work for our company. I happened to see a tweet about our company in which a customer complained our technology wasn't compatible with the Firefox Internet browser. This particular customer was at company headquarters in on-site training that day and was frustrated because he thought he was wasting his time learning a new product that wasn't going to work with his browser. Despite being across the country at the time, I was able to quickly respond as the CEO of the company and let him know that I had seen his tweet and would have someone show him how to set it up so that it performed using Firefox. An hour later, I saw the customer send out another tweet stating that the problem had been solved and how impressed he was to learn the CEO monitored the company on Twitter and had reached out to him personally to ensure a solution was found. He proceeded to tweet



about the superior customer service and products our company offered. After that, I knew the value and importance of social media and was convinced it was something we needed to focus on.

Q: What gadgets or technology tools have helped you stay on top of the social media trend?

A: Despite the fact that everyone seems to have an iPhone these days, I still stick with a Blackberry. I've downloaded Tiny Twitter and Facebook, and have experimented with a few other social media tools for Blackberry that aggregate content, but tend to stick with traditional platforms rather than services that combine all the social media forums. As most CEOs aren't shy to admit, we don't have a lot of time. So I often don't get onto the different networks until the end of the day right before bed and then again first thing in the morning. It's become part of my routine to spend about 30 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes in the evening catching up on what people are saying about our company and responding to any messages I've received. For me, it's great because I'm able to look at it as something I do casually and comfortably as opposed to something I need to really sit down and focus on.

Q: You spoke about Blogging earlier. Does that take up a lot of time? How do you work that into a CEO's schedule?

A: Blogs are the exception to my casual and comfortable rule. I usually keep a list of topics I want to cover on my Blackberry and in my office so that when it comes time to blog, I have a few different things to choose from and don't waste time brainstorming an idea. When I first started blogging, I didn't get the concept. I'd sit down for an hour and hammer out a 1,000-word blog post and think I'd done a good job. It wasn't until my Marketing Director sat me down and explained that my posts were too long and they didn't need to be so formal that I really understood the technique behind blogging. Now I write three-to-five paragraphs and it takes me about 30 minutes per topic. I write two or three times a week and try to keep each post to one screen and one scroll down as a common practice. Our blog is prominently positioned and easily accessible from our corporate web site.

Q: How does social media play an active role in your company's communications and marketing plans?

A: Social media has become another communication channel for our company. Anytime we have an announcement about a new product or a tip on how to use our current products, we send it out through our social media networks and traditional channels. Anything exciting that Clarabridge does is always posted on our Facebook fan page and via our corporate Twitter handle.

We've also realized how important that social media content is for our customers who buy our text-mining software, and earlier this year we've even adapted the products we sell so that they can easily text mine social media content from Twitter, blogs, and Internet review sites.



Q: If you could offer CEOs one tip about social media, what would it be?

A: I would say that you really need to get out there and personally understand how it works before you start on a social media plan. I admit that even after our PR firm suggested it, I didn't really understand why we needed to have a presence in social media until I had a firsthand experience with it. Following a plan that you don't understand won't work. Experiment with it first, and then determine whether or not it's a fit for your business before you dive in head-first. Once you've determined what type of presence your company needs, then utilize a more formal plan.

Q: How do you respond to something negative being said about your company?

A: Social media gives you a chance to be involved in a conversation you otherwise wouldn't know about. If I see something negative said about my company, I look at it as an opportunity to change someone's mind by finding a solution that works for both parties. As soon as I see the comment or complaint, I make sure we follow up with a response to try and hammer-down the issue. This way, not only does Clarabridge get seen as a responsive company, it also offers me an opportunity to interact with my customers. The worst thing to do is to ignore negative feedback – it can create brand and reputation damage. By following up, I have another chance to fix the damage and make my company responsive and customer focused.

Q: If you're a small company that's not yet into social media, what's the single thing you could do that would have the biggest impact?

A: I think the best thing you can do is find out where your customers go and set up a presence on that media--it could be Facebook, Twitter, a support environment, or a blog. You should think about providing a way for your customers to get support online and develop a relationship with you online. There are likely to be segments of your customer base that are not social-media savvy, but almost every industry has a growing base of customers, partners and prospects who are. It's better to get with them before your competitor does and to establish a presence before your average customer arrives, rather than after.

Sid Banerjee is a member of Vistage CE Group 3355 in Washington, DC. He can be found on Twitter [@sidbanerjee](https://twitter.com/sidbanerjee). His company can be found online at www.clarabridge.com and on Twitter [@clarabridge](https://twitter.com/clarabridge).

How Social Media Marketing Can Take Your Company From Super to Superb

By Hollis Thomases, President and CEO, Web Ad.vantage, Inc.

“Social media marketing” (SMM) is one of those buzzwords that often gets tossed around without much context or insight as to what it really means. Social media is media (content) created by the masses rather than by large corporate institutions that have traditionally dominated what you and I know as “the media.” It’s sort of the democratizing of content: by the people, for the people. Among the most common examples of social media are terms you’ve probably at least already heard of like blogs, Wikipedia, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, but have you heard of blog commenting, webcasting, LinkedIn, Digg, Delicious, or Flickr? Are you left wondering how or even if your company should be a part of all of this? In other words, what’s in it for you?

You don’t have to take on the entire burden of SMM for your organization, but so you understand the medium, here are some common pointers you and your team will want to understand:

10 Social Media Marketing Tips:

1. **Find out where your customers (and competitors) are and set up shop.** Odds are, your customers are already discussing your brand on social networks, whether you’re aware of it or not. Just do a few simple Google, Technorati (www.technorati.com) or Twitter searches (www.search.twitter.com) on your brand or product names to find out who’s talking about it and where. Create accounts on the networks where buzz about your brand is the heaviest.
2. **Building one-on-one relationships.** By its very nature, SMM is about communicating with users (potential customers) individually, which you accomplish by starting meaningful conversations, answering questions, sharing information, giving honest feedback, and reaching out to new people and making connections.
3. **Put a human face on it.** Social media is not about a nameless, faceless logo. People want to know who they’re interacting with and that this is a person just like them, flaws and all. If you get heavily engaged in SMM, you can aggregate all your profile URLs into one referring URL by using a solution like XeeSM.com (see mine in the byline of this article) or Unhub.com.
4. **Engage through content.** SMM requires constant care and feeding, and that feeding comes most often in the form of content: industry news, how-to videos, new product



previews or reviews, unique offers, podcasts, tweets from conferences, and other brand-related content that keeps consumers interested.

5. **SMM is current.** Though blog posts, videos, and other forms of content can have a long “shelf-life,” SMM is very much about the here and now. What’s current? What are the issues facing your industry? What’s making news? Can you influence news? What can we comment upon and answer questions about? The more in-the-moment you can engage, the higher your visibility is likely to be, and this visibility will help your SMM success.
6. **Be realistic about resources.** All of this content, care and feeding is going to require time and commitment. Don’t bite off more than you can chew because an untended SMM effort is worse than none at all.
7. **Set actionable goals and have a plan.** Regardless of whom does the SMM work for your organization, their efforts should be led by specific goals, e.g. how much time will they commit to SMM, how often will they interact within each SM community, what will it take to generate new content, etc.? Set objectives, develop daily/weekly/monthly action plans, and track milestones for progress.
8. **Proactively monitor reactions to your brand.** This kind of “reputation management” gives you a window into what people are saying about your company though you can monitor your industry, your products, and your competitors as well. The simplest way is to set up a Google Alert (<http://www.google.com/alerts>) for each of the things you want to monitor. There are also free and paid social media monitoring tools - I’ve provided a partial list here: <http://www.webadvantage.net/webadblog/sneak-peek-2-twitter-marketing-an-hour-a-day-1896>. You’ll want to respond to negative criticism, thank people for positive mentions, and encourage feedback.
9. **Measure efforts.** Yes, SMM can be measured! Start by looking at your web analytics (like Google Analytics). Business versions of the monitoring tools also give you tracking and measurement information (here’s a list of social media measurement tools for business: <http://www.webadvantage.net/webadblog/sneak-peek-3-twitter-marketing-an-hour-a-day-1899>). Once you have set your actionable goals (#6), you’ll know better what tools will help you measure for those outcomes.
10. **Learn from your experiences.** SMM requires a lot of changing on the fly. Be prepared to adapt your action plan to the results (or not) you’re getting. Don’t think of poor results as failure because with SMM, you need to be learning all the time, even when things don’t turn out as you’d have liked them.

When considering if SMM is right for your company, ask yourself the following:

- What could be the overall benefit to my company? (more about benefits below)
- How should our company be involved?



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- Which social media sites/tactics are our targeted customers using or which would bring us the biggest benefit regardless?
- What are the pros and cons?
- What kind of resources, staff and lead time will we need to start and keep things going?
- What is my competition doing in the social media space?
- How will I manage from a leadership level? What role should the CEO play?
- What do we want to see with respect to tracking and analysis?
- How do we want to place value on these efforts?

Benefits

Intangible benefits of SMM are often realized immediately:

- Increased brand visibility, exposure, and relevance
- Improved customer relations
- Improved company morale

Tangible benefits may take time but are plentiful:

- Increased search engine rankings
- Increased inbound links to your company's website
- Increased website traffic
- Increased top-of-mind awareness
- Brand positioning as approachable, transparent, and interested in providing customer service
- A direct way to dialog with prospective customers, partners, and vendors who might not have otherwise found you



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- Instant results to surveys, polls, questions and a way to gauge the pulse of opinion when it comes to your brand.
- A weapon to combat harmful, untruthful, or otherwise detracting mentions of your brand—to help balance the negative with the positive.

As you can see, there are plenty of reasons to engage in this kind of marketing, so when devising your overall marketing plan, don't overlook social media marketing.

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Monitoring and Measuring Social Media for Your Business

*By: Lois Arbogast, Vistage International
Molli Megasko, Arment Dietrich, Inc.*

One of the most popular arguments of why NOT to use social media is that it's too hard to track and calculate an ROI. Here are 10 tools to utilize when monitoring your social media presence and ultimately verifying the success of your campaigns:

1. [Google Analytics](#)- This is a tracking and traffic service offered free by Google. By creating a campaign in Google Analytics that allows you to track back any and all links you post to your website, you'll have an immediate ROI. Google analytics is a great tool when used correctly, so you'll need to make sure you have someone knowledgeable on your staff to set up a campaign successfully. Once the link goes active, you'll be able to see how many people clicked through to your website and track where they went or what they purchased upon visiting. Make sure you capture any sales derived from links you've posted on social media sites by setting up goals within your analytics campaign. (www.google.com/analytics)
2. [Backtype](#)- A real-time, conversational search engine that gives you an update about what people are saying about your company and products. Compiled from Twitter, blogs and social networking article sites such as Reddit, Backtype allows you to effectively understand which bloggers are talking about your company so you can target them in the future. The bloggers will help you and your company establish a presence as an industry thought leader and could lead to an additional story about your company. (www.backtype.com)
3. [Twitter Search](#)- Gives you a live feed of people discussing your company on Twitter. Check up on trending topics involving your company to find the latest compliments, issues and opportunities. Can't find anyone talking about you? Twitter's a great place for your company to start the conversation and get noticed by potential customers. Developing an online community of "followers" helps you have candid conversations with people who may not otherwise have any exposure to your brand. (www.search.twitter.com)
4. [Facebook Fan Pages](#)- Facebook is used for individuals to connect, share photos, and relate to like people. This social networking site offers many opportunities for small businesses to expand their audiences externally. Whether you're trying to develop new talent, increase ecommerce, or simply build brand awareness, Facebook offers measurement tools within a groups' admin rights. By measuring number of fans, amount of comments and shares, you can benchmark where you started and set goals



for impressions and click-throughs. Here you can tell if what you are putting out is actually being read and from there what those fans are doing with that information. Are they clicking back to your website? Sharing it on their own pages? Facebook might seem like a big project, but by listening and measuring, your time spent will have a good ROI. (www.Facebook.com/pages/create.php)

5. [Addict-O-Matic](#)- Similar to Backtype, Addict-o-matic creates a custom page highlighting conversations, pictures, videos and articles mentioning your company. If you're looking for an all-encompassing snapshot of the buzz you're creating online, Addict-o-matic is the tool for you. From a corporate perspective, Addict-O-Matic is the perfect tool for a busy CEO. It allows you to stay on top of your online presence without signing into each individual service. (www.addictomatic.com)
6. [Website Grader](#)- A free SEO tool that measures the marketing effectiveness of a website. Website Grader scores your website based on things like website traffic, social popularity and SEO and then provides basic advice on how to improve your website from a marketing perspective. The tool is a perfect complement to a well-positioned social media campaign, as it helps make it easier for search engines to find and identify your corporate website. As a CEO, utilize this tool to evaluate where your website stands currently and where it has room for improvement. (www.websitegrader.com)
7. [Compete.com](#)- Gives you the opportunity to compare your website's popularity and analytics to those of your competitors. By entering your website address, as well as up to two competitors' website addresses, you'll be able to see a line chart highlighting the traffic to each of the websites as well as top search terms and referring sites for each company. This is a great benchmark tool to help track the success of a campaign from beginning to end while also keeping a tab on the success of your competition. If your competition's score is higher than yours, research what they're doing online and create a campaign that incorporates their successes. (www.compete.com)
8. [Delicious](#)- A social media bookmarking site that allows users to tag, save and share web pages in one place, Delicious helps you to better understand whether or not people find the content you're publishing interesting and relevant. The more people adding your website to Delicious, the more popular your website becomes and the higher it appears in search rankings. (www.delicious.com)
9. [Digg](#)- Digg allows people to share content published anywhere on the web. Once an article is shared, users can vote on the interest of the article and increase its popularity. As popularity increases, your article is sorted to the top of the Digg pile, appearing for more people. Oftentimes, you'll find a select group of people are "digging" your content. Follow up with these people as they may be interested in your industry or company specifically. (www.digg.com)
10. [Social Meter](#)- Social meter scans major social networking websites to analyze a webpage's popularity. It looks at link-backs on websites such as Digg, Delicious, Google



search and Technorati and tallies any results in a comprehensive bar chart. By releasing relevant information via press releases, Twitter and blogs, you can increase your social meter score. The higher the score, the more people are reading your content. (www.socialmeter.com)

By using the websites and tools listed above prior to beginning your social media campaign and then following progress on each as you go, your company can effectively fine-tune your efforts to be more targeted and produce a higher ROI. Find a few tools that work well for you, such as a Google Analytics campaign, and check them weekly. Once you've developed a good foundation for tracking your progress, calculating the ROI for your efforts will be as easy as pulling your company financials.



Selling Social Media to Your Executive Team

By Gini Dietrich, Chief Executive Officer, Arment Dietrich, Inc.

By now you know that if you want to try something new, you have to show your executive team the return-on-investment (ROI), the results, and the time commitment needed to accomplish the goals. The mantra is the same, no matter where you work: How does this affect the bottom line?

There are conflicting messages about the ROI for social media in the great, big World Wide Web, but you can measure the effectiveness of a program, if you are consistent, build your community, set benchmarks, and monitor daily.

There are two ways you can sell a social media program to the C-suite:

1. Tie results to the P&L.
2. Tie results to more improved customer service and better efficiencies.

If your CEO is an entrepreneur, he or she wants to hear the idea, how you think it will improve the P&L or customer service, and then they want you to run with it. If your CEO is a “hired gun,” there may be more process behind what you present and how you execute, but the strategy is the same.

When I speak to [Vistage](#) CEO groups, I have them tell me everything they’re doing to communicate to their customers, employees, and stakeholders. On that list, you typically find:

- Trade ads
- Trade shows and conferences
- Business publication advertising
- Public relations
- Email marketing
- Marketing brochures
- Radio and television ads
- Customer service department



Selling Social Media to Your Executive Team

- Internal and external newsletters
- Golf outings
- Client dinners
- Travel to see clients

Then I ask, “What if you can still do all of this, but have a new way of distributing the information, getting feedback, listening to what your clients have to say, and make changes immediately, instead of when someone becomes unhappy or you have a crisis on your hands? What if you can talk to your customers every day to build loyalty, without having to depend solely on client dinners and golf outings?”

This is where I start to get their attention. Then I ask, “What if, right now, your customer service department or your sales people are hiding an issue from you because they want to try to fix it before you hear about it? What if you learn about it the instant it becomes an issue, because you’re talking to your customers every day, one-on-one, in an informal, and easy, fashion? Don’t you think a lot of your issues could be solved pretty quickly and cost-efficiently?”

If you begin your presentation to the C-suite with these types of scenarios (even better if you have real issues that are happening within your company) and then you show how a social media program can fix a customer service issue quickly, and before it becomes a customer who is no more, you’ll have their attention.

As for how to affect the P&L, that one is easy. There are so many ways to measure the effectiveness of a social media program. Benchmark a few things before you present to the C-suite. Look at:

- Your Web site grade via [Web site grader](http://www.websitegrader.com) (www.websitegrader.com)
- Everyone who is on the social networks within your company; look at their [Twitter grades](http://www.twitter.grader.com) (www.twitter.grader.com)
- Compare your traffic, search terms, and key words with your competitors via [Compete](http://www.compete.com) (www.compete.com)
- Find your Google page rank via [popuri.us](http://www.popuri.us) (www.popuri.us)
- Assess your share-of-voice via [siteVOLUME](http://www.sitevolume.com) (www.sitevolume.com)
- Analyze your social popularity via [socialmeter](http://www.socialmeter.com) (www.socialmeter.com)



After you've done this, create 30-day, 90-day, six month, and annual goals that affect the bottom line of the company (i.e., drive more traffic to the Web site for increased sales or increase awareness of bi-weekly white papers or podcasts customers can buy).

Then go present the program and show why the company can't afford NOT to participate in a social media program!

Vistage member, speaker, founder and CEO of Arment Dietrich, Inc., Gini Dietrich helps companies use social media to develop and foster relationships for better and more efficient communication. She spreads her "communication through one-on-one relationships" message at numerous conference keynotes and panel discussions, company social media training, the Fight Against Destructive Spin blog, and her own intense social networking. Gini is one of few female business owners who speak on the subject of social media and communication. You can contact her at gdietch@armentdietrich.com or @ginidietrich on Twitter.



How Much Time Should I Spend on Social Media?

By Gini Dietrich, Chief Executive Officer, Arment Dietrich, Inc.

When email first entered our work lives, none of us knew how to handle it. We all thought it was evil and we didn't know how we were going to manage. But we've figured it out and technology now allows us ways to work with it efficiently. Sometimes I get pushback on this and people tell me that their email is out of control and they're not managing it. The point is that the advent of email was used as a new way to communicate and the same goes for social media.

This is a new way of being able to communicate. It doesn't replace anything you're already doing. It makes you more efficient and allows you to really look at the world as flat. This is a new way of working more efficiently and personally with your customers. It's a new way of interacting on a more personal level with your employees and stakeholders. It creates *personal* relationships with hundreds, maybe even thousands of people you wouldn't otherwise know.

All this being said, social media is overwhelming and it's really easy to allow it to become a time suck, just like email in some of cases. You can do social media in as little as 15 minutes a day, but to have true influence, create expertise, prospect for new business, recruit talent, and create customer loyalty through engagement, it takes an hour a day.

Here's how to do just that:

- Sign up for an account at [SocialOomph](http://www.socialoomph.com). (www.socialoomph.com)
- Spend 15 minutes every day finding industry articles, news you find interesting, and thought leadership pieces that have nothing to do with you or your business and set those up to be distributed throughout the day. A good rule of thumb is that 60 percent of your tweets should not be self-serving. I set up my tweets an hour apart and during the workday hours only.
- Spend 10 minutes every day setting up your "self-serving" tweets – these are links to your blog, white papers the company has written, any articles written about you or that quote you, Webinars or podcasts you're hosting, etc. A good rule of thumb is these should be only 40 percent of your tweets and you should space them out so they don't come out all at once (i.e., one in the morning, one at noon, and one in the evening).



How Much Time Should I Spend on Social Media?

- Spend 10 minutes going through your groups on [TweetDeck](#) and find things to RT (retweet) for your followers. This expands your follower base, shows that you listen, and provides great influence. ([www.tweetdeck.com](#))
- Spend five minutes setting up [ping.fm](#) and use that to distribute your content to your other social networks, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Delicious. I only use Ping for our daily blog content. I use Twitter for everything else. ([www.ping.fm](#))
- Spend 10 minutes going through your LinkedIn groups and answering questions where you have expertise and can position yourself as a thought leader. ([www.Linkedin.com](#))
- Spend 10 minutes responding to people on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.

It's a science and this method works, if you stick within the limits and use your time efficiently. There may be some instances where it makes sense to spend more than the time outlined above, but that will be your choice to make when the need arises. Remember the social part of it – it's supposed to be fun, interactive, and highly engaging, not just one more thing we have to do.

Vistage member, speaker, founder and CEO of Arment Dietrich, Inc., Gini Dietrich helps companies use social media to develop and foster relationships for better and more efficient communication. She spreads her "communication through one-on-one relationships" message at numerous conference keynotes and panel discussions, company social media training, the Fight Against Destructive Spin blog, and her own intense social networking. Gini is one of few female business owners who speak on the subject of social media and communication. You can contact her at gdietch@armentdietrich.com or [@ginidietrich](#) on Twitter.



Ten Do's and Don'ts of Social Media

By David Nelsen, Vistage Speaker

Social media and social networking are quickly becoming “de rigueur” for business. A recent study by a Chicago-based firm, Slack Barshinger, showed that small and medium-size businesses are getting “heavily involved with social media, with about half using blogs, wikis, Twitter or other social media channels for business purposes.” If your company is not yet engaged, it’s time to jump in before your competitors beat you to the punch.

If you’re not familiar with social media, check out YouTube, Twitter, TalkShoe, or any blog—these publishing and broadcasting democracies involve hundreds of millions of people. While most of these services were originally conceived for consumers, social media allows businesses to engage in many-to-many conversations with customers, accelerating their learning and building trust. This is not your father’s marketing.

Here are ten basic rules for what to do and not do:

DO

1. Do the same up-front planning you would for any important business initiative. Define your target audience. Detail how you intend to create value for them. Map out how you expect them to create value for you. Document your approach and objectives per medium (blog, Twitter, Facebook, etc.).
2. Listen and learn from others for a few weeks before responding. In general, spend twice as much time listening as responding.
3. Display your Personality, and keep the content Interesting and Entertaining (the old radio adage “PIE”). Remember, people buy from people; show your professional self.
4. Be authentic. Never before has a medium and its participants been more skilled at smelling a rat and turning against the perpetrator.
5. Remember that social media is about two-way conversation (see “Don’t try to control” above). Conversation builds trust; trust leads to more sales.
6. Favor timeless content over time-sensitive content (note: this varies based on the medium and there are exceptions). We live in a time-shifted “Tivo” world and there’s wonderful leverage in creating a blog post (for example) that will have value to new readers weeks, months, or even years from now.



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7. Remember that “push” is out and “pull” is in. Direct mail, traditional advertising, and unsolicited email are forms of “push” –the content producer chooses who to target. “Following” on Twitter, “subscribing” to a blog or podcast, or viewing a video your friends “liked” on Facebook are forms of “pull” –the content consumer decides what to listen to. In today’s information-rich world, people want to opt-in, choosing where to spend their valuable time. Give them a reason to choose your content.
8. Keep your eyes open. Use Google Alerts, search.twitter.com, relevant LinkedIn Groups, Ning networks, and other sites to monitor or “listen in” on conversations about your company, your competitors, and the best practices in your industry.
9. Show patience. As the party with more power (a business relative to a customer/prospect), attacking or being critical will frequently backfire and word will propagate quickly.
10. Learn from your audience (as they will learn from you). Be prepared to rapidly evolve your products and services to meet their needs. They’ll suggest valuable ideas you never thought of.

DON'T

1. Don’t get started if you have significant product weaknesses or customer support issues. Engaging in social media makes good products more successful, and bad products... dead. But don’t delay for long; address the issues and then jump in.
2. Don’t use social media to overtly market or sell. Instead educate, enlighten, inform, and entertain your audience. In this way, you’ll position yourself and your company as an expert in your field and benefit from the “media halo.”
3. Don’t “set it and forget it.” This makes you look worse than not showing up at all. Once you get started, sustain your participation and interaction.
4. Don’t go negative. Emphasize your strengths and advantages rather than making claims about a competitor’s weakness.
5. Don’t mix personal and business accounts/personas, etc.
6. Don’t expect to fully control the conversation. Social media is not an advertisement, product brochure, newsletter, email blast, or one-way monologue; it’s a conversation. Conversations are bi-directional and can have rough edges. Even if you don’t want to participate, your customers and prospects are already talking. Join them.
7. Don’t worry about some negativity for online users. Studies show that a little negativity increases credibility and empathy. Paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln: “You can’t please all of the people all of the time.” Be responsive to the negative.



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8. Don't feel the need to disclose everything. Not everyone who likes sausage wants to see exactly how it's made. Be open and honest and use discretion.
9. Don't be a generalist. With literally hundreds of millions of blogs, videos and podcasts to choose from, every individual can precisely tailor their consumption to their interests. Focus on one topic and do it well (the narrower the better).
10. Don't overwhelm your followers with too much information, or too frequently. Everybody's got a busy life and nobody enjoys getting "Twitter-ria." Focus on the highest value information and content.

In the next few years, social media will become a primary vehicle for interacting with your customers, partners, suppliers, and even employees. By getting started today, your company can adapt to a changing world more quickly than your competitors. What are you waiting for?

Vistage member and speaker Dave Nelsen helps companies develop social media strategies to improve their marketing, sales, customer support, and even internal communications. He's the Founder of podcasting pioneer TalkShoe and a long-time entrepreneur. You can contact Dave at dave@get121.biz.



From Hotels to Help Desks: Social Media Case Studies in Business Applications

By Lois Arbogast, Vistage International

As a CEO, there are a number of different ways you can personally get involved in social media. By having a presence there, you're given a unique opportunity to get accurate information about yourself and your company out to the people who matter—your customers. You'll also connect with customers on a much more personal level, hearing from brand evangelists and detractors, giving you the opportunity to respond.

With social media, you often gain the most by learning from others' mistakes or successes. Three high-profile examples give us a snapshot into how social media can positively affect your company's reputation and responsiveness, while giving your customers a positive view of your company.

Comcast

In 2008, [Comcast \(www.comcast.com\)](http://www.comcast.com) was struggling to shake the reputation of being a company that had poor customer service. Looking for an alternative that would not only reduce waiting times of customers looking for support on the phone lines, but also bring a community culture to the company, Comcast turned to Twitter ([@ComcastCares](https://twitter.com/ComcastCares)). The company invited frustrated customers to send their questions to the Twitter handle and engage a staff of 10 service representatives to try and solve their problems. The conversations would give Comcast visibility as a company who was there to support their customers and allow customers the opportunity to get help in a convenient way. The shift in support vehicles seems to have worked. According to the American Customer Satisfaction Index, Comcast's score rose 9.3% in satisfaction since 2008—an increase directly credited to Comcast's Twitter support team.

Comcast's strategy of inviting customer complaints gave it a direct line to hear what their customers wanted. As the leader of your business, you can also use social media to learn what your customer wants.

Marriott

Marriott CEO Bill Marriott gets the importance of social media. Often, customers may interact with a brand on a daily basis and never feel a connection with that brand because there's no personality behind it. [Marriott on the Move \(www.blogs.marriott.com\)](http://www.blogs.marriott.com) is a blog by Bill Marriott



geared towards anyone who's interested in not only the brand, but the person running the brand. His blog began in January 2007 and has covered topics ranging from the birth of his granddaughter to the re-opening of a newly renovated Marriott hotel in Miami, Florida. Each post incorporates a story or fact the average customer would never know. Bill bridges the gap between a corporate figurehead and the customers who stay at his hotels all around the world every day by sharing his take on real-life situations. The blog adds a face and transparency aspect to a brand that otherwise is just a place to rest your head while traveling.

If you don't have time to start a blog personally, other ways you can add a face to your business include responding to industry-related articles as the CEO of your company, starting a personal Twitter account or writing a monthly newsletter to send to your customers and post online publicly.

Zappos

Zappos may be the most successful case study for CEO success in social media. Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos.com, grew the company from \$1.6 million in 2000 to \$840 million in 2007. When asked what his strategy was for such staggering growth, Hsieh consistently touts customer support as his top priority. Zappos, and Hsieh himself, have done a superb job translating an online company into a customer-service oriented community. Having adopted social media into their strategy early, Hsieh took it upon himself to lead the way, being an active voice on Twitter. Through engaging customers, perspective customers and the online community in general, Hsieh was able to cultivate a culture of personable service despite being a solely online company. Adding the additional platform of online customer service to an already established traditional model helped Hsieh establish Zappos as a leading distributor in the online shoes category.

So how does this affect business? Previously, a disgruntled customer had two options: call and complain to your customer service representative or not buy your product again and tell friends how disappointed they were in it. Times have changed. Now, one under-satisfied customer can create havoc for your brand in a matter of minutes by blogging, tweeting and rating your product online. Negative comments about your product don't even need to be substantiated in order to have a damaging effect on your business. But how does a company address this negativity and make sure that correct information is out there? By having an active presence in and monitoring effectively the social media world.

Whether your company is B-to-B, B-to-C or solely online, social media can positively affect the relationship you have with your customers as well as aid in developing your brand in a genuine way.



Why Join Vistage?

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Vistage delivers the vital perspective chief executives need to see the big picture, test ideas, overcome obstacles and seize opportunities. In groups of up to 16 peers, Vistage members engage in candid and challenging discussions under the facilitation of a highly trained Vistage Chair. The Vistage Chief Executive Program includes:

- Monthly, full-day problem-solving meetings with up to 16 chief executives, presidents, or business owners, professionally facilitated by a Vistage Chair
- Monthly, two-hour personal coaching sessions with a seasoned business advisor (the Vistage Chair)
- Up to eight workshops per year led by a Vistage expert resource speaker
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We selectively seek, by invitation only, CEOs with a strong desire to enhance their leadership and business skills while moving their organizations forward. To attend a Vistage meeting in your area as a guest, contact our Member Development Team at 800.274.2367.

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