

A SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

FOR FLORAL RETAILERS AND WHOLESALERS

Social Media Channels, Tools, and Techniques

Introduction

Think of your social media networks as collectively being one business channel that enhances how you market through other means. The respective networks all have unique qualities and capabilities that create inherent strengths and weaknesses. This is why you want to take a distributed approach that maximizes your rewards while minimizing risk, much as a balanced investment portfolio does.

It is essential to understand that you can influence, but not control, each social network channel. For this reason it is wise to verify your content to the extent that you are able. This is also why you should consider creating a self-hosted blog on a domain that you own and make that your social media hub. In this area you have total control. Then use the other networks for what they do best, and that is for sharing and engagement.

The following are the major social media networks that every business should consider using. There are very specific reasons each one is included on this list. Of course, there are still others that you may wish to consider. For example, YouTube is typically the best site for hosting video because it is the largest video hosting site, one that also happens to be one of the largest search engines in the world. Nevertheless, Vimeo is an alternative that some choose for its cleaner interface and higher quality video display.

There are as many ways to use these social networks as there are companies. Your challenge is to understand your business objectives, build a strategy using the information presented here, enhance your other marketing efforts, and consistently implement it using the resources available to you. If you are monitoring your results on a regular basis, you will quickly learn how to allocate your resources for maximum benefit.



Facebook

Facebook is the largest social network with nearly 1 billion active users worldwide. In order to have a Facebook business page, you will first have to create a personal Facebook profile. You are only allowed to have one personal profile, which is limited to 5,000 friends.

The culture of Facebook favors personal and informal interaction among friends. How this works for you personally is determined by your definition of friends and the privacy settings that you choose. While a conservative approach limits your community, it also leads to higher quality interactions.

Be advised that Facebook plays for keeps when it comes to their terms of service. Once content is posted on Facebook, it is there forever. Establishment of multiple accounts and other abuses usually lead to termination of your account without notice.

Qualities and Capabilities

1. Facebook is a highly social community with an emphasis on sharing. You will get the most from Facebook by freely sharing interesting or useful information.
2. Facebook is a community that is largely invisible to Google (pages are visible, personal profiles are not) - which is why you need a dual social marketing strategy that accommodates both Facebook (Bing) and Google search.
3. Facebook is a filtered experience. What appears in your newsfeed is adjusted according to social signals, which are interactions that you know as sharing, comments, and likes. [Read more here.](#)

4. Facebook Pages

- a. Think of your Facebook Page as a *social community* that supports your *business*. Not all friends are customers, but many are.
- b. Be sure you have at least 3 administrators for your page(s), because personal accounts that provide access to your page can get deleted, and often they are unrecoverable.
- c. Focus on sharing useful information that benefits and engages your community.

Tips and Best Practices

- Create a Welcome tab with a call to action for your Facebook page.
- Edit your page settings to establish the most appropriate *category* for your page because Facebook will use that to locate your business in their search results.
- Edit settings to receive email notifications when there is a comment on your page.
- Use [Facebook Smart Lists](#) to organize your communities – and to take full advantage of your location.
- Facebook accounts are often hacked – here are [Five Ways to Protect Your Facebook Account from Hackers](#).
- Respond to comments to the extent that it is appropriate. When the phone rings, the caller expects an answer. It is the same with your Facebook page or profile.
- When you Like the comments made on your page or profile, you are sending a social signal back to the person making it and also one to Facebook, thereby increasing the likelihood of them receiving your content in the future.
- Post as frequently as necessary to generate the desired level of engagement. Depending upon your community, this could range from once or twice a week to multiple times per day. Endeavor to keep your business engaged with your customers, but not in an overbearing way.



LinkedIn

There are many interesting contrasts between Facebook and LinkedIn, which is approaching 200 million users worldwide. Unlike Facebook, LinkedIn is searchable. Also, much of the LinkedIn content is readily indexed by Google. One of the easiest ways to learn more about a business connection is to simply Google their name and the words “on LinkedIn.” This will take you to their profile where you can learn more.

LinkedIn recently redesigned [LinkedIn Company Pages](#) to make them more user-friendly. They now have the look and feel of a Facebook page. Products and services can be profiled on the home page, which also has a place for making fresh updates as one would on a Facebook page. Page owners can receive notifications of comments to their mobile device.

Many green industry businesses are going all in on Facebook and ignoring LinkedIn completely. LinkedIn is quietly making bold moves that deserve your consideration.

Qualities and Capabilities

1. LinkedIn is *the* network for *business professionals*. Regular updates to your LinkedIn profile keep it fresh – and that keeps you and your business relevant with everyone in your network.
2. You should periodically save your LinkedIn connections to a CSV file (see bottom of connections tab) and then to your social CRM – Customer Relationship Manager.
3. Even when LinkedIn says your profile is 100% complete, there is still more you can do to make it stronger. Use the applications within LinkedIn to bring in your content and activity from other online sites (click More on the top navigation to get there).

Tips and Best Practices

- [3 Powerful LinkedIn Profile Tips](#) – Learn how to add keywords to your title, tag your profile for special skills, and add video to your profile.
- [3 Invaluable LinkedIn Tips](#) – Learn when and how to best engage on LinkedIn.
- [4 Tips for Using LinkedIn Classmates](#) - Classmates is a LinkedIn feature that is useful for both job seekers and businesses looking to break into new corporate accounts.
- This comprehensive article on [10 Tips for Using LinkedIn to Grow Your Business](#) also includes video tutorials.



Twitter

Twitter is an extremely powerful network that delivers news around the world in real-time. The short-burst 140 character limit of Twitter messages encourages speed, as does the practice of retweeting to republish a message from one community to another.

When sharing news and having conversations on Twitter, it's best to assume your message will be seen by the world. Your tweets say a great deal about you. Even celebrities who should be more media savvy have made tweets that have put them in uncomfortable situations, and in some cases significantly altered their careers.

Twitter has advanced the reach of its platform nicely in recent years, one that is considered a valid and credible news source. Used responsibly, Twitter can be invaluable for a business that understands how to capitalize on a big stage to showcase what they do well.

Qualities and Capabilities

1. Twitter is a communication and content distribution system with massive reach.
2. The key to getting the most out of Twitter is engagement and sharing. If you continuously blast marketing messages you will encourage people to unfollow you.
3. Keep your tweets to less than 120 characters to allow space for the Twitter address of the person retweeting your message.
4. Consider how Tweets might work with Facebook posts.

Tips and Best Practices

- Use *link shorteners* such as bit.ly or goo.gl. They save valuable characters and also provide useful stats. Many sharing tools accomplish this automatically.
- Real-time search is a significant trend that acquires much of its data primarily from Twitter. SocialMention.com is a social search engine is one you can explore for this purpose.
- You can set your Twitter settings to receive notifications on your mobile device whenever you receive direct messages or @mentions.
- Use Twitter lists to better focus and personalize your communications for specific communities.
- Use the [Advanced Twitter Search](#) to find exactly what you need, as it is much more powerful than the regular Twitter search.



YouTube

YouTube is a Google property that accounts for approximately 25% of all Google search traffic. Thus, in addition using YouTube to host video, one should take full advantage of its SEO capabilities by writing strong titles, choosing appropriate keywords, and including contact information and links to other relevant content.

You will create better YouTube videos if you think of them as what they are – mini-movies. Even short video clips should include a clear beginning, middle, and end. Forget the fancy introductions and begin with a strong opening scene, make your point, and close with a call to action.

Qualities and Capabilities

1. Video is transportable and easily shared across the web. If you carefully optimize your videos with strong keywords, there will always be a trail that leads back to you.
2. Use relevant and commonly used keywords and modifiers in your video titles, tags, and descriptions. Test your keywords by searching YouTube for them and evaluating the content you receive, because it will be associated with your video.
3. YouTube regularly makes updates to the YouTube channel capabilities to enhance the user experience. When you noticed one change when posting a video you should expect that there are more, and take the time to learn them.

Tips and Best Practices

- When placing links in your video descriptions, be sure to use `http://` instead of just `www` to make your links clickable.
- YouTube offers a variety of free services, such as an online video editing tool. You can find them [here](#).
- There here are a number of ways to [make your video go viral](#), however, as a business it is best to avoid gimmicks and focus on providing practical solutions to common problems. What works with Google will work equally well on YouTube.



Google+

While Google+ is considered by many to be Google's social network, an answer to Facebook, Google has lately tried to reposition it as something more. Google prefers to think of Google+ as an integrator of the company's overall online services, as opposed to being a stand-alone property.

What Google+ is shaping up to be is the linchpin that brings together a number of Google services, with the likelihood that more will be added later. For example, Google local pages were recently merged into Google+, effectively requiring 80 million page owners to join Google+.

Google+ presently has 400 million active users, of which 100 million are active. This represents about 20% of that on Facebook, and has been accomplished just a little over a year. These users are predominantly male and focused on matters related to technology and online marketing.

Qualities and Capabilities

1. Google+ communities are known as circles. In addition to the circles you choose, Public is another choice that ensures your sharing is visible to the Google search engine. You will find this by clicking on "more" when making your post.
2. Your Google+ profile is an opportunity to aggregate all of the sources where you publish online content. Take the time to include these links to make that content more readily available to Google.
3. The equivalent of a Facebook Like on Google+ is the +1. It's a vote of confidence that sends a social signal that you like this content. The share button allows you to share that content with your respective circles.

Tips and Best Practices

- When someone moves their mouse over your name on Google+ it presents a hovercard. This will include what you include in the "employment" field on the "about" tab of your profile. Instead of just adding the company name as many do, include a couple of descriptive sentences about how you add value for your customers.

- Much like you can follow anyone on Twitter, you can place anyone in your circles on Google+. Since nobody knows which circle they are placed in, you can include people you do not know to learn more about specific industries or businesses.
- When you write your bio for your about page, be sure to include links to your website and other relevant sites. This is a powerful use of Google+ for SEO.
- If you are brand new to Google+, [this article includes a video interview](#) with Chris Brogan, New York Times bestselling author of *Google+ for Business*.



Pinterest

The early success of Pinterest can best be described by the notion that every picture tells a story. Thus, while new Pinterest strategies are still emerging, one common approach is to use it to create a photo narrative of your business or brand.

Qualities and Capabilities

- Flowers are very visual and Pinterest is ideal for visual items because you post pictures here.
- You can be informative (e.g. name flowers or post flowers of one color or of one provenance) or whimsical. Flowers are well-suited for Pinterest.

Tips and Best Practices

- When you create your boards a unique url known as a permalink is assigned from the name of your board. If you rename your board that link will be broken and you will lose all of the connections to it. Choose your board names well and avoid changing them.
- [Pinerly](#) is a valuable bookmarklet tool that captures images from any web page to facilitate adding a caption and posting to your boards.



Blogging

Early blogs were predominantly personal journals consisting of periodic communications on random topics. Quality blog posts are now often considered articles. Even the word blogging is considered passé. Today top business blogs are some of the most valued sources of fresh and relevant news.

You can think of your business blog as a new source or digital magazine for your customers, one that also provides a forum for discussion in the form of comments. Quality blog posts are now often considered articles, and the comments that follow are a rich source of valuable information on what consumers want.

Blogs can be hosted on platforms such as Blogger, TypePad, or Wordpress.com. However, for complete control and ownership of your blog Wordpress.org is the becoming the standard among professional bloggers and businesses. Wordpress.org is the world's leading CMS - Content Management System, making it much more than a blogging platform. Wordpress.org can serve as your company's primary website, with the blog on a subdomain. The greatest value of a self-hosted Wordpress site on a domain that you own is 100% flexibility and control. Unlike your company presence on the other social networks, your Wordpress site can grow into a valuable platform that serves as the hub of your online presence.

Qualities and Capabilities

1. *Ownership* – You own your blog content for life when its address is a unique URL that you own. You can switch blogging platforms and always have those valuable links follow you.
2. *Flexibility* – There is more functionality possible on a blog than most people will ever need. Most important is you have the ability to adapt to other changes to maximize the effectiveness of your blog.
3. *Content Management* – A search feature on your blog allows visitors to find what they are looking for from hundreds of blog posts. This also helps you to link back to your previous work to further engage your reader.
4. *Community* – A personalized blog becomes a community destination that you inhabit. It shapes your persona.

5. *Multi-Media* – You can host audio, video, and images on your blog instead of linking out to them.
6. *Sharing* – Your blog posts can be easily shared with friends and visitors that can extend your message and introduce you to new communities.
7. *Expertise* – When you blog on a regular basis you are forced to develop new perspectives that liberate your expertise.
8. *Email Capture* – You can capture email addresses on your blog to build your list.
9. *Reputation Management* – Google acknowledges blogs as respected news with a search category specific to them. Your blog is a representation of your accumulated experience as a professional in your industry.
10. *Control* – Unlike most social media networks, you have complete control over privacy settings, advertising, functionality, and the look and feel of your blog.

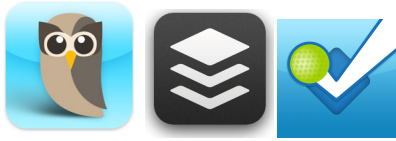
Tips and Best Practices

Getting Started

- [3 Reasons to Start Writing](#)
- [What is Content Marketing](#)
- [How to Start a Blog](#)
- [Is Your Marketing Content Evergreen or Floral](#)
- [How to Be The Solution to The Right Problems](#)

Getting Better

- [The Cardinal Rule of Content Marketing](#)
- [How to Make Your Video Go Viral](#)
- [A Little Blogging Secret](#)
- [How to Start a Blog](#)
- [The New Rules of Information Marketing](#)
- [The Best Blog Post Length Test](#)



Tools

There are countless time saving tools to help streamline your social networking and marketing. These tools evolve over time, thereby changing their capabilities and the user experience. They can also go away on short notice if the company is shut down or purchased by another. Also, what was once free could become a fee-based service.

For this reason, it is wise to be familiar with and use multiple tools so that you can easily pivot when necessary. Try new tools when you become aware of them; and don't be afraid to circle back to give them a second chance when new updates are rolled out. Most important is to back-up your data to second source. This could be as simple as having it loaded into another tool, or backed-up to your computer.

Following are some widely adopted tools that allow you to more easily accomplish specific objectives. All are free unless noted otherwise.

- *Hootsuite* - Monitor mentions, keywords, and newsfeeds on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
- *BufferApp* – A browser application that allows for sharing content on a predetermined schedule so that it is not all shared at once.
- *Facebook Photo App* – A photo application that quickly and easily shares photos to Facebook.
- *Foursquare* – A check-in service that uses geo-location to allow you to check-in to Foursquare and Facebook and Twitter with one click.