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**Tweet Tweet, Thumbs Up: Practical Tips for Promoting on Facebook and Twitter**



Unless you’ve been living on a deserted island void of technology for the past decade, you probably know that social media plays a key role in the majority of successful business plans. Social media is cost-effective and easily accessible, and can be an integral component of effective customer communication, company branding and influence, and even sales. With the plethora of social platforms sprouting up seemingly daily, social media is no longer a luxury for businesses, but rather, an essential.

With [900 million](http://www.ebizmba.com/articles/social-networking-websites) unique visitors per month and ranked as the [second](http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/facebook.com) most popular website worldwide, Facebook is the leading social network. Twitter isn’t far behind, as the [11th](http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/twitter.com) most popular site globally, boasting [290 million](http://www.ebizmba.com/articles/social-networking-websites) unique monthly visitors and growing. Suffice to say that if you haven’t explored using Twitter and Facebook to grow your business, you could be missing an opportunity to connect with customers and influence conversations that are important to your business.

Here are a few best practices to keep in mind when it comes to putting social media to work for you:

**Capture Attention**

The ultimate goal of using social channels is to drive visitors to your website. However, you must get people to notice you first, so capturing the attention of your audience is key. Naturally, it’s important to know who your audience is and cater to them specifically. What do they care about? What do they want to know? What’s interesting to them? Keeping these questions in mind is a good way to drum up content to share on your channels. For example, if you have a website that shares DIY home improvement tips, maybe your post reads: “Three easy ways to change the look of your bedroom!” with a link to the blog post. It’s also important to maintain your company’s voice in all of your social communications (i.e., don’t try to be something you’re not; visitors will see through inauthenticity).

**Engage with Variety**

Other ways to engage people include running contests or offering “exclusive” information on products or sales. Contests can be as simple as fill-in-the-blank types of posts on Facebook or “retweet to win” posts on Twitter. Typically, contests that are simple and quick heed the most response, along with rewards that will make people want to play along. You can always consider boosting [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/help/100241190123985/) or [Twitter](https://business.twitter.com/products/promoted-tweets) content with promoted posts for additional exposure. This form of advertising allows you to target a specific group of people based on a variety of demographics and interests.

Studies also show that posts with visual content tend to get more engagement, so including images and videos with your posts when relevant piques interest. Shorter posts also tend to get more reads than longer posts. Though Twitter only offers 140 characters, don’t feel the need to always maximize that character count.

**Stay Trendy and Timely**

Another important aspect of Facebook and Twitter is the ability to post about and join conversations on specific industry happenings as well as current events right as they happen. Searching Twitter hashtags for keywords is an easy way to see who’s talking about what, and allows you to participate in relevant conversations. Facebook also recently added a hashtag search feature, but perhaps what’s equally important is to stay abreast of current local, national and world events and recognize an opportunity to use your brand to take part in discussions. For example, Arby’s capitalized on some Twitter [Grammy talk](http://www.adweek.com/adfreak/arbys-slayed-grammys-tweet-about-pharrell-williams-hat-155237)with Pharrell Williams, who then tweeted back with an equally witty response. The bottom line is that although social media offers a place to discuss products and services, there’s some room to have fun with it, too.

**Listen Up!**

One of the biggest mistakes companies make with their social channels is viewing them as a way to pump out information *they* want to talk about. A “Look at me!” approach can be off-putting — an equally important aspect of social media is listening. Staying on top of questions or comments that come in through Facebook and Twitter allows you to provide additional customer service and utilize your channels as two-way conversation vessels. Pay close attention and always respond to the inquiries, even if it’s as simple as “Please contact customer support for assistance.” It will go a long way.

**Stick with It**

One of the most challenging aspects of managing Facebook and Twitter accounts can be simply staying the course. You may not see immediate results right away, but don’t let that deter you. As long as you have relevant content, posting to Facebook daily and Twitter several times a day (in addition to following up with anyone who contacts you) is a good rule of thumb. Some businesses also find it beneficial to create a social content calendar for the weeks and months ahead based on company milestones or product releases, holidays and other key industry topics, so that you’re never at a loss for words. And though posting regularly is a must, remember that quality trumps quantity.

The key to a successful social media campaign is trying different approaches to discover what works for your business, and then leveraging it to build a loyal following. And that’s something everyone should “like.”