



Social Media Management for Online Business Owners

Your Guide to Managing Social Media
for Ultimate Return on Investment

Manage your social media for profit

We all know social media is hot. Businesses large and small are using it to connect directly to their customers as well as attract potential customers. Social media can generate exposure for your business like no other methods tried before.

By managing your social media marketing efforts across all channels you can establish yourself as an authority, an expert and a trust worthy business. But, with this new and exciting social media marketing there are dangers. While you can attract more clients than ever before, even if you work from your small home office, or kitchen table, you can also waste more time than ever before. But if you give social media some thought and planning you can explode your profits by using social media to your advantage.

While social media as we know it today has only been around about a decade, it is no longer something you can play at, the consumer is street smart and can smell desperation a mile away. To be successful with social media marketing you must have a social media marketing plan and if you can afford it, a team behind your implementation efforts. If you can't have a team, you can look like you do by having a good social media management plan and systems in place.

Let's explore a few general questions to get an overview of social media.

Well, first of all, what is social media?

According to Wikipedia:

"social media is designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques."

Essentially, social media can be any software or tool, usually online, but more and more are also on mobile devices -- such as smart phones and iPads -- that enable people to generate and share content freely such as with Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and etc.

Social media includes networking forums, blogging and vlogging too. Anything that is interactive in nature that one would consider "social" that can help you in your online business marketing efforts is considered social media.

Most social media networks are services which are "in the cloud" or web based. This means that they are hosted on the service's servers and you usually do not have to download anything to your computer. You can access your networking sites from any computer, anywhere, anytime. Today you can even use your smart phones to access social media networking sites.

Guide to Social Media Management for Online Business Owners

Millions of people are using social networking sites, and you should be too. Social media marketing is a very low cost way to connect to your target market. You can create tremendous buzz with the right marketing strategy.

What different types of social media are there?

Just a decade ago, social media as we know it today did not exist, so remember, what is popular today, might not exist tomorrow. Do your due diligence and do research on any of the social media that you want to try.

While an all encompassing list of different types of social media would require a very large book, and is too much for this guide, the types we will concentrate on are:

Blogs -- Some of you might not have thought of blogs as "social media" but they are really the first time of social media we had available where it was truly interactive in nature. The truth is, blogs really started it all. Blogs -- short for web logs have been around a long time. They used to be micro-sites but today they are usually part of a regular website.

You can keep it updated each day with informative content and you also have the ability to post your thoughts in response to a blog post that someone else made. This makes blogging very social and very important. Blogging is foundational to all your other online marketing efforts because regular blogging humanizes you, is very inexpensive, and creates a feeling of trust between you and your potential customers.

The trick for proper blogging is not to make your blogs a hard sell and each post should speak to your target market. If your audience feels engaged they will eventually purchase your information or services.

Types of blogging platforms--

- Wordpress.com
- Wordpress.org
- Typepad.com
- Blogger.com

Vlogs -- Video blogs are fast becoming very popular social media tools for online businesses to market their services and content. What can be more social than hearing someone's voice, seeing their face, and being able to comment on their video. Some people are replacing written blogs with vlogs and that is perfectly acceptable and some say preferable because it is the "wave of the future." I say the future is already here, so start working toward overcoming your fear now.

You can use programs such as Camtasia and a webcam or flip cam to record and edit vlogs. These programs are not hard to use, and there are numerous tutorials available to you. The trick is to be committed to doing it and sticking to your plan.

Types of vlogging platforms--

Guide to Social Media Management for Online Business Owners

- Youtube.com
- Twitvid.com
- Wordpress.org or com

Social Bookmarking -- You've likely heard of "tagging" and sharing content with others via social bookmarking. This is simply saving the URL of the site or blog you visited and enjoyed into one of your social bookmarking accounts where you can share and organize all that interests you.

Social Bookmarking is an easy and fast way to organize, manage, share and search everything on the web. Even emailing a friend a link to something, or sharing it on Facebook, or sending a Tweet about a website or resource you liked is social bookmarking.

Types of social bookmarking platforms--

- Digg.com
- Del.icio.us
- Stumbleupon.com
- Twitter
- Facebook

Social Networks -- Most of us are familiar with these types of networks. It is where you can get and give updates about your business or yourself, share pictures, share content, videos, and more to everyone who is on your friend, follower, or connection list.

Types of networking platforms--

- Facebook.com
- Twitter.com
- LinkedIn.com
- Ning.com
- Bizsugar.com

Forums -- These are online communities where many different content contributors, or forum posters, discuss issues that are important to them. They share different points of views, insight, recipes, tips and more. These are also called **Discussion Boards**.

Types of networking platforms --

- Ning.com
- Wahm.com
- Mingle.com
- Facebook.com

Guide to Social Media Management for Online Business Owners

In the above examples you probably noticed that some of the types of social networking sites cross several categories. Twitter, for example, is both a micro blogging platform, as well as a bookmarking site, and a networking site all at once.

How much time should I spend on social media marketing?

Social media is a powerful marketing tool. It is important for Internet marketers to employ social media marketing. How much time you should spend depends on whether you're being productive or not.

Many successful marketers are spending 6 to 10 hours a week on social media endeavors. How much time you spend should be something you decide. The important thing is to set aside some time each day to devote to productive time on social media. (Note: *Playing Farmville on Facebook is not productive time for most Internet marketers*)

How can you avoid social media overwhelm?

Get organized -- It's very important to get organized when it comes to your social media strategy. Why? Well, organization saves you time, and time is money. The other thing it does is keep you from being frustrated. In the military everyone has standard operating procedures or SOPs, these SOPs keep things organized by having a system in place to do everything.

Create a password system -- create a system to choose passwords. A good example would be to have a specific formula. Say you need a twitter password. You could use a number that only you know, say the date of your first date with your husband, plus TW for twitter, plus predetermined symbols, such as !\$.

So for twitter your password might be 1884TW!\$. This is January 8, 1984 Twitter, and the predetermined symbols. Keep in mind that some systems have different requirements and you should have a plan for that in place.

This password system will save you time from losing them. You can of course purchase a password management application such as: roboform.com and you can also keep track of them on a spreadsheet which we will discuss later.

Organizing your Social Media

Keeping all this social media organized can be a very chaotic experience. It is very easy to spend hours wasting time. In order to get a good return on your investment (ROI) you have to be organized.

While at first it can feel overwhelming there are ways to get organized that will pay off once you get all the systems in place. We will go over several different ways to get organized. Everyone does not think the same way so we will go over more than one possibility.

DASHBOARDS and START PAGES

Dashboards and Start pages are either in the cloud or downloadable programs that enable you to put all or most of your social media into one place so that you do not have to sign on to each service separately. They can save a lot of time or they can be time wasters. Some are simple, and some are more complex.

The best way to figure out what is right for you is to try out a few different services to see what works best for you and your technology skill level. Read the descriptions and see if they have what you need, if it doesn't move on to the next. You can find more by doing a search for social media dashboards or start pages.

netvibes



With netvibes you can create a start page just the way you like it. It can include all your social media widgets, your emails, blogs you like to visit, and more. You can add RSS feeds, tabs, and create multiple instances for different niches if you're involved with several. The platform is "in the cloud" which means you're using space on someone else's server and not your own. Plus if something happens to your hard drive, your information is still out there "in the cloud!"

Netvibes has many different widgets (over 180,000 of them!). Widgets are simply, apps, or programs that perform a certain designed function. An example of a widget is that you can use one widget for "[TinyURL](#)" which is a website service that will create short urls for you right on the dashboard without having to open a new web browser window.

You can also have the ability to create a bookmark with a thumbnail, and even have access to a language translator right at your fingertips. You can use it free, or become a VIP for even more great benefits for as little as \$50.00 per month. The currency is in pounds so it depends on the current exchange rate.

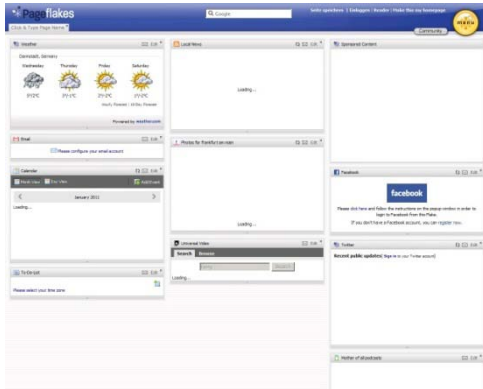
Benefits of netvibes:

- Everything is in one place
- Customizable
- Create Tabs and multiple dashboards
- Manage social media from one spot, reading and updating
- Can be personal or private
- Set up alerts on certain keywords or subjects
- Lots of widgets
- Download a widget to your desktop

Guide to Social Media Management for Online Business Owners

- Put widgets on your website
- Share it all with your friends from one place
- Mobile Friendly

Pageflakes



This service has a good interface that guides you through setting it up. It is also "in the cloud" so there is nothing to download and you can access your dashboard anywhere. Like netvibes you can have customized tabs so that you can keep your different niches organized.

You can even have business on one tab and personal things on another. You can add as many "flakes" as you want which are essentially widgets. There are over 200K flakes that you can choose from which can be quite overwhelming but you can do a search on important keywords to find the right flake.

Benefits of Pageflakes

- Drag and Drop Interface
- No Sign Up Required
- Easy to use
- Over 200K "flakes" (widgets)

SproutSocial



This social media management tool is also "in the cloud". SproutSocial offers many benefits to users.

You can try it free without providing any credit card information. It offers many valuable tools that can help you interact and even measure your return on investment (ROI) with ease at an affordable price. You can start at \$9.00 a month or you can get the business service for only \$49.00 per month.

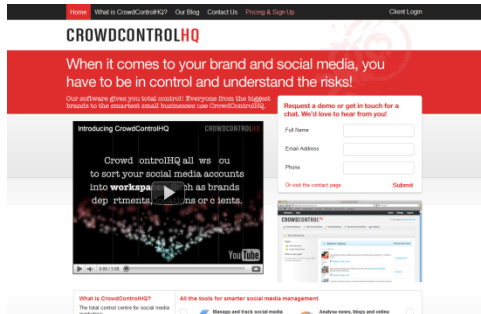
Benefits of SproutSocial

- Manage all your social networks in one place
- Meet new customers
- Monitor your brand
- Create Schedules to save time
- Tools to analyze performance

Guide to Social Media Management for Online Business Owners

- Will have an affiliate program soon

Crowdcontrolhq.com --



This is a totally web based social management system that allows you to control, manage, share, and evaluate your social media marketing efforts. Crowd Control allows you to do everything from one spot including planning, managing, tracking, and more.

There is a fee from about \$80.00 per month for the smallest package and up to \$240.00 a month for enterprise solutions. Again this site charges in pounds and the conversion provided may be more or less depending upon exchange rates.

Benefits of Crowdcontrolhq

- Manage and track tasks
- Plan and execute social media strategies
- Everything in one place
- Analytic tools
- Facebook Page moderation automation

Minggle



Minggle is free software that you install on your computer that connects you to all your networks by allowing you to create updates to whichever of your social networking sites you desire at the same time.

You can monitor via a "stream" all your network activity and it will automatically notify you about messages, comments and more without logging into each network separately.

Benefits of Minggl

- On your desktop
- One click interaction
- Blast your status across networks
- Moves all your messages to one place

Hootsuite



Hootsuite is one of the favorite social media management tools right now, however, some have reported some wonky issues.

They do have a responsive developer team so therefore, Hootsuite has a lot of benefits such as being able to assign tasks to your team, track results, collaborate, blog with Wordpress.com (soon WordPress.org too), schedule

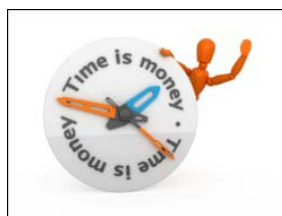
and manage all your social media networks in one place, right from the customizable dashboard and there is even a mobile app!

You can get a free ad supported account that will allow up to five social networks, or you can "Go Pro" for \$5.99 per month for their unlimited version, allowing for 1 team member, with a \$15.00 monthly charge for each additional team member.

They do have a thirty day free trial. An awesome thing about the Pro version is you also get to be an affiliate! So, everyone you recommend who signs up, you get a cut of the money. This could make your account essentially free. They even have an Enterprise version which is quite pricy but if you're that big, it is probably worth every penny.

Time is Money!

While some of these services are free, and some services, the prices may seem expensive the benefits these systems offer are very useful and should pay off in the amount of time you save. When deciding to spend money on your business there is a good way to figure out if it's worth it.



Assign yourself an hourly rate because your time counts too.

For example: If you assign your hourly rate at \$50 dollars per hour and one of these services will save you 10 or 20 hours per month then take the cost of the service and the money value of the time saved and make a decision on whether it is worth it or not.

If any of these programs seem like something you'd want to try to help you manage your social media marketing they all offer free versions or free trial periods as well as responsive customer service who can help answer your questions.

Regardless of how you decide to manage your social media the important factors are:

Prioritize -- You can start small, you really do not have to be everywhere at once. Figure out where your target market is, and be there! However, it is highly advisable that at the current time you are on Twitter and Facebook at least.



Remember this could change. The number of social media platforms is mind boggling, is growing every day and as we know, what is hot today might not be tomorrow. (Think MySpace) It is very important to target and prioritize your market as much as you prioritize which networks you will be apart.

Even if you choose Twitter and Facebook you don't have to do it all today. Start one at a time and spend a few minutes a day on each getting to know the system. Once you know that system and have a system in place, add another, and so on. The important thing is to get started.

Before joining any social media networking service consider the following:

- ✓ Why do you need it?
- ✓ Who uses this service?
- ✓ Why do you want to use this service?
- ✓ Is your target market here?

Target -- If you want to maximize your social media marketing strategy you need to pick the right social media to use. You can't use them all, and you really shouldn't. Pick the ones that are most used by your target market. If your target market is not using that particular platform, don't use it. When it comes to online marketing for online businesses, small really is better.

If you are unsure about how to target your market, ask yourself the questions: Who is my ideal client? And no, it's not everyone! The smaller your target the better. Then you will know where you should be in terms of your social media marketing strategy. Understanding your market is one of the best ways to get organized, save money, save time, and become more effective with your overall marketing strategy.

Be Flexible -- What's in today, will be out tomorrow. Stay awake and aware. One way to do that is to keep track of your analytics to make sure that what you're doing is having the desired results.

Organize -- Just like the bookkeeping in your business you must keep the social media organized in order to be efficient. There are a multitude of ways to keep organized. From the paid services above, to using free services, to using a Virtual Assistant, you must get organized.

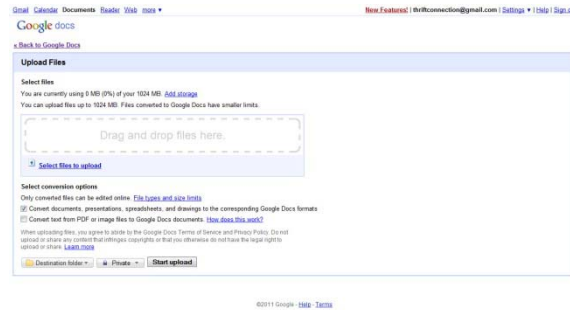
Guide to Social Media Management for Online Business Owners

To upload a file to share, click **Upload**

This is what you see after you click Upload.

As you see you can Drag and drop files or you can click Start Upload, it's up to you. We will drag one of our files into the area.

Then we will click "Start Upload" Notice that you can also choose a destination folder if you wish.



Below is what it looks like after the file is uploaded.



You can click Share, to share the file with as many people as you want to, so that you can work collaboratively on it, or you can set permissions so that they can only read it and not change it.

As you can see this can come in very handy to use for yourself, and to use if you have a partner, or a Virtual Assistant.

Organizing in the cloud keeps you from having the chance of missing an email due to an overactive spam catcher, having a computer crash due to a virus or other problem. You can access these files from any computer with an Internet connection. To look at the file simply click it and it will open.



Remember: if you are using free services count on something going wrong that can't be fixed over night. You can upgrade with Google to paid services, which means better customer service and faster resolution to problems, so keep that in mind when you use any service. Sometimes there is a price to pay for "free".

But don't let this scare you away from using Google in your business. More and more people are starting to see the benefits. We all already realize the benefits of computing "in the cloud."

Schedule -- Keeping up with your social media marketing will be made a lot easier if you schedule your activities. Start doing things on a schedule daily, weekly, or monthly depending

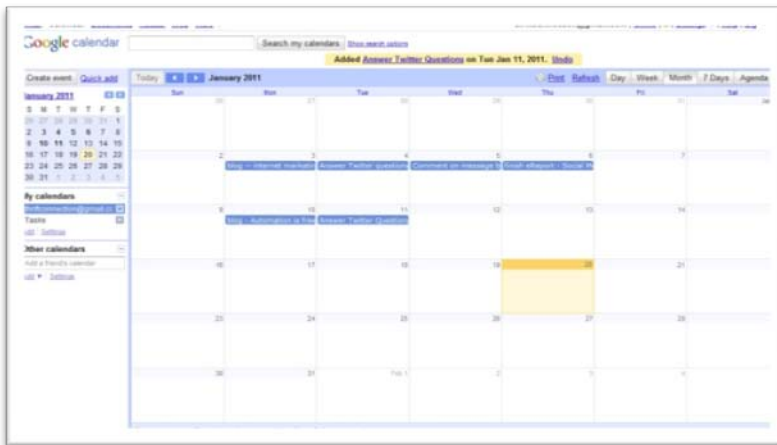
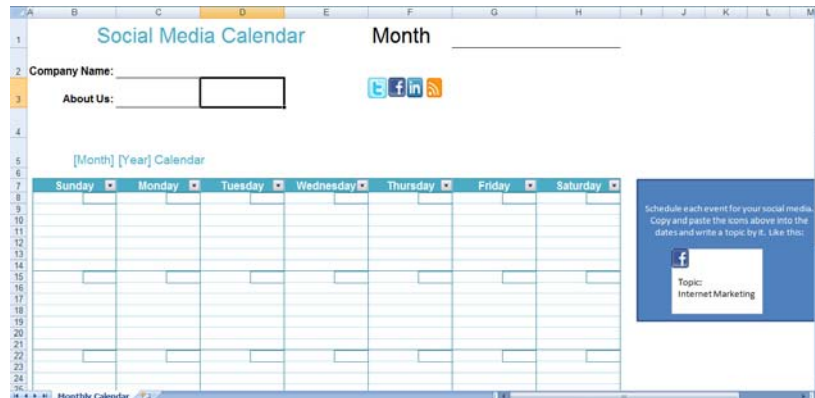
Guide to Social Media Management for Online Business Owners

upon your established marketing strategy and goals. You can keep track with a **Google calendar**, or on an Outlook calendar so that each day you know exactly what you're supposed to be doing.

By creating an online social media marketing calendar you will be able to easily tell if you're being productive or wasting your time. We all know how easy it is to spend hours messing around with social media than actually working. Don't allow social media to become a time waster. Keep your personal business separate from your business and devote the time you need to in the right places.

You can create a perpetual calendar in Excel or Word (included in appendix) such this one.

Fill out the calendar with which social media to use, topics to focus on, and who will do it.



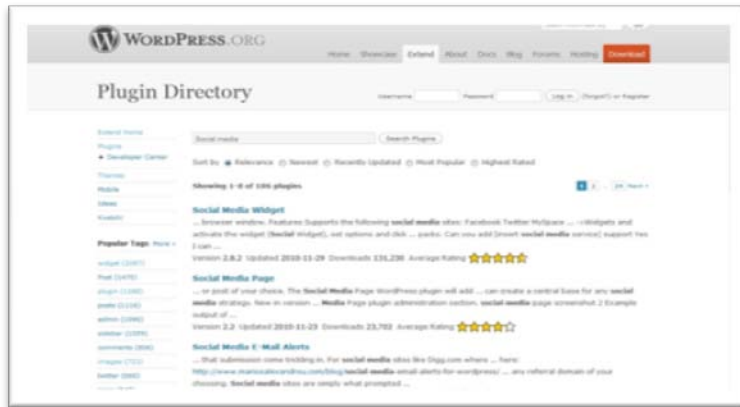
Alternatively you can use **Google Calendar** to schedule tasks. You can create many calendars and color code them. They can be shared with others, embedded in your blogs and websites, and synced to your mobile technology.

Automate -- Find ways to automate your activities. You can automate by using apps, widget, dashboards or Virtual Assistants. If you are using a self-hosted Wordpress blog platform, there are many ways to add "plugins" which are simply applications or programs that expand the use of your blog or website and automate tasks such as sending your friends, followers, or connections a notice that you just posted a new blog.



There is no doubt that automation can save a lot of time but do so with care because you don't want to take the "social" out of social media marketing. Social Media Marketing is supposed to be interactive. If you're not interacting, then you will not see the results you desire.

You can find "plugins" at the [WordPress.org plugin Directory](http://WordPress.org/plugin-directory)



This is what the directory looks like. You type your search term in the little window then click Search Plugins.

You can also look at the popular tags and browse in that way.

Below is a list of Wordpress plugins that you might find useful do not use them all, try out only what you find useful:

- [ShareThis](#) -- Puts all the social media share icons where you need them on your blog
- [Akismet](#) -- Not social media, but helps with spam.
- [FeedBurner](#) -- Enables you to create a good Feed
- [Social Media Manager](#) -- Helps manage all your social media in one spot.
- [Social Count](#) -- Shows how many times someone shared, tweeted or buzzed your content
- [Social Media Pack - Twitter Module](#) -- Sends a Tweet when you post something new
- [Follow Me](#) -- Sets up icons on your site so that people can follow you across social media
- [WordPress Easy Feed](#) -- You can include your favorite RSS feeds on your blog including your own feeds across several social networks
- [SocialGrid](#) -- Widget that allows you to organize, share and add profiles across networks
- [WP Tweetbox](#) -- Send a Tweet from your blog or website
- [FaceBook Like Button Plugin for WordPress](#) -- Visitors can "like" your content
- [Leenk.me](#) -- Auto Tweet new blog posts
- [Full Circle](#) -- Automate notifying your social networks about new blog posts.
- [Dantoon](#) -- See who your subscribers are
- [Your site in Facebook - create your fan page from WordPress](#) -- Create custom pages formerly "fan" pages
- [Tumblr](#) -- Pick items to share on Tumblr.
- [My beautiful tubes](#) -- Allows you to post YouTube Videos where you want on your blog
- [ComplexLife](#) -- See a historical view of your online activities
- [Lifestream](#) -- Show your social feeds on as many networking sites as you desire
- [CommentLuv](#) -- Posts your commenter's last post and encourages interactivity
- [Retaggr](#) -- Create an interactive business card

Guide to Social Media Management for Online Business Owners

A note about Virtual Assistants -- One way to use a Virtual Assistant to manage your social media is to use her as your central person that others are feeding content to, and she is responsible for posting said content.

It's dangerous to have more than one person managing the actual posting of content across all your social media channels because it can be too easy for mistakes to happen. If your VA collects the content from the writers or you, she can then post it to the appropriate places, keeping track as she goes along about where, when, and what was posted and shared. In addition your VA should not make up answers or posts herself without your approval to questions asked on your social media networks, what she should do instead is alert you to messages that need answers, so that you can answer them in your own voice.

In some cases a cheat sheet can be created with your standard answers but you have to be careful of sounding too robotic on social media because people are expecting you to be personal.

Interact -- Even if you hate technology, and you outsource, and do all the other things mentioned in this guide, you still need to set aside time each day to interact with your friends, followers and connections yourself. It's so important that you respond to questions, and do not appear like a robot. While automation is good for some aspects of your social media management, some types of automation will create a situation where everyone is simply ignoring you, hiding you, or deleting you.

You will appear more trusting and authentic if you are doing the interacting each day. At the very least create what you want said in a file that your VA can cut and paste, but you'll get more bang for your buck if you are simply YOU sometimes and socialize, interact, and network.

Engaging with your customers online will help establish a connection with them, and too much automation might get in the way of that. A good rule of thumb is that it's okay to automate sharing a new blog post, but not okay to automate welcome messages, or the job of answering inquiries from clients or potential clients.

Systems, as mentioned above are most important to establishing a profitable and well run business. This is true whether your business is online or offline. With a system you can be consistent which is one of the biggest markers of success for Internet marketers.

Final Considerations

Strategy -- Plan your social media marketing strategy, define your goals, and know your target market.

Consistency -- It's the old "tortoise and the hare" story. Keep a regular pace for the long-term because consistency over the long term is the common denominator to success when it comes to social media marketing.

Outsource -- Either via automation or a Virtual Assistant, get help, and you will reap the rewards.

Testing Processes -- Try more than one method so you can compare your results and know what works best.

Guide to Social Media Management for Online Business Owners

Measuring Results -- Check your analytics, test your efforts in order to create the best systems that will get the most return on investment. (ROI)