



SOFTPRO

QUICK AND EASY SOCIAL NETWORKING

The Fast Way to Mix, Mingle and Make Your Mark Online
Presented by Softpro Ltd

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QUICK AND EASY SOCIAL NETWORKING

Lesson 1-Why You Should Go For Social Networking

Have you seen the movie, Social Network? Who would have thought, just ten years ago, that we would be watching movies about the creators and developers of the most popular social networking site, and that they would become mainstream celebrities?

Social networking has taken over our lifestyles to such an extent that now even the mainstream media uses it to tap into the society. And it's how friends and families stay in touch around the world. And how new friends are made and new business ventures are launched.

For businesses this has a huge implication. As a business owner, you can tap into the power of social networking to grow your business. Or you can be left behind in the twentieth century mindset of cold calling, mail-outs, fax-outs, and leaflet-drops.

If the thought of learning about applying social networking to your business is a little bit scary, don't worry; it's so new that you are not alone, but the ones who choose to learn this stuff will be right on the cutting edge of social media for small businesses.

Even if you don't do social media for social reasons, (I, for one, don't use it for social reasons), we need it for our businesses. It's where your customers are and it's where you need to be.

I am going to show you how to do it painlessly and simply over the next few weeks. I'll take you through simple steps and before you know it, you will be up with the play, and ahead of your competitors, simply because you are learning how to use the latest in technology for your business.

What is Social Networking?

Social networks are services like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. It's an online service or site that focuses on building relationships. The relationships can be defined by the social network service or they can be defined by the user.

For example, with a social networking service like OldFriends.co.nz the relationships are specifically classmates or past classmates from high school or college. For a social networking service like Facebook, the users create their own groups by liking others and by joining groups.

As a business owner, you can use this community building effect to build a community around your business. You can tap into the likes, interests, and hobbies of your audience and prospects. You can connect with your audience and so build your business.

What Are the Benefits of Social Networking?

As a business owner with a social network platform like Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn, you can:

- Increase awareness of your business.
- Maximize exposure to your potential clients.
- Boost credibility as a reputable and trustworthy business.
- Build community around your product or service.
- Learn more about your audience which helps you to then give a better service.
- Create partnerships with other businesses which compliment your business in some way.
- And best of all, you can do all this without spending very much.

Lesson 2-Overcoming the Drawbacks to Social Networking

In lesson one, I told you why social networking is such a good thing to have in your marketing bag of tricks. But social networking isn't a silver bullet for a business and there are disadvantages that you need to know about so that you can be prepared, and avoid the worst. I want to talk about four disadvantages that I see, and discuss how you can avoid falling into the traps.

1. It Can Be Time Consuming

If you are on a social network site for your personal use or if you know someone who is, you will know that it can gobble up quite a lot of time each day to participate on social networking sites. The key to success is often the amount of interaction you have with other members.

Small business owners generally don't have all day to participate on social networking sites. To post and comment on other people's posts can suck hours out of a business day.

The way to avoid this is to set aside a time each day or week for Facebook or Twitter. For example, when I started, I set aside Monday evenings for Facebook. At first it took me a whole evening to make small progress, but after a while I was able to check into Facebook a couple of times a week and post quick messages without getting sucked into hours of time spent on Facebook. It takes a bit of organization and self-control, but it's worth the effort.

2. It Can Be Slow To Generate Results

Depending on your goals it may take some time, effort and patience to reach them. It does take a while to build a following, so be prepared to settle in for the long haul. Be prepared to work steadily, don't get impatient, and you will see your following grow slowly and boost your business. The results will show up in the end.

3. It's Another Tactic to Become Educated About

Each marketing tactic you add to your strategy is another method you have to learn. Learning takes time, effort and sometimes it takes money too. If you're short on any of them then implementing a social networking plan can feel overwhelming. This book is **free** and it helps you learn the basics. It's also laid out clearly and simply, so you will learn fast.

I will also have some very reasonably priced courses coming up soon. So your social media education will be easy, painless and inexpensive.

4. There are Too Many Options

There are literally hundreds of social networking sites. Some attract very narrow audiences. Others attract all types of people from all walks of life.

To use social networking effectively you'll want to make sure you focus on the services that provide the most bang for your buck. You'll want to choose to create profiles on services that will help you get the most return on your time, energy and money effort. This is where I will help you to get knowledgeable on the useful places.

Lesson 3-The Most Important Part of Starting Out in Social Media

Now that you understand what social networking is and how it can help you grow your business, and the pitfalls you need to avoid, I want to share a very important tip for you. This is really important, and it's something people forget when they get enthusiastic and excited about the possibilities of social media. Here it is:

Start Small

It's important with any marketing strategy or tactic to focus your attention on one element at a time. I've discovered by trial and error that trying to juggle too many tactics leads to:

- Overwhelm
- Missed steps
- Missed opportunities
- Weak implementation

If you focus on one tactic at a time you can optimise it and then move onto your next task or tactic. The result will be a finely tuned marketing system.

Social networking is one tactic in your marketing strategy. Embracing the 'start small' philosophy means focusing on one social networking service at a time. If you try to create profiles on too many sites they're all going to get short changed. None of them will receive your full attention and they'll likely fall short of your expectations.

However, if you focus on creating a profile and optimising one social networking site at a time, you can maximise your efforts.

But we'll still be looking forward and planning what social networking site you're going to focus on second and maybe even third. That way your plan and strategy can support each other.

For example, if you choose to focus on Facebook first you may want to focus on twitter second. There are many ways to cross promote Twitter and Facebook activities. Each social networking site and effort can be used on the other and vice versa.

Lesson 4-Top Seven Social Networking Services

With more than 200 main stream social networking sites it can be difficult to decide which site is the right site to invest your time, money, and energy. So, in this lesson, I will walk you through seven of the most popular social networking services.

But first, I just want to explain the difference between Social Networking and Social Bookmarking.

Social Bookmarking is the practice of bookmarking web pages and sharing them with an online community. It is also a good business building strategy. Social Bookmarking sites are sites like:

- StumbleUpon
- Digg
- De.lic.ious

Social Networking is what we are covering in this free book. Some of the most popular social networking sites include:

Facebook

www.facebook.com. Founded in 2004, their mission is: "Giving people the power to share and make the world more open and connected."

They say:

- More than 500 million active users.
- More than 70 translations available on the site
- About 70% of Facebook users are outside the United States
- People on Facebook install 20 million applications every day

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- Every month, more than 250 million people engage with Facebook on external websites
- Since social plugins launched in April 2010, an average of 10,000 new websites integrate with Facebook every day
- More than 2.5 million websites have integrated with Facebook, including over 80 of comScore's U.S. Top 100 websites and over half of comScore's Global Top 100 websites

MySpace

www.MySpace.com Founded in 2003, MySpace is “a leading social entertainment destination powered by the passions of fans. Aimed at a Gen Y audience, MySpace drives social interaction by providing a highly personalized experience around entertainment and connecting people to the music, celebrities, TV, movies, and games that they love.”

According to the factsheet on their website, “MySpace has more than 100 million users worldwide, half of which are in the U.S. Our fans are defined as Gen Y, whose numbers on our site grew over 23 percent this year. MySpace has a 50 percent market share in the 13-35 demographic in the US. MySpace is localised in 30 countries and translated into 16 languages”

Twitter

www.Twitter.com “Twitter is a real-time information network that connects you to the latest information about what you find interesting. Simply find the public streams you find most compelling and follow the conversations.”

As of September, 2010 Twitter has 175 million registered users. And 95 million tweets are written per day.

Tagged

www.Tagged.com “Other social networks are for staying in touch with people you already know. At Tagged, we make it easy to meet new people through social games, friend suggestions, browsing profiles, group interests and much more.”

You can create an account using your Twitter, Facebook or MySpace id thus combining your efforts.

Tagged claims to have over 100 million members and 25 million monthly visitors.

YouTube

www.YouTube.com “Founded in February 2005, YouTube allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small.”

On their press page, YouTube says:

- More than 2 billion views per day
- 24 hours of video uploaded every minute
- More video uploaded to YouTube in 60 days than the three major US networks created in 60 years
- YouTube is localized in 25 countries across 43 languages
- YouTube's demographic is broad: 18-54 years old
- YouTube reached over 700 billion playbacks in 2010

YahooAnswers

www.yahooanswers.com “Find out everything there is to know about Yahoo! Answers.”

Created in 2006 as Ask Yahoo, Yahoo Answers is a social network that operates on a scoring system. The more you interact, the higher your score. Yahoo! Answers staff claim 200 million users worldwide and 15 million users visiting daily.

LinkedIn

www.Linkedin is a professional networking site. It's a place to build professional connections or further your career. Launched in 2003, "LinkedIn operates the world's largest professional network on the Internet.

On their about page, they say:

- More than 90 million members in over 200 countries and territories.
- More than half of LinkedIn members are located outside of the United States.
- There were nearly two billion people searches on LinkedIn in 2010."

Lesson 5-Which is the Best Social Networking Site for Your Audience?

In Lesson 4, I gave you a brief outline of the seven most popular social networking services. In this lesson I am going to help you work out which one is best for you to start with.

How to choose the best site

Let's consider the popularity of a platform. So you could ask yourself:

- *Where can I find the most people?*
- *Which ones will offer me a better experience?*

You will find that the more popular social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter have the advantage on both counts. For example, Twitter has a number of secondary tools you can use to schedule posts, to track results and to cross promote on sites like Facebook.

So a popular social networking site might be easier to use simply because of the number of developer applications and secondary software products.

But it doesn't make sense for you to choose a popular social networking site if your audience isn't using the site. It's much more important and effective to go where your audience is.

Find out where your audience is going

- Choose a site and browse the site, looking at who is using it.
- Ask your readers and website visitors what sites they use. You can do this in your newsletter, when you see your clients, or you can publish a survey on your website.
- Visit the social networking site's home page and review their statistics and user information. For example, Facebook lists the following statistics:
 - More than 500 million active users
 - 50% of our active users log on to Facebook in any given day
 - Average user has 130 friends
 - People spend over 700 billion minutes per month on Facebook

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- There are over 900 million objects that people interact with (pages, groups, events and community pages)
- Average user is connected to 80 community pages, groups and events
- Average user creates 90 pieces of content each month
- More than 30 billion pieces of content (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photo albums, etc.) shared each month.

To find this relevant data, most social networking sites list their user data on their site. This information can often be found on their “About” page or on their “Press” page. For example, I got the above information on Facebook’s Press page. You can also search online to find social networking ranking information which may also list user demographics.

Does It Fit Into Your Plan?

Some social networking sites are easy to use and offer an abundance of features. Others do not. When deciding which sites are right for you, make a list of what you want to accomplish with social networking. We talk about your goals and social networking plan in the next steps. Once you have your goals established, you can compare sites based on that information.

What is Facebook like for Businesses?

- Facebook offers the ability to create a Business Page. These used to be called ‘fan pages’ and you could have ‘fans’. Now you ask people to ‘like’ you. This is instead of being a ‘friend’.
- A Business Page works almost like a website, but it’s on Facebook. You can include a sales page, a welcome video, content and any number of links and promotions on your wall. It’s a nice way to build a community and a brand.
- Facebook Business pages allow for customisation. You can add photos, discussion forums, micro-blogging, videos, and events.
- A Business page offers you the ability to differentiate between “friends” and “fans”. An update to your Business page does not show up on your personal profile wall.

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This means you can post things to your Business page that your friends don't see. It's a nice way to separate your activities and you can feel comfortable promoting your product or service.

- A Business page provides you with analytics tools and data points so you can test and track your success.

Summary

Your first step when creating a social networking plan is to consider which service or site you'll use first. Take some time and evaluate the pros and cons. Make sure your audience is present on the site. Make sure the site fits your goals and objectives. And take a look at the outside applications and tools that can make your social networking efforts easier and less time consuming.

Action Step: Take a look at your social networking options. Make a list of the top three to five. In the next lesson I will show you how to create your goals for your social networking site. You don't have to choose just yet. You can let your goals help you determine the best site to start with.

Lesson 6-Determine Your Goals & Know Where to Start

Any organisation will only use social networking if it's going to be of benefit to the company. And in this lesson I'd like to have a closer look at how you can actually benefit from social networking. As you read through the list and my summaries, make your own notes so that you will be ready to establish what it is that you are hoping to achieve in your social networking.

1. Marketing

At its simplest, social networking provides you with an opportunity to link to relevant content, promotions and offers. You're also able to establish your brand. This helps motivate people to become your fans or follow you or whatever.

2. Connections

In many cases the people you connect with via social networking sites can change your business. It's not unusual to develop good friends, associates and customers while networking online. You'll learn from others and provide value. Take care however, to not spread yourself too thin. It's the quality of your online relationships not the quantity of them that counts.

3. Partnerships

Social networking can be a great resource for finding quality partnerships. You're able to meet and connect with likeminded people from around the country and around the world. It gives you a chance to not only research and study potential partners but to also put yourself out there as a valuable resource for other compatible businesses. Partnerships can range from simple advertising exchanges to larger scale partnerships and new business developments.

4. Authority and Credibility

Exchanging ideas and building authority and credibility in your industry is made much easier through social networking. You can share valuable information and guidance and so position yourself as a trusted resource.

5. *Vendor Relationships*

You can find great providers via social networking sites. You might find the perfect bookkeeper, distributor or even a great marketing specialist.

6. *Mentors & Educational Opportunities*

Social networking is a fantastic way to learn. You'll glean new information from potential customers, from gurus in your industry and from those people you meet along the way. Enjoy the learning process and the vast amount of information available on social networking sites.

7. *New Customers*

You'll likely also find a whole new customer base with social networking. You'll meet friends of friends who could use your products or services. You'll connect with people who have been looking for the solution you provide. It's a great way to do business.

8. *Traffic*

Social networking sites are supreme traffic generators. One link in one post on your social networking site of choice can send hundreds of visitors to your website. It drives traffic through linking in your posts. It also drives traffic simply through your profile. People click to learn more about you.

9. *Target Market Research*

Social networking is a great place to learn more about your audience. You can use social networking to collect ideas for your business. You can eavesdrop on conversations to learn what your audience's most pressing problems are. You can start discussions to learn what they want to know. You can also tap into trends. In fact, short of sitting down with a focus group, it's probably the best place for your target market research.

10. Product Launch

You can use social networking to launch a product. It takes a bit of planning and forethought but you can really boost your launch results. Here's an example of how you might use social networking to launch a new product or service.

- Create a build up to the launch event. Post any sneak peeks, samples, and testimonials for the product a few days before the event.
- Offer special incentives. You can also offer a limited discount or sneak peek viewing to the first 100 visitors, first 100 fans on Facebook or even the first 100 people to reTweet your offer. This is also a great way to gauge interest in your new product.
- Publish content relating to your new product and link to the new content from your social networking profile. You could also publish a testimonial or link to a rave review.

Defining Your Goal

Obviously, there are many things you can accomplish with social networking. In fact, there are so many it's easy to get carried away. But let me encourage you to take advice I gave you in lesson three – start small. Choose one or two goals that you know you can achieve. Focus on success. Once you've accomplished your goals you can add more challenging goals to your plan.

So now, when considering your goal you can start by looking at what would most benefit your business. Do you need more traffic? Are you looking to build more loyalty within your company? Are you money motivated and looking for more cash? Make sure your social networking goals support your business goals and you'll be off to a great start.

Action Step: Spend ten minutes looking at any social network service you are thinking might work for you and your organisation. Have a look at what your competitors are doing and how they are using social networking to their advantage. Then create your goals for your social networking plan. What do you want to accomplish with your social networking efforts?

Lesson 7-Create Your Plan

Once you have your goals outlined it's time to start planning how you're going to achieve them. This is the most active step yet. In fact, it'll require a bit of time, brainstorming and thinking as well as some research. So let's get started right now. Grab a piece of paper or pull up a new document on your computer and answer the following questions.

1. Who is your target audience? - It's important to know this before you begin participating on social networking sites so you choose the sites which are right for your business and your goals.
2. What relationships are you looking to find and build? Are you looking to establish relationships with customers, vendors or potential partners? If so, how will you accomplish this?
3. What do you have to offer your audience? What content will you publish? What information are you going to offer and how are you going to participate? Are you going to link to blog posts? Post tips and information?
4. What image do you want to portray? What's your brand? For small business owners your personality is often also your brand. Maintain consistency through your profile page, communications, website and/or blog.
5. Who is your competition on each social networking site you've chosen to participate in? What does their profile look like? Who are they following/connected to?
6. How are you going to represent yourself online? There are many options here and you're not limited to one. However it pays to consider how you want to portray yourself. As an expert? As a partner? As a motivator? A resource?
7. How often are you going to post/participate? Create a realistic plan for posting and participating in your chosen social networking sites and schedule it into your day/week/month.
8. How many new people will you connect with each day/week/month? You can create goals here that will help you stay motivated to connect. Consider though that sheer numbers don't always mean success. With social networking the power is in the quality of the connection, not the quantity of connections.

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9. Will you create specific content, promotions and offers for your social networking audience? If so, what? How do they fit into your goals?
10. How are you going to test and track your social networking efforts? We'll take a closer look at testing and tracking in step seven. However, begin to think about quantifying your goals and different tactics and tools you can use to track and measure success.
11. How will you manage your time? When will you schedule social networking? What tools will you use to make the process easier? For example, you might participate in social networking interaction and posting each night while you watch television. If you're using Twitter, you might also schedule posts in advance for the week using any number of tools.

Lesson 8-Let's start Networking!

Now that you have your plan written out, it's time to start implementing it. It's time to start networking!

Implement Your Plan

Your plan is laid out. Your first social networking site has been chosen. It's time to put your efforts, time and energy into action.

Your first step will be to register with your site of choice and to start building your profile.

Your profile page is often the first interaction you have with a potential prospect. It's the perfect opportunity to brand your company

Depending on the site you've chosen to start with you may have lots of opportunity to create your profile and brand your business. Or you may be allowed little more than a username and website address.

Make the most of whatever you have.

What Do You Include On Your Profile Page?

Your profile page is the first glimpse into who you are and what you have to offer. Take time planning and developing your profile page. Consider the following elements:

Your User Name

If you are a very small business, you might like to consider registering with your personal name rather than your business name. People will be more likely to connect with a person than a business.

Your URL

You may want to enter your landing page here. However, keep your goals in mind. If you're trying to boost profits for a product you might send people right to your sales page. Make sure your URL is in line with your goals.

Your Description

Your “About Me” page, business description and likes and interests are next. Consider creating a story that relates to your business and your vision. What do you have to offer? Include information about you personally. Social networking is about connecting personally. Promotion comes second. It’s also okay to list your accomplishments here – this helps to establish credibility and it helps people recognise you as an expert in your industry.

Interaction

Once your profile is up, it’s time to interact. That means posting and commenting. Let’s look at the actions individually.

Posting

Ideally you’ll have a plan about what you’re going to post. Your posts will support your goal and offer value. A post about the great tuna sandwich you just ate is only relevant if you have a cooking website or blog.

Random tidbits of information do not offer value to your audience or followers. However, offering tips, and solutions do help your audience. And if you can entertain them at the same time that’s great!

Consider sitting down weekly and looking at your social networking plan. Determine what you’re going to post about and then schedule the posts. If you can write them all in one day and schedule them to be automatically posted, all the better. That’s not always possible.

Consider how your posts might integrate with your marketing and content strategies. For example, if you’re creating blog posts to support a new affiliate product you might also link to those posts or create similar content for your social networking page.

Consider simply publishing a teaser. Often, publishing an entire article just doesn’t make sense. You want to drive traffic to your website. Tease it on the social networking site and link to your website for more.

Let your content do double duty. Use it to provide value and promote at the same time. For example, if you’re releasing a new product or service, you might offer several tips or related posts with links to your new product/service sales/information page.

Make sure you're providing a consistent voice or brand. Social networking is about building a community. When you brand your content to your personality you build an audience of loyal followers.

Interact

Interacting is most commonly accomplished by commenting on other people's posts. In the case of Twitter you can also "reTweet". On Facebook you can "Share." You can also "Like" on Facebook.

Those are the basics. Most often you'll be actually providing discussions, comments, and insight or advice. Again, make sure you're not "Selling". Offer value. Don't merely market your business, connect and provide value.

Follow and Friend

Follow or friend people who are in your niche. Consider sending them a note or a message about why you are interested in following them. Build your following by following those who are in your niche. You don't have to follow everyone who follows you. However, it pays to take some time to evaluate the decision. Are they in your audience? Might they provide value to you in terms of education, connections or partnerships?

Many marketers follow everyone that follows them. This limits your ability to have a genuine interaction. You might consider only following those who you can keep in touch with.

Look for connectors and follow them. Connectors are people who are involved in their community. They know everyone. When you follow a connector you then become part of their community and have access to all of the resources and people they know.

Integrate Social Networking Activities

Integrating your social networking activities with your marketing strategy is essential for optimal success.

You've already taken the first and most important step to integrating your social networking tactic into your marketing strategy by creating goals for your efforts.

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For example, you can integrate your activities into your total marketing strategy in

- **Email Marketing** - Include a link to your social networking profile in your email signature. Include a call to action in your newsletter inviting people to find you on your chosen social networking site(s).
- **Website** - Include social networking interactions or buttons on your website. Use a widget to show recent conversations or posts. Or include a “like this on Facebook” or “Tweet This” button on your pages.
- **Reverse Marketing** – Include a link to any new website content on your social networking sites.

The more you can maximize and integrate your efforts the more results you’ll get.

Lesson 9-Test and Analyze

We have come to the last lesson in this book. And I have some special freebies for you, to celebrate that you have got so far! So read to the end of the lesson and see what's in store for you to help you get started on your social media marketing.

Like any effective marketing effort it's important to test and track your efforts.

Test and Track

You can test and track by installing Google Analytics on your website. This is free. Your analytics will tell you how people arrived at your site. If your networking goal is to drive traffic to your website this will tell you how well you are succeeding.

Also, you can tell which social networking posts achieved the most results. You can do this by sending followers to test pages.

Analytics Tools

You can also utilize many analytics tools designed specifically for social networking. For example, HootSuite offers analytics. You can find out how many clicks you've had in the past week and see who clicked. This is extremely useful marketing information. You can also see who has mentioned you or your business.

For any goal you create, make sure there is a means to measure success. Include it in your plan and implement it in your strategy. Also consider tracking how much time you spend on social networking and the results you achieve. You may find your time is well spent. You may decide to outsource the task. Or you may decide to change your goals and strategy. Tracking and testing provide critical decision making information. Don't skip this step!

Rinse and Repeat

Once you've established yourself on your chosen social networking site you can repeat this process. You can add another social networking site to your marketing and social networking strategy. Again, start small. Focus on singular goals. Create meaningful and beneficial relationships.

Like anything in life, you get out of it what you put into it. Social networking is no different. If you go into it with a goal, a plan and a desire to connect you will achieve success. You will achieve your goals.

Start Small

Remember to start small. But do start. Focus on accomplishing goals that make sense and support your business. Participate fully, make friends, build relationships and offer value and you will create the loyal following you are seeking. You will boost your traffic. You will increase awareness and exposure for your business. You will also increase your profits.

Have Clear Goals

Make time to network with clear goals in mind. Be authentic and transparent. Connect, inform, motivate, entertain, and inspire. Show your audience who you are and the value you and your business have to offer.

Use Social Networking to Grow Your Business

Use social networking to learn, grow and prosper. Social networking is a growing medium because it works. Follow the strategies and guidelines presented in this book and reap the rewards.

Free Course For You

This is a really brief overview of what goes on in the world of social media. And I recommend Facebook as a great first choice for most businesses entering this arena.

You can learn more in my [Free Five-Part Mini-course](#) on starting a Facebook Fan Page for your business.