ANOTHER MARKETING TOOL FROM

The Marketing Bit

7 KEYS TO

SOCIAL MEDIA

MARKETING SUCCESS

© 2012 ~ The Marketing Bit ~ All Rights Reserved
About The Marketing Bit

As the name implies, The Marketing Bit is all about marketing, online and off. It is a marketing training company specifically designed to help business owners serious about their online and offline marketing.

I founded The Marketing Bit to help solo-entrepreneurs and business owners become smarter about their marketing by providing smart tools and straight forward, no nonsense marketing guidance. There is no hype, secret sauce, magic elixirs. I prefer proven tools and reliable information. Don’t you?

Some refer to me as a “seasoned marketing professional” as I’ve been engaged in marketing for 35 plus years. A bulk of that time was working within advertising agencies and some as Director of Marketing and Communications for companies. I also ran my own small marketing business for 12 years and do so today, so I understand the pitfalls and demands of being a small business owner. I'm more of a hands-on marketer than a theorist and have been involved in all phases of marketing over the years: communications, strategic planning, marketing research as well as social media. I absolutely love working with open-minded business owners seriously interested in learning how to make their marketing more effective and deliver results.

This document, The 7 Keys to Social Media Marketing Success, is designed for business owner newbies and rookies new to social media. The intent is to prepare you mentally for what is involved in being successful in social media and presents you with tools and a game plan of how to approach social media in a way that will ensure your success. After you’ve finished reading the document, do send me your questions and your comments. My contact information is below and I welcome the opportunity to help you in your social media efforts in whatever way I can.

Sheila Hibbard, your marketing guide

The Marketing Bit
Email: smh@themarketingbit.com
Facebook  LinkedIn  Twitter or Google+
7 Keys to Social Media Marketing Success

**Mental Housekeeping**

Too many business owners view social media as a take it or leave it luxury and not as a vital part of their marketing efforts. So, before we get started, let's do some mental housekeeping.

**Resistance to Social Media is no longer an option**

Like it or not, marketing your business, products and services through social media is no longer an option. It is mandatory. All of the traditional techniques you used to capture business and new customers are losing their bite thanks, in large part, to social media. It has become the way people are introduced to new products and services and they place more value in the recommendations of online acquaintances than advertising pitches.

But here is the ultimate question you need to ask yourself.

**Without social media marketing, will your business survive?**

I think you know the answer to this question. Your business may have survived tough times in the past, but the world is marching on and it is doing it quickly. Social media continues to expand and mobile marketing is already on your doorstep. Small businesses owners not willing to catch up and get serious about social media are going to have it tougher than the competitors who are willing to make this investment. Their businesses will shrink in the same way newspaper and TV viewership and radio listeners have shrunk.

The bottom line is if you hope to keep your business alive and thriving, then you have to learn how to use social media to be effective in your marketing efforts.

**Drop all of the excuses**

I’ve worked with many small business owners and it has been eye-opening to see how many excuses can be used to avoid doing something that is so critical to the long-term success of their businesses.
One all too common excuse I hear is:

“I don’t have time to market my business.
I’m already wearing too many hats.”

Yes, if you’re a small business owner without staff or with only a few employees, chances are you are very busy. But then running a business, any business, is a time consuming process. It can and often does take over your life. But if you really love what you do and your business, you have to get your priorities in line so you can achieve whatever level of success you want.

Most likely you place a higher priority on your accounting, on filling out reports, on stocking the shelves and keeping track of inventory than you do on marketing your business. All of these elements are important, but not nearly as important as is the act of marketing and here is why.

If you don’t have time to market your business,

WHO WILL?

My answer is NO ONE! No one will invest the time, energy and effort into the marketing of your business if you won’t. No one understands your customers or your products the way you do. A hired gun won’t understand what your customers want and need. You do and that means you have to be the one to engage with the social media communities you need to build.

Besides, your customers and prospects you’ll find online want to interact with YOU and not some hired gun. They want to know that you are as invested in connecting with them as they are with you.

Your accounting and inventory can wait for another hour or even another day. Why? Without marketing, you might not have many sales or merchandise to track. Marketing is the engine that drives sales and without it, you risk losing your business entirely.

Another excuse some small business owners use to avoid social media is:

It’s too complicated… I don’t understand it.
Frankly, this excuse doesn't hold water. There are billions of people all over the world, of all ages and all walks of life who are actively engaged in social media and every last one of them had to learn how to use it. There are hundreds of thousands of instructional YouTube videos that will teach anyone anything having to do with social media. One just has to look for it. There are many people such as myself, who have taken the time and the necessary training to learn social media and are happy to teach it to you. One just has to ask.

Face it. Social media is not brain surgery. Chances are high your current occupation requires more technical savvy than social media. It is not all that difficult, but it does require a desire and a willingness to learn.

If you're still reading and not offended by my bluntness, then you'll find this document a solid overview of what is required to become a successful social media marketer. Some of you will be able to follow the steps and use the tools to create the perfect game plan for implementing a social media marketing effort for your business.

Some of you may need more detailed help and instruction. If, after reading this document, you decide you are ready to learn more about social media marketing, you should contact me for additional help and guidance.

Social media marketing is not a slam dunk, but it is not nearly as difficult as you might imagine. In fact, it's a lot easier and far less expensive than any of your offline efforts. You owe it to yourself, your customers and to the long-term health of your business to make a good faith effort with social media. So let's get going.
Following are the seven keys to social media marketing success. Can one do social media without all of these keys? Yes, but it will make it more difficult to achieve success.

The seven keys to social media marketing success are:

1. Solid Foundation
2. SEO
3. Selecting the Right Tool
4. Virtual Hub
5. Engagement
6. Consistency
7. Measurement & Management

Success Key 1 – Solid Foundation

Some of you may not realize it, but to interact effectively in the social media world, you have to build an online network…a community of fans, followers and/or connections. To do this successfully, you have to have a solid foundation.

Your foundation has to begin with marketing. In the most simplistic terms you need to know…

- Who you want to talk to?
- What do you have to say to these people to entice or compel them to pay attention?
- What you want to accomplish with social media?

If you can answer these questions well, you’ll be steps ahead of others struggling with social media. Let’s go a step deeper with each of these components.

Who do you want to talk to?

This is another way of asking: Who is your audience? There are dozens of ways to cut and dice your audience, but that’s not the intent of this document. Instead, I’m going to tell you that the quickest, most efficient way to build an online community is to target your existing customers. Why? Well, because they…
1. …already know, like and trust you.
2. …will know and be connected to others who will mirror them.
3. …will be far more likely to help promote your social media efforts and offline promotional efforts to their social media networks.

This approach allows you to leverage your existing customer relationships while moving them into your social media marketing efforts.

How do you find customers online? The answer is through your email customer database. You should already have an email database of your customers and be sending them regular e-newsletters.

To find them online, you simply download this database into a free Gmail, AOL or other free email service and allow Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin or Google+ access so they can identify which of your customers and how many of them are currently using the platform.

If you don’t currently have an email customer database, forget social media until you get one established. Get started on this right away. Email marketing is one of the easiest and best ways to strengthen your customer relationship and increase sales. If you need help getting started, you can find some solid information about creating an email marketing campaign on The Marketing Bit blog.

Here are a few other ways to find customers and build your social media networks.

- Tell all of your email newsletter subscribers you are engaging in social media and ask them to join you. A percentage of them will.
- Integrate your traditional marketing efforts with your social media efforts. Example: Include a social media icon in your newspaper ads or direct mail and give readers a reason to join you there.
- Another way is include a request on your voice mail message asking callers to join you on Facebook, Linkedin, etc.
- Have your social media urls listed on your invoices, stationary, business cards, etc.
- Put a sign in your store window telling folks passing by that you’re on social media and they can join you.

As you begin to create online traction and build your audiences through your efforts, you’ll see how social media can help you achieve your goal of creating more sales.
What do you say to these people to entice them to pay attention?

In order to craft compelling messages, you have to understand your audience. You need to know the underlying benefit(s) they satisfy when they purchase from you. You also need to understand why they purchase from you and not your competitors. Armed with this information you can craft enticing messages that will help strengthen your bond and get them to share your information with their social media networks.

If you need help with this process, you may want to check out a recent [post about how to profile your audience](#) and our [SSO worksheet](#). These two resources will help you create compelling and competitive messages that can be used in social media efforts as well as in your offline advertising.

What do you want to accomplish with social media?

Without a specific objective, marketing efforts, including those in social media, are a waste.

Most of you are going to say your objective is to create sales. But “sales” is your ultimate goal and creating sales through social media marketing isn’t like flipping a light switch. You have to be willing to put all of the tactical pieces into place before you will achieve your goal of “sales”.

*So, your tactical objectives need to be SMART…specific, measureable, actionable, realistic and timely.* The more specific the better you’ll be able to measure your results and repeat what is working. To achieve results your objectives need to be actionable and realistic and you need to leverage what is going on at the time to make your social media efforts relevant to your audience.

Here are some examples of realistic **social media** marketing objectives to get you started.

- Attract X number people to follow, connect and like you by X date.
- Capture X number of clicks back to web site on a particular offer.
- Add X number of new email addresses to database in the next month.
- Get XXX number of comments by X date.
- Get XXX to participate in special offer or contest in the next week.

Take these examples and adjust them to fit your unique needs and work to accomplish them in the designated time. Select one objective and once accomplished, go on to another.
You may find it takes longer to achieve your objective than you first thought, but don’t give up. You’ll reach a plateau and it will take just a little more effort to the next plateau. Readjust, recalibrate and continue to move forward.

As you move forward, you may find that while you’re focusing on one objective, you’re accomplishing another. That is how social media works. It is the synergy across all of your online efforts that helps you achieve your ultimate goal of sales.
**Success Key 2 – SEO**

The third key to being successful in social media marketing is SEO, or Search Engine Optimization.

You’ve may have heard about SEO, SEM, long-tail and all sorts of terms that don’t really mean anything to you. SEO is a geeky science that can be very complex and is always changing. Yet, SEO is critical. SEO rules the web because it dictates what will or will not be found online.

What does SEO have to do with social media? Every social media platform has its own search engine so you can find other people, companies, topics within the platform. Most search engines use keywords to collect and present the search findings. To ensure your profile and your content rises to the top, your content has to be *keyword rich*.

Outside of the social media platforms, search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo also rely on keywords to collect and group their search findings and there are efforts to include social media activity in these results providing searchers with a complete digital picture of you and your company.

While SEO can be complex, you need to have a bare bones understanding of SEO to maximize your website and your social media profiles and interactions. That is why we’ve described a non-techie, simplified SEO approach for you to consider. It involves a simple 3 step process.

1. **Start with a spreadsheet (Excel or Google).** Brainstorm and make a list of the primary keywords to describe your business, product and services. Include brand names (e.g. Kohler, Schwinn, etc.) if appropriate, as well as local geographical terms your customers might use to find you.

2. **Go to Google Search and find “Google’s Keyword Tool”.** Once there, input the keywords on your list. Record the search volumes for each of the keywords and add any search terms Google suggests you believe *may be used by your audience in their searches*. If you’re a local area business use “Local Area” search volume.

3. **Starting with the highest search volume keywords,** ask yourself which keywords or phrases are most relevant to your audience. *Which keywords would they be most likely to use in their searches?* Of these, select the top 10-20 keywords or keyword phrases.
Now that you have keywords you believe are most relevant to your audience, star the top 3-5 as primary keywords you will consistently use to describe your website, in headings and sub-heads for your blog posts and in your social media marketing interactions.

You should also create a keyword rich company profile by using these primary keywords and phrases upfront. Your company profile can be anywhere between 100 and 200 words and should be consistently used in your Twitter, Linkedin, Facebook and/or Google+ profiles.

You'll use the remaining keywords as ideas for blog posts, free e-books, and social media interactions.
Success Key 3 – Select the Right Tool
You’ve heard the saying that you need the right tool for the job. Well, this may sound like social media sacrilege, but I don’t believe small business owners should try to be on ALL of the social media platforms. The opportunities and leverage are greatest with those social media platforms where the majority of your current customers hang out.

Trying to learn and use all of these tools at once can be like drinking from a fire hose and not very productive. My recommendation is to first concentrate on the one social platform where most of your customers are and stair-step the process. Learn one platform and get it well oiled and then leverage those connections to expand to other social media platforms. This will make the process of expanding your audience reach much easier.

As an example: If you are a company that sells to other businesses, you will most likely you’re your customers and prospects hang out on Linkedin. Concentrate your efforts there and once you feel comfortable and have a healthy base of connections, you can then ask them to join your Facebook page.

If you sell to consumers, you may find the bulk of your customers hang out on Facebook. This will be your best jumping off point. Once you establish an audience on Facebook, you can easily expand it to Twitter, Google+ or social media’s newest darling, Pinterest, etc.

Select the initial social media platform with care. The way to know which is best is to download your email customer base into the various social media platforms and have the platform identify which of your customers are current users. Refer to page 6 of this document for an overview. Another option is to poll your email subscriber database to find out which social media platforms they most prefer. This process should tell you where you should initiate and focus your social media efforts.
Success Key 4 – Virtual Hub

When is the last time you looked at your website? Is it ready for prime time? Or is it dusty and out-of-date. When is the last time it was updated? If it’s been a long, long time, you need to get your site prepared for social media. You need to make it fresh and keep it fresh.

Think of the social media platforms (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin, etc.) as virtual introductions to your company while your website serves as your virtual hub, office or store. You need a place online to send your social media contacts and that place should be your website where it has dynamic content, added value and items of interest.

The quickest and easiest way to create dynamic content is to add a blogging component to your website. Wait! Before you throw up your hands in disgust crying “there is no way I have time to redo my web site or to create and maintain a blog”… you need to read on.

Why is a blog needed for social media? Because, you need an easy and painless way to create fresh content so your audience can learn more about you, your company and your products. And a blog offers you this ability.

Blogging doesn’t have to be time intensive. You can post a video to your blog – a video you made or one you found – make a few introductory comments and you’re done. You can post a photo to your site, explain what it is and you’re done. You can develop alliances with other business owners and they can contribute postings so they can get exposure to your audiences. You might have someone on staff that is good with the written word. Give them a list of topics and review what they write before it is published and you’ve got yourself an up-to-the-minute blog that will keep your customers and prospects interested.

You can use your blog to go into more detail about your product offerings or to develop an educational series about your product. You have lots of options of how to engage your audience through a blog and you should employ them.
Once your blog items are published, publish links to your blog posts and announce them on your social media platforms, letting your audiences know you have something of interest. In turn, they click on the link and visit your website. While they're there they sign up for your email newsletter. They check out your other products and store hours. They discover you have a special event scheduled in the next month. In short, they become more engaged with you and that’s what you want to occur.

There are lots of blogging platforms out there. Blogger, Posterous and TypePad are just a few. I would caution you against using these platforms for several reasons.

1. Most of these platforms have inherent limitations in what you can and cannot include in your blog. You don’t need limitations. You need tons of flexibility so you can create the cohesive online presentation of your business.
2. If you read the fine print, most of these blogs claim ownership of whatever you put into your blog. If they disappear, so does your blog and there is nothing you can do to retrieve it.
3. You don’t reap the direct benefits of blog, the platform does. Shouldn’t your efforts add to your bottom line and not some faceless platform?

The ideal blogging platform is WordPress. Why?
- It is software you can access or store on your hosting service so only you can control it.
- WordPress is free to anyone who wants to use it
- WordPress plugins and widgets allow one to add any function to their site and to do so for free.
- WordPress is the most popular website platform out there. If you were to hire someone to recreate your website, chances are they’d use WordPress to create it and charge you a pretty penny for something you can create yourself.
- You can have static web pages (e.g. about, contact us, products and services) with WordPress in addition to a blog component.
- It is easy to use, to add photos, videos and to update.
- You would never need to hire a web person to update your website because you can do it yourself.

Using WordPress as your virtual office and having a dynamic blogging component for your website is a no brainer and a critical key to unlocking your social media success.
Success Key 5 – Engagement

Some business owners complain that no one comments on their posts or shares their tweets or Facebook updates, etc. I believe there are five contributing factors for why this occurs.

One factor is the content being posted or tweeted is simply not interesting to the audience. Chances are it is all about the business or the product and does nothing to add value to readers. Boring your audience isn’t going to get you far.

The rule is to first add value by sharing information 80% of the time…information that isn’t about you. Postings and tweets should be about information that enlightens, educates, informs, and updates your audience. Occasionally you can promote your business, products, and store through your social media networks but with care and not like a used car sales man. Remember, social media is about building online communities of buddies.

A second factor that contributes to a lack of engagement is posts, tweets, updates don’t include a call to action. If you want your customers to take action then explain what and how they should do it and be certain to give them a reason to do it. Ask them to comment, retweet or share.

Another factor is business owners hesitate to make an effort to translate their social media connections into true buddies. What do I mean? Well, you need to go beyond just thanking someone for following you on Twitter, as an example. You should visit their profile or website and find interesting information to share with your network. Cherry-pick a few of your fans each week and talk just to them through the direct messaging tools that are available and become buddies in the same way you would talk face-to-face.

Business owners aren’t asking their fans, followers, etc., what they would like to know or learn about. Instead, the business owner assumes they know what their networks want to hear about. It is far better to ask first and then engage.
Lastly, opportunities to network with other businesses and leverage their audiences, their posts and their information are often ignored. Creating these strategic partnerships online can be very advantageous and helps to establish online referral networks that can be mutually beneficial to both businesses.

If you employ these five engagement principals, you’ll begin to see more interaction within your social media communities. Really!
Success Key 6 – Consistency

We all know first-hand that forming good habits takes time. The word is it takes about 4 weeks or 30 days to form a habit.

One good social media habit to form is consistency – consistency for your blog posts, consistency when you are on Twitter, or the days of the week when your fans can expect new posts on your Facebook Page.

To do this, determine when is the best time for you to commit to making a post to optimize your audiences’ participation. Which mornings of the week do you have 30 minutes you can devote to Linkedin or Facebook? When do you experience the most traffic or engagement? Answer these questions and then make an appointment with yourself to be online and keep it.

What difference does consistency make? It accomplishes a couple of things. First, it helps you to stay committed to your social media community and that’s a good thing. It also serves to train your fans, followers and connections as to when you will be engaged online and what they might be able to expect.

One way to heighten that expectation is to create a weekly special of some sort. This doesn’t need to be a discount, but rather something your customers really want. Maybe your can provide the inside scoop on some upcoming event, or a first-come-first-served happening. Perhaps you might offer some weekly tips that pertain to your product offerings. You get the idea.

Make social media marketing a habit and follow the other success keys outlined in this piece and you will be rewarded with strong social communities who will become your online promoters.
Success Key 7 – Measurement & Management

The last success key is the measurement and management of your online efforts.

Remember the saying: “You can’t manage what you don’t measure”? Well, it is true.

Go back to your goals. Remember when we suggested you create goals that are measureable? What did you want to accomplish? Was it to increase the number of followers, fans, comments, etc.? You’ll need to track your efforts to see what types of engagement delivered the most positive results. Once you’ve identified what is working for your audience, you need to repeat those efforts and stop wasting time on those that aren’t delivering.

Develop the habit of reviewing your efforts weekly or monthly. Find out what is or is not working. Continue with what is working and ignore the rest. There are also many free tools available to gauge your success on the various social media platforms. Here are a few:

| To measure website traffic, SEO, traffic sources, engagement across the web | Google Analytics  
Website Grader  
Social Mention  
Post Rank Analytics |
|---|---|
| To measure Linkedin | Linkedin “Network Statistics” for your individual account  
Linkedin “Analytics” for your Company Pages |
| To measure shortened link performance and sources | Bitly |
| To measure Twitter performance | TweetStats  
Crowdbooster  
TwitterGrader |
| To measure Facebook Page performance | Facebook Insights for your Company Page |
| To measure Facebook & Twitter | TwentyFeet |
There are also a lot of management tools available to help you manage multiple social media accounts. If you’re managing just one social platform, you really don’t have to tap into these tools. They’re best used when you have multiple Facebook or Twitter, etc. social media accounts. Once you reach that point, there may well be other management tools on the market, but the popular ones at the time of this document include:

- Hootsuite
- Buffer
- Dlvr.it
- Sharaholic
**Conclusion**

There you have it – the seven success keys to social media marketing.

1. Solid Foundation
2. Simplified SEO
3. Selecting the Right Tool
4. Virtual Hub
5. Engagement
6. Consistency
7. Measurement & Management

Yes, there are a lot of nitty-gritty how to techniques and tips about how to use each of the individual social media platforms and they can be useful in your efforts. But these seven keys provide you with a good grounding and understanding of what is required on your part to be successful with social media. Make the commitment to do what is required.

These seven keys are not difficult to implement. In fact, all are a common sense approach to marketing.

1. Lay a solid marketing foundation by understanding what you want to accomplish, who you want to reach and what you’re going to say once you reach them.

2. Play by the rules of SEO across all of your online interactions – website, social media profiles, online directory listings, blog posts, etc.

3. Select the right social media tool (the platform where most of your customers are). Once accomplished, leverage these contacts into new social media platforms.

4. Transform your website from a static site to a dynamic social media hub where you provide your network of contacts more information about yourself, your company and your product offerings.

5. Engage your social media audiences by finding out what they want, need, talking about them more than about yourself and by offering value.

6. Develop a habit of consistency in your social media interactions. It will help build a strong audience and anticipation on their part.
7. Measure your progress so you will learn what is and is not working. As your social media audience grows, step up and manage your social media engagement so it continues to grow.

And guess what?

**You can do this!**

So, what are you waiting for? You should get started right now! Yes, really!

Do let me know if this information has been helpful and don’t be shy. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this document in more detail, my contact information is below and on the front cover. I am happy to help in whatever way I can.

To your social media marketing success!

Sheila Hibbard, your marketing guide

The Marketing Bit

Email: smh@themarketingbit.com;
Facebook, Linkedin, Twitter or Google+