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Which Social Media Platforms Should You Use?

By

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Social media is showing no signs of slowing down in terms of growth. By and large this is a good thing ... except when your marketing department is always jumping on the latest and greatest new platform at the expense of building something that supports your brand in a more consistent, measurable and profitable way. You can avoid the shiny-new-object syndrome with a few simple questions.

1. Are your customers/prospects there yet? If not, chances are you don't need to be either.
2. Can you do it well? Success in a social media space requires commitment, so always consider the resources required for a new community and how it may affect your relationship with customers/prospects elsewhere.
3. Is the platform here to stay? Your job isn't to pioneer new technologies, your job is to find places to do great marketing, build the best relationships and get a profitable ROI.

Marketers and PR professionals need to understand the potential values and potential downsides of establishing social media campaigns on the variety of free platforms on the internet.

There are six primary social media platforms that you should be familiar with to successfully harness the potential of social marketing/advertising/communication. Each platform plays a specific role and the right combination of platforms can sometimes take your marketing strategy to the next level.

The key is to optimize each platform to work with your Web site, pay per click campaign and other PR/marketing tools that are already in place. This will go a long way in helping you to make the first page of search engine results.

It's also important to remember that social media requires constant care. You can't just set it and forget it.

LinkedIn - ranks very well in search engines and is a great platform for sending event updates out to business associates. When optimizing your

LinkedIn profile, select one core keyword (or search

term you would like to be found under) and use it frequently and to improve search engine standings. It is also one of the best networking tools around, both in terms of finding new jobs and potential new business.



Facebook – is a closed community and does not rank in the search engines. If you optimize your Facebook profile for one keyword you may be able to become an expert in your industry for the more than 22 million Facebook users. At the same time, Facebook is losing favor with businesses and is becoming a channel for friends and family members to communicate.

MySpace – is an open community and it ranks great in the search engines and allows businesses to have fully-developed profiles, including personally designed backgrounds. In addition to optimizing your profile with a keyword, you can also search for your target audience in MySpace friends and create an outreach network. Again, however, this landscape is changing and Facebook is now mainly a playground for bands and entertainers.

YouTube – one of the best forums available to create viral marketing campaigns. From publishing client video testimonials to creating social proof of your abilities, YouTube videos are a great way to get other site owners to link to your Web site. Each new video is a new opportunity to optimize for a different keyword. For each video, be sure to include your keyword in the title and at least once in the description section.

Blogs – Blogs give users a few distinct advantages over other platforms. First, search engines love blogs. They have plenty of content and are easy for the spiders to crawl and categorize online. Second, customers and prospects love informative blogs that are a mix of marketing, education and entertainment. As with a YouTube video, every blog is a new keyword opportunity. Whether you want to dominate a search page with one particular keyword or just have a presence under a different keyword, a blog is a free and easy way to get you there.

Again, you have to be committed to providing regular, interesting and new content. Merely repurposing brochures or web site material is not enough. The Blogosphere looks for Bloggers with a unique viewpoint and opinions.

Twitter – is a micro blog that limits posts to 140 characters. Twitter plugins allow you to update Twitter and push it out to your other platforms, such as Facebook. Additionally, Twitter posts rank in the search engines.



Most importantly, you need to have a Social Media strategy. You must understand why you are on a particular channel and commit to regular updates. It's also important that you are not just trying to sell products or services...this is about providing useful information. If all you do is "sell" you will lose visitors and your company could be the subject of negative tweets, blogs and posts.

Statistics show that many companies enter the Social Media playing field, but few do it well and fewer stay committed for more than a couple of months. If you're interested in more information about any of the Social Media channels or want to discuss whether a Social Media strategy makes sense, you can email me at leslie.l.bonk@bmpr.com, find me on LinkedIn, tweet me @moxxy333, or use my favorite "old-style" form of communication, the telephone (262) 789-1565.