

## SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING FOR CLIENTS



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Often times, when businesses think of Social Media, the second thought is "It's a waste of time."

Facebook is the place you go to play Farmville. YouTube is where you head when you have five minutes to spare and you need a good laugh or you want to watch the latest popular music video.

Twitter is where you end up when you want to catch up on the latest celebrity gossip, check your favorite sports team or check for breaking news.

Is it possible that these sinkholes of productivity could actually save you time?

Yes, and in this guide I'm going to show you ten ways to leverage social media to make your life better, complete your tasks more quickly, and have more time for the things that matter.

## #1: Connect with Customers

These days, business is all about the relationships. We buy a car from the guy our brother recommended. We hire the contractor our mother's accountant used. We go see the movies that everyone on Twitter talks about. So finding ways to take business relationships beyond transactional is a sure-fire way to cement yourself in the minds of your customers.

– blogs, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and the like – are all ways to connect with people. And if you can use these tools to establish and enhance your relationships with your audience, you've got a leg up on your customers. Here are a few examples:

### **Interactions**

They're relevant. They are directly applicable to the niche or industry you're in. They're personal. Each interaction connects with the audience in a manner beyond a simple "buy my stuff" way. They're useful. They're free. They don't cost anything on the part of the person reaching out. They're relatively low on the time-investment scale

Examples include:

- The car salesman who leaves a link for \$10 off an oil change on a customer's Facebook wall.
- The financial advisor who records a short video explaining ways to grow your investments.
- The golf instructor who holds a Skype party during the Masters.

Each interaction provides value to the recipient. In some cases, it's a dollar savings (the coupon); in others, it's informational (the video). And even the Skype party is useful in terms of entertainment. The recipient is better off for having taken part in the interaction.

A tweet or Facebook post takes seconds; the video, a bit longer, but actually saves time in the long run as the vendor is answering a question she receives over and over again.

In sum, social media provides ways to reach your customers on an intimate level, quickly and inexpensively. People want to be treated as individuals, not as numbers. Social media provides a way to do that without spending your life on the phone.

## #2: Get Answers to Your Burning Questions

It used to be that all answers to your questions could be found on Google. Then, when Google became overrun with junk sites and advertisements, Wikipedia became the guru of choice. But even Wikipedia won't give you the answer to every question you have. Sometimes the information is too arcane, or sometimes you don't want the facts; you want an opinion. So what better place to turn to than social media?

Social media is great for the following types of inquiries:

1. Opinions

2. New technology questions

- Heading out on the town Saturday night and want to know where to find an authentic Indian restaurant?

Wikipedia won't help you and Google is full of sponsored ads. So instead of doing a fruitless search, post a query on your Facebook page, and within hours your followers will have chimed in with a variety of suggestions, depending on your appetite, allergies, and budget.

Your Social Media community enjoys giving help and assistance, and the resulting information may be more appropriate to your circumstance than a review written by a nameless, faceless entity.

- Your brand-new video camera won't boot up after the last charge. You could spend an hour or two on the manufacturer's website, searching the FAQ pages for an answer. So you send out a plea for help using Twitter, and within minutes you have a handful of suggestions, as well as site to go to for expert help.

Google often doesn't help much with tech questions because there either aren't enough answers out there to make it to the first page of the search results, or the resulting

pages are all scams, junk sites, or sponsored posts for services that will fix your camera for a small fee. That's why you can often save time by asking your network first.

We often think of social media as a way to just hang out with our friends and colleagues, but it is actually one of the greatest examples of the wisdom of crowds. Take advantage of it, and save time, too.

### #3: Get Fast Feedback

Everything online happens at the speed of light. Decisions that used to take weeks or months to make are now a matter of mere minutes or seconds. There is no time for a group consensus or "sleeping on it." But with your social media network, you can still get input from a number of people, quickly. There are literally millions of people on-hand, ready and able to give you feedback in the moment.

- For instance, want to know if the font on your homepage is too small? Send a tweet with the page link and ask what the general public thinks.
- Wondering which header graphic better conveys your business? Post them both on your Facebook page and ask for input.

#### **The benefits of turning to your social media network:**

You'll get an interesting cross-section of respondents: Friends from high school, curious passers-by, co-workers.

It's fast. Depending on the size of your network, you could have responses within minutes.

It's free. You don't have to pay a cent for the input

It's informal. No need to prepare a five-paragraph overview, ten-slide PowerPoint presentation, or other background information. Just ask and wait for input.

It's objective. The people you're asking have little or no vested interest in the outcome.

Your social media networks can serve as your own personal focus groups. Asking their opinion can also make them feel closer to your business, and part of the process – both good things!

### #4: See What People Are Talking About

Large corporations spend millions of dollars, prowling the streets, seeing what the trends in fashion, music, and culture are. They rely on feedback from companies to see what's hot and what's not.

As a small business, you don't have the same level of resources. But that's okay – you can get your own "feet on the street" feedback, quickly and easily, using your social media networks. Here are some of the tools you can use to see what's hot, right now:

Go to [www.whatthetrend.com](http://www.whatthetrend.com) and you'll see a list of trending topics. If there's a topic you want to track, you can click on the name and subscribe to the RSS feed to keep constantly updated on a trending topic.

## Hashtags

If you want to follow a particular topic ("internet marketing," "Redsox," etc.) via Twitter, you can simply follow the (#) associated with that subject. You can also subscribe to the RSS feed to be notified whenever new tweets on that topic are posted.

## Facebook and LinkedIn Groups

It's a little more difficult to see what's trending on Facebook or LinkedIn, but you can see what groups are growing and what topics are hot. Do a search on either site for results, and join groups that look interesting and pertinent to your business. You can receive messages directly to your email inbox or opt to log in to your account to read. Either way is a great tactic for keeping tabs on what people in your niche are talking about.

## #5: Find Resources

If you're in search of a great web designer, you may want to skip Elance and go directly to Twitter, do not pass go.

Finding recommended vendors and freelancers for your business may be as easy as asking the hundreds of people in your social media network who they recommend. Here's a breakdown of ways to find trusted contractors, by social media outlet:

One of the most powerful elements of LinkedIn is the "recommendations" feature. You can write, read, and request recommendations from others in your network. It may take a little legwork, but you can use this feature to find a great copywriter, and read what others have to say about him or her. Think of it as a Yelp for people.

While you're missing out on the depth of information available on LinkedIn, you can get instantaneous responses. For instance, tweet "Looking for a great online bookkeeper" and you should get a bunch of responses within minutes. Give more weight to those that come from inside your network, though, as often a request for referrals will generate automated responses from a spammer. It looks like it comes from one of your friends, but is actually just an ad.

You can post requests for referrals, just like on Twitter, and you can also search for people with those keywords in their profiles. Beware, though; just because someone is

listed as “Mary Bookkeeper” doesn’t mean they’re an expert. You could also post your request in groups that are associated with the topic (post a request for a logo designer on a graphic artists’ Facebook group wall, for example).

It might seem a little strange to put out a call for resources via video, but why not? Especially if you have a significant following, you could get a tremendous response. Added benefit: If the project you have in mind has a visual aspect, you can demonstrate it right on the video (think office organisation, website overhaul, kitchen remodel).

Even if fourteen people recommend the same web designer, make sure to do your due diligence. Get a written quote and scope of work, ask for a list of projects completed, and confirm that that person will be doing your project personally, not outsourcing to another. With these tips in mind, you should be able to find great outsourcing resources at the click of a mouse.

## #6: Take a Quick Break

Whether you’re working in an office or at home, taking regular breaks is essential for your mental and physical wellbeing. In the traditional office, you could head to the cafeteria for a cup of coffee, or head down to the proverbial water cooler. But when you work for yourself, taking a break to join into humanity is a little more involved. You can get in the car and drive to Starbucks for a quick latte, but that takes time and money.

You could call up a friend to check in, but who talks on the phone anymore? Instead, here are a handful of things you can do to take a much-needed mental vacation, all from the comfort of your own home, all via your social media networks:

- Head over to Facebook and see whose birthday it is using the notification feature. Then leave them a birthday message on their wall (time: 5 minutes)
- Catch up on your favourite non-work-related blogs. Or read a few of the industry movers and shakers and leave them a thoughtful comment, linking back to your own site. (10 minutes)
- Post a question of the day (hashtag #QOTD) related to your niche, but in a “just for fun” sense. For instance, “What’s the last \_\_\_ you purchased for your \_\_\_?” This is a fun way to engage your Twitter followers, as well as gather some informal intelligence. (5 minutes)
- Yes, go ahead and succumb to the Farmville or Plants vs. Zombies pull and log in to play for a limited time. Set an egg timer next to your computer and stop when time’s up. (15 minutes)
- Check out the latest videos in your niche (did you know you can subscribe to other video creators’ YouTube channels?). Leave a comment or create a video response. (15 minutes)

- Log into LinkedIn and update your status. Then check in on some of your groups and see what the hot topics are. Offer your expertise where appropriate. (15 minutes)
- Do the same with Facebook. Visit some of the groups you belong to and leave questions on the wall, comment on others' posts, and leave links where possible. (15 minutes)
- See who's commented on your blog lately and visit their websites, leaving comments and thanking them for visiting you. Reciprocity goes a long way to establishing relationships. (10 minutes)
- Go to the iTunes store and see who hosts the leading podcasts in your industry. Visit their blogs and start establishing a relationship with these movers and shakers. (5 minutes)

Any of these ideas takes less time than a trip to the local Starbucks counter – or a trip to the water cooler, for that matter!

Use your break time wisely and you'll receive the double benefits of refreshment and audience engagement.