

# The Right Content, Right Now

Navigating Social Media for Business

FEATURING INSIGHTS FROM

---

**GUY  
KAWASAKI**

**MARSHA  
COLLIER**

**BRIAN  
MORAN**

AND MORE

# Table of Contents

## 03 Introduction

by Brian Moran

## 04 Getting Started on Social Media

Getting Social: Connecting With Customers on Social Media

by Marsha Collier

Guy Kawasaki's Social Media Insights for Small Businesses

by Bruna Martinuzzi

Is Social Media Even Worth It?

by Anthonia Akitunde

## 16 Creating the Right Content

The Social Media Content Plan That Can Help Get Results

by Angela Stringfellow

Content Marketing Tips to Help Make Every Word Count

by John Jantsch

## 22 Using Specific Platforms

Infographic: Effective Tips for Social Media Marketing

by Anthonia Akitunde

A Small-Business Owner's Guide to Using Instagram Effectively

by Gini Dietrich

Quick Tips to Help Grow Your Twitter Following

by Brian Moran

What Every Business Owner Should Know About Facebook Advertising

by Erika Napoletano

## 33 Case Study

Growth Talk: Build a Brand, Share It With the World

by Rod Kurtz

All content was originally published on [openforum.com](https://openforum.com). American Express® OPEN Forum helps small-business owners find the insights, inspiration and connections to help grow their businesses. Learn more at [openforum.com](https://openforum.com).

The information contained in this guide is for generalized informational and educational purposes only and is not designed to substitute for, or replace, a professional opinion about any particular business or situation or judgment about the risks or appropriateness of any approach for any specific business or situation. THIS GUIDE IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE USED FOR PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS ADVICE. The views and opinions expressed in authored guides through OPEN Forum represent the opinion of their author and do not necessarily represent the views, opinions and/or judgments of American Express Company or any of its affiliates, subsidiaries or divisions (including, without limitation, American Express OPEN). American Express makes no representation as to, and is not responsible for, the accuracy, timeliness, completeness or reliability of any opinion, advice or statement made in this guide.

## INTRODUCTION

# Making Social Media Work in Your Business



INTRODUCTION BY

**Brian Moran**

Founder & CEO, Brian Moran & Associates

---

*“The more you promote the efforts of others on social media, the more likely it will come back to you—I call that my rule of reciprocity.”*

Welcome to “The Right Content, Right Now: Navigating Social Media for Business.” The content you are about to read is designed to help you incorporate social media as a competitive tool into your business.

We enlisted some of the top experts in social media and small business to help you get started, create content worth reading and find the right social platforms for your specific business.

In the [Getting Social](#) section, Marsha Collier illustrates how to connect with your customers on social media. Bruna Martinuzzi shares Guy Kawasaki’s social media insights for small-business owners based on an interview she conducted with him. Lastly, Anthonia Akitunde delves into the question of whether or not social media is even worth the time and effort for business owners.

In the [Creating the Right Content](#) section, Angela Stringfellow designs a plan that can help you

get the results you want, and John Jantsch provides sage advice on making every word count in content marketing.

In the last section, [Using Specific Platforms](#), Gini Dietrich writes about how small-business owners can more effectively use Instagram in their business, while Erika Napoletano covers everything you need to know about Facebook advertising. I am honored to be included with the notable experts listed above, and have offered my tips for using Twitter to help grow your business.

As a bonus, OPEN Forum editor-at-large Rod Kurtz presents a case study on building a brand and sharing it with the world. It’s a fantastic story that includes many practical takeaways for business owners looking to grow their corporate brand.

I’ve often said that social media is a lot like college—you can’t take 128 credits in one semester, and you won’t learn social media overnight. Take time to properly learn how to incorporate social media into your company, and get your employees involved in building your brand. Social media is not a fad, and it’s not something that is going away any time soon.

One more piece of advice for making the most out of your time spent in social media: Listen twice as much as you talk. Many business owners make the mistake of seeing social media purely as a megaphone—a platform to tell the world about your products and services. If that’s your approach to social media, then you are setting yourself, and your company, up for failure. Social media is a dialogue, not a monologue. Listen to your customers as they talk about your product or service. Support their social media efforts by retweeting and liking their posts. The more you promote the efforts of others on social media, the more likely it will come back to you—I call that my rule of reciprocity. Enjoy the articles in this guide and make the most of using social media in business.

01

# Getting Started on Social Media

**Getting Social:  
Connecting  
With Customers on  
Social Media**

by Marsha Collier

**Guy Kawasaki's  
Social Media Insights  
for Small Businesses**

by Bruna Martinuzzi

**Is Social Media Even  
Worth It?**

by Anthonia Akitunde

# Getting Social: Connecting With Customers on Social Media

*Use these smart social media tactics to help build an online community, increase your brand awareness and boost your bottom line.*

If we are to believe 21st century common knowledge, the entire world is on social media. And even if it's not the entire world, it seems pretty close. In this new era, social media is where you want to be.

Connecting with customers on social media, and using social networks to show your appreciation for customers, fosters word of mouth within a community, whether that community is as local as a 10-mile radius or as vast as the Internet enables.

## Making the Connection

Through my career in retail marketing, I advised small businesses that thrived in competition with name brands. Working with businesses of every type, I observed which path to success each entrepreneur took. Small businesses had the ability to flourish due to their attention to detail and a personal connection with their customers. Early entrants into the social media world were small businesses who used their personal accounts to build their online personas. Similarly, businesses began to jump in and create connections online.

*“Social media outreach can be a slippery slope. New platforms seem to be emerging on a monthly basis. Double check the demographics of a site before jumping in by running a Google search on the specific demographics of each site.”*

— Marsha Collier

In 2009, I began testing the theory that social media could build connections and revenues for businesses, small and large. Even at that early stage in social networking, I found outstanding examples, which spurred me to write my book, [\*The Ultimate Online Customer Service Guide: How to Connect With Your Customers to Sell More\*](#). I knew from practice and study that a business's bottom line could improve from connecting with customers on social media.

Social media outreach can be a slippery slope. New platforms seem to be emerging on a monthly basis. Double check the demographics of a site before jumping in by running a Google search on the specific



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Marsha Collier**

Author, Columnist, TechRadio Host,  
The Collier Company, Inc.

Marsha Collier is listed as a top influencer in lists from Forbes and Huffington Post. She's also an author who has sold more than 1 million books on the topics of e-commerce, social media and online customer service. You can find her current books at [CooleBayTools.com](http://CooleBayTools.com) and [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

demographics of each site. A search for “Pinterest demographics 2014” will bring up a page of links to current information on the users of that site. If your target market is customers with an \$80,000+ income, some sites may not serve that demographic base well. As I always say, “Fish where the fish are,” and put your efforts into the sites that hit your target audience.

If you’re primarily a B2B business, you might find platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter and perhaps Google+ to be most advantageous for making the right connections and getting your brand out there. You can join LinkedIn communities and become part of the discussion. Or take articles you’ve written for your business blog, tweak them by rewriting a paragraph or two and post them on LinkedIn to expose your brand to a much wider audience.

A B2C business might do better on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Whereas Facebook shows posts by a preset algorithm that displays only what Facebook

deems to be important to the viewer, tweets on Twitter are shown as they are posted and are searchable by users. This makes your message viewable to anyone following your account. Businesses that have a visual story to tell can also reach a wide swath of customers on Pinterest. Nothing sells like pictures!

## Building a Community Online

Putting your business on social media helps your customers connect with your brand on a more personal level. Commenting, responding and sharing are the building blocks to your online success. Building your community is where the challenge begins.

In the beginning, keep things simple: Establish and maintain outreach on a single platform before expanding to others. Use audience-targeted keyword searches to build your community within each platform. Twitter makes this easy. If your business sells luggage, you might search not only



## TIPS

### *Just as you would in a brick-and-mortar shop, it's important to keep things personal and friendly.*

*The generic "Follow us on Facebook" or similar call to action doesn't give anyone a reason to connect with you.*



Personalize your outreach by using the word "join," thus making your connections more inclusive.



Share your comments and links with a promise of what your community can expect from you once they click the "like" or "follow" buttons.

Source: Marsha Collier

for mentions of the brand names you carry, but for users who mention travel, cruises and flying. If you are an accountant, search and respond to those who ask questions about taxes, bookkeeping programs and small business. Search the sites repeatedly for keywords that relate to your industry, your competition and even your customers by name. Certainly it is not a best practice to stalk, but special customers might appreciate an occasional "hello." This is why it is called social media; it's your chance to personalize your business and be sociable.

While you're at it, keep self-promotion to a minimum.

I know the point of all this is to sell and gain customers, but how often have you fast forwarded through commercials on TV? Social media is the same animal. Start a conversation with your community and share interesting information. If you are a public relations agency, for example, you might share tips on PR—yours or others from quality articles on the Web. Be sure these are relevant to your audience. People aren't interested in a constant stream of information about what you're selling; make this outreach more about building a relationship.

Odds are you don't plan to stake out social networks 24/7, but you do need to check in daily and respond to everyone who has commented on your posts. Word catches on in the online world, and if you are an outstanding community member, others will follow and trust you. People will then begin to share your message (which you've peppered into your social stream). Social engagement is a two-way street.

## Choosing the Right Content

Generating leads from social media is triggered by piquing the interest of your community. Creating the type of content you would like to see and sharing the things you like may resound with people who have similar interests. Another way to relate to an audience you've never met is to consider what your personal reasons were for getting into your business, and use them as clues to the personality of your community. When creating content, play with different formats to see what your audience responds to.

**Blog posts.** Your company blog is your personal testing ground. The statistics on views and time spent are private and easy to retrieve. This is the place to find out the sort of topics that resound best. Keep the bulk of your posts fairly short until you have an important

*“Quantity is great, but not everyone on social media is your targeted customer. Use search to find those who are interested in your business and center your outreach on qualified customers.”*

— Marsha Collier

story to tell. Busy people don't have a lot of time to read each and every post that attracts them. It's best to let readers capture the essence of your ideas in several short, thought-provoking posts. The idea is to build your brand and bring them back for more, and create compelling content you can share.

**Related news.** Share relevant news stories on social media platforms. These can be articles that relate to your industry or even something that you personally find interesting. You'll soon figure out which type of stories are most popular by the amount of Facebook likes, Twitter retweets and social approval you receive.

**Videos.** Short—and I mean short, two minutes maximum—videos about your company, products or services helps people to get to know you. (Remember, make it fun.) Consider creating how-to and instructional videos, posting them on YouTube, and sharing them on your blog as well as social platforms. Visuals can capture a customer quickly.

**Pictures.** If you are on one of the popular social platforms, you will no doubt see people sharing pictures—lots and lots of pictures. But sharing pictures that don't relate to your business can merely

dilute your brand in the eyes of the community. (Kittens are cute, but I think I've only shared one kitten picture: He was wearing glasses and reading a book.) Whether you're sharing images of your own or from other websites, keep your brand focus front and center.

When it comes to building a community on social media, start slowly and be patient, all the time knowing that each person you connect with might be converted from stranger status to stakeholder and advocate.

## Measure for Measure

Metrics are important, but can be tricky. Twitter engagement seems to be the easiest to measure. If your budget is small (or nonexistent), you can go to [Twitter Analytics](#) and see how your tweets perform on the platform. Your past 28 days' worth of history will be shown by day in a bar graph.

You can also see the engagement rates of individual tweets, broken down into number of engagements (clicks, favorites, retweets and more). Scrolling down through 28 days of tweets can give you a good idea of which hashtags, topics and times of day result in the most engagement.

Another analytics platform can be found at [Simply Measured](#). Its Twitter account reports dig deep into every facet of your engagements. You're not only given numbers and metrics, but recommendations as to what is working best, based on analysis of the deep data. If its pricing is a bit rich for your small business, you can sign up for a free trial to get some on-the-spot guidance on your outreach.

Most importantly, keep in mind that chasing numbers of followers should not be your goal.



# Guy Kawasaki's Social Media Insights for Small Businesses

One of today's most powerful voices in entrepreneurship reveals his tips for an effective social media strategy.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

## Bruna Martinuzzi

President, Clarion Enterprises Ltd.

Bruna Martinuzzi is the founder of [Clarion Enterprises Ltd.](#) and the author of two books: [Presenting With Credibility: Practical Tools and Techniques for Effective Presentations](#) and [The Leader as a Mensch: Become the Kind of Person Others Want to Follow.](#)

*“The start of effective social media is to provide a great product or service. Then social media is easy. Social media isn't lipstick you can put on a pig to make the pig beautiful.”*

— Guy Kawasaki

If you want to grow your business, there are few more qualified people to give you advice on the topic than [Guy Kawasaki](#), a thought leader and one of today's most powerful voices in entrepreneurship and marketing.

Kawasaki was formerly chief software evangelist for [Apple](#) and is now chief evangelist for [Canva](#). He has launched multiple successful companies, including Garage Technology Ventures and Alltop, and has advised numerous companies, including Motorola, StumbleUpon, Evernote and Paper.li. Kawasaki is also the author of 13 books, which have been both New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestsellers. He literally wrote the book on social media marketing—he is the author of [The Art of Social Media: Power Tips for Power Users.](#)

A bottom-line guy, Kawasaki doesn't shy away from telling the truth in ways that cut through the noise to deliver streetwise advice from someone who's been there and done that, many times over. We caught up with him to get a few of his incredibly practical insights for small-business owners.

### **What would be an effective social media strategy for a small-business owner who wants to grow their business?**

First, the start of effective social media is to provide a great product or

# *“The most effective social media strategy is to establish a presence as a sector expert that creates and curates valuable content.”*

— Guy Kawasaki

service. Then social media is easy. Social media isn't lipstick you can put on a pig to make the pig beautiful. A pig is still a pig. Small-business owners should run from an author who says he can help you sell crap.

Assuming you have a great product or service, the most effective social media strategy is to establish a presence as a sector expert that creates and curates valuable content. By establishing a reputation for expertise, a small business gains credibility and endears itself to its followers. Hopefully, this will lead to more business.

For example, a restaurant that establishes itself as an expert in food—consumption, preparation, etc.—is probably a place where people would like to eat. Again, the restaurant has to make great food, but the rest isn't rocket science—you simply work hard to provide value and hopefully reap the results.

**Your recent book, [The Art of the Start 2.0](#), addresses startups specifically. Is there any advice from the book that can benefit small-business owners that are beyond the startup stage?**

Seriously, does the “startup” stage ever end? Sure, after a while some details are set, such as the name, legal structure and seed capital, but small-

business owners constantly face new challenges. For example, every new product requires a launch. Growth requires new employees. Raising capital is seldom “one and done.”

Look at the topics of the chapters: leading, launching, team building, evangelizing, socializing, rainmaking, partnering and enduring. A successful small business may not need to bootstrap or pitch for funding anymore, but it needs the other 80 percent of the book. If a small business doesn't need to do these things, it's probably comatose or dead.

**So, what are your top social media insights for small-business owners to help them avoid false starts and take their business to the next level?**

A few tips: All of your posts cannot be promotional. Most of them should provide value, not sell what you do. Before you share anything, ask yourself if it's so good that people will re-share it to their followers. Always include a graphic or video with your posts. Repeat your posts—you should not assume that everyone you want to reach is viewing your social media at the same time of day. I'm all about tactics, not high-level strategies. Now go and implement.

# OPEN for Discussion: Is Social Media Even Worth It?

## IN THIS DISCUSSION:



### Jamyla Bennu

Co-Founder of natural hair and body product line Oyin Handmade



### Amy Bouchard

Founder of whoopie pie purveyor Wicked Whoopies



### Brian Honigman

Marketing Consultant

*A waste of time or a growth engine?*

*Three small-business owners weigh in on social media's effectiveness.*

As the numbers behind social media go up and up ([social media advertising](#) is expected to reach upwards of \$14 billion by 2018, according to Business Insider), confidence in its value has gone down. [Only 2 percent of large brands' Facebook fans see their posts](#), meaning you pretty much have to pay for Facebook ads to reach existing and prospective customers. And a 2014 Gallup poll found that social media doesn't necessarily get customers to buy—apparently only 5 percent of those surveyed said [social media had a “great deal of influence” on their purchasing decisions](#).

Those stats imply that social media may be more expensive and time consuming than it's actually worth. But is that really the case? Jamyla Bennu, co-founder of natural hair and body product line [Oyin Handmade](#); [Amy Bouchard](#), the founder of whoopie pie purveyor Wicked Whoopies; and marketing consultant [Brian Honigman](#) spoke with OPEN Forum about social media's effectiveness, the tricks they use to stand out in crowded news feeds, and the one piece of advice they think every small-business owner should know about social.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Anthonia Akitunde

Co-Founder and Editorial Director, mater mea

Anthonia Akitunde is a freelance writer based in New York City. She is also the founder and publisher of mater mea, a website that celebrates women of color at the intersection of career and family.

## Is social media a good use of small-business owners' times?

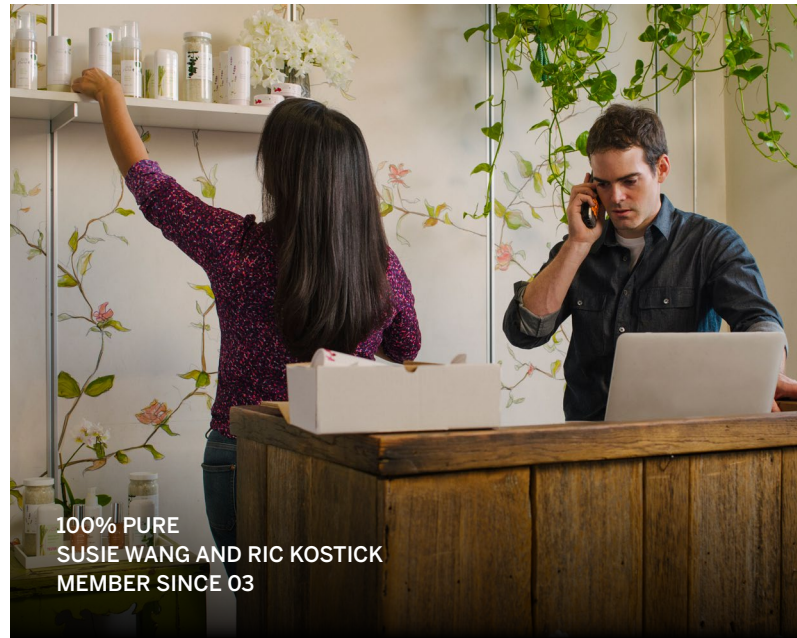
**Amy Bouchard:** I'm not a big social media person. There are probably 100 other things out there I don't even know about. [But] Facebook is pretty safe for me, and it's worked for us. We have Wicked Whoopie Wednesday, [when] we give away free whoopie pies to random winners. We have to put a little time into it, but people try it, then they talk about it. Then there's that trust when people see [other] people like it. It creates this excitement and buzz, and we don't have to pay for it.

**Brian Honigman:** Social media is a really effective approach in the long term. It's not just something that you start and [expect] to get a lot of traction. The problem with most businesses in trying to be successful in social media is they don't know their audience, and that's really important—you have to understand who you're talking to and why you're talking to them. That will help inform what you're actually saying and where you're saying it. Use social media as a tool to help you reach your goals as a business.

**Jamyla Bennu:** It's definitely worth investing the time; it's about building relationships with our customers. Transparency is a very important goal for us, and we like to connect with our customers. I think a lot of small-business owners feel that way—a connection to a customer is something they can offer emotionally, which maybe a larger business could not, and social media is a wonderful tool in which to do that.

## Why do you think social media advertising is an effective way to reach an audience?

**Honigman:** Because you can really target the right



message to the right people in a way that wasn't previously available. For example, Facebook allows you to access this massive audience and then scale down to exactly your niche and put money behind that.

## How do you measure if social media efforts are actually working?

**Bouchard:** We're able to track our orders and see where the spikes are. Of course, it's harder during holidays, but we're very careful—going back to what Brian said—with where we're spending our money and making sure that we're reaching the right audience.

**Honigman:** The best way to measure your success is to understand what your goals are. I would never suggest throwing money into social media if you don't have a strong strategy in place. Something I often do as a consultant is make sure that a business—before jumping into any marketing channel—has a plan of action. So for the \$100 you allocated to social media advertising this month, what did you get in return? Was it more visibility for your business? Did you retain

*“The best way to measure your success is to understand what your goals are. I would never suggest throwing money into social media if you don’t have a strong strategy in place.”*

— Brian Honigman

your current customers? Were you able to drive more engagement? Were you able to drive additional traffic to your website or a particular landing page? It’s all about understanding what your goals are first, then measuring against those benchmarks you set from the very beginning to understand if it’s actually worth it.

**Bennu:** We get deep into our analytics and focus on trends. Over time, as we’ve put more emphasis into social media that’s mobile friendly, such as Instagram and Twitter, we’ve noticed a long-term surge in our mobile ordering. That’s interesting also in being able to reach consumers who are accessing the Internet in different ways—becoming a part of their social experience even when they’re not in front of a computer.

**What have you done to make a social media ad or post worth clicking on?**

**Bouchard:** For me, it’s the images. The wording is important, but when you see something yummy or delicious, it just grabs you. But we have to play with it all the time. There’s so much competition out there.

**Bennu:** We find the same thing: Images matter. People

are visual creatures—tap into the motivator of your customer. Visuals of food is an industry all its own, so I can imagine that the pictures of the delicious Whoopie Pies must be really tapping into a goal for your customers. We make hair- and body-care products, and when we post hair pictures or tutorials that include photos of people with awesome hair, we see an uptick in engagement or response. But it’s not just any type of person; it has to be aspirational or connecting to what that person is looking for when they look for our products.

**Honigman:** Yeah, it’s a lot of testing to see what will actually resonate with your customer base or potential customers. Facebook ads especially allow for some A/B testing where you can swap out different copy, different images, different titles on your ads to make sure you’re serving the most effective ads to your audience. It’s the right image that really reflects what you’re offering, [or] having engaging copy that provides the proper context, as well as a strong call to action. You don’t just want to say, “Hey, we make whoopie pies!” You want to say, “Our whoopie pies are delicious. Order today!” You don’t want it to be a hard sell, but you want to drive action.

**So what I’m hearing is that this all takes a lot of time, which we know small-business owners don’t have a lot of. How do you fit social media advertising into your workflow?**

**Bennu:** There are a number of staff members here who are authorized to participate in our social media, so that has been a huge help. It used to be [that] I was doing the social media whenever I had time. Once we began having staff members participate in it as well, it became something that had to be not only well-

organized, but more highly trained. I had to really think about what I was doing, and then systematize it so it could be shared. We developed what kind of experience we wanted our customers to have with us online; our keywords happen to be education, inspiration and affirmation. Those are the things we want them to experience through our social media channels.

I have found setting those things up and also setting up a rough schedule based on our metrics and analytics [are helpful]. We get great response in the morning and in the middle of the evening, so we kind of split the day—I have an employee do the morning shift, then I'll do the evening shift, and sometimes we'll preschedule some things for the week. So it's definitely something that requires time and the investment of time, but we've found that it's worth it.

**Honigman:** According to a [Constant Contact survey](#) of small-business owners, about 20 hours a week on average is allocated to marketing. I would say that varies across the board; it just depends on your unique

situation as a business owner. I've found that when it comes to social media, the one-man shop marketing consultant myself, using all the different tools out there helps to streamline some of the more repetitive processes, and lets you focus more on the strategy of how you're approaching social media as opposed to the very repetitive aspects of creating content, posting it on the right channels and optimizing for that channel. When I have those tools, like Hootsuite, Sprout Social, Buffer, I'm able to spend that [marketing time] solely focused on making sure that part of my social strategy is in place for the coming week.

**Bouchard:** Like you mentioned, Brian, I probably spend 20 hours a week on marketing. As the founder of the company, it's my responsibility to look and make sure there are no weirdos out there saying weird stuff [about the company]. Other than that, I do pay a marketing company to give us a heads up about what we should be doing. I used to do that years ago, but I just don't have time to do it. And as the company grows, I'm not even the one who would be good at it. [Letting] somebody else do it as you grow is the responsible thing to do to get to the next level.

### **How did you figure out how much money you wanted to spend on your social media marketing efforts?**

**Bouchard:** For many years, we didn't have any extra money, and it was basically sending whoopie pies to different TV shows and magazines, and doing everything possible that was free in order to create a buzz. It only takes one person to like it. And if that one special person likes it, they put it on their Facebook page and you start to get that amazing media buzz, and trust, and it doesn't cost you anything except for your product.



ELEVATIONS  
CARA WHITE  
MEMBER SINCE 05

**Bennu:** One of the major benefits of social media is that it's free. I don't think we even paid for advertising for the first 10 years that we existed. It was all word of mouth; we were very much into providing an amazing experience, providing a [great] product, then letting our customers talk amongst themselves. There's kind of an emotional hurdle we had to overcome to pay at all for social media (laughs). It felt like, "We shouldn't have to pay for Facebook ads! This is supposed to be people sharing their experience with each other. I don't want to pay to insert my message into their world." We very rarely do it.

**Honigman:** I don't think there's a silver bullet for the right budget to succeed on social media. It's very different for every business. It's again understanding what you're trying to accomplish. [Don't] say, "We're definitely allocating \$100 a month to advertising on social media." You want to start really small with the budget and grow [it] as you begin to test to see what works and what doesn't.

### **What's one thing you've learned through your social media efforts that you think every small-business owner should know?**

**Bennu:** Determine your voice and stick to it. Social media is interactive by nature, so you're going to be interacting with all kinds of folks. But it's important to realize that it is official communication, and you don't want to get sidetracked from your own messaging. Protect your online voice, because it is an asset.

**Honigman:** I couldn't agree more. In my experience, I've seen results from really paying attention to the details, which I think many using social media neglect just because they think, "Oh, it's just one Pin on

*"Determine your voice and stick to it. Social media is interactive by nature, so you're going to be interacting with all kinds of folks. But it's important to realize that it is official communication, and you don't want to get sidetracked from your own messaging. Protect your online voice, because it is an asset."*

— Jamyla Bennu

Pinterest or one blog on Tumblr." But all these details—what image you're using, the language you're choosing on your post, how frequently you're posting—all that effort compounds in the long term and establishes how others perceive you online. It's important to understand what messaging you're putting out there, who you're trying to reach, and the unique nuances of each particular channel that you're planning on being active on.

**Bouchard:** Being 100 percent committed and totally interacting with the customer. I hate saying "Facebook fan"; I always say "my friends"—I'm so appreciative of them. People get ready on Tuesday night for Wicked Whoopies Wednesday. I literally will set my clock, get up at 12:30 in the morning, and do my post. I did it Christmas Eve; I did it New Year's Eve. I feel like if for some reason I ever missed a Wednesday, I would be letting so many people down. Interacting and making sure the whole thing is all about having fun is really important.

02

# Creating the Right Content

**The Social Media  
Content Plan That Can  
Help Get Results**

by Angela Stringfellow

**Content Marketing  
Tips to Help Make  
Every Word Count**

by John Jantsch



# The Social Media Content Plan That Can Help Get Results

*If your business has been focusing solely on promotional and branded content on social media with little to show for it, it may be time to embrace the art of content curation.*

Social media can sometimes be a difficult thing for small businesses to figure out. So many networks, so many tactics, so many choices.

How do small-business owners who are trying to maximize their results determine what to share and when? Some social media thought leaders have a rule of thumb, a secret sauce or an equation they rely on to determine the right mix of brand content, influencer content and promotional content. The short version: If you're using your social media channels to broadcast your business, it's time to mix it up a bit.

## Social Media Snafus to Avoid

The right content mix establishes your credibility and can escalate your thought leadership status, even when most of the content you share isn't your own. But it's easy to alienate your audience if you're not careful about when you post updates, how frequently you share updates, and how much of the content you share is self-serving or promotional.

*If you don't track your numbers, you could be posting important updates that your ideal customers never see because they're not typically online at the time of day you're posting.*

If you post too frequently, for instance, you can oversaturate your fans and followers, and they might unfollow you. If you post updates too many times a day and every single update includes a call-to-action begging your followers to buy your products or services, you're missing the value element. These self-serving social media messages are no fun to follow and don't really help your audience, causing many to completely tune out your messages or stop following you altogether.

Laura Roeder, founder of consulting firm LKR Social Media and the social media scheduling app [Edgar](#), advises businesses to [keep close tabs on their analytics](#) and identify the best times of day for sharing



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Angela Stringfellow**

Chief Ideation Officer, CODA Concepts, LLC

Angela Stringfellow is the Chief Ideation Officer at CODA Concepts, LLC, where game-changing digital marketing concepts are born and come to life.

## SOCIAL MEDIA 4-1-1

Source: Joe Pulizzi and Andrew Davis

**For every six pieces of content you share or social media updates you post, four should be content from industry influencers.**

The key is to share influencer content that's reputable but also relevant to your target audience.

4

**One of the remaining two posts should be original, branded content you created.**

That might mean you wrote it yourself, had a staff member write it, or you hired an outsourced writer to write it on your behalf.

2

**The final piece of content should be a promotional offer or something sales oriented.**

This could be a coupon, discount, press release or notification about a new product launch.

1

content based on your audience's engagement levels. If you don't track your numbers, you could be posting important updates that your ideal customers never see because they're not typically online at the time of day you're posting. Remember, social media isn't a set-it-and-forget-it kind of thing because consumer habits are changing all the time. Monitor your analytics on an ongoing basis, and adjust your posting schedules accordingly.

## The Magic Social Media Equation

So if your updates should include both sales pitches and informational posts, what's the right mix? Joe Pulizzi, founder of the [Content Marketing Institute](#), regularly touts a system called [Social Media 4-1-1](#). Andrew Davis, author of [Brandscaping](#), originally coined the term.

The idea is to take the spotlight off yourself and put it on the influencers in your industry. It probably

seems counterintuitive, which is why so many small businesses get stuck in the trap of endless, shameless self-promotion yet fail to see results from their social media efforts. When you give, you're more likely to receive. By sharing influencer content, you're accomplishing a few important goals:

- **Providing value to your audience.**
- **Building a relationship with key influencers in your niche.**
- **Helping thought leaders by sharing their content without asking for anything in return.** Then, when you do ask for something down the line, you've already established a relationship and they're more likely to say yes. Why? Because you've generously helped them promote their products and services and solidify their reputation in the industry, so many will happily return the favor.

The Social Media 4-1-1 rule isn't the only equation used by leading social media experts. Content marketing firm [Rallyverse suggests a ratio of 30/60/10](#).

In both of these equations, promotional or sales-oriented content with calls-to-action makes up the smallest portion of the overall ratio. Being self-serving on social media simply isn't a good idea.

## The Danger of Overpromotion

A study conducted by digital marketing firm Convince and Convert [analyzed 150,000 social media posts](#) between November 2010 and July 2011 to determine the ideal mix of created versus curated content. The findings are revealing.

- **Companies that link to third-party websites (content curation)** 75 percent of the time or more generate a lot of clicks but few conversions. This makes sense, since conversions happen on your own website.
- **Companies that link to third-party sites** between 50 and 75 percent of the time have fewer clicks per post but realize higher conversion rates.
- **Companies that link to their own content** 50 percent of the time or more experience a negative impact on clicks-per-post (engagement), but they don't realize greater conversions than companies with a more balanced mix of owned versus curated content.

*“Links to owned content or promotional social media updates should make up no more than 25 to 50 percent of your total social media updates.”*

Source: Convince and Convert

## Content marketing firm Rallyverse suggests a ratio of 30/60/90



30%

**Owned or branded,  
original content**  
(created by you)



60%

**Curated content**  
(influencer or  
educational content)



10%

**Promotional content**  
(content that includes  
calls-to-action)

Source: Rallyverse

Based on these results, Convince and Convert suggests links to owned content or promotional social media updates should make up no more than 25 to 50 percent of your total social media updates. Any more than this, and you risk negatively impacting both your engagement and conversion rates.

While the precise equation for your own social media marketing mix may differ slightly from those suggested above, the Social Media 4-1-1 rule or a similar equation is a good baseline rule of thumb. If you've been focusing solely on promotional and branded content and haven't embraced the art of content curation, now's the time to change that. Finding the right ratio of self-serving, promotional and influencer or educational content is critical to succeeding on social media.

# Content Marketing Tips to Help Make Every Word Count

*More doesn't always mean better when it comes to content that converts. These steps could help make every word count.*



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### John Jantsch

Founder, Duct Tape Marketing Consultant, LLC

John Jantsch is a marketing consultant, speaker and bestselling author of *Duct Tape Marketing*, *Duct Tape Selling*, *The Commitment Engine* and *The Referral Engine*, and the founder of the Duct Tape Marketing Consultant Network.

These days, producing content is just a way of life for marketers. But more content doesn't always mean better or more effective content. In fact, less content that delivers greater value might be the right way for many businesses to view the task of producing content.

If you're going to expend the significant amount of time and energy it takes to create content that will drive your marketing machine, you may want to think long and hard about how to make your content more powerful.

Below are five considerations for every bit of content you produce:

## 1 Craft a Point of View

Your unique point of view, whether it's how you do what you do, your view of the world or your way of getting results, should shine through in your content. If you're simply agreeing with every commonly accepted notion or trend in your industry, you're simply producing commodity content, and what's the point of that?

Consider taking a stand and maybe even ruffle some feathers in the name of your beliefs in order to make your words gain traction with your prospects and customers.

## 2 Be Useful

I shouldn't have to remind you of this, but offering something useful is always better. If all you're creating doesn't make people think differently, take action or learn how to do what they want to do, you may as well just link to other people's content.

*“It’s worth asking yourself if the content you produce is mostly industry blah, blah, blah or if you’re offering real stories about real customers and real problems.”*

— John Jantsch

Long form, how-to content is useful. Free tools are useful. Screencasts showing people how to do something online are useful. Webinars are useful. In short, content that educates is useful, and it’s what you should consider providing to your audience.

### 3 Be Consistent

Over time, you can build momentum, as well as a library of content that becomes an asset, by creating a weekly newsletter, writing daily blog posts, scheduling guest content and creating video and audio interviews.

Create a calendar of themes for the year that map back to your most important keyword phrases, and build an editorial calendar where you plan your blog posts, guest posts, podcasts, webinars, seminars, e-books and curation activities. Knowing your schedule in advance can help you plan ahead, keeping your themes and content consistent with your marketing message.

### 4 Be Authentic

I know this term gets tossed around like candy these days, but I think it’s worth asking yourself if the content you produce is mostly industry blah, blah, blah or if you’re offering real stories about real customers and real problems—as good, bad and awesome as they might be.

Authentic content sounds like you speaking—it tells us why you do what you do and it can help us see you as a real person.

### 5 Focus on Something Other Than You

The last element I want you to consider is how much you write about yourself, your awesomeness and your killer solutions versus how much you help your readers understand the value in the lessons you’re sharing. Until people begin to see themselves getting the results they want in your content, it can fall short of the ultimate goal.

To get a sense of just how pervasive this idea is in most writing, you can quickly scan a Web page or article and pretty easily count the use of the words “we” or “our” or “I.”

Take a look at all the content your organization produces today—including Facebook updates, blog posts, email newsletters and promotions, and marketing brochures and presentations—and audit each of them to see if they pass the test for the elements outlined above.

If not, it may be time to get to work rewriting, repositioning and rethinking your content creation strategy and process.

03

# Using Specific Platforms

**Infographic:  
Effective Tips for Social  
Media Marketing**

by Anthonia Akitunde

**A Small-Business  
Owner's Guide to Using  
Instagram Effectively**

by Gini Dietrich

**Quick Tips to Help Grow  
Your Twitter Following**

by Brian Moran

**What Every Business  
Owner Should  
Know About Facebook  
Advertising**

by Erika Napoletano

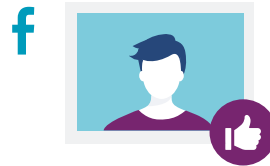
# Effective Tips for Social Media Marketing

We boiled it down to one helpful tip for each of the top 5.

Text by **Anthonia Akitunde**

## 5 Tips for Sharing on Social Media

Social media is an incredibly effective way to attract new customers and keep in touch with old ones. With so many options, we've narrowed down the one thing small-business owners should know about each of the five biggest platforms.

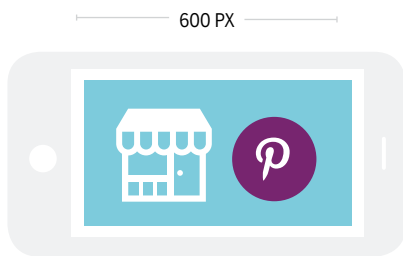


Images see the most engagement on Facebook than any other post.<sup>2</sup>

Post engagement by type:

0.6%	TEXT	1.4%	LINK
3.0%	VIDEO	4.4%	IMAGE

Source: Adobe Digital Index: "Social Intelligence Report: Q1 2-14"



Images that are **at least 600 pixels wide** look best on Pinterest.<sup>4</sup>

Source: Pinterest for Business: "Best Practice Guide"



Instagram accounts see more engagement with photos that have **5 hashtags**.<sup>3</sup>

Source: TackMaven: "The Fortune 500 Instagram Report"



Using images in your updates leads to a **98% higher** comment rate.<sup>4</sup>

Source: LinkedIn: "15 Tips for Compelling Company Updates"



Your tweets should be **100 characters or fewer** to get higher engagement.<sup>1</sup>

Source: Salesforce Marketing Cloud: "Strategies for Effective Tweeting: A Statistical Review"

# A Small-Business Owner's Guide to Using Instagram Effectively

*With more than 300 million users, Instagram has become a visual way for businesses and brands to connect with people. This primer can help get you started.*



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Gini Dietrich

Chief Executive Officer,  
Arment Dietrich, Inc.

Gini Dietrich is the founder and CEO of Arment Dietrich, author of *Spin Sucks*, co-author of *Marketing in the Round*, and co-host of *Inside PR*. She also is the lead blogger at *Spin Sucks* and is the founder of *Spin Sucks Pro*.

*“Instagram has 300 million users—and they aren’t all teenagers.”*

— Gini Dietrich

Instagram is most noted by teenagers and college students as a way to connect quickly with friends through photos.

In fact, Andrew Watts recently wrote in [A Teenager's View on Social Media](#), “Instagram is by far the most used social media outlet for my age group. Please note the verbiage there—it is the most used social media outlet.”

That said, there is a huge opportunity for small businesses to use Instagram to create a humanness to the brand.

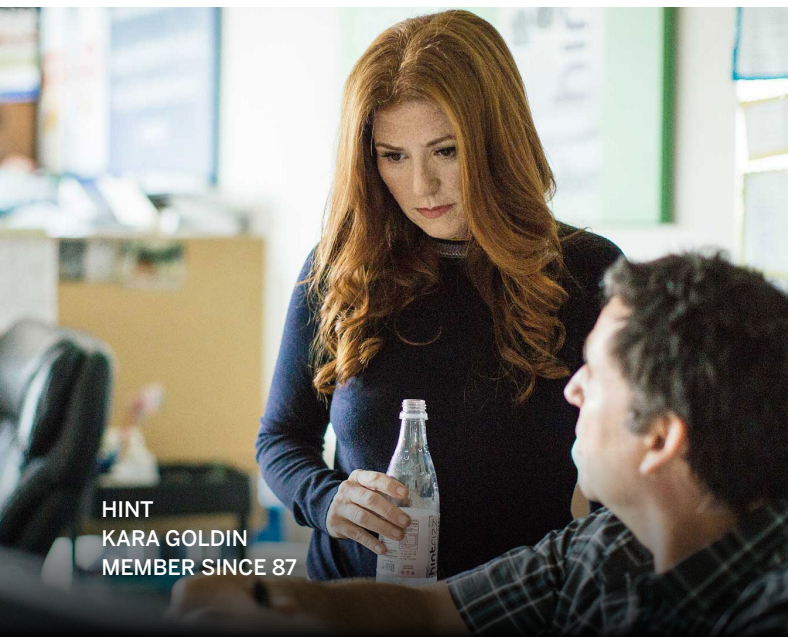
Instagram has 300 million users—and they aren't all teenagers. Nor are they all big brands. On the contrary, self-employed artists, small businesses and even software as service organizations are having success with the social network.

And, here's the good news: You don't have to have a visual product to have success on Instagram.

## Use Instagram for Business

Instagram is a great way to promote your brand, connect the physical world with the online world and launch a new product or service, just to name a few. What you use—and how you use it—will depend on your goals and your organization. For instance, if you have employees spread across several countries and in many different time zones, perhaps your





HINT  
KARA GOLDIN  
MEMBER SINCE 87

goal is to connect them with one another and build morale and culture. In that case, one of your Instagram strategies may include giving the account keys to a new employee every week and have them take photos of a “week in the life” to engage other employees—places they eat, meetings they attend, set-up of their office and more. On the flip side, if you’re a clothing manufacturer, it could be fun to have people post photos of themselves wearing your clothes in their own environments.

If you post too frequently, for instance, you can oversaturate your fans and followers, and they might unfollow you. If you post updates too many times a day and every single update includes a call-to-action begging your followers to buy your products or services, you’re missing the value element. These self-serving social media messages are no fun to follow and don’t really help your audience, causing many to completely tune out

## What Kinds of Visuals Can I Use?

Visuals are the main currency of Instagram. Small

*“Encourage your team to get involved in submitting images, and your Instagram page should grow in popularity.”*

— Gini Dietrich

businesses should share compelling content that their followers won’t be able to find anywhere, Instagram advises in its own [best practices guide](#). Think about the kind of visuals you like—subject, quality, etc.—and try to replicate that with the photos you share on your account. Worried you won’t have something visually compelling to share? Think about the following business opportunities to snap photos with your phone and upload directly to Instagram:

- **Your office.** Take photos of the team’s offices. Everyone has individual taste when it comes to their workspace. This is interesting to those who might buy from you. Also take photos in and around your work environment—brick-and-mortar office, manufacturing floor, virtual office, the retail floor or wherever it is you hang out during the day. Think about the behind-the-scenes photos that most people wouldn’t otherwise get to see.
- **Community events.** Your employees have lives outside of work. Encourage them to take appropriate photos or video for you to use on the business’s Instagram page. Likewise, if you and your team participate in community service, get visuals from those outings.
- **Celebrations.** Many organizations celebrate new babies, birthdays, work anniversaries and more. A few years ago, one of our young professionals

didn't believe human beings can't eat more than six saltines in one minute. She took the challenge and we got it on video. Though it was completely silly, our followers loved it ... and it drove a level of engagement that eventually brought us some business.

Encourage your team to get involved in submitting images, and your Instagram page should grow in popularity.

## What Is an Instagram Hashtag?

Like Facebook or Twitter, you can use a [hashtag on Instagram](#) that will help you attract new followers. A hashtag provides an easy way to search similar topics for people who are interested in what you're posting. You should familiarize yourself with a few broad popular hashtags—#throwbackthursday or #TBT, #ootd (Outfit of the Day) or #selfie—and category-specific ones that apply to your business.

#TBT, of course, has evolved from Instagram to the other social networks, and millions of people participate every Thursday. You can piggyback on something like that or create your own and let others use yours. The goal is to gain new followers who might eventually buy from you. Using a hashtag is one of the easiest ways for them to find you.

## What are the Rules for an Instagram Contest?

Contests can be a fabulous way to gain more followers and engagement on Instagram, provided you follow the rules and terms of service. It can be pretty scary to set up a contest only to have your page removed for not following the rules. Note that it should be stated that contests are not sponsored by Instagram and that the platform does not help brands and businesses administer contests.



100% PURE  
SUSIE WANG AND RIC KOSTICK  
MEMBER SINCE 03

*“Visuals are the main currency of Instagram. Small businesses should share compelling content that their followers won’t be able to find anywhere.”*

— Gini Dietrich

To execute a [law abiding](#) Instagram contest, you should do the following:

- **Set your goal(s) for the contest.**
- **Determine your key metrics.**
- **Choose the hashtag you’ll be using.**  
This is required so you can track users. As per Instagram’s promotion guidelines, “You must not inaccurately tag content or encourage users to inaccurately tag content (ex: don’t encourage people to tag themselves in photos if they aren’t in the photo).”
- **Choose a selection method for winners.**
- **Set up the rules, terms, and conditions.**  
And make sure your users follow them to the T.
- **Launch and promote the contest.**  
Figure out how you’ll support the contest (other social networks, a news release, and/or advertising).
- **Notify winners and follow up with everyone else.**

Though that list seems a little daunting, it won’t take you long to write down your expectations. It could be worth the time because your followers, impressions and engagement may increase. And, if done well, so will your sales.

## Measure Instagram Effectiveness

Of course, increased followers, engagement and impressions are nice, but where the real pedal meets the metal is whether your efforts drive business results. So how do you know if Instagram is actually affecting your sales? There are several platforms to help you track effectiveness.

- [Iconosquare](#) is a deep (and free!) set of Instagram tools that provides data about your account and interactions—growth charts, engagement rates, best times to post and much more.
- [SumAll](#) provides analytics for more than just Instagram. You can track social media, commerce and Web analytics all in one daily email. It’s free and as easy to set up as signing in with one of your social networks.
- [SimplyMeasured](#) adds an extra level of help: strategy development. As you plan your Instagram campaigns, SimplyMeasured will help you determine the audiences you can reach, what kinds of visuals to use and what your competitors are doing. Then it tracks your activities, the audience engagement and your business results. It starts at \$500 per month, but does have a free trial.

# Quick Tips to Help Grow Your Twitter Following

*Want more followers? It doesn't have to be complicated. Follow these easy 11 tips and help your Twitter following grow.*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

## Brian Moran

Founder & CEO, Brian Moran & Associates

As the Founder & CEO of Brian Moran & Associates, Brian has been helping small business owners and entrepreneurs realize their version of the American dream for over 25 years. You can connect with him on [www.twitter.com/BrianMoran](http://www.twitter.com/BrianMoran).

With more than 302 million active users, Twitter is an essential tool for business owners to connect with their customers. What started out as a bit of a novelty has become a primary source of news and information. But just being on Twitter is not the same as using it effectively. Follow these 11 easy tips—use them as a checklist—and help your Twitter following grow.

### 1 Post regularly, and keep it conversational.

Most of what you share should be informative, useful or inspiring—and it should be sent out several times a week. Occasionally you can add personal anecdotes and behind-the-scenes information about your business. You'll hold your followers' attention if they feel that they're getting information they couldn't get elsewhere.

### 2 Include photos when appropriate.

Images are some of the most shared content on social networks. You need to post more than just text to keep your followers interested.

### 3 Share content from others.

Sharing content isn't just about retweeting posts you find interesting, though that's definitely a big part of it. You can tweet links to online articles, videos and websites. Position yourself as a source for information relevant to your industry, not just as someone who only posts about his or her own business.

#### 4 Use hashtags.

This categorizes your tweets so they can be found in a Twitter search, allowing people who don't follow you (yet) to find your content more easily. The # symbol goes before the keyword, without a space between it and the word.

#### 5 Follow back.

You don't have to follow everyone who follows you. When you receive notification of a new follower, look at that person's profile. If it's an existing customer, a potential customer or someone who shares interesting content, then it's someone you should follow back.

#### 6 Respond to all questions.

Many people use social media to interact with companies, asking questions. You should respond to all questions, and you need to do so in a timely manner. Social media is about two-way communication, and responding shows your followers that you are listening and respect their concerns.

#### 7 Ask for feedback.

Maybe you are considering offering a new product, or you are debating between two logos. By asking your Twitter followers for their input, you show that you respect their opinion and appreciate them, which can help create a more loyal following.

#### 8 Try to acknowledge most, if not all, tweets that reference you.

A simple "Thanks for sharing" to someone

who retweets one of your posts, or "Glad to be of service" to someone who acknowledges a positive experience with your business, can go a long way to strengthen relationships.

#### 9 Host a TweetChat.

Are there hot topics within your industry that your customers may have opinions about, or that they want to understand better? A TweetChat is a discussion that takes place on Twitter at a designated time and uses a unique hashtag. These can be done regularly (every Friday at 1 p.m., for example), or as needed. Create a list of questions ahead of time to keep the conversation moving. At the end, you can use [Storify](#) to consolidate the discussion into a single, shareable transcript.

#### 10 Create Twitter-only offers.

People love deals, and Twitter-specific deals are a great way to get people to interact with you. For example, an exclusive offer may say: "Respond to this tweet to receive a code for 20 percent off." You can make it more exciting with, "The first 10 people who retweet this will win ..."

#### 11 Include your Twitter ID everywhere.

Call attention to it on business cards, email signatures, on all of your other social media accounts, and displayed within your physical space if you have one.

Those are just a few ideas on how to turn your Twitter account into an effective communication tool.

# What Every Business Owner Should Know About Facebook Advertising

*Ready to use Facebook ads to grow your brand and attract a bigger, better audience? Here's a smart list of must-knows to get started.*

Facebook advertising can be hard to grasp. First, the platform is always expanding, with new features and capabilities added frequently. Second, your business needs will change. Put those two factors together, and you're playing a shooting gallery game at a digital carnival.

But you can get your brand growth efforts on Facebook off to a smarter-than-the-average-bear start with a few solid how-tos and the whys behind them. After that, you'll have a better understanding of where to spend your dollars more wisely on [Facebook's advertising platform](#) and why it matters. You'll get less carnival, more results—and, hopefully, just as much fun.

## First Things First

If you haven't had much success in the past with Facebook advertising, should you really reconsider it as a strategy to grow your brand? Honestly, maybe you shouldn't. Maybe you got sucked into the “every brand should have a Facebook page” myth.

*“With Facebook actively dialing back organic reach, ads can now not only help you reach new fans, but also help you reach more of the fans you've already earned.”*

— Erika Napoletano

The truth is, not every brand should have a Facebook page. If you look around your industry and see few to no competitors with a presence—especially a successful presence—on Facebook, you might be on the right track when you think Facebook may not be the best place to spend your ad dollars and brand energy.

If everyone in your industry has Facebook traction and you don't, however, that's a good reason to reconsider. In your previous efforts, you simply may not have understood the options available, how to better target your ads and how to do some smart, competitive research to make your advertising efforts worthwhile.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Erika Napoletano**

Columnist, American Express OPEN

Erika Napoletano is a “business therapist,” helping savvy businesses and smart entrepreneurs get unstuck with their branding, marketing and messaging challenges. A twice-published author based in Chicago, her frill-free, thought-filled work can be found in numerous business publications all over the world.

So let's start with the why behind the advertising. You can build campaigns to increase Likes to your page (fan acquisition). You can build campaigns to promote a particular post (Promoted Posts) on your brand page timeline. You can also build campaigns to drive traffic directly to your website (these are ads you typically see in the right sidebar). App developers can encourage people to download their apps, and event sponsors can raise event awareness. For a complete list of common objectives for ads, Facebook has a short, snazzy list [right here](#).

## Getting Eyeballs on Those Ads

With Facebook [actively dialing back organic reach](#), ads can now not only help you reach new fans, but also help you reach more of the fans you've already earned. Here are a few simple ways to begin targeting your ads to make sure you're reaching more of the best people for your brand:

- **Geography.** If you only do business in the United States or in a certain hyperlocal market, get rid of the broad reach and only target users in those areas. You'll end up spending less, and the fans you acquire will mean more.
- **Interests.** You can target ads to people with specific interests, including an interest in your competitors.
- **Demographics.** Want to attract millennials? Boomers? Seniors? Well, Facebook's got that dialed in. You can select generational demographics for your ad targeting or create your own based on gender, age, geography and interests.

So how much should you spend on your advertising? Great question, but there's no definitive answer. Here's what I can tell you: It's probably going to take a little bit to get your advertising dialed in. Some ads will



*“My best advice is to set a reasonable test budget. Choose an amount that’s not going to hurt while you learn the Facebook ad game.”*

— Erika Napoletano

work better than others. Some graphics will perform better. Some demographics will surprise you with their response, and others will fail.

My best advice is to set a reasonable test budget. Choose an amount that’s not going to hurt while you learn the Facebook ad game. SEO software provider Moz advises that brands spend [at least \\$1 per day on Facebook ads](#). It also suggests that if you can’t afford that, you probably shouldn’t be in business.

Are you wondering why you have to pay to reach people who are already fans of your brand’s Facebook page? That’s a good question, and the answer is simple: Because Facebook’s free ride model is a thing of the past.

Organic reach isn’t dead by any means, but Facebook’s revenue model now depends on you paying to reach the people you most want to reach. For my community of roughly 30,000, for instance, I spend from \$60 to \$120 per month, just to keep my brand top of mind for those folks. I also invest a portion of every fee I’m paid for every article I write to drive traffic to those articles from Facebook. It’s a no-brainer investment for my brand and my community, because I owe it to them to give them relevant information and I owe it to my brand to make that kind of investment. It’s the least I can do.

## Help Wanted

Unfortunately, Facebook’s advertising platform is

largely self-service until you start spending thousands (and thousands) of dollars. However, it hasn’t left you stranded. The platform has improved significantly over the past year or so, offering more guidance as you go through the ad creation process.

If you’d like to get the skinny directly from Facebook, visit the [Facebook Advertising](#) section. There’s also a fair amount of help available in the [Facebook help wiki](#) with answers to a myriad of questions for new advertisers.

If you want to keep up to date on the latest Facebook advertising news, the following is my go-to list for news about Facebook advertising and why I follow each site:

- [Moz](#). Moz has one of the most solid search marketing and general marketing blogs on the Web. Read it for information on everything from SEO strategies to Facebook advertising. The “techy” posts might occasionally go over your head, but keep the subscribe button switched on because useful information flows daily.
- [Mari Smith](#). This is a solid blog to follow if you’re a beginning Facebook advertiser. It offers regular news about Facebook updates and changes in general.
- [Jon Loomer](#). A must-read for midsized to larger brands diving into Facebook advertising, Jon Loomer invests considerable time in how-tos and case studies.
- [Ad Espresso](#). This informational blog offers well-documented articles about Facebook advertising.

If you haven’t yet dipped your toe in the ad waters at Facebook, now’s the time to do your homework, set your budget and dive in. After all, your audience is waiting.



04

# Case Study

**Growth Talk: Build a Brand,  
Share It With the World**

by Rod Kurtz

# Growth Talk: Build a Brand, Share It With the World



YOUNG & RECKLESS FOUNDER CHRIS PFAFF AND  
DICKS COTTONS FOUNDER RICH AMUNDSON

*Dicks Cottons founder Rich Amundson and Young & Reckless founder Chris “Drama” Pfaff explore the challenges of growing a company while not spinning out of control.*

Entrepreneurship is a journey—and it can help to have a friend or two on the open road. *Growth Talk* connects the founders of fast-growing companies, over a casual meal, to trade advice and lessons learned. In the [first installment](#), I brought together [Rich Amundson](#), founder of [Dicks Cottons](#), an Orlando-based maker of sunglasses and other travel-inspired accessories, and [Chris “Drama” Pfaff](#), founder of [Young & Reckless](#), a Los Angeles-based lifestyle apparel brand.

Here, we pick up our conversation about building an authentic brand, finding a balance between personal and professional growth—and the importance of going to the beach.

**You’ve both grown your brands significantly on social media. What advice would you give fellow entrepreneurs about going social?**

**Chris “Drama” Pfaff (CP):** I can’t place enough importance on it, and as well as we do, we do a tenth of what I would like to do. It will never be enough for



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Rod Kurtz**

Editor-at-Large of American Express®  
OPEN Forum

me. I just think social media is so incredibly powerful. It's essentially giving everyone their own television network. Or their own magazine. Everything for free. I also think that if you're going to start any brand anywhere even near either of our spaces in this day and age, without social media and a strong social-media plan, you might as well give up. It's literally like being soulless. At this point, it's so expected that you have that. And you have to do it well. These customers just expect to be able to have that sort of access.

### **You guys are similar, in that your personal and professional social-media presences are interwoven. When you open your Twitter or Instagram, what are you going for?**

**CP:** You are the brand.

**Rich Amundson (RA):** I think it's funny when I look back at our first two years of pictures, I'm like, "That was the worst."

**CP:** Oh my god, yeah.

**RA:** Now we have consistency. We don't post something unless it involves a beach, travel or a party. Ever since we did that, people have told us, "Your Instagram has gotten so much better." People notice consistency—they want to see what they expect. If you start messing with crazy stuff that's not on brand, I think they'll lose a little bit of trust. Chris, you guys have done really consistent stuff too, right?

**CP:** Same as you. Other than like posting my dog here and there, I consciously do not post things that are horribly off-brand. If I'm sitting and having a movie night, you won't see me posting it. I notice that when I do it, kids hate it. If I post something whack, like if I was getting a massage or something, the response would be, "What? Idiot."

*"People notice consistency—they want to see what they expect. If you start messing with crazy stuff that's not on brand, I think they'll lose a little bit of trust."*

— Rich Amundson

**RA:** I'm sure it's hard to read all the comments when you have so many people following you.

**CP:** I just see the difference between when I do something on brand and when I don't. It's almost my job to at least pretend like I am the perfect example for young, hardworking, adventurous entrepreneurs. That's my job. Anything other than that, why am I doing it, right? What's the point? I'll start at private Instagram if I really want to show my friends that I'm getting a massage. I look at it like this: When you follow me, here's your view of that life and the guy running the brand.

### **Every entrepreneur is looking for an edge—a hack or a tactic. What's yours?**

**CP:** For me, it's simply that everybody—including myself in the beginning, and especially young people—think that's it's so easy. They think it's so fun. They picture being an entrepreneur and the traveling and the nice dinner meetings and the lunch interviews. You don't see the discipline. It's a discipline issue to me, and it's extra dangerous when you work for yourself because you can do whatever you like. You can skip a list for a week. You can skip email for a week. You

can do whatever you want. My only advice is to figure out that discipline and pretend you're working for the meanest boss on the planet, but that boss doesn't exist and he's just in your own head. Everyone wants a shortcut. Everyone wants the superstar entrepreneur life, but it's actually the opposite. When you work a regular job, you go home at 6.

**RA:** The bell doesn't ring for us.

**CP:** One thing I tell my people sometimes is that if you leave, you can go to be a marketing director for somebody else tomorrow, because you have a strong resume. I sink with the ship. I'm the captain when everything is all good, but I sink with it also.

**RA:** Yeah, there's no Plan B. You always feel like you're never doing enough, right? I could be doing more. I could work until 3 a.m. I could get up an hour earlier. You're constantly fighting yourself.

**CP:** That's why I've always had so much trouble with that and I need to just get better at that balance. I'm almost scared to let go too much, to the point where it's a flaw, but I need to correct it.

**RA:** I started going to the beach once a week, just to swim. We lose sight. We try to say the process is the prize. But you might be in the water and come up with the best idea that you wouldn't have thought of sitting at your desk.

**CP:** That's why I keep telling myself the reason you became an entrepreneur is because of that: You want that freedom and you can handle that freedom of being able to do that, right? If you do it wrong, you become an entrepreneur for all those reasons but then before you know it, you're working a job, which is exactly what you didn't want to do. Your own brain kind of repels against the life you've created.



YOUNG & RECKLESS FOUNDER CHRIS PFAFF AND  
DICKS COTTONS FOUNDER RICH AMUNDSON

**RA:** I think it's also the competitive nature of your brain, that you want to keep moving. You don't want to take that time off because someone is going to catch up to you.

**CP:** Yeah, 100 percent. That's always scary, especially in our world.

**You both started these businesses when you were young—and dare I say, reckless. If you could go back and give yourself advice now, what would it be?**

**CP:** I would ask my 22-year-old self, “Are you sure this is what you really want to do?” I think that's what every kid should ask themselves. I just can't stress enough how much of your life you'll devote to starting a business. I'm glad I did it, 100 percent. I think I've done the journey pretty well and learned the lessons I had to learn. It's about devoting your life energy to it.

**RA:** I would probably say, “Don't take anything for granted,” because I think when you have your successes, you can get a little complacent at times—or I did, anyway. Then when things don't work out, you get really hard on yourself. But you have to remember, like, 99 percent of the working world would trade places with you in a heartbeat. Sometimes, when you get down in yourself, you have to remember, “Wait, I don't have to wear a suit and go sit in a cubicle today.” A lot of our customers probably have to. So I have to put on this face for them. The other side of it is you take things for granted and you're like, “Oh, this is easy, I'm going to like take off for like a couple of minutes” or whatever. You can't do that either. Whether you have a successful day or a challenging day, the fact that you got to live that day, that's the prize. You got to create and do what you wanted.

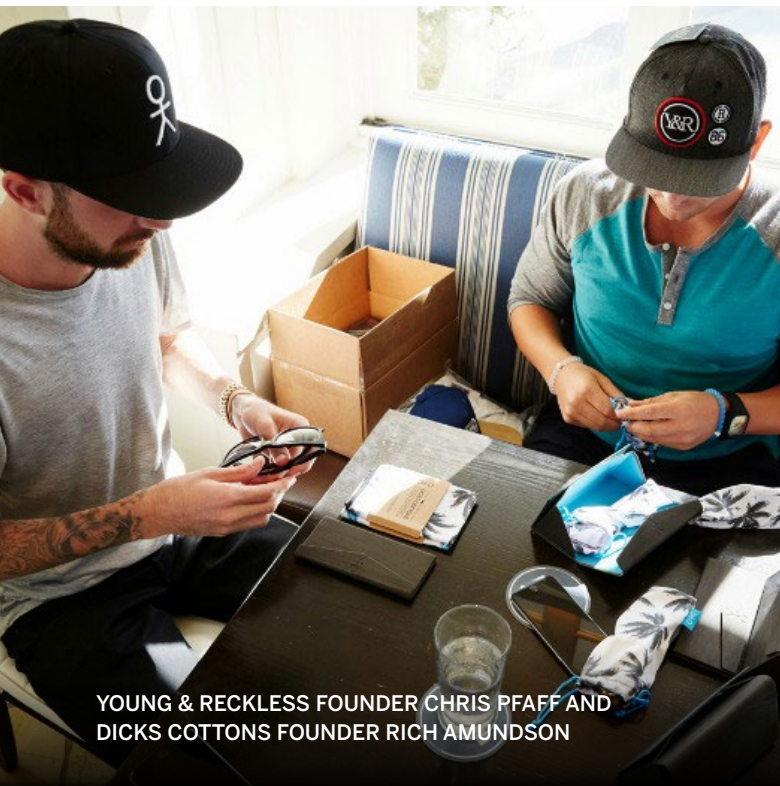
*“I tell my people sometimes that if you leave, you can go be a marketing director for somebody else tomorrow. I sink with the ship. I'm the captain when everything is all good, but I sink with it also.”*

— Chris “Drama” Pfaff

**CP:** That's why I'm so preachy about it, because I think it does kind of intertwine into my brand message. Really, part of my goal is to inspire kids to do what I've done—do what we've done—and I just think it's such a shame that everybody looks for the overnight success, the quick million.

**You focus so much attention on business growth, but personal growth is a big part of that too. How do you constantly improve as an entrepreneur?**

**RA:** Never stop learning. I'm always reading stuff—probably too much, because you get in the black hole of the Internet—but I just try to keep learning. You have to stay up with the times, because, say a new social app comes out, and if you're behind on it, you're screwed. I always think of the yacht that I'll be on one day, hopefully, with no Internet service and just eating fresh fish and going on port to port. That inspires me to keep growing.



YOUNG & RECKLESS FOUNDER CHRIS PFAFF AND  
DICKS COTTONS FOUNDER RICH AMUNDSON

## Spearfishing?

**RA:** Yes, spearfishing, eating fresh fish and drinking champagne.

**CP:** To me, you take in learning—whether it's from reading or people you're meeting. A lot of things qualify as learning, but it's about learning new information and then trying to turn that into making progress. The combo of learning and making personal progress is what fuels my entire existence. If you're on cruise control and not learning, it halts your progress.

## Now that you've had a chance to get to know one another, what advice would you share—entrepreneur to entrepreneur?

**CP:** I'm going to take that travel advice from you, whether you give it or not. I don't know, I always feel

weird giving advice, especially to someone who already knows what he's doing. I would just say, you have a great story, you understand your brand, you have depth to it—continue to hammer that home. Keep traveling and doing the days at the beach and never lose the soul of the brand. This is what we believe in. We live it. We do it. This our brand. I, as a successful 28-year-old young man, am inspired by you. Your brand inspires me, so it will definitely inspire millions of people when it's told.

**RA:** Thank you for that. I don't know if I can give you much advice, since your brand is already huge, but maybe, just saying personally, don't be as hard on yourself.

**CP:** Yeah.

## I always tell him that.

**CP:** Yeah, that's what everybody's telling me right now.

**RA:** You know, you're also your own worst critic. But what you're doing is working, so I wouldn't overthink it or be too hard on yourself. Because every time I see an athlete or celebrity post something, they're wearing a Young & Reckless shirt. Just keep doing what you're doing.

**CP:** Point taken. Watch my Instagram through the next year and you should see a lifestyle change.



American Express® OPEN Forum helps small-business owners find the insights, inspiration and connections to help grow their businesses. Learn more at [openforum.com](http://openforum.com).

The information contained in this guide is for generalized informational and educational purposes only and is not designed to substitute for, or replace, a professional opinion about any particular business or situation or judgment about the risks or appropriateness of any approach for any specific business or situation. THIS GUIDE IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE USED FOR PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS ADVICE. The views and opinions expressed in authored guides through OPEN Forum represent the opinion of their author and do not necessarily represent the views, opinions and/or judgments of American Express Company or any of its affiliates, subsidiaries or divisions (including, without limitation, American Express OPEN). American Express makes no representation as to, and is not responsible for, the accuracy, timeliness, completeness or reliability of any opinion, advice or statement made in this guide.