

Social Media Marketing

Are You Part of the Conversation?

By

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As a Man (or Woman) Thinketh...

This tiny book was written to help with your mindset about marketing and social media. Just having the tools doesn't make for an effective solution! Too many people believe having a copy of Microsoft Publisher, Adobe InDesign or Apple's Quark Xpress gives their business an in-house marketing department. If one doesn't know how to use and think with the tools, they will fail miserably.

My goal was to provide enough insight on the subject matter, so you'd be able to utilize your social media effectively and have it bring your business success. So take the time to read these short pages thoroughly. Really think about what they say and your social media program will be enhanced greatly!

I thank you for purchasing this program and I believe you will agree it was written with you in mind, the person with little time and lots of need.

I will see you on the retweet!



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What is Social Media?



Many people are scared by technology. So when they hear the term “social media marketing,” it can be overwhelming! I’m here to tell you it’s no more than what you’re accustomed to at a reception or the old-time local plaza.

Think about it. There used to be a time when there was a local gathering place: it could’ve been the downtown plaza, the local VFW or community center. People would gather and share ideas, update each other on what is going on and take advantage to promote their business or hobby.

Being Social



Ask yourself, if you were at a wedding reception, would you beat the people over the head by attacking with your business card, saying, “Hi, I’m Joe Slobodnik and I own the Pain-Be-Gone Chiropractic Clinic in town. I wanted to give you my card and let you know an adjustment is a great way to...” Most likely not! You would socialize, come to know the people, wait for an opening and THEN share what you do.

The same rules apply to social media. The only difference is you will use technology as the medium of sharing, meeting people, socializing and being part of the

conversation. And, with social media, you have so many tools to deliver an effective message with impact. You can use:

- Articles which allow you to make your complete point
- Videos which allow you to do so visually
- Photos
- Personal comments
- Third-party content (other people's articles, videos and/or blogs)

Just remember, the three reasons people use social media are:

1. To be entertained
2. To be informed
3. To be helped

If you do these things, you cannot fail!

The Power of Social Media



Social Media Has Levelled the Marketing Playing Field

Unlike advertising and traditional marketing, where a one-sided communication takes place and what is communicated is what the company wants the public to perceive, social media is more about providing a two-way conversation that offers quality and value.

By providing content that does the three things mentioned previously (solves problems or helps, educates or informs, and/or entertains), your following comes to see you as a valuable source of news and information. In doing so, the following happens:

1. They come to know your expertise, what you do.
2. They come to trust you as a source of information.
3. They come to like you and people buy from people they like.
4. They will start to refer you to other friends, followers and connections.
5. If they need your service, you will get a chance to compete; hence they become a sales prospect.

These dynamics combine to create a powerful social media program. Once these things have happened, you have an effective platform that will complement your traditional advertising, promotion and PR campaigns for a complete marketing program.

Social Media Marketing is more than Just Promotion

The term “social media marketing” can be very misleading, because it gives the connotation that it’s strictly for selling something. However, social media marketing is more than just promotion! Social media marketing can help you with customer retention, lower your administrative costs and manage your online reputation. Let’s take a look at how you can do this.

Lowering Administrative Costs



Have you ever heard the saying it’s cheaper to keep a happy customer, rather than find a new one? Think about it! If you lost a paying customer, what would it take to find one to replace him or her? It takes advertising and marketing, people answering phones or making outbound calls, possibly free samples to attract interest. In short, this costs money to only break even, since you need two new customers to grow.

When you consider most times the reason for losing a customer is either a misunderstanding or tardy response to an inquiry, what if you had a robust questions-and-answers page, with downloadable resources that was promoted via social media? What if when you received an inquiry and provided a response, you took that response and shared it through Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+ for all to see? Not only would it deliver the answer to anyone else who may have the same question, it shows caring and forward thinking – providing a solution before asked!

Now, what would happen to your customer service department if answers were being posted and delivered, eliminating the need to speak with someone on the phone? You would need fewer representatives putting out fires. Those are assets that can be reallocated for higher productivity and/or lowers cost by not needing to hire as many employees. And, let’s not forget the GOOD PR this garners you.

Customer Retention

Staying with the example above, if a customer feels valued and connected, finding the help they need to best use your product or service, why would they look elsewhere? When using this approach, it gives you two HUGE benefits:

- 1) It builds trust! When they see they can count on your company to deliver, they trust you.
- 2) You can make suggestions on how your product could be used for higher productivity and value, positioning your company for up-sales.



Taking a proactive approach will keep you ahead of your competition and, while the goal may have been customer retention and lower administrative costs, **it still contributes to sales!** Not only by the up-sales that can occur, but the legacy it creates; which your sales team will use as one of the benefits of doing business with your company.

Online Reputation Management



If you don't know what is being said about you, you cannot capitalize on it nor defend against it. If people are saying good things about you, you want to know about it and publicly acknowledge it and thank them. It shows graciousness (which is in short supply these days) and puts the positive out in the open for everyone to see. Moreover, the things they say can also lead to new research and development.

If something bad is said, it allows you a rapid response to quash any negatives. And, once a negative is out there, it will never disappear; but a steady social media campaign will help to push it down where no one will find it.

Good ways of doing this are with Google Alerts and setting all your social media accounts' notice settings to inform you whenever you are mentioned or tagged by anyone.

So if you thought social media was nothing more than just selling, you've been missing about two-thirds of the value it offers to help grow, sustain and protect your business.

When Promoting, Think ‘Human Nature’ and Use Common Sense

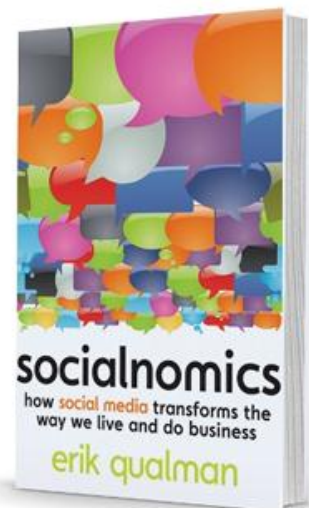


When it comes to marketing, there are many strategies and tactics, but nothing beats understanding human nature and using common sense. In a social media driven world, funny tactics, hyperbole and exaggeration will get you only so far—since sooner or later the dots will be connected and you’re out of business. Like no other medium, in social media, honesty and integrity are of the highest order! People talk and love to share negatives more than positives. Avoid being the creator of a negative.

Common Sense 101

Ask yourself, “What do I do when I see something online or in social media I’m interested in?” If you’re like most, you Google it and/or ask your peers on Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ or Twitter (to name a few) what they’ve heard and think. When you Google it, you find articles and comments which were created through social media that lead you to either a website for more information, or to a blog where the comments were posted.

In a study done by Eric Qualman, author of the bestselling book [*Socialnomics: How social media transforms the way we live and do business*](#), in 2009, it showed 78% of people who



use the Internet and social media trust what their peers have to say over advertising. So what does this all mean to you? If you understand human nature and use common sense, you will always put your best foot forward and get better results.

So here are a few tips and points to think about, as you promote yourself or company.

Know Your Audience



I know this is a “DUH!” statement. However, too many people DO NOT know their audience; they assume they do and we already know what ASSUME can do.

By this I mean, what is the demographic (are they young, middle aged, elderly, single, married, religious, agnostic, liberal or conservative); how does that demographic think in general; what interests that demographic?

For example, a married person’s priorities may be more family and child-safety oriented, while a single person’s priorities may be more self-centered and riskier. If the demographic is women, they think differently than men. So you need to know who you are speaking to!

Think Human Nature: What Would Get Your Attention?

While this is a generality, people tend to think in the same way about certain things. For instance, in general, people do not like to be sold; people do not like to be made to feel they don’t know or are ignorant. People like to do business with people they like. People buy from people they trust or someone THEY trust trusts.

Ask yourself, “If I were online, what would catch MY attention and make me look further?” Is it the flashy pop-up or is it an article I read with many good comments? Is it the



advertising video (akin to a television commercial today) or an interview in the news or a talk show I follow? Is it someone being generous with their time, offering to help me with answers, or someone pushing an agenda and a sale?

These are things you need to pay attention to when strategizing your marketing plan and choosing your tactics.

Aggressive Humility



No one likes it when another person is arrogantly proud about his or her accomplishments to the point of having to permanently graft their hand on their back, for patting it so much. However, there is something about a humble spirit that seems to be very attractive!

Now, I'm not saying you don't let the world know what you can do and have accomplished. Not to do so would be marketing suicide! But HOW you do it is another story.

Whenever possible, post information from a third party who had something to share about you. Testimonials, articles in the news, grateful comments from others regarding your generosity! You see, these tactics will get people to admire and like you, and when they like you, they will listen to what you have to say.

While marketing is far broader than these tips, in the world of social media and in your daily interactions, these tips will help you position yourself in the best way to grow your network. And, the bigger your network, the bigger your reservoir for future business! After all, it's rarely about what you know, but rather WHO you know — so make sure you meet plenty of people.

As you meet these people, make sure you capture the data! In other words, that you are getting their information for a database you own for ongoing future marketing.

Social Media Alone is NOT the Answer!



Why NOT capturing the data could cost you plenty

Technology is amazing! Who would've thought just three to four years ago social media would open a door for businesses to reach consumers directly with their message, bypassing traditional media and advertising—effectively? However, social media alone is NOT the answer. If you don't have a plan for capturing the data, it could cost you plenty should the cloud fail.

Many hear Google, Digg, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter (among others), and think they could never fail. After all, they are the leaders of cutting edge innovation and technology. They think, “So if I build a following in the social sphere, I will always have that resource for my business!” While I cannot say that a disaster WILL happen, what we can say is that there's history of lost data from major networks that have had terrible effects on business people.

When you consider that all “the cloud” means is instead of the data being hosted on your computer, it sits on someone else's computer. However, it's still a physical computer that can be infected, surged, crash from wear and tear, or have any number of other issues that plagues technology. So why would you solely trust these services with your database of followers for marketing?

Casualties of the Cloud



On February 27, 2011, [Gmail had a hiccup that made them lose less than .02% of all their user's e-mails, contacts and data](#). You might think .02% is nothing; however, when you're Google, back in 2011, less than .02% represented more than 100,000 people—many of whom were business people who lost leads and agreements that amounted to millions of dollars in lost business. While many were eventually restored, the time lost in productivity also has a huge dollar value.

On June 1, 2012, the 800 Lbs. social-network gorilla, [Facebook, was hacked](#) and went down for several hours. And on July 3, 2012, Facebook decided to change everyone's e-mail address from whatever the user deemed, to [their profile name and number]@facebook.com—WITHOUT TELLING ANYONE ABOUT IT! Well needless to say, many people were not getting crucial communication, because it was being sent to their Facebook inbox and not their standard accounts. How many deals were slowed or lost due to that faux pas, I wonder?

Capturing the Data and Driving Traffic to Your Website

Okay, you get the point. Am I saying don't use social media? No, that's not what I'm saying at all. What I am saying is, while using social media to deliver your message and build your following, you want to capture as many of those identities as possible, to build an in-house database YOU own. You do this by having a social-media friendly website and blog. Not a third-party, freebie-blog website; but a blog on your company or personal website—where you want the traffic to go.

The blog is your main driver of traffic. However, once you get them there, you want to make sure it's so well designed it will pull them in and make them WANT to subscribe for future articles and posts. You also want to have a "request info" conversion form (on every page), ensuring if they have a question, they don't need to look far to ask it—it must be in their face to make it as simple as possible. How you capture the data is irrelevant (whether by subscription or inquiry), just make sure you get it!

You Know You Need to Blog, but You Don't Know How



Here are 7 Tips to Help You Be an Effective Blogger

Who'd have thought a few years ago blogging would become a powerhouse for news, opinion and information over traditional sources in the media. As a matter of fact, DestinationCRM.com did a study in 2011 with BlogHer that shows [bloggers are trusted more than a celebrity endorsement!](#) So if you're in business, you need to start blogging right away.

Benefits of blogging include letting your public know what you offer, delivering your expertise in bite-sized pieces that build huge value for your brand, building a following for future sales and it's the number one way to drive meaningful traffic to your website. If you don't have a blog setup, set one up right away and start tapping your keyboard.

Here are seven tips that will help you get organized and produce an effective blog.

Share Micro Facets of Your Message

Most people are used to trying to sell the entire picture of what they offer, because they anticipate making a sale. In doing so, it comes across salesy (which is not good) and you use all your material and wonder, "What am I going to write about next?" Every expertise has micro facets of important points that are rich with helpful

information. For example, if your business is lawn care, you can write an article on proper fertilization, which pesticides are best, what grass should be used for your region, the different kinds of grasses, etc. This will give you plenty to work with, keep your reader interested and provide a referral resource as readers share your blog with their friends having the same questions.

Keep it Short, but not TOO Short

On the Internet, attention spans are short. So if you give too much, unless it's a really compelling article, many people won't read it. So try to keep it between 400 and 750 words.



Use Good Citations

While you may have great information and years of experience to back it up, people like to know what you're saying is true from a different source. So when possible, as I did above with the blogger study, use links to other content that supports your point.



Make it Evergreen

An evergreen article is an article that will stand the test of time, because it's not dated. For example, proper lawn-care techniques will probably not change soon. However, if an infestation happened that was a one-time occurrence, an article on how to correct that problem may not be useful again. Evergreen may not always be possible, but when it is, be sure to write it.

Pay Attention to the News and Trends

This is an example where evergreen may not be possible, but is a powerful tool; writing about the hot topics and news as it pertains to your expertise. These kinds of articles can have an emotional power that gets many responses, but they are typically a one-time use article.

Listen to Your Audience

As you post blogs, people will comment. Those comments are gold! They will tell you what your readers are interested in and provide direction for future articles.



Entertain, Help and Inform

I will say it again – the three reasons why people use social media and read blogs are to be entertained, informed and find solutions to problems. So you'll want to make sure your article does at least two out of three for it to be a good piece. Remember, if you wouldn't read it, why would anyone else?

It doesn't matter what your industry or expertise is, there is so much fodder for blog articles available and there will always be an audience that is looking for what you have to say. If there were none, you'd be out of business! So take the time to share your message with passion and professionalism, and a little wit, and pretty soon you will be the trusted source they read and follow.

You Finally Started Blogging, but You are Losing Faith in Your Blog



Here are two points that may be affecting its effectiveness

Blogs have become a valid source for information worldwide. So much so that even journalists scour Twitter for breaking news blog articles they can quote in a story or show, or interview the blogger directly. However, not all blogs are equal!

However, just because you blog doesn't mean the world will want to read it! If the quality is not there, you're off message or not marketing it effectively.

So let's take a look at two points that can make a huge difference on the success of your blog.

What Are You Writing?

This sounds pretty straight forward, but in reality it's not. By, "What are you writing?" I don't mean is it junk that's ill written. What I'm asking is, is it on target with the goal of your blog and the needs of your audience?

People blog for different reasons: artistic expression, to vent, to generate prospects for business and help others, to provide customer service via articles so as to decrease in-house customer service costs, etc. Identify what your goal is and that will direct what the content should be.

Once you know what your goal is and who your audience is, then ask, “Is what I’m writing of interest and use to my audience?” You see, in the beginning you may be poking around with a few articles as you hone your direction and strategy, but eventually, your audience will tell you what they want you to write about by how many likes, comments and retweets your articles get. And every now and then, they will tell you directly.

For example, I am writing this part because a LinkedIn connection responded to an article on blogging with the comment, “I am losing faith in blogging.” To which we had a good discussion. If he had this concern, how many other people who do not voice it also have this concern; hence this content.

How Are You Marketing Your Blog?



This question is generally replied to with the broad stroke answer of “Social media!” Duh! How are you marketing it IN social media and how do you define social media?

If by social media you mean Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Google+, well, that’s a good start. However, there are other places you need to submit it to, like StumbleUpon, Digg, Delicious, article banks like Ezine and Article Alley (among many others). You want your article in as many places as possible and to be able to be found in the different

places other surfers may look for information. The narrow view of social media by the general public is not how the savvy surfer uses the Internet. So you don’t want to bottle-neck yourself into just the most well-known.

As to “how” are you marketing it, are you just throwing it out there, posting it in groups that are not interested in your message, putting the entire article in the post? Here are few things to consider.

1. When you post an article, make sure your headline is golden!

2. Use a teaser, not a portion of the article. It has to pull the reader in to want to click through to your blog and website.
3. Ask a question after your teaser to stimulate conversation. For example, if posting these tips, you might ask, “What have you done that has been successful with your blog? Please share.”
4. Make sure your website is designed well, so when someone clicks on the link, they will stay and read it. If you check your Google Analytics, you will probably see a high bounce rate if you have a mediocre website. This means your readers arrived, were not pulled in by what they saw, so they left.

Always remember everything will come down to the quality and content of your website. If you do all of the above and your website is well thought out from a content and marketing perspective, you will hit a homerun. However, if it is not, I think you will find your tracking reports will reflect a spurt of traffic and a hasty retreat—again, this is your bounce rate.

What Makes a Good Website? Great Question!



There is STILL one thing that trumps social media—your website!

Yes, social media is an engine for driving traffic, building a following, trust and credibility. But what good is that if after you've done all the hard work to get them to (guess where) YOUR WEBSITE, it lacks the necessary dynamics to convert them to at least a subscriber to your blog or hopefully an immediate purchase? Your website is the hub of your entire marketing program!

So making sure your website is designed for effectiveness is a crucial component for success in business. Forget your college bound nephew, who knows the tools but has no marketing sense. You get what you pay for! The sad part is most people don't realize how many sales they've lost, before they realize none are coming in. THAT'S TOO BIG A MISTAKE TO MAKE!

What Makes a Good Website?

So what makes a good website design? I thought you'd never ask! Let's look at that. Now I am not going to talk about SEO (Search Engine Optimization) or the technical aspect of a website; just good design.

Good Aesthetics (“Eye Candy”)



This is the one where designers inexperienced in marketing typically get you! Why? Since he or she doesn't know what's effective and you are depending on them to show you, when they present a template with eye-popping effects and snazzy graphics, you say, “Oooooo... aaaahhh!!!” You love it and move forward, only to wonder why it doesn't work.

The reason is it distracts and eventually annoys. So by “eye candy,” I mean it must be pleasing to the eye, have enough graphics to make it functional and attractive, but no more than is necessary. And, there is a difference between a graphic that says what you want and one that says it with style, grace and impact. Use those; avoid the others!

Proper Use of Space (Layout)

Once you've chosen your graphics and look, how you lay it out on the page is essential. You want good balance and flow. You want it to guide the reader naturally. Poor layout looks cluttered, choppy and makes one struggle to find what they're looking for.



This also includes proper use of fonts. Avoid serif fonts (Times New Roman, et al.), unless there is a well-thought out reason for them. Don't single space, and when tastefully feasible, use earth tones (blues, browns and dark greens).

Quality Content

This point should be the very first! I chose not make it first, because if the attractiveness and layout of the site doesn't pull your visitor in, what you wrote won't matter. However, this is your message! This is what will persuade the reader, meet him

or her where he or she is and take him where you want him to go. If you skimp on this part, everything else you did right will not matter!

Make sure you hire a professional creative marketing and sales writer, not just anyone who THINKS they can write. A poet can write, but would you write your entire site in poetry? A creative writer can write, but I would not necessarily want to read a poem by one. This is apples and oranges. So make sure your copy is as strong as it can be to do the job it was written to do!

A Blog



This was originally an article for my Blog, [*The Ruminations of Eddie Vélez*](#). My audience read this article in my blog, on my website. Now think this through. I gave them quality content that provided educational information and a solution; hence they found it valuable enough to want to read. So they clicked on the link in Facebook, Twitter, Digg, Delicious, LinkedIn, Google+ or wherever else I posted it and SHAZAAM! They landed on MY WEBSITE! I just drove traffic to my site via my blog.

Now I hope my site is well done that they may choose to look past the article and go deeper into my website. Moreover, I hope they found the article informative and useful enough, they would choose to subscribe to my blog. In doing so, I provide them with great information, they get to know what I am best at and about my expertise, so that if:

- a) They need my services in the future, they'll consider me, or...
- b) If they know anyone who may have a need, they may say, "You know, I read this great article about that. I think it may help you. Let me send it to you." In doing so, they just referred me!

Do you see how it all ties together? Do you see how connecting the dots of your marketing program with a well-designed website changes the dynamics?

A Conversion Form

Once you got the visitor to your site/blog, you need a way of capturing that information. You need to be able to have that dialogue and send them more great information. If there is no form they can fill out to either:

- a) Contact you and ask a question, or...
- b) Subscribe to your blog

...you will lose the opportunity to keep your company and expertise on their mind for that eventual day.

There is no way to measure what persuaded a person to buy. If they desperately need what you offer now, they'll buy now; but typically people are doing their homework. So you need to make sure they don't forget how you helped them with great info when it's time they need what you offer. This is how you ensure future sales!

The Bribe! (A Valuable Freebie)



If your content is very good and your articles are worth reading, people will subscribe to your blog by osmosis. However, since we tend to think if we wrote it, it's GREAT, we are the worst judges of whether it will work or not. So, you want to tip the scale in your favor.

Put together a free download or offering for the subscriber. It could be a white paper on your expertise, a training video or podcast, a software tool—whatever. Just have something that would make them think, “I want that information and all it costs me is a free subscription.” You do this and your subscriptions WILL increase.

Social Media Functionality



Since social media is how you use your blog to drive traffic to your website, understand if someone likes what they read and wants to share it with THEIR friends on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+ or LinkedIn (to name a few), you need to make it as easy as possible. Not to do so is to miss an opportunity for expanding your following, and garnering more awareness and credibility.

So make sure you have buttons that allows them to follow you on your different accounts, but also for them to post, tweet, like and share your content through their social media network.

As I mentioned previously, this is not an exhaustive list. There are other considerations on the technical side that also help you to tip the scale in your favor for a successful online marketing program. However, without a well-designed website for effective marketing, all the rest matters nothing.

About the Author



Eddie Vélez, has over 20-years experience in formulating marketing strategies and implementing tactics and support material necessary for a synergistic plan. Eddie is a graduate of The School of Art and Design, in New York City, with a major in advertising, with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. He has apprenticed under Neal Martineau of Ogilvy and Mather—a three-time winner of the Ogilvy Award for Advertising Excellence, and has worked in Public Relations and social media, managing the social media programs of many authors and celebrities.

Eddie has designed and implemented marketing and training programs for companies big and small, to include a medical savings/insurance company. His efforts helped lower attrition and produced a 1,000% growth in an 18-month period, which led to the company being ranked 12th on the NASDAQ's Top 50, for the year 2001—among others.