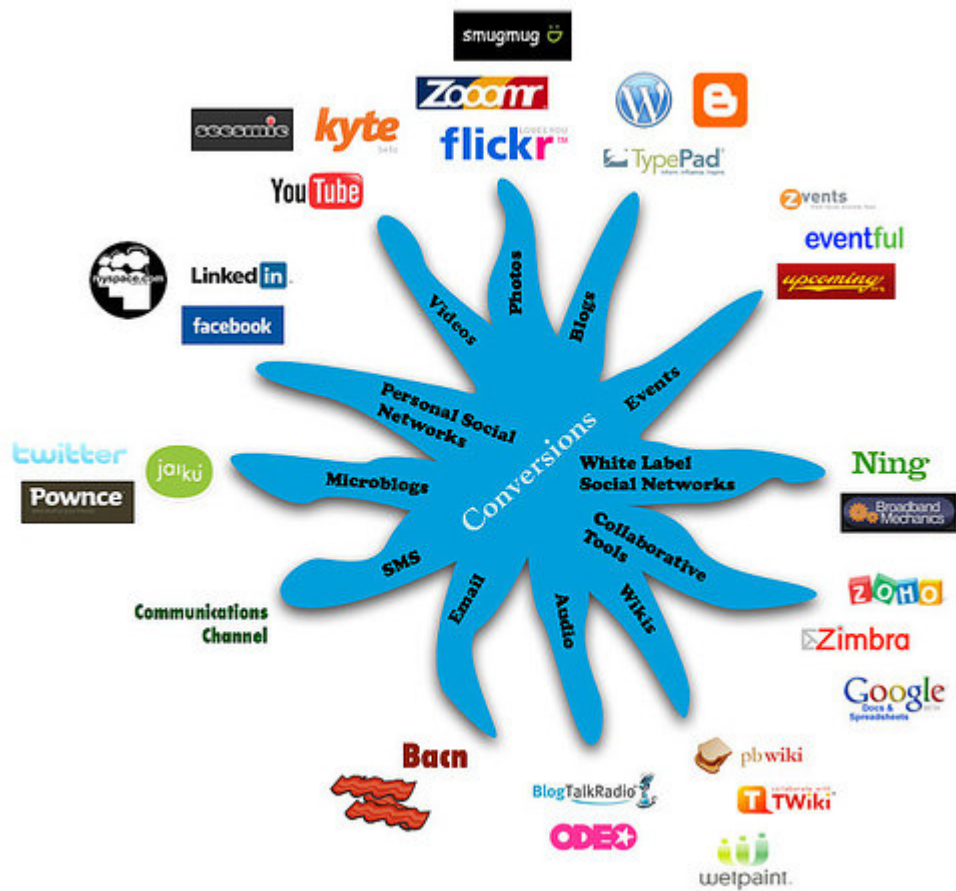


Secrets of Using Social Networking to Grow Your Business

By: Janet Slack



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We have become a world of online business. Entrepreneurs who want to succeed are embracing business and marketing online; one of the newest and most exciting components of online business is the use of social networking. This report will be a quick overview of why social networking matters to your business and some of the key places and ways to start. First though, I want you to [watch this video](#) from Erik Qualman that tells the story of the growth of social networking.

How Social Networking Helps

The world of marketing has changed greatly in response to the internet. Each person who is considering a purchase now has a wealth of information about possibilities – the amount of data available is staggering. This is actually very overwhelming. What purchasers tend to do in response is to favor the product or service that is familiar or that is used by people they know. If they don't have this information, purchasers tend towards products that are used by people who they perceive to be like themselves. This has led to the wildfire growth of social networking as a marketing tool because social networks are filled with people that we like or with whom we have something in common – people "like us". This concept is termed social proof.

The first way that social networks help your business is directly related to the idea of social proof. Social networks allow you, the entrepreneur, to become known to hundreds or thousands of people who would otherwise not encounter you. There is the opportunity to have great visibility for yourself and your business. The more you network, the more familiar you become to

these people who you have encountered. When they are looking for your type of product or service, you are now going to be near the top of their list of possible businesses from which to buy. Using social networking to increase your visibility and familiarity can boost your business success.

On a similar note, your social network also connects you to many more people who can refer to you or partner with you in other ways. Business is built now through collaboration with other businesses. People love to share information about someone they have heard of that can solve their friends problems. In fact, there are businesses that operate solely to connect potential partners. There are many opportunities to gain business referrals, joint venture partners and supporters of your work through social networking.

People also love to be associated with the best. We look to experts to help us with whatever is going on in our lives. We prefer to buy from someone who really knows us, our problems and the solutions to them rather than someone who just happens to be selling an item we need. Social networking allows you to position yourself as an expert in your field by answering questions, offering information and being in dialogue about issues important to your target market.

Your Purposes in Using Social Networking

One of the most important aspects to using social networking to build your business is to have clarified your purpose(s) for using it and to keep that firmly in mind as you progress. Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have a component that is compelling for many people and feeds into our need for



new input constantly. What this means is that it is easy to spend valuable time and energy on activities in social media that are NOT valuable to your business. Don't allow yourself to lose your focus and waste your resources.

In addition, different social networking sites function better for certain purposes than others and it is important to target your efforts on the appropriate site depending on your purpose. LinkedIn is a great place to find business partners or employees and to showcase your expertise. Twitter is a wonderful research tool and can be the first place to establish a relationship with someone that develops into something more in a different location. Facebook will greatly increase your exposure and can be a good place for list building. Social bookmarking sites can be powerful in driving traffic and providing social proof.

Social networking is primarily an indirect source of new customers for your business. You will gain new customers directly at times, but you will gain much more for your business indirectly. It is a mistake to expect your social media marketing to bring you a quick flood of purchasers. More likely, you will first gain exposure, people on your mailing list, referral and business partners and folks who have signed up for your free offers. Only later on will all this activity translate directly into new purchasers. There is no instantaneous boost through social networking despite many people who would like to take your money to sell you "sure fire" ways to do just that.

Here are some of the very valuable purposes that social networking sites may provide for your business:

- Educate you on the problems and needs of your target market
- Provide research information on your niche

- Increase SEO for your websites by providing links
- Increase website traffic
- Provide teleseminar participants
- Build your email marketing list
- Assist in finding business partners and joint venture partners
- Monitor what is being said about you and/or your business
- Provide sources for product/service testimonials
- Develop affiliate connections
- Increase sales (longer term)

Overall Success Strategies

Relationships and Information - You need to start your exploration of social networking for your business with the complete understanding that this is not your grandfather's sales environment. In today's virtual world, direct sales tactics will not work and will probably get you ostracized. Marketing now is based upon the building of relationships and the providing of value to others. Real relationships take time to develop; you slowly get to know people, learn what they are about and whether they are trustworthy. Those are the people with whom you end up doing business.



The fast paced world of the internet leads many people to think that they can develop relationships online quickly. This is the case only if you also

spend time connecting in other ways such as email and telephone calls. You will see many programs that claim to give you hundreds of “friends” or “followers” very quickly and sometimes these schemes actually produce the results they claim. However, this type of rapid growth will not help your business. You want to develop true relationships with the people you meet in social networks – that is the only way these people will benefit your business.

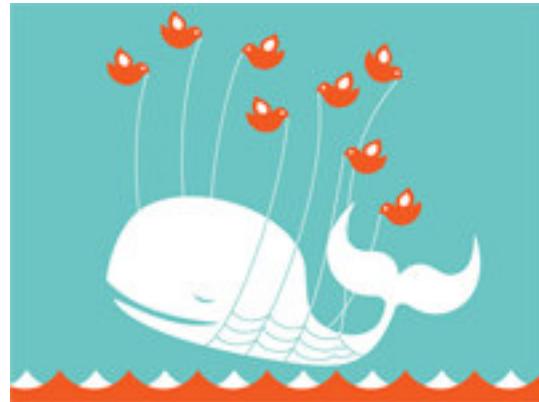
As you are developing your relationships online, you need to be providing information of value to those you meet. Today’s marketing style is also called information marketing because the information you provide will allow the people you meet to get to know you and your business. Those people that come to know, like and trust you through your online relationships will be the ones that contribute to your business success.

Privacy – As a business owner online, you are presenting a lot of information about yourself to the world. As you do this, you must be aware that what you write online is permanent. This matters in several ways. There are plenty of crooks who operate by gathering personal information about people from their casual conversations online and combine the information to steal identities and more. Always be cautious about what you share. In addition, since you cannot “take back” an online comment, be careful with all you say online since your reputation is constantly at stake. Remember that everything you do online is building positive or negative relationships and so be professional at all times.

Another privacy issue is that of how much information to reveal about yourself in any particular forum. Facebook is a good example of that because you may be doing business there and also connecting with old

college friends or family members. Think this through before you start and develop a plan for addressing privacy issues. Research the tools of each site to help you structure what you share for a level of privacy that keeps you comfortable.

Limits & Coordination – It is easy to get overwhelmed by the amount of work required to stay current on a variety of social networks. Limit yourself to 2-3 places that will have the greatest impact for your business. Start slowly and learn tricks for the particular site you are



using to maximize your time and efficiency. You will also want to find ways to coordinate your social networking with other parts of your marketing plan. Perhaps you will connect the RSS feed from your blog to load directly to your Facebook page. Perhaps you will announce on Twitter each of the new articles that you post to EzineArticles.com. Whatever you do, think it out carefully. For example, many people hate to see Twitter posts on the Facebook stream so this would not be a good business decision. Finally, consider the use of a tool such as Ping.fm which will post messages to several social networking sites at the same time.

Specific Social Networking Sites and Resources

The best business success using social networking comes from having a marketing plan that includes the elements that will best assist your unique business and your specific purposes. A business coach with experience in this area can be a tremendous help. The following sites and resources are those that are widely considered the most helpful for small business owners.

1. [LinkedIn](#) – This is called the “network for business professionals”. Be very careful here to understand the culture of the site and follow accepted guidelines for activity. This site is important if you hire or work with clients who do. LinkedIn is also great for search engine optimization.

<http://Linkedintobusiness.com> owner - Viveka von Rosen

<http://Jibberjobber.com> owner - Jason Alba

2. [Facebook](#) – This site started as a connecting place for family and friends and has grown tremendously. Many businesses are achieving success here because of the huge audience.

<http://Whyfacebook.com> owner - Mari Smith

<http://Allfacebook.com> owner – Nick O’Neill

3. [Twitter](#) – This site is fast paced and easy to get lost in. Best uses of Twitter include research, exposure and meeting folks who you will get to know elsewhere.

<http://Twitterhandbook.com> owners – Warren Whitlock & Deb Micek

Twitter in plain English – short video found at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddO9idmax0o>

Twittersupport – help section of the site

<http://help.twitter.com/forums/10711/entries/18375>

4. [Social Bookmarking](#) – This is a way to classify, share, store and search information about websites. Users tag or bookmark what they like (or

don't) and share their decisions; others can then click and surf to the targeted sites. Social bookmarking when used properly can increase website traffic and affiliate connections and revenue. Although there are dozens of social bookmarking sites, these resources are the biggest or best for general use for business owners.

[Del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us) is owned by Yahoo and is now the largest social bookmarking site.

How-To Guide to Del.icio.us Use is available from ScribD

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/17492746/A-Guide-to-Delicious-Social-Bookmarking>

[StumbleUpon](http://stumbleupon.com) gives you a toolbar which allows to vote for or against any website that you visit. The site has over 3 million users and great traffic.



[OnlyWire](http://onlywire.com) is a service that allows you to submit web content such as your blog posts to all the social bookmarking sites to which you are registered all at once. There is a low fee for the service.

About Janet Slack

Janet Slack, the owner of [Life Adventure Coaching](#) and [Solopreneur.biz](#), is an ICF Professional Certified Coach (PCC) and has been coaching since 2003. Janet is also a Licensed Professional Counselor and has developed and runs a thriving private practice in her town.



In her years as a coaching entrepreneur, Janet has mentored, coached and supported hundreds of others as they started their own small businesses. She has a passion for helping solopreneurs and other small business owners succeed. Her dedication is to helping more coaches reach their goals through increasing their comfort in the business world. Janet is the author of [***MindYour Own Biz: Develop the Coaching Business of Your Dreams***](#) which is available through [Amazon.com](#) and publishes a weekly [Biz Tips for Coaches](#) and [Biz Tips for Entrepreneurs](#). She has successfully used social media to expand her business in the past year and teaches her clients to use these marketing techniques wisely.

You can catch up with Janet at the following social networks:

[Solopreneur.biz on Facebook](#)

[Janet on Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Linked In](#)