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# Introduction: Why Social Media is a Necessary Component to Your Online Marketing Strategy



A highly competitive marketplace emphasizes the importance of consistent branding and marketing across as many platforms as possible. Today, social media has become one of the most used mediums for business marketing. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+, etc are free for the user and are easily setup and managed to promote your business.

The majority of people spend time online, whether it is at work, on their phones, or at home. Because we live in a world where virtually anything and everything, whether valuable or not is shared online, a business cannot afford to ignore having an online presence.

The purpose of marketing is to attract new clients to your business. A business needs to make money. Money is obtained through sales, and sales are made and based upon the relationships you build and develop. Although traditional ways of advertising, marketing and sales remain, the shift to more untraditional practices and mediums, such as social media, have brought on the need for a more diverse marketing strategy.

## Social Media's Different Platforms and the Benefits of Each

With new social media platforms popping up every year, it is important to identify the big players and what each can do for your business. There are 3 primary social media platforms that remain the most powerful in social media marketing. These include, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Although, other prominent social platforms exist, these three remain the most highly used and recommended for building an established online presence.



### Facebook:

Facebook has 1.11 billion monthly active users as of June 2012, and according to Facebook, there are over 50 Million Facebook Business pages. With such a large user base, Facebook is the most popular social networking site existing today. Because of its vast audience, it has become easier than ever to reach a business' target market.

It is important to go where your customers are, and for most, that means Facebook. A Facebook page acts as a community forum for your business. It is a place where you can share important updates, information, events, and features with your clientele and potential customer base. It is also a place for your customers to engage with your business on a more personal level. Providing customers with a more intimate forum.



#### Benefits of Having a Facebook Business Page:

- Business pages are indexed by search engines: Based on the keywords used in your business page title, a business' Facebook page will appear in top search results, driving more people to your business.
- Create new service/ product campaigns easily: Introduce new products and services to your online fan base quickly and easily on your Facebook page. By using your page's valuable real estate, like the Cover Photo, you creatively and cost efficiently spread the exciting news or developments of your company.
- Business Humanization: Facebook business pages evolved from personal profiles, but having a defined personality and voice has not disappeared. Your business Facebook page is a place for you to connect with your customers. People are more likely to connect with a personality than a static brand.
- Drive your Facebook fans to your website: A Facebook page is just another place for you to promote your website. Always make sure your website is visible in the 'About' section of your page, so that it appears on the front page of your timeline.
- Provide Facebook only promotions: Entice your customers and clients to connect with your brand online by offering Facebook exclusives. If they take advantage of the offer and think it is valuable, the more likely they are to share it with their network of friends.
- Business networking. Interact with other businesses by liking and commenting on their updates. This gives your business a chance to positively intermingle with other online businesses.

- Client/ Customer Retention and Loyalty: Facebook offers your business a direct way for you to address your client's questions, concerns or praises. Having the ability to connect on a more personal level develops more solid relationships, resulting in client/customer retention. Having loyal customers means you are creating a trustworthy brand.
- Customer engagement: Monitor how your clients and customers view and interact with your business. The more compelling information your push out there, the more likely they are to engage with your page and share it with their contacts resulting in a viral effect.
- Gain social influence: The more your fans engage with your brand, the more people will view your business as a valuable and credible source. Providing valuable information and consistently interacting and responding to your fans gives people a chance to see how you conduct your business.



## Twitter:

Twitter is a microblogging social network that allows users to send and read messages, called Tweets, of up to 160 characters. Unlike Facebook, there is no difference between a business profile and a personal profile.

According to a study done at the University of Massachusetts, 73% of Fortune 500's have an active Twitter account. As this study shows, Twitter has gone from being a niche-marketing tool to an integral part of a company's overall marketing strategy, no matter what the size of the company.

Another study conducted by Pingdom shows that the typical Twitter user is a 37 year old woman. For many companies, this demographic makes up a large part of their target market. Again, to reach success in marketing, you go to where your audience is, and in many cases, Twitter is an efficient tool to get there.

promote your brand.

- PR opportunities – Journalists, editors and reporters are active on twitter and constantly searching for industry experts that can provide them with newsworthy stories.
- Drive traffic to website: Sharing content from your website with your followers drives increased traffic to your website.
- Boost Business Relationships: Interact with key influencers in your industry. Engaging with these people increases your chance of them Retweeting or re-sharing your business.



## **LinkedIn:**

LinkedIn was launched in 2003 as a social community for online professionals. Today, with over 175 million users, LinkedIn remains the social platform for business professionals around the world to connect and network virtually.

Because of its business centric model, LinkedIn is a great place to network and interact with businesses and business professionals alike to build relationships, provide new opportunities for your brand, and enhance your reputation.

### **Benefits of Using LinkedIn for Business:**

- Combine professional networking and social media: Quickly and easily expand your network by finding others that you have connected with in the past. Once you are connected with those, you can also view mutual contacts allowing you to expand your reach even more. It allows you to visually identify the ‘six degrees of separation’ between you and other professionals in your industry.
- Use LinkedIn Recommendations to build credibility: Professional recommendations and followers of your LinkedIn Company profile helps build credibility for your brand. These recommendations, whether on your individual or company page can assist in securing new clients and new business opportunities.
- Contribute or start a LinkedIn Discussion and Group: Establishing a LinkedIn Discussion or Group can position yourself as an industry thought leader. Many groups and discussions are open to all members, allowing for a potentially large reach. These are great places to demonstrate your expertise in the field, building credibility for your brand.
- Increase traffic to your website: LinkedIn provides yet another place for you to showcase your website. Drive traffic to your website by posting updates that link back to your site. LinkedIn is also highly favored with search engines, and LinkedIn profiles often come up in search results.
- Research both companies and professionals for future business opportunities: LinkedIn search enables you to extensively search for and research companies you may consider working with. It also enables you to research any competition to get a better picture of what they are doing.



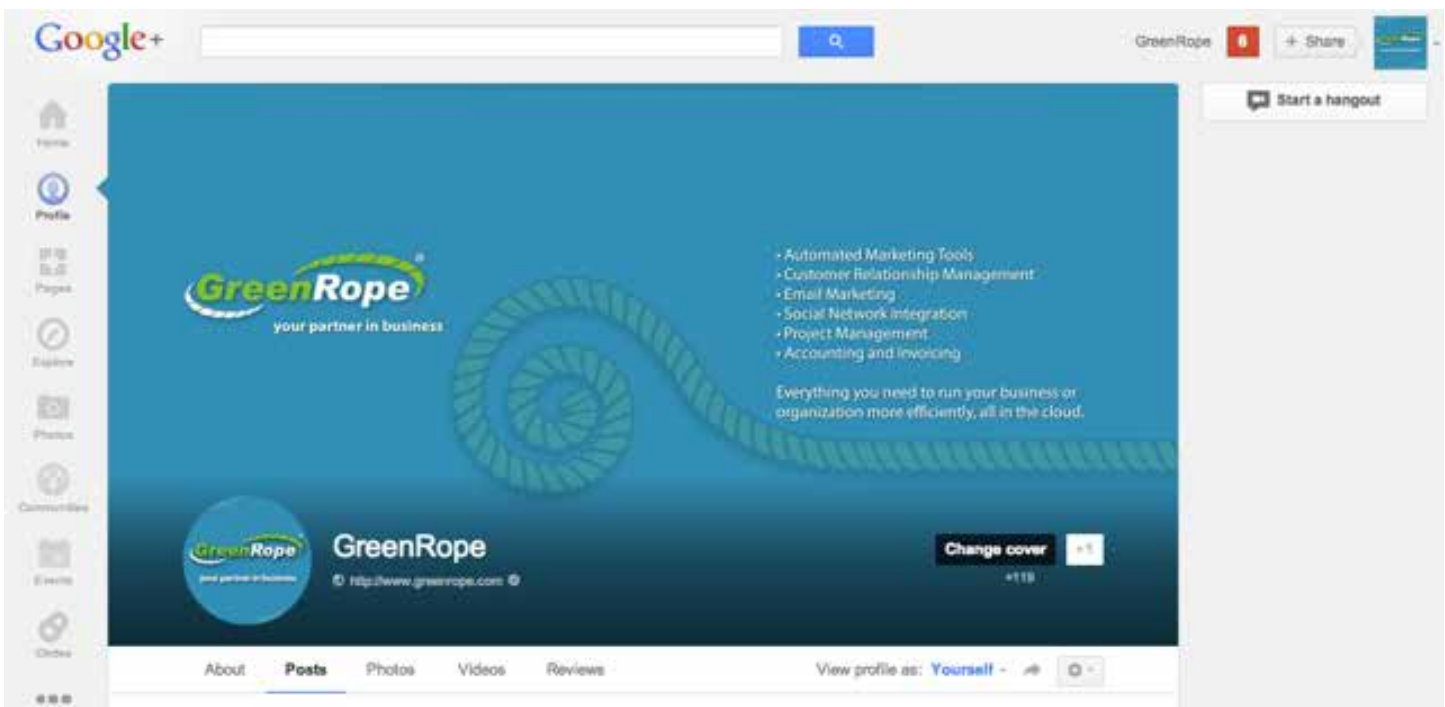
## Google+:

Google+ is a rapidly growing social network. According to a study done by the GlobalWebIndex, Google+ has surpassed Twitter and is now the 2nd most popular social network out there. With 343 million active users, Google+ is a big player, so jump on board.

Benefits of using Google+ for Business:

- Google now incorporates Google+ into most all of its products. Each person who signs up for a new Google account is automatically set up with a Google+ social profile.
- Google is also the most used search engine, and ranks Google+ pages and posts pretty darn high. If not for all of the other cool features Google+ has, which we are about to get into, then you should consider it for SEO purposes.

\*\*Not to say that Google+ is biased, but it is, and anything that is put onto Google+ has a better chance of showing up in search results. Just saying, that's convincing enough for me. That is one of the main reasons that marketers first started putting their businesses on Google+ in the first place. Now, the social network has made so many changes and added many cool features that it is simply the place to be.



Google+ Features include:

- Google+ Pages: Similar to Facebook pages, but higher ranking in search engines. You can post, add photos, create Communities, engage with people in your circles, etc. Google+ posts rank pretty high in Google, so even though you may not post daily, it is good to post a couple of times a week to keep it current and updated. Google likes that. J
- Google+ Communities: This is probably my favorite new feature from Google+. Communities work like

a LinkedIn Group. Communities exist for everything. GreenRope happens to be a member of many small businesses, CRM, Sales and Marketing communities. This is a chance for your business to post and share with other businesses and users interested in the same industry and topics. Share your latest blog posts with the community, answer questions, and show your knowledge. You can access Google+ Communities both as a company and an individual, making them, in my opinion, even more valuable than LinkedIn groups.

- **Google+ Hangouts:** Google+ Hangouts are pretty awesome. Host or join a discussion with businesses, people in your circles, communities, etc. Hangout is basically video chat with up to nine different people. The coolest part about a Google+ Hangout? You can make it live, so that other people can watch it. When you enable a Hangout on Air, the hangout is recorded and then turned into a YouTube video that you can share. This is great for panel discussions, meetings, etc.
- **Google+ Events:** Post events, including Hangouts in Google+ events. Events will show you all the events, both physical and online that are going on with the people in your circles, businesses, and communities. Google has also added an extra bonus called Party Mode, which enables you to snap photos during the event and post them to everyone at the party in real time. Google+ Events also has an array of invitation themes, so that you can send out happy hour or professional invitations depending on the event.

All in all, Google+ is a marketing powerhouse and a social network any sized business should utilize. With so many features and relevant users, Google+ cannot be ignored.

## **In-House vs. Outsourcing Your Company's Social Media**

Determining whether your company should hire an in-house social media professional or outsource the task is a topic of much discussion these days. Small business owners are already responsible for most all operations, and social media adds another daunting undertaking to the list. Enter the position: Director of Social Media.

While outsourcing may seem beneficial because of their social media expertise, hiring an in-house social media exec means you are giving the job to someone that knows your company both inside and out.

Top three reasons for keeping your social media in-house:

1. No one knows your business like an internal employee. Not only do they have access to key company information, but they are always “in the know” of new and exciting things happening.
2. An internal employee is more passionate about your business and serving your customers than any outsider.
3. Outsourcing your brand's image is risky, if you can't find a reputable company.

Top two reasons to outsource social media:

1. Designated and experienced professionals develop and execute proven social media strategies.
2. Outsourcing provides one less thing for you to worry about, saving time and potentially money.
3. Save your in-house resources for business development, sales, etc.

Even though, time is money, there are a few factors that should determine whether outsourcing social media is beneficial for your brand.

If you decide to outsource, it is crucial that the undertaker go out of their way to understand your business model, marketing strategy, and target market. Meeting employees and becoming an expert on the product or service you are selling is the only way that an outsider can achieve success with a social media campaign.

Social media provides direct access to both your most loyal and most vocal clients and customers. Because social media is so fast-paced, being able to accurately represent a brand in the company's voice is key. It is also pertinent to the success of the media campaign to know how much time the outsourced professional will be dedicating to your social media. Make sure that this information is quantifiable and in the contract that both parties sign.

When hiring an in-house social media manager, it is important to hire someone with both a marketing background and previous social media experience. Social media may be a new age way to market a business, but many marketing principles remain, and having someone that is knowledgeable on the subject will ensure best practices are maintained, while adapting your business to this new medium of marketing.

## Creating Content for Social Media

Have you ever heard someone say, "Content is king"? Well, the truth of the matter is that it's true. Content IS king, and what you put out there is going to determine how others view your brand. Establishing your brand as a resource for industry information increases the chance that people will come to you before someone else when searching for information about your industry. Broadcasting valuable content also increases your company's reputation as a credible source for key material.



Many people do not understand the difference in creating content for Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. While in most cases, you are presenting your fans and followers with similar information, the way you go about posting it varies from platform to platform.

Facebook, for example, is far more visual than Twitter. With the onset of the new Facebook Timeline, posts and updates with images receive a higher view rate resulting in greater engagement. Facebook also does not limit the numbers of characters per post. Your post can be an essay or one word. However, when creating content for Facebook, it is important to keep in mind the following:

1. Keep Facebook posting to a minimum. Do not inundate your fans with posts and updates. This might trigger them to "hide your posts" from their newsfeed or "unsubscribe" from your updates.
2. Ask for what you want. Do you want your fans to "Like" your post? Ask for it. A call to action results in greater activity.
3. Keep promotion to a minimum. Why do you "Like" a page? Typically, a person "Likes" a page because they want access to valuable information, as well as updates on new features, functions, promotions, etc. If you stick to the 70/30 Rule, you are doing it right. Make 70% of your posts relevant/ valuable content about



your business and the industry, and the other 30% promotion of services, features, events, etc.

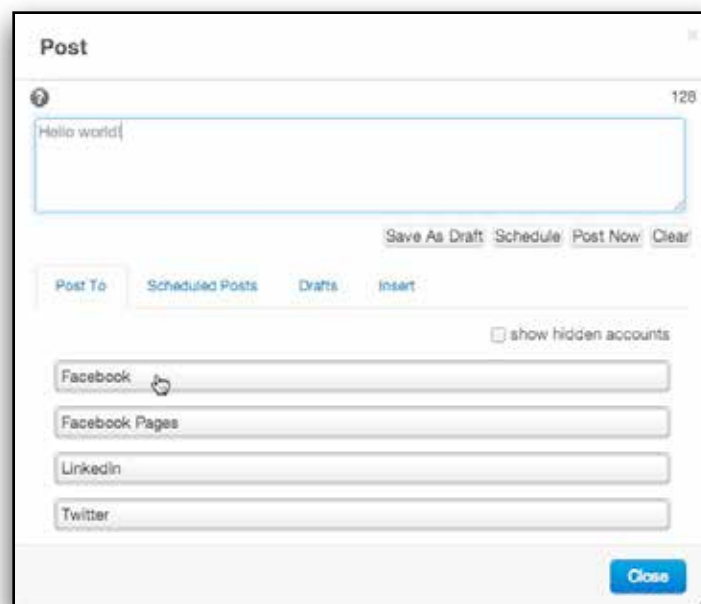
Twitter is a whole other beast. Twitter allows you 160 characters (the same as a text message) to get in everything you have to say. That is not a lot of space, so keep it succinct.

Twitter moves a lot faster than Facebook does, so it is important to Tweet 2 or 3 times per day to keep the conversation going. A tweet should be catchy, easy to read, and spark a reaction.

1. Tweet valuable information that will encourage readers to click on your links.
2. Retweeting is just as valuable as Tweeting. Retweeting an industry influencer's tweet encourages engagement and oftentimes will receive a response from the person you retweeted.
3. Make use of the trending topics. Trending topics are the popular conversations going on in the Twitter-sphere. Chime in on relevant trending discussions to increase the chances of your tweets being seen by others also monitoring and engaging on these topics.

## Using GreenRope's Social Media Dashboard

GreenRope's Social function allows a business to easily and efficiently manage their social media presence. With direct access to Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, it has never been easier to post, search, and track your brand's social media activities.



GreenRope supports the three largest social networks, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Configuring your accounts to start managing them is simple and can be completed in a few easy steps using the Social Configuration tool.

After you have added each of your accounts, you can then access them via the main social dashboard. The first tab lays out an overview of all account activity, including comments, likes, tweets, mentions and retweets. This summary gives you a great idea of both the rate of engagement, as well as the type of engagement your profiles are giving and receiving.

If you would like to go more in depth into each account, simply click on the Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn tab to view yours news feed, posts, your friends, pages, likes, followers, etc.

If you are a manager of more than one Facebook business page, you will not need to add these separately. All

of your pages will appear automatically once you have configured your personal account. Under the 'Pages' tab, you will be able to view the page on Facebook, view your news feed, post, or access more information about the page. It is now easier than ever to manage all of your business pages from one single place.

Monitoring and posting in Twitter is just as easy. View your profile, your contacts, tweet, and even perform keyword searches from within the dashboard. You are able to search and find conversations that relate to your business and industry easily and efficiently, making engagement more effective.

Posting and scheduling messages across all of your accounts is another key feature of GreenRope's social dashboard. Any authorized GreenRope User can post or schedule a message and broadcast it to one or all of your accounts at the same time! This saves you time and energy. Instead of having to login and repost the same content, GreenRope allows you to do it all at once and from one place!

GreenRope is always looking for ways to make your daily operations easier and more time efficient. Our social dashboard does just that. Social media does not have to be a daunting task. Just connect your accounts, and you will have your social world at your fingertips.

## **Finding the Best Way to Track Your Social Media Efforts**

Measuring social media efforts has been a topic of conversation ever since the inception of the social media craze. Marketers have been struggling with finding ways to measure social media, with little consistency. GreenRope developed a series of metrics to better help marketers determine where they stand in the social media game. These metrics give businesses the ability to track and measure the effectiveness of their social media campaigns for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

The new app offers several valuable insights, including:

- **Conversation** – Measuring the number of replies to your posts across your social networks is a good way to determine if your message is engaging your listeners. The "Conversation" metric will give you a base number that determines how effective your message is at garnering responses from your listeners.
- **Amplification** – When your listeners are engaged, they are more likely to share your posts to their friends, and the "Amplification" metric measures how effective your posts are at eliciting shares and re-tweets.
- **Applause** - A lesser measurement, but also very insightful, is the number of "Likes" or "Favorites" your posts generate. This metric, dubbed "Applause", provides a way of gathering insight into your listeners' do and don't like.
- **Impact** - This is a weighted average of Conversation, Amplification, and Applause, coupled with additional calculations that take into account several other factors, to provide a solid metric of the overall impact of your messages. This will enable you to evaluate your posts and decide what people best respond to.
- **Interest** - This metric identifies how much your listeners click on your links. The other measurements point towards your likeability and basic brand image, but "Interest" shows you the bottom line: Are your posts driving traffic to your sites?

With GreenRope's Social Media feature, business owners and marketing and social media experts will have access to information that will allow them to evaluate their social media strategy with measurable data, allowing them to fine-tune their messages and more effectively reach their target audiences.

Social media is called so because it is supposed to be social. These measurements point towards your likeability and basic brand image. The higher the score the better, but it is important to also take into account the quality of

your fans, followers, and conversations. Often times in social media, quality can trump quantity, but it is important for you to know where your numbers are. That being said, quality can be directly correlated to quantity because the more valuable and relevant content you broadcast, the more likely you are to get engagement from your fans and followers.

## **Conclusion: Social Media is Here to Stay**

Social media is not going anywhere. In fact, social media is becoming more ingrained in the daily lives of both businesses and individuals. In a study done by Manta of 600 small business owners across the United States, they found that 90% are active on one or more social networks and 74% view social networking as valuable to their overall marketing strategy. Forty-two percent of these business owners said that over 25% of customers found their brand via social media sites. This being said, social media proves to be an effective tool for any business to recharge its marketing strategy. GreenRope makes having an online presence both simple and effective. The usability of the GreenRope social media tools encourages businesses to take the next step in their marketing, and to join the social media revolution.