

28th and 29th November
2015

Effective use of Social Media for Small Business

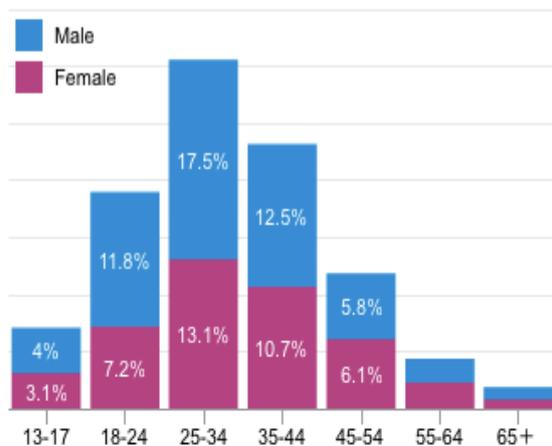
GUJARAT TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY – INNOVATION COUNCIL
Student Startup Support System Co-Creation Center (S4-C3)

Ten (10) Benefits of Social Media for Business

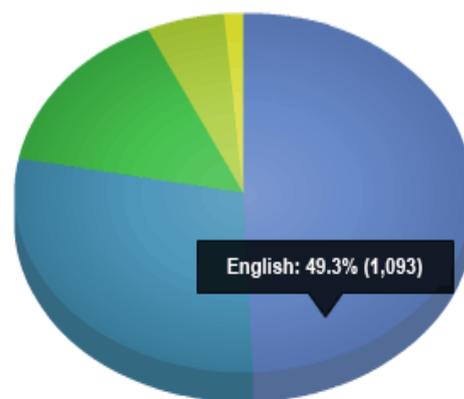
1. Social media is an easy way to learn about your audience

For businesses in any industry, the key to success is to know the audience. Social media makes this possible, and easier to accomplish than ever. With tools like Facebook Insights in Hootsuite you can learn the dominant languages spoken among your social media audience, as well as their age and gender. This knowledge can help you cater campaigns and product offers to your target audience, which will provide you a better return on investment.

Facebook Insights : Likes by Demographic - Graphical



Facebook Insights : Likes by Language



Source	Likes
English	1,093
Indonesian	563
Spanish	209
Japanese	40
French	25

[+](#) [Edit](#) [Remove](#)

Facebook Insights : Gender Summary



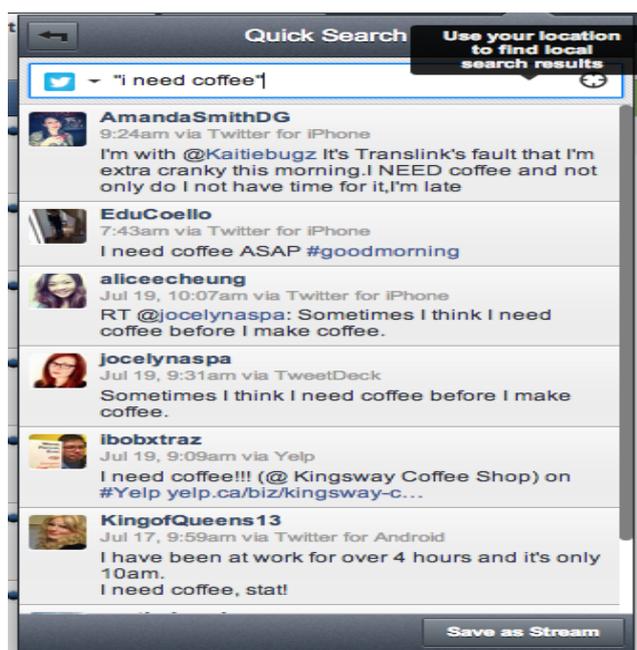
2. Social media helps target audiences more effectively

Geo-targeting is an effective way to send your message out to a specific audience or demographic based on their location. Social networks like Facebook and Twitter have tools that allow you to communicate the right kind of content to your audience. For example, in Hootsuite you can target by 'Location', 'Language', 'Age', 'Gender', 'Relationship status', 'Interested in', and 'Education' on Facebook, and 'Country(s)' on Twitter. For example, if you want to send out a post to people who speak Spanish, geo-targeting is an easy and effective way to do it.

The image shows a screenshot of the Facebook targeting interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Add a link...". Below this, there are several icons: a tag, a link, a calendar, a location pin, a globe, and a lock. The main section is titled "Facebook Page" and contains a sub-section "Make this visible to fans with:". This section has two columns of options. The left column includes "Location: Target by country" with a dropdown menu and an input field "Enter a Country...", and "Language:" with an input field "Enter a Language...". The right column includes "Age:" with a range of "13" to "65", "Gender:" with a dropdown set to "Male", "Interested In:" with a dropdown set to "Male", "Relationship:" with a dropdown set to "Single", and "Education:" with a dropdown set to "In High School". Below these options, it states "Targeting is only applicable to Facebook Pages". The bottom section is titled "Twitter Targeting Options" and includes "Target by country:" with an input field "Start typing a country...".

3. Social media helps find new customers and expand your audience

Social networks like Twitter allow small businesses to locate their current customers or seek out potential customers. For example, if you open a new coffee shop in the neighbourhood, you can create a geo search in Hootsuite to locate anyone tweeting about needing a morning cup of joe within your area. After locating those tweeting about coffee, you can start reaching out to them, and invite them to come try a hot bevvy at your new coffee shop.



4. Social media allows you to receive instant feedback from your customers' perspective

Social media for business gives you instant access to positive or negative feedback, which provides you with valuable insights on the customer perspective. For example, if you launch a new product and share it on social media, you'll instantly learn what your customers think of it. Another way to gain customer perspective with social media is by learning how they use your product; brands often base new products or services on their customers' original ideas. Below is Contiki Holidays' take on learning what people feel or think about their experience on a Contiki tour.

5. Improve market intelligence and get ahead of your competitors with social media

With social media monitoring you can gain key information on your competitors, therefore improving your market intelligence. This kind of Intel will allow you to make strategic business decisions in order to stay ahead of your competition. For example, you can create search streams in Hootsuite to monitor mentions of your competitor's name or product. Based on your search results, you can improve your business to offer something your competitors are missing.

6. Social media can help increase website traffic and search ranking

So you built a website for your company, now what? One of the best benefits of social media for business is using it to increase your website traffic. Not only do social media help you direct people to your website, but the more social media shares you receive, the higher your search ranking will be. For example, if every person who follows Hootsuite on Twitter re-tweets this post, it's more likely to rank higher in Google's search engine results page for variations of "social media for business."

7. Share content easier and faster with social media

In the past, marketers faced the challenge of ensuring their content reaches their customers in the shortest possible time. With the help of social media, sharing content got easier and faster. When you use social media for business, specifically for sharing content about your business or for content curation, all you need to do is simply share it on your brand's social network accounts. But keep in mind that getting your customers to share your content with their followers means you need to make sure your social media content aligns to your brand and interests your audience.

8. Social media helps generate leads for one third of the cost

Social media is an easy way to generate leads. For example, Hootsuite's marketing department was built around content and social platforms, and Twitter ads has allowed us to scale, increase reach, and fuel demand generation. Hootsuite promotes two types of content via Twitter Ads: ungated content (free content requiring no email address for access) and gated content (free content requiring an email). Sharing gated content on social media is a great way for any company to generate leads.

9. Create meaningful relationships with customers through social media

Social media is great for creating meaningful relationships with your customers. For example, social media allows tourism brands to create dialogue with travellers, therefore creating relationships with customers before, during, and after they have booked a trip with the company. This kind of social media dialogue between brands and customers is something traditional advertising will never achieve.

10. Social media lets you increase brand awareness and reach with little to no budget

Social media for business has allowed companies to increase brand awareness and reach of their brand at little to no cost. The costs associated with these strategies are a lot higher with traditional advertising methods. Recently, marketing departments across companies started hiring community managers to increase brand awareness and reach through social media. Community managers foster relationships with online audiences in different regions. At Hootsuite, we have community managers for each of our three regions: APAC, EMEA, and The

Americas. This helps us make sure we keep expanding the reach of our brand to those regions and maintain relationships with key stakeholders.

Reference 1: <http://t.co/mvWuVdEKmf>

Reference 2: <http://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-for-business/>

Social Media for Business: 2015 Marketer's Guide

Should your business be on social media? Absolutely. But should you have an account on every platform? Not necessarily. Your social success depends largely on the type of business you run and how much time and effort you intend to put into your strategy. Some networks, like Facebook, are more low-maintenance and work for every type of business, while others, like Instagram, require more dedication, working best for businesses in certain niches. Want to create an enviable social strategy? Familiarize yourself with all of the social networks at your disposal, figure out which features will work best with your business and focus on the platforms that best reflect your business's mission.

We profiled the top social media platforms, so you can learn how to utilize each one for your business and determine which ones fit your needs.

Facebook

Facebook is the biggest social network out there, both in terms of name recognition and total number of users. With over 1.39 billion active users, Facebook is a great medium for connecting people from all over the world with your business. And Facebook is not only the biggest network; it's arguably the most versatile one. In the 11 years since it launched, Facebook grew from a simple website where college students could keep in touch into a multifaceted Web and mobile social-platform where anyone can connect with not just their friends and family, but also with celebrities, organizations, businesses and more thanks to the Pages feature.

Since Facebook has a wealth of options for any type of organization, it's a great starting point for your business, regardless of your industry. You can use it to share photos, videos, important company updates and more. Additionally, Facebook is a lot more low maintenance in terms of posting frequency — whether you post several updates a day or only a few a week won't make much of a difference in terms of what your fans think of you. To find out more about Facebook for business, check out our guide.

Twitter

Twitter is another social network where mostly anything goes. With Twitter, you can post short (140 characters or less) text updates along with videos, images, links and more. You can also easily interact with other users by mentioning their usernames in your posts, so Twitter is a great way to quickly connect with people all around the world (the platform has more than 500 million users worldwide). Because of this, Twitter is not only a great way to market your business; it's also an effective channel for handling customer service. For example, if you maintain an active Twitter presence, then customers who are also active on the platform will seek you out to express concerns or share their praise.

If you have interesting content, Twitter is also a great tool for quickly spreading the word. Retweeting and sharing other users' content is incredibly simple, and if a user with a lot of followers retweets you, your content has the potential to go viral. But with Twitter, it's important to remember to find balance — don't simply share your own links or media; make sure you are also sharing a lot of interesting, relevant content from other Twitter users so your audience doesn't think you only care about what your business is doing. Check out our guide to learn more about using Twitter for business.

Pinterest

This platform consists of digital bulletin boards where users can save and display content they like in the form of pins. Users create and organize their boards by category, so for example, as a personal user, one might have a board dedicated to food where they pin recipes, another board dedicated to photography they find interesting and so on. Pinterest is very visually oriented (every post has to be an image or video), and like Facebook, it is also fairly low-maintenance as far as post frequency is concerned. However, keeping your boards organized and search-friendly can be time-consuming.

Pinterest is also a much more niche network than Facebook or Twitter, and so it may not work for everyone. Pinterest's users are primarily female, and popular categories on the site are DIY projects, fashion, exercise, beauty, photography and food. That's not to say that businesses outside of these categories can't succeed on the platform, but it does make it a great marketing tool for businesses that do work in those areas. If you can find ways to connect your content to Pinterest's audience, then go for it. There are plenty of cool ways to use this platform to your advantage, and you can read more about them in our Pinterest for Business guide.

Instagram

Instagram, like Pinterest, is a visual social media platform that is based entirely on photo and video posts. The network, which Facebook owns, has over 300 million active users, many of whom post about food, art, travel, fashion and similar subjects. Instagram is distinguished by its square photo/video post format that makes each post look similar to a Polaroid picture. This platform, unlike the others, is almost entirely mobile (there is a Web version, but you can't take photos or create new posts, and other functions are limited, as well).

Instagram is another platform where more artistic niches excel, so again, it may not be the best fit for your business depending on your industry. If you want to succeed with Instagram, it's important that the person running your account has a good eye for detail and has at least basic photography skills so that the photos and videos posted to your account are high quality. And don't be discouraged if your industry is underrepresented on Instagram; if you can find the right hashtags to latch onto and can post intriguing photos, you will most likely make it work. To find out more about using Instagram for business, read our guide.

Tumblr

Tumblr is arguably the most difficult social media platform to use as a business, but it's also one of the most interesting networks. Tumblr allows several different post formats, including text posts, chat posts, quote posts, audio posts, photo posts and video posts, so you're not limited as to what kind of content you can share. As with Twitter, reblogging (reposting other users' content) is very quick and easy, so if a user with a lot of followers shares your content, it's

possible to go viral fairly quickly. However, what sets Tumblr apart more than anything is its audience, which is less like a pool of users and more like one big tight-knit community full of smaller subcommunities.

Tumblr currently hosts more than 200 million blogs, and the majority of these blogs are run by young people (half of Tumblr's visitor base is under the age of 25). But this means that businesses that don't cater to young people's interests or aren't relatable to young people in some way are not poised for success on the network. The good news is, there's a subcommunity or fandom for almost every niche and interest you can think of, so a successful marketing campaign is possible if you use Tumblr correctly. You can learn more about the Tumblr community and how to use Tumblr for business in our guide.

Reference: <http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/7832-social-media-for-business.html>

Benefits of Social Media

If used wisely, social media can be a powerful business tool. Some of the opportunities and benefits of social media can include:

- **Revenue**

The most obvious opportunity is to generate revenue. This can be done through building a community or advertising your products or services within the social media platform. If you choose to advertise in social media, the ads can either link back to your business' social media page or sometimes to your website. This can mean that you're able to benefit from social media without needing to have a channel.

- **Brand development**

Using social media allows your customers to connect and interact with your business on a more personal level. If you already have an established brand, social media might be an opportunity to further develop your brand and give your business a voice.

- **Attracting customers**

Social media can be a good way of attracting new customers. For example, when considering social media campaigns, you could try to attract followers with promotions or giveaways. Once you have a good following you can focus on more personalised social media campaigns to encourage them to stay.

- **Research**

Even if you think social media is not suited to your business or that you don't have the time, simply logging on to see what your competitors are doing in this space, or finding out what your customers are saying about you might be a valuable exercise.

- **Networking**

Networking can be a valuable way to exchange ideas with like-minded people to improve the way you do business. Using online networking sites can also be valuable to your business, often for the purpose of knowledge sharing and word-of-mouth referrals.

- **Recruitment**

Some organisations use social media to advertise vacant positions. Job networking sites like LinkedIn are dedicated to the job market and can help you use networks to attract skilled people.

- **Search-engine discoverability**

Your website's ranking in the search results of various search engines can sometimes be affected by the size and influence of your social network. As your social following grows, your visibility in search engines may also increase. This is a common Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) strategy.

Reference: <http://www.business.gov.au/business-topics/business-planning/social-media/Pages/benefits-of-social-media.aspx>

Five (5) Benefits of Social Media Business Owners Need to Understand

It's more than just hype. Here are 5 stat-backed benefits of social media marketing.

While the importance of social media marketing is generally accepted, the fact that people don't question its value is all the more reason to think about exactly what its value is. The goals of social media marketing can't be just to gain likes, fans, and retweets. These things are not ends, but means to an end. Social media marketing is far more than an online popularity contest, and the better business owners understand that, the better they can use it for their companies. Here are five benefits to social media that business owners need to understand.

1. Increase Brand Awareness

One of the main benefits of social media marketing is the easiest to recognize: Social media is an excellent way to introduce people to a brand. Despite the Field of Dreams notion some business owners have that "if you build it, they will come," if people are unaware of a business or a website's existence, they can't shop there (Kevin Costner was dealing with ghosts, who have a lot of free time to meander around cornfields). Because social networks are used by more than two-thirds of the country, and given the way content spreads virally to others, social media is the perfect channel to promote a brand to potential customers. Relevanza reported that 78 percent of small businesses attract new customers through social media.

Research shows just how valuable this brand awareness can be. According to Adroit Digital, 75 percent of online Americans said product information found on social media influences their shopping behavior and enhances brand loyalty. They also report that social media is the second most likely way U.S. Millennials will learn about a new product (26 percent of respondents), just 3 percentage points behind TV advertising (29 percent). In the future, social media may be even more important than TV ads for introducing new products to consumers. Similarly, research from eMarketer has shown that 33 percent of consumers cite social networks as the way they discover new brands, products, and services.

2. Legitimize a Brand

Another way social media marketing helps with customer acquisition is by establishing a brand as legitimate. When Internet consumers discover a business or retailer they want to use but know little about, they often check their social media page to learn more about it. Many small businesses have static websites that change little, if at all, after being initially set up by the designer. Social media pages, on the other hand, should be constantly updated with new posts,

comments, etc. A website establishes that a brand exists, but a social media page establishes that the brand is active. Similarly, the number of fans shows how popular a brand is and Facebook reviews can reassure buyers by showing them that other consumers like a business. Research from Ballihoo found that 63 percent of consumers who search for local businesses online are more likely to use businesses with information on social media sites.

It's worth noting that poor social media marketing can also delegitimize a brand. If a new customer goes to a business's social media page and finds that a post hasn't been made in a few months, that customer may assume the business is defunct. If customers are asking for help in the comments and they're being ignored, they may assume the company has poor customer service.

3. Increase Sales

In the end, social media marketing needs to help increase sales and revenue. That's why it's called social media marketing and not simply social media public relations. To be fair, improving brand awareness and legitimizing a brand should, by themselves, help increase sales. But there are ways to use social media to directly steer consumers toward the sales funnel. For fans of the business, business owners can write posts that link to products, sales, etc. Marketers can also use promoted content and advertisements to sell products to target audiences who haven't become fans of a brand yet. The ability to target particular audiences is one of the greatest benefits of social media marketing. Social networks know a lot about consumer interests and demographics, so even though there are hundreds of millions of fans, marketers can accurately target the right people with the right message.

There are also a lot of ways that retailers can sell products directly from social networks. On Facebook, business owners can set up a Facebook store with apps like Ecwid or Beetailer. On Twitter, retailers with Amazon.com pages can allow Twitter users to add products to their Amazon checkout straight from their Twitter feed. There are also ways to sell products on Pinterest, YouTube, and other social networks.

4. Improve Customer Service

Another benefit of social media that's easy to overlook is customer service. Even if a business has a dedicated customer service department, telephone number, or email, it's important to handle issues via the method of communication the consumer prefers. The fact that people use social media to ask customer service questions is reason enough for businesses to ensure their ability to help customers through social media. This also goes back to establishing a brand. One of the key concerns of consumers when they shop online is the responsiveness of customer service. People want to be assured that if they have a problem, they can easily find help. By being receptive to customer needs, business owners can increase customer loyalty to a brand.

5. Distribute Content

Social media should be a part of any content marketing distribution system. Social media accounts for a huge portion of referral traffic on the web. People are looking for content that interests them and they want to share it online. A joint study by AOL and Nielsen found that people spend more than 50 percent of their time online with content and an additional 30 percent of their time on social channels where content can be shared. Business owners who

want to gain customers through content marketing need to use social media and promoted content to make that happen.

All of these points and data show that social media marketing is a huge benefit for business owners, and exactly what the benefits are. Besides increasing brand awareness and establishing the legitimacy of the brand, social media marketing can affect the bottom line of a business by increasing sales. Learning about the importance of social media for marketing should also underscore why these efforts need to be continuous and the harm it does when social media marketing isn't up to consumer expectations. Long story short, social media marketing is something that every business needs to do and needs to do well. For more statistics that show the benefits of social media, read this article that shows 11 stats to make you re-appreciate social media marketing.

Reference: <http://www.inc.com/peter-roesler/5-benefits-of-social-media-business-owners-need-to-understand.html>

The Only Real PR Challenge You Have Is Your News Interests No One

This bulletin just in for tech companies: no one cares about your news. It's nothing personal. It doesn't even mean the news isn't interesting. It just means that most people don't care enough to even notice your announcement. The go-to strategy for companies seeking to launch and grow has been to pursue press coverage. However, it is tough to get overworked and underpaid media to spend much time with vendor-driven tech news. In the winner-take-all battle today for attention, where the truly big stories and viral time wasters crowd out everything else, your announcement is pretty far down the list.

But you need to build buzz and visibility for your launch so you can start selling. What is the secret to getting attention and motivating action? It begins by starting where you want to wind up -- with the user. Some of the trends are well-known. The media are increasingly fragmented, and news cycles are diminishing. Fewer reporters are churning out more articles, trying to reel people in with must-read stories and (often, sadly) click bait headlines.

In this climate, who has time to sit with a vendor for a quality, in-person briefing? And if they *do* write, who even sees or reads the stories? There are many other ways to vet the latest tech products and services (no one ever got fired for following Gartner's guidance). The earned media hit just does not drive the same the results anymore, in terms of web traffic, attention or sales leads.

Much of the problem has to do with information overload. How do people cope? We scan. We prioritize. We note what's trending. Google and the social networks track our content engagement, and adjust newsfeeds accordingly. People stir the content soup in myriad ways and, in doing so, affect their popularity.

The result is that the architecture of content and news distribution has changed. It's no longer primarily top down. Sure, big media still has reach and influence, but the revolution is by and large user-driven, with a healthy dose of platform and algorithmic selection thrown in.

Get user-driven and go organic.

Startups, and their PR and marketing teams, need to recognize the new rules of a user-driven world of news and content. This means going where the users are, and communicating on their terms. It means lighting a fire that they will help spread.

These steps will help you accomplish your launch and marketing goals.

Talk the customer's language.

PR used to be about communicating through the media filter. Being user-driven means developing news and content that resonates with customers. Throw out the PR clichés, press release happy-talk and indecipherable jargon.

Tell a story they will care about.

Put news in context starting with the headline that clearly and concisely explains how the information relates to customer problems. It's not possible to target people individually but you *can* get a bead on what is trending in your niche. Check out Trendspottr and Buzz Sumo for starters. Both sites give you ways to track the hot stories and social media topics for your space. Uprise.IO goes further, with in-depth data to help you understand your audiences, and the characteristics of popular content.

Go where the users are.

To get the attention of your intended audience, you need to discover how and where they get information, then work hard to ensure that your news is right there. Of course, media and blogs are important but so are communities where users share the latest stories. You can submit your news and rally colleagues and users to vote it up on social news sites like DZone and Stack Overflow, for the software developer community.

Hone your media strategy.

Choose your PR shots wisely. Don't chase every media opportunity down a rat hole. Aim for the bigger stories by the recognized reporters in publications that matter to your target market. Coverage in the right places is the first step toward getting your content curated and shared elsewhere.

Focus on content curation and sharing.

Some publications get curated much more than others. How do you find them? It can vary by industry and network (e.g., see the TechMemeleader board). You can pitch curators. First, take the time to read and better understand the outlet. Then, contact the editors to learn about their criteria and pitch your news if appropriate.

Make your information easy to share. For example, can your press release headline easily fit in a tweet? Does your blog have social sharing buttons? The Moz blog recently wrote that wonky articles attract more links and shares. So do articles with lists.

Tap owned and social channels.

Being user-driven means being present and vocal where the customers are, which increasingly is on social media/networks. The company blog and website should support your communications effort, and serve as hubs that can connect PR with social channels and inbound marketing.

Building your social presence is an important long-term strategy. Having a large following offers another communications vehicle to support news promotion. Meanwhile, seek the cooperation of friendly influencers who have larger social footprints to help get the word out.

It is still early days for the new world of user-driven news and content, but it is not too soon to adapt your strategies. There is a growing number of tools to help you understand and reach the customer. Use the above strategies, and you will be on your way to getting your news noticed, and inspiring interest and action.

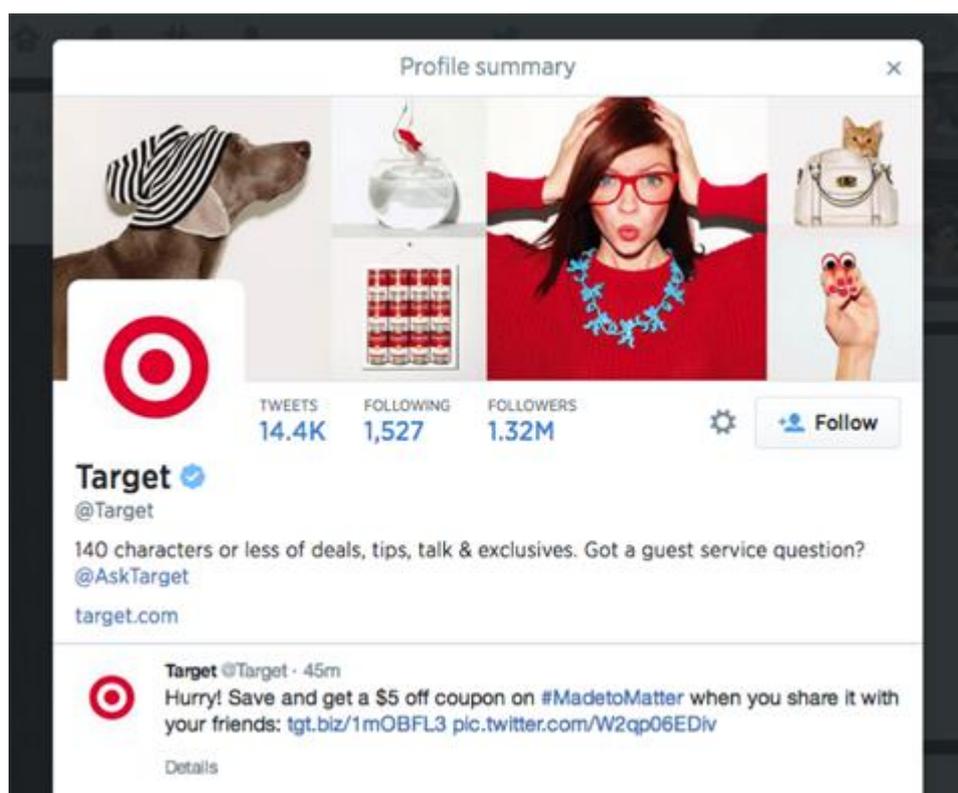
Reference: <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/252662>

Three (3) Ways to Use Social Media for Business

1: Sell Products or Services

The instant nature of social media is ideal for sales. It's no wonder social networks have become full-blown marketing channels. Those using a sales approach make no bones about the fact that they want you to buy their product or service.

When you're selling, your updates likely **include discounts and coupons, limited-time deals, new releases and promotions.**



Target uses Twitter to offer discounts that lead to sales.

Pro

Taking a sales approach is a straightforward and direct method of marketing—any users who convert know exactly what they're getting into because they're ready to buy.

Con

The downside of this approach is that when you drop the social component and go full-bore marketing, you're defeating the purpose of social media. People don't want to feel like they're being sold to; they want to **have a conversation**, and ultimately, call the shots.

As marketers, you can't cut out selling completely—you have to **find a balance**. One popular way to structure the sales approach is known as the *70-20-10 rule*.

70-20-10

The 70-20-10 rule help balance your content.

Here's how Social Media Examiner explains it:

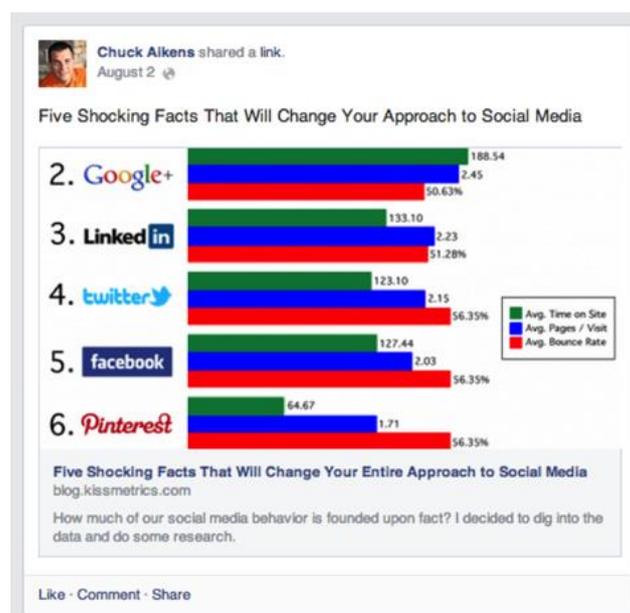
“Remember to **stay true to the 70-20-10 rule**: 70 percent of your Page's content should be information that's valuable and relevant to your fans; 20 percent should be content that comes from other people and 10 percent should be promotional.”

Balancing sales pitches with informative and relevant content is a good way to increase sales without being annoying.

While the hard sell can be a turnoff if it's overused, don't be afraid to promote your product or service. Social media is a legitimate and expected form of marketing. If you don't **ask for and expect sales**, you won't profit from social media marketing.

2: Become a Leading Industry Resource

The most typical social media approach is positioning yourself as a resource. Content marketing professionals **recognize social media channels as conduits and use them to pass information to fans, followers and customers**.



Chuck Aikens shares current and authoritative SEO advice on Facebook.

If you're using this tactic, your updates **include tips, advice and links to interesting or industry-related articles and resources.**

Pros

Providing the information your audience craves translates into lots of follows, shares and positive word of mouth.

Not only that, your social role as a trusted resource identifies you as a leader. People come to see you as someone who always has a great link to share and consistently gives out good information or advice.



Share knowledge to become a trusted resource. Image: Shutterstock.

When people view your social media feed as a resource, they'll also view your own content as powerful and authoritative. This makes it much easier to **share your own articles and views without coming on too strong.**

Cons

The biggest problem I've seen with this approach is boredom. If your social feeds are nothing more than links to articles, you become predictable.

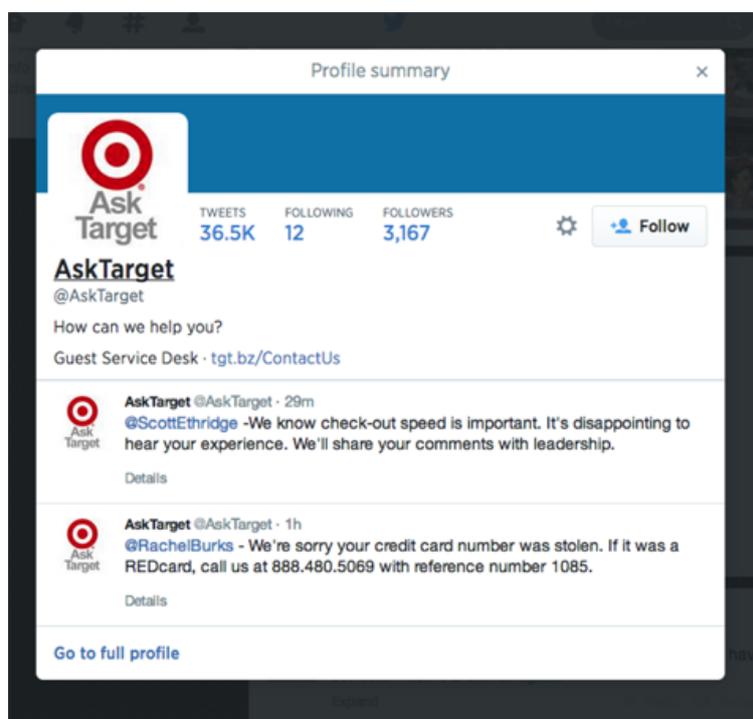
It takes quite a bit of time to **find the best articles and resources to share.** As Buffer staffers admitted, "We tend to read a lot of content at Buffer. And I mean a lot... We share 25 stories per day. We read even more that don't make the cut." Unleashing content at that rate is going to take some serious scouting time.

Plus, if you work in a narrow niche, you may find yourself in the challenging situation of sharing great articles from your competition. On one hand, your competitor may be producing great content you can't ignore. On the other hand, sharing that content may pose a strategic challenge if your goal is to promote your own service's superiority.

3: Provide Quality Customer Service

All companies want to give their customers the best experience possible, and right now that means providing customer service on social media. These days, many customers choose

to **bypass annoying phone menus and hold times in favor of a quick social media update** (tweets are particularly popular).



Understanding the need to meet their customers where they are, companies are monitoring Twitter in particular.

If you're providing customer service online, many of your interactions will **include tips, tricks and hacks, information on how to use your product or service and solutions to complaints**, obviously.

Pros

With social media you have an opportunity to **provide awesome customer service in mere minutes**. That kind of immediate response tells people you have a strong commitment to customer satisfaction and a customer-centered presence.

As you **monitor mentions to keep up with customer service issues**, you can also **keep track of customer sentiment**—you'll see feedback on how your customers are doing and what they're feeling. This is an opportunity to **understand how people perceive your brand** in the social environment. You can **use that information to identify where and how to improve your service**.

Cons

If you're using Twitter for customer service, your main account can be awfully boring when it's nothing more than customer inquiries and responses. Your feed will be a painful waste of time for anyone not directly interested in those discussions. To avoid that, some companies **set up separate accounts for the sole purpose of addressing customer service issues**.

Customers' intense expectation of an immediate response can be exhausting. If you don't **have the staff to keep up with and respond quickly** to customer service issues, you may find yourself in a bit of turmoil.



This customer complaint received an automated response. Not exactly stellar customer service. If you can't **provide personal attention**, you risk your reputation. For example, Hasan Syad tweeted a complaint about British Airways' customer service (and spent \$1,000 to promote that tweet). Over 77,000 people saw it. The company's response? "Twitter feed is open 0900-1700 GMT." That's not exactly the kind of customer service users expect from a multi-billion-dollar global brand.

Conclusion

Thus not suggesting, that you can or will only use one approach in your social media marketing—that simply wouldn't work. As you've likely experienced, tactics are mix and match, and you combine them in a way that supports your current and long-term goals.

What is provided here is food for thought. Considering the pros and cons of popular social media approaches helps you decide which ones fit your current campaign (and in what capacity). The combination you choose and create a social feed that is interesting, helpful, intriguing and valuable.

Reference: <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/social-media-for-business/>

Twelve (12) Social Media Marketing Trends for Small Business

Curious about how other small businesses are using social media to get more sales? Wondering which platforms work best for small businesses? Social Media Examiner's seventh annual Social Media Marketing Industry Report, a survey of 3,720 marketers, business owners and solopreneurs from the U.S. and overseas, reveals some trends gaining momentum, as well as some surprising stalls.

The majority of the study's participants were either small business owners or marketers working for small businesses. Specifically:

- Thirty-seven percent of the survey's respondents were involved with businesses involving 2 to 10 people
- Twenty-three percent were solopreneurs
- Eighty-two percent were involved with businesses having 100 employees or fewer

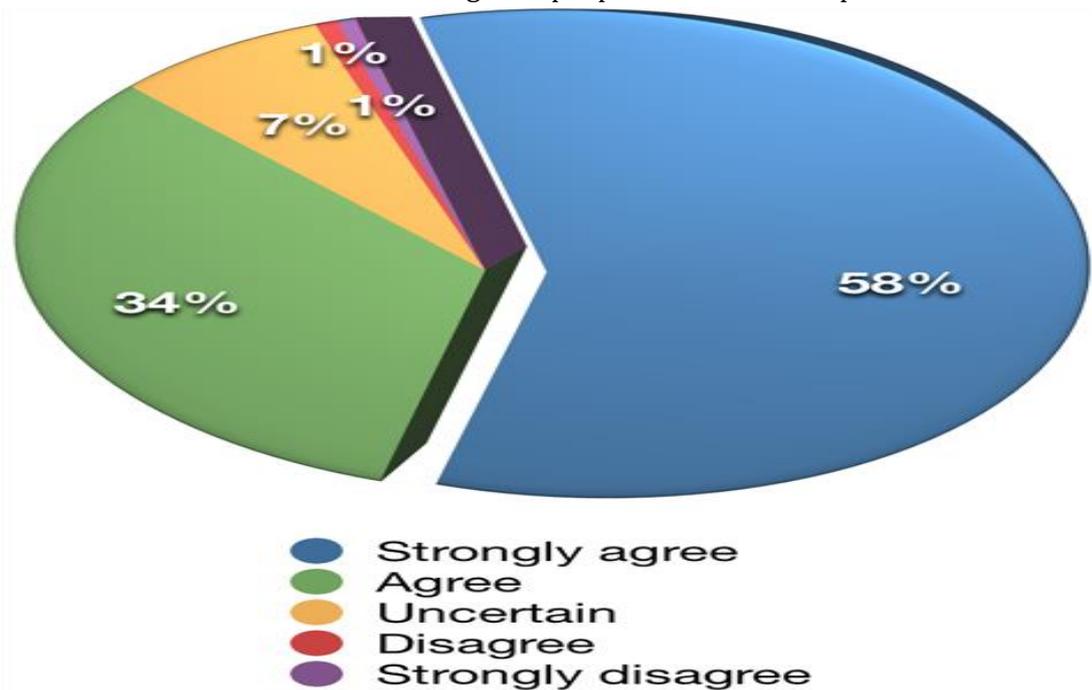
Get ideas from their experiences and future plans to help you shape your social marketing strategy when you download the report.

Social media beginners and experienced users both will find helpful information here about:

- Whether social media is working for small businesses
- How much time other small businesses spend on social media marketing
- What types of content small businesses use
- Where small business owners and their marketing staff buy the most ads

1: Social Media Critical for Small Business

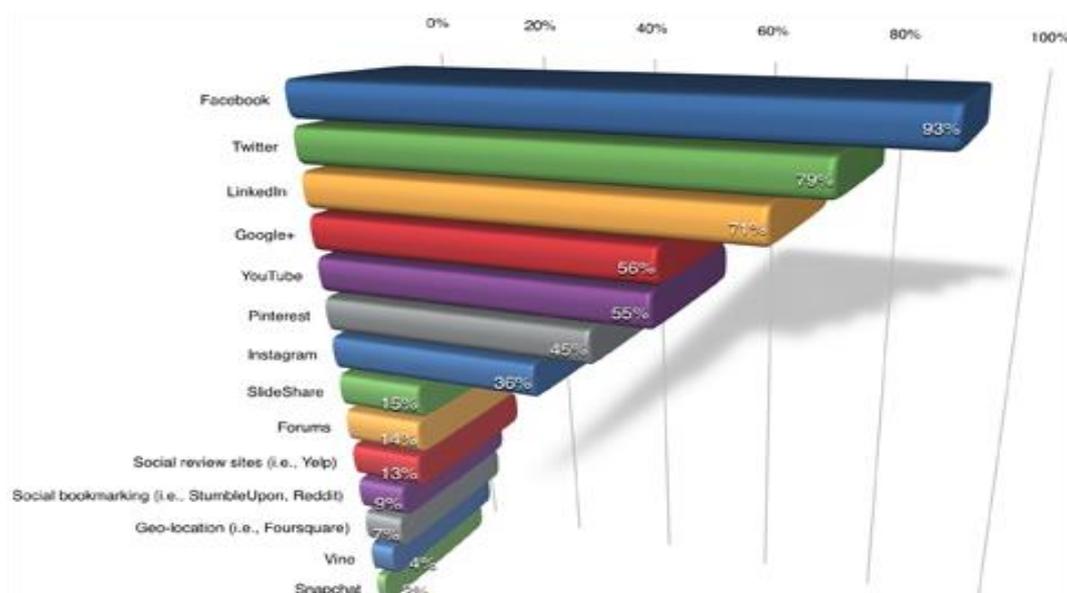
First, 96% of survey participants use social media marketing, and 92% of those agree or strongly agree with the phrase, "Social media marketing is important for my business." Keep in mind that participants self-selected from a pool of over 300,000, and therefore are probably more interested in social media marketing than people who did not respond.



Nearly all survey participants use social media and view it as important for their business or company.

2: Facebook Dominates Small Business Social Media Marketing

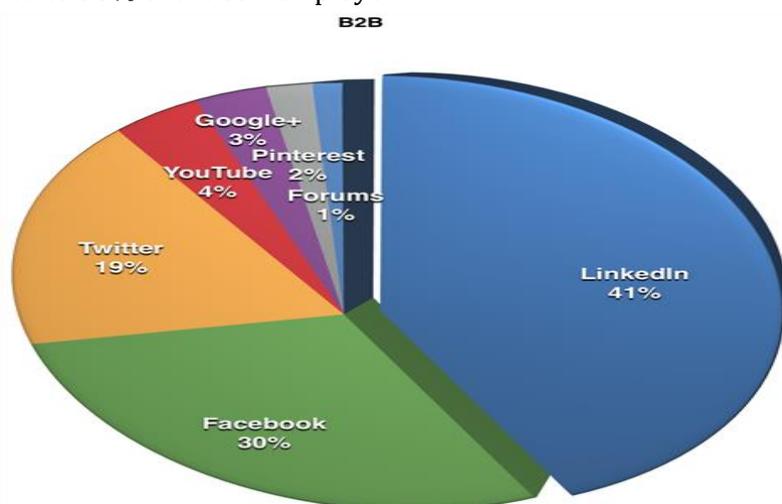
The majority of respondents carry out social media marketing on Facebook. The chart below shows that 93% use Facebook, ahead of Twitter at 79%. In the coming year, 62% of respondents plan to increase their use of Facebook for marketing purposes. Sixty-six percent will increase Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn activity.



Ninety-three percent of survey respondents indicated using Facebook for social media marketing. Twitter is gaining on Facebook, however, and with its new advertising opportunities, will be an interesting property to watch over the next year or so. It's much the same story for Instagram and Pinterest, both of which doubled their traffic from 2014 to 2015. YouTube is more commonly used by larger businesses. Specifically, 71% of businesses with 100+ employees use YouTube, compared to 38% of the self-employed.

3: B2B Small Businesses Use Social Differently Than B2C

Breaking down Social Media Marketing Industry Report averages is useful. B2B respondents for this survey report that LinkedIn is their number-one choice for social networking.

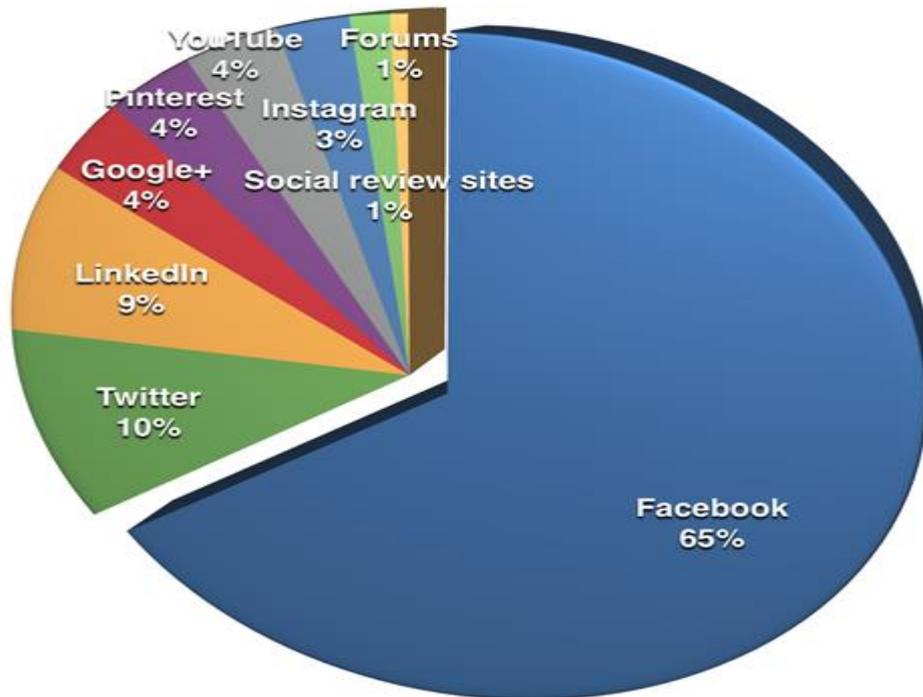


Those in the B2B space give LinkedIn the majority of their attention, but use Facebook and Twitter too, at respectable rates.

B2C companies, on the other hand, go to Facebook first and in larger numbers. This makes sense because B2B businesses are looking for the marketing people, facilities managers, buyers and others who rely on LinkedIn for industry connections and news. Facebook is comprised of nearly every consumer on the planet.

Seventy-one percent of B2B marketers want to learn more about LinkedIn this year. This said, just 18% of B2B marketers are using LinkedIn ads. These same marketers are using Facebook ads at a rate of 75%.

B2C

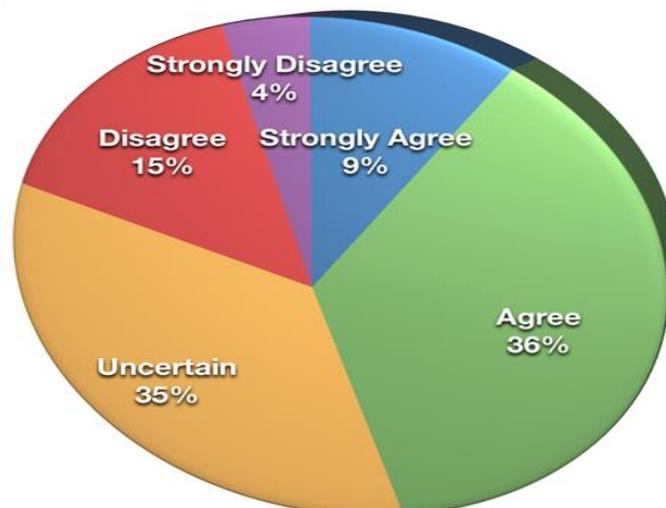


B2C companies can't resist the huge potential consumer pool on Facebook.

4: Most Small Business Marketers Don't Know if Facebook Efforts Are Working

Despite the fact that 92% of small businesses agree that social media is important for their business AND that the majority use Facebook for their social media marketing, most also report that they don't know whether their Facebook outreach is "working."

"Working" may mean building brand awareness and relationships with customers. It could also mean bringing in more leads and sales. The bottom line is that the majority of small businesses either don't know if Facebook achieves the goals they've set or it does NOT achieve those goals. It could also mean they have no goals or they haven't bothered to measure their progress toward goals. Shockingly, despite the high numbers using Facebook, just one in three self-employed respondents characterize Facebook efforts as "effective."



Thirty-five percent of marketers have no idea whether their Facebook efforts are effective. Facebook's domination of social media marketing despite the fact that most marketers are uncertain of its impact should concern small businesses. Without the benefit of a marketing team creating a strategy complete with goals and measurement, small businesses have a harder time evaluating marketing efforts. They may have simply embraced the notion pushed by marketing agencies and media that Facebook is THE place to be, an inexpensive way to market to a targeted audience. As a relatively new marketing platform with plenty of buzz, Facebook's hype could be clouding its true potential for small business.

On the other hand, 44% of survey respondents have been using social media for two years or less. That short time frame makes the lack of clarity understandable. Most marketing efforts take a year or more to begin returning results. Small businesses may not be giving their social media efforts a chance.

5: Small Businesses Plan to Expand Facebook Activities This Year

The Social Media Marketing Industry Report also found that, again, despite the cloudiness surrounding Facebook's effectiveness, 62% plan to increase activities on it.

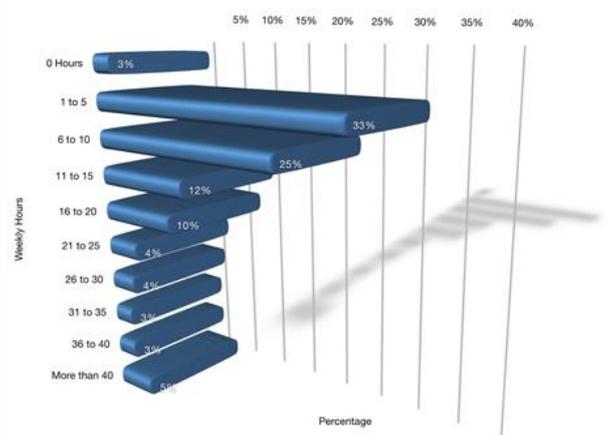
Sixty-eight percent of survey participants indicated they want to learn more about using Facebook for marketing. You'll see below, too, that 53% plan to increase their ad spend on Facebook this year.

Social media beginners shouldn't be concerned that they've missed the chance to get a foothold for their business on Facebook. Although Facebook has existed since 2006, many small businesses are still figuring out how to use all of its features to grow their customer base, engagement and more.

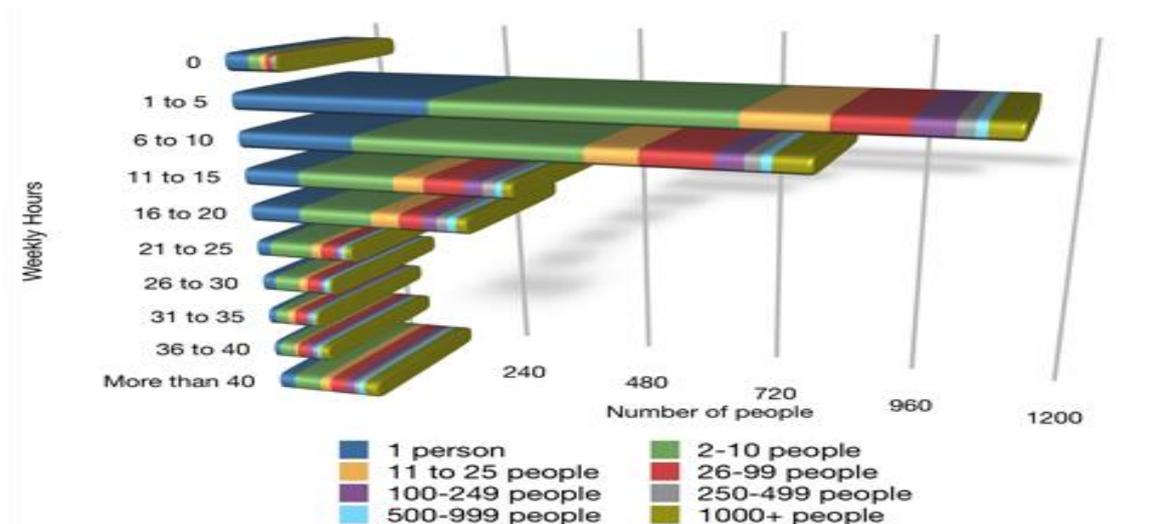
6: Most Small Businesses Spend 6 Hours or More Weekly on Social Media

Because of the crush of responsibilities they have, small business owners worry about the time it takes to keep an audience engaged on social channels. Tools like Hootsuite and Post Planner cut down on time spent, but social media marketing still requires significant time. These figures give small business owners and marketers a clear idea of the time competitors are investing.

Thirty-three percent of study respondents report that they devote 1 to 5 hours weekly to social media marketing; however, a robust 25% spend 6 to 10 hours each week.



One in three respondents spend 5 hours or less on social media, but 63% spend more than that. As shown in the chart below, solopreneurs and businesses with 2 to 10 people fall mostly in the 1 to 5 or 6 to 10 hours per week category. Still, 19% of marketers devote more than 20 people-hours weekly to social media.

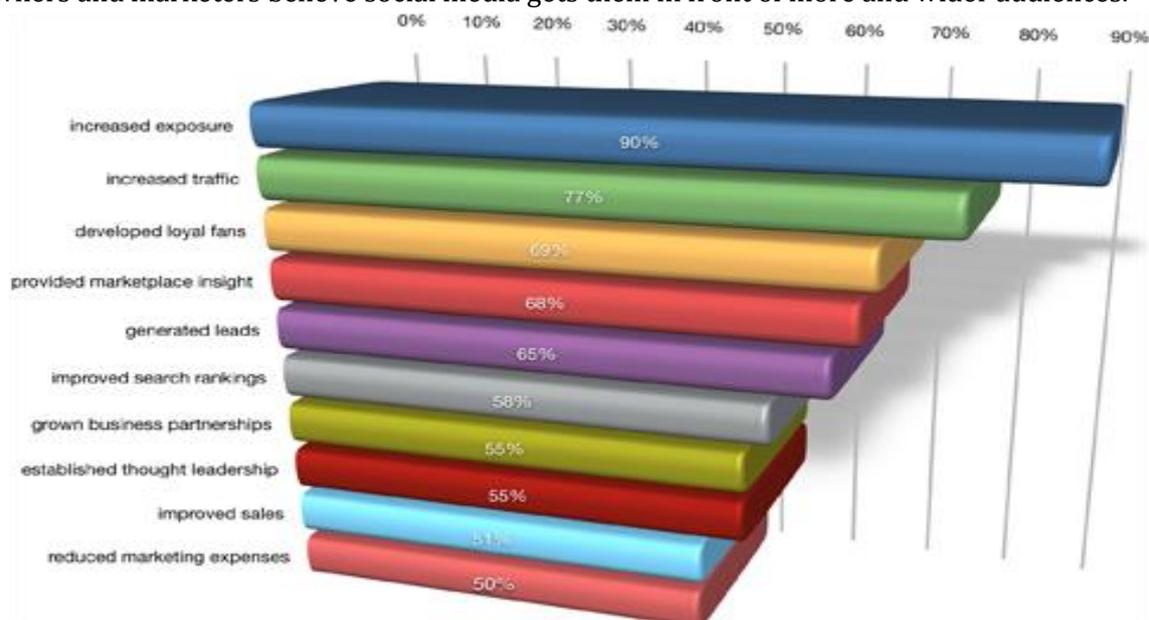


Most small businesses spend 6 hours per week or more on social media activities, but a significant amount also spend 11 to 20 hours per week.

7: Small Businesses Identify Increased Exposure as Social's Top Benefit

Even though "increased exposure" is more difficult to measure than a metric like traffic or bounce rate, marketers and small business owners rank it the number-one benefit of marketing on social media.

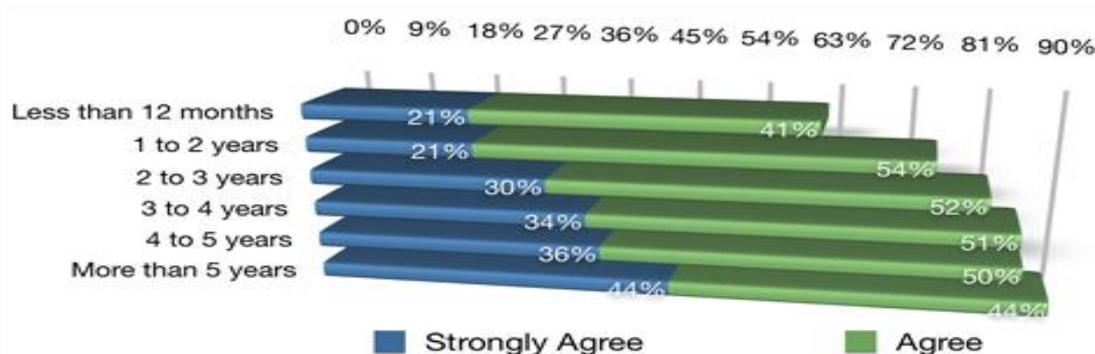
Whether through social channel engagement, referral source data from Google Analytics or customers sharing in person or by phone how they found the business on social media, business owners and marketers believe social media gets them in front of more and wider audiences.



Small business owners and marketers put increased exposure via social as the top benefit.

8: Increased Traffic to Website Is Number-Two Benefit of Social Marketing

The chart above indicates that 77% of the survey's nearly 4,000 respondents have appreciated the traffic that comes to their sites via social referral (clicking from Facebook or LinkedIn to the website for a blog post or landing page offer). Google Analytics and other tools make getting this data possible, even easy. More exciting, the longer small businesses use social marketing, the more frequently they report increased traffic.



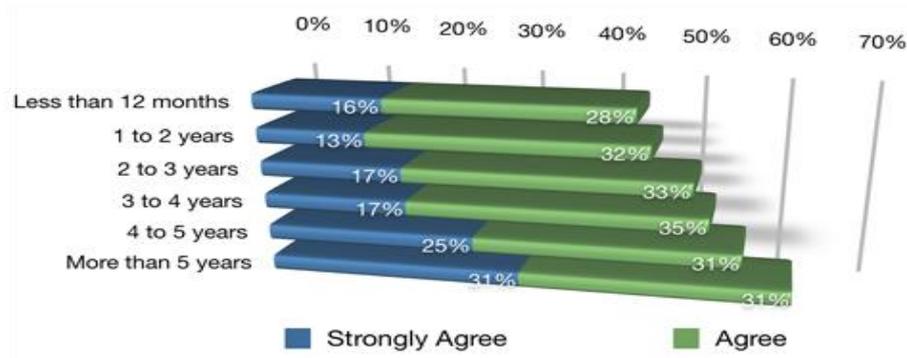
With each year that business uses social media, the likelihood increases that they agree or strongly agree that social drives traffic to the website.

Like any marketing tactic, social media requires time before results emerge. Agreement with the statement that social brought additional traffic to respondents' websites increased year after year, from 61% of those using it less than 1 year to 82% calling it effective after 5 years.

9: Social Media Cuts Marketing Expenses for Small Businesses

Early on, social media developed the reputation of reaching audiences at a low price. Before 2014, Facebook was allowing companies to reach their audiences for free. That smart move brought lots of marketers to the channel. The prospect of a free marketing channel with a potential reach of one billion people proved irresistible. The perception that Facebook promoted offers online for little to no money grew.

With lots of companies hooked, however, Facebook started charging for marketing activities in spring 2014. With costs rising, returns cannot be as robust. And yet this year's *Social Media Marketing Industry Report* found that 51% of businesses with 10 or fewer employees who also spend 6 hours or more on social media marketing still believe that it reduces overall marketing expenses. Enterprise-level companies with 1,000 employees, on the other hand, tend to hire staff to carry out social media. With additional labor, it's not surprising that just 59% of large companies did not find cost savings through social media.

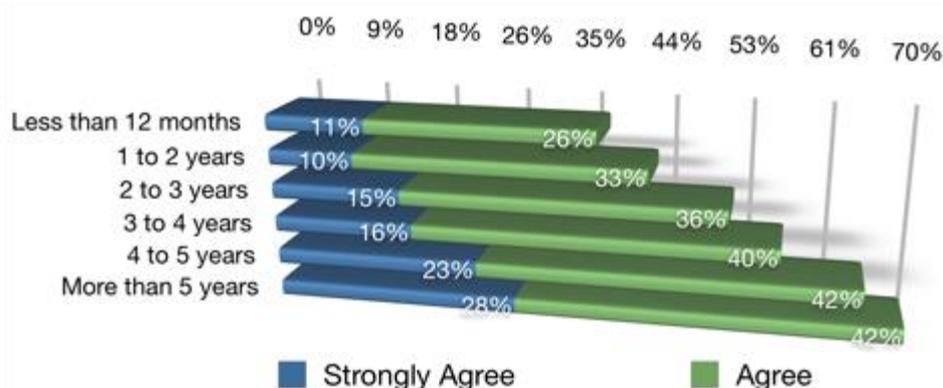


The majority of marketers spending 6 or more hours per week promoting through Facebook for 2 to 3 years or more agrees or strongly agrees that social media marketing reduced marketing expenses.

10: Small Business Direct Social Sales Rise Over Time

The goal of all marketing tactics eventually is increased leads and sales. As mentioned above, social media has more challenges than search engine optimization and pay-per-click ads when demonstrating direct sales.

More than half of marketers who have been using social media for more than 2 years report their channels helped them improve sales. Seventy percent of those with a 5-year social media marketing investment report it helps improve sales.



70% of participants using social media for more than 5 years agree that the platform drives sales.

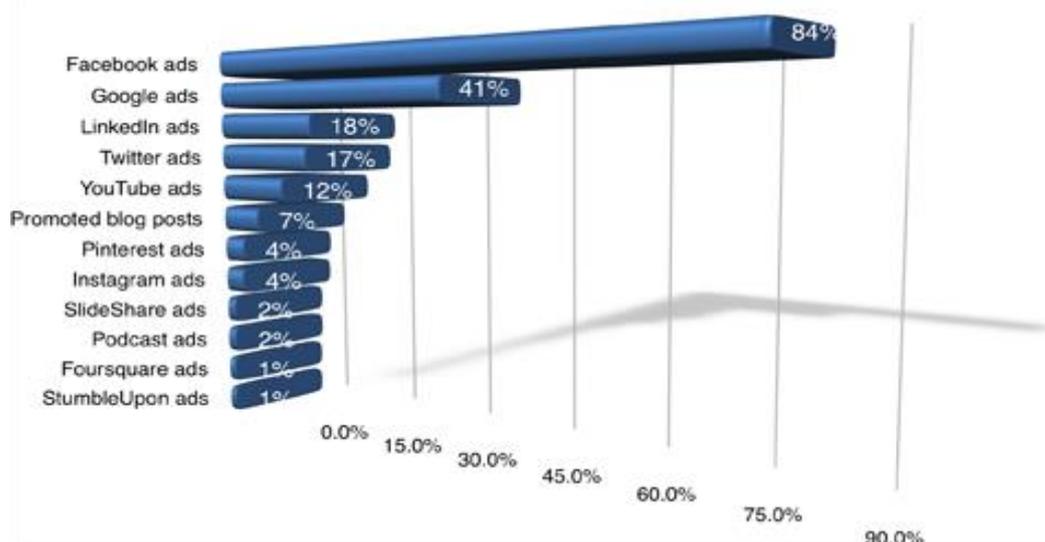
A recent Social Media Examiner research article brings attention to two important studies that may indicate social sales rising overall as well. Internet Retailer's "2015 Social Media 500" reviewed 500 leading merchants' use of social media. In 2014 social commerce sales of just those 500 companies rose to \$3.3 billion from \$2.62 billion in 2013, an increase of 25%.

Leading statistics provider Statista also predicts a leap in worldwide social sales from 2014 to 2015. Where sales originating from social channels amounted to \$20 billion in 2014, Statista sees it hitting \$30 billion by year-end 2015. This 50% increase will get the attention of marketers and small businesses.

Finally, a January 2015 Shareaholic study of 300,000 websites revealed that as of Q4 2014, 31.24% of all traffic came from social media. These findings are all promising for social selling.

11: Facebook Dominates Social Media Paid Ads

The low cost associated with social media ads is just one aspect that appeals to small businesses. The ability to target ads to a narrow geographic (down to the zip code) and demographic market provides another.



Marketers use Facebook ads twice as much as Google ads.

The success of Facebook's paid ads has propelled its stock price from \$20 per share in 2012 to \$80 per share in May 2015. LinkedIn and Twitter ads have met with some success, prompting our survey respondents to consider them seriously in the coming year. Other social media platforms like Instagram, Pinterest and others have ad opportunities in development. The potential of ads on these latter platforms remains untested, which in large part may be keeping advertisers at bay at this point.

Moreover, 53% of our respondents indicated they would be increasing their use of Facebook ads in the future. Google and Twitter should have a bump as well with 38% and 31% of respondents planning to increase spending on these channels. Other channels have a more difficult road ahead as the vast majority of respondents indicated they have no plans to utilize them for ads in the coming year. Get the report to see just how unpopular LinkedIn ads are compared to Foursquare. It isn't pretty. The report's 12 charts indicating how marketers plan on increasing and decreasing advertising activity can help you position your business.

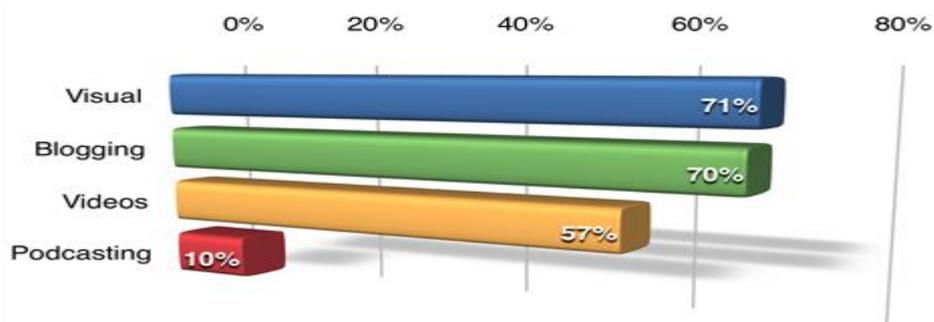
The reluctance to spend on smaller channels could be viewed another way, however. Less ad crowding on a channel at this point could mean less competition for attention to individual ads. In our recent discussion of Pinterest, we shared that Forrester Research predicts Pinterest could surge in 2016, even though the traffic it sends to websites pales in comparison to Facebook's referrals at this time. That platform has emerged as an online shopping list for consumers, as most use it to save ideas of what they want to buy. While Pinterest's traffic referral numbers lagged behind Facebook's by a large margin, users there have high buying intent. They are SHOPPERS.

The lack of interest in smaller channels could also reflect that marketers simply haven't learned enough about these platforms. Aggressive marketers will undoubtedly experiment with the various channels to determine where the value exists for their brands.

12: Types of Social Media Content

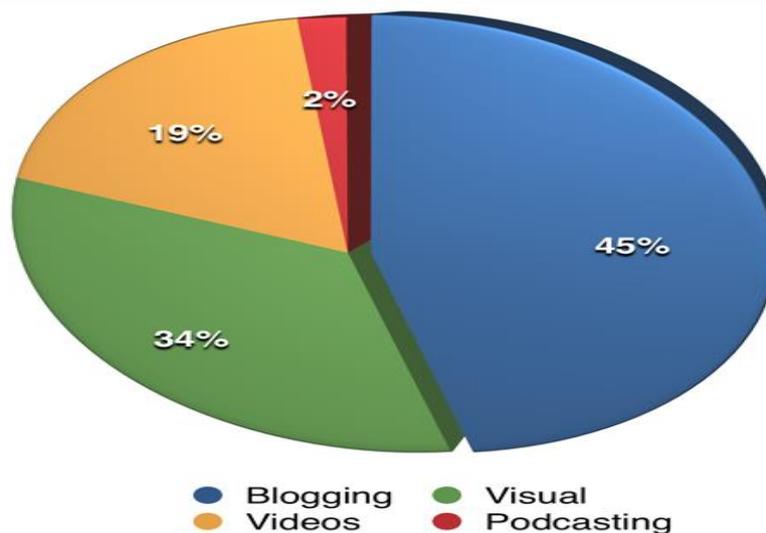
Once a small business determines which channel drives the most valuable (and intentional) traffic, the next step is to provide the content to engage that traffic.

Blogging and visual assets nearly tied at 70% and 71% respectively. The self-employed depend on blogging, with 79% of that faction reporting they blog. At this time, just 10% of marketers use podcasting, but some speculate that podcasting could be an opportunity. Requiring higher budgets and more technology, video content finishes third.



While marketers use visual content like photos and collages most often, they report blog posts are more important to their success.

Despite the easy digestibility of video and visuals, marketers pinpointed blogging as their most important type of content. Consumers now research their purchases thoroughly before buying, and the blog most likely provides more extensive information than the quick image or 1-minute teaser video.



Blogging not only provides the content behind social outreach, its search engine optimization features bring in more leads and boost search engine ranking.

Overall

Small businesses must invest every marketing dollar wisely, and yet taking risks on less-crowded platforms can pay off, too. When every step you take is informed by research, your chances for success (and your confidence) rise.

Reference: <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/social-media-marketing-trends-for-small-business/>

Document references:

1. <http://t.co/mvWuVdEKmf>
2. <http://www.forbes.com/pictures/ejgi45k/ten-myths-about-social-networking-for-business-2/>
3. <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/252662>
4. <http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/7832-social-media-for-business.html>
5. <http://www.business.gov.au/business-topics/business-planning/social-media/Pages/benefits-of-social-media.aspx>
6. <http://www.slideshare.net/hootsuite/introduce-your-boss-to-social-business-in-4-easy-steps-35941897?ref=http://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-for-business/>
7. <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/social-media-marketing-trends-for-small-business/>
8. <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/social-media-for-business/>
9. <http://www.inc.com/peter-roesler/5-benefits-of-social-media-business-owners-need-to-understand.html>