

●●● Time for B2B Businesses to Get Social: ●●●

A Social Media Primer for Businesses
That Think They Don't Need It.



www.pwb.com



●●● Overview.

Social media has reached prime time. More searches are done on YouTube than Yahoo. If Facebook were a country, it'd be the 9th largest in the world. Consumers are interacting with each other and with companies on social media. Nearly 30% of Twitter users 18-24 years old use Twitter to follow their favorite companies. And 69% of all Facebook users are a fan of one or more company pages (Source: Exact Target). And social media influences consumer behavior. People exposed to a brand in social media are nearly three times more likely to search for that brand's products. (Source: "The Influenced: Social Media, Search, and the Interplay of Consideration and Consumption", Comscore, 2010)

No wonder 86% of B2B companies are investing in some form of social media (Source: "B2B Goes Social", White Horse, 2010). B2B social media marketing spending is set to explode over the next five years. Forrester Research predicts that B2B firms will spend \$54 million on social media marketing in 2014, up from just \$11 million in 2009.



It's no doubt B2B marketers continue to turn to social media marketing approaches in greater numbers. Indium Corporation, a global solder supplier, gets more leads from blogging than any other source. Kinaxis, a supply chain management company, tripled its leads by using social media to virally spread a series of online videos. Social media marketing is used to

- Grow brand awareness
- Generate leads
- Conduct customer service
- Boost SEO efforts

That last point is notable: Having a consistent presence in social media boosts your Google rankings, according to a study that analyzed data from over 10,000 keyword rankings and the factors that influence Google to highly rank a website (Source: SEOMoz).

●●● It's More Than Just Being There

The social media “honeymoon”, however, is now tempered with very real business challenges. There is a gap between where companies want to be and where they actually are with their social media programs. We find the gap typically falls in one of three places – in the creation of new and engaging content, in the effective integration of social media with their traditional marketing programs, and in the measurement of the impact of social media.

The lack of competency in these three areas is preventing companies from truly getting the most from their social media programs. It's holding back social media success. And in some cases, causing social media managers to get nervous because management is breathing down their neck for bottom line results. Social media investment is expected to increase among B2B companies (Source: Worldcom Public Relations, 2011). And with that, so does the cost of failure. Whether you're a social media practitioner or still on the sidelines, the strategies in this paper are for companies looking to minimize risk, maximize results, and get the most out of their social media efforts.

You will learn how to:

- Create new and engaging content
- Effectively align your social media efforts with your traditional marketing
- Measure the impact of your social media

86% of B2B companies are using social media, compared to 82% of B2C companies.

Source: White Horse, March 2010



●●● The Key to Creating Content That Engage Audiences

Probably the number one thing that keeps social media managers up at night is thinking about how to create content that engages audiences and gets people to interact. How do you get Facebook fans and Twitter followers excited and look forward to what you have to say? How do you get people to share your content, leave comments on your blog, and get people to interact with you? And, most critically, how will this ultimately help you achieve branding and demand generation goals that fuel business?

The answer is by having a content marketing strategy.

No one cares about your presence in social media unless you deliver content of interest. So, don't go any further with social media until you develop a content strategy. Develop your content strategy first, and then identify how you will implement your strategy through social media and other communication channels. If your content strategy is solid and you do a good job of communicating it in social media channels, then people will share it.

What is content marketing? It's a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable items to attract and acquire people to your products and services. Content is information you share with your target audience and is at the hub of everything you do in marketing, both online and offline. An effective content marketing strategy will increase followers, generate demand for your products, and entice people to share your content with their friends.

Content marketing, demand generation, inbound marketing, pull versus push marketing, permission marketing – whatever name you call the new model – is the new way to go regardless of your type of business or size of your company. Marketing today is more about dialogue and less about shouting.



The old rules of interruptive marketing have changed. The traditional model of barraging your audience with your advertising and pushing messaging at them is far less effective nowadays. People are now able to skip past commercials with TiVo, use banner-blocking software to ignore online banner ads, or subscribe to Sirius satellite radio without any ads. There are still many effective ways to reach buyers through outbound media, but it takes creativity and the best programs to integrate both old and new media content.

B2B companies that blog generate 67% more leads per month than those who do not.

Source: Hubspot, State of Inbound Marketing Lead Generation Report, 2010

The new model delivers information that educates a buyer and brings them to you. It's not about pushing your message; it's about pulling in your customers. And the way to pull customers in (and generate demand) is to publish remarkable content. Content marketing creates marketing messages that your customers request, instead of interruptive messages they ignore.

If you have a demand generation strategy, then you are already on board with the new model. Content marketing will help you generate demand. But it takes work – namely well-planned content and savvy use of social media marketing. Research says the number one way B2B companies distribute their content is via social media channels (Source: B2B Content Marketing 2010: Small Business Report. MarketingProfs and the Business Marketing Association).





●●● Develop a Content Marketing Strategy

The key to developing a content marketing strategy is to understand your company's buyer personas and their buying process. Identify who you want to reach, what issues they care most about, and then create content against this plan. **Build content around the different stages of the buying cycle.**

Create content that represent what needs to happen at each step to move a lead from the top of the funnel to the middle to the bottom (from awareness to consideration to purchase). If you already have a demand generation program in place, this is really nothing new. If you've not thought this through it's entirely likely you're wasting a lot of marketing dollars.

The top of the funnel should be content that is educational and helps your prospect with a problem they're facing. At this stage, people are interested in getting general information and not looking for specific vendor solutions. You want to be seen as a trusted resource for information. Content can include white papers, industry research, etc.

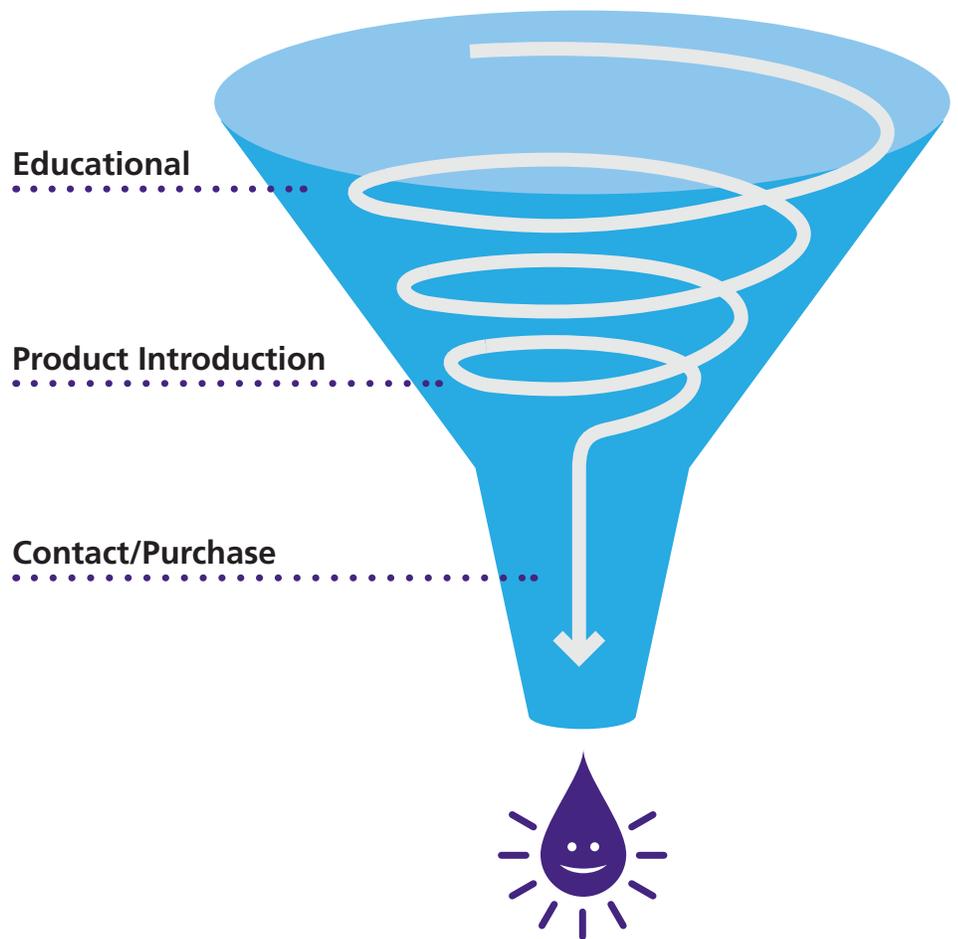
The middle of the funnel should be something that both educates and slowly introduces your product or service as a solution to their problem. At this stage, content can include client case studies, product fact sheets, educational webinars hosted by an executive from your company, etc.

Most U.S. B2B marketers agree that Facebook is an effective marketing tool.

Source: Outsell, December 2009

The bottom of the funnel should be content that moves the prospect to pick up the phone or send you an email request. At this stage, prospects are prepared to make a purchase. Offer a free demo over the phone or free in person consultation. You want them to contact you directly so you can now close the sale.

Keep in mind there is a deluge of information online (25 billion web pages according to Netcraft). People aren't looking for "information", they're looking for answers to their problems. Your content should be the answer they're looking for. Continue to provide ongoing solutions to their problems in the form of valuable content, and ultimately people will reward you with their business and loyalty.



●●● Create New Content and Repurpose Existing Content

As you create new content, consider repurposing old content into new forms. A white paper can become a series of blog posts. A product fact sheet can become an online video. Different people consume different types of content. Some like to read, some like to listen, others like to watch. Breathe new life into old content by reimagining it in different forms and presenting it to buyers (via social media and other channels) at the right stage of the buying process for maximum impact.

Content can take the form of blogs, online videos, podcasts, white papers, case studies, e-newsletters, webinars and more. Consider new sources, too, like:

- **Branded Tool:** A branded tool for prospects and customers that provides them with a customized analysis, report, product recommendation, or plan. A local credit union can offer an online financial planning calculator for planning for retirement or saving for college.
- **Widget:** This is a small web application that provides a simple function – such as weather, news headlines, sports scores – without requiring the user to visit a website. A widget is a good way to extend a brand into a customer’s everyday life. An online retailer can offer an e-commerce widget. A non-profit can use a widget to help promote an upcoming fundraising event with a countdown timer to the date and include an RSS feed with event updates like sponsors, ticket sales, entertainment, and more.
- **Company-Focused Community Site** – Instead of reaching your customers on a 3rd party social network, build your social network. The main point is to cultivate a loyal community and bring people together with similar interests and similar problems. Do not pitch your products. Archer Technologies is an example of a B2B company that built their own community for customers to interact, share best practices, and provide feedback to help product development. You can use a tool like Ning.com to create a custom social network. Or, build a microsite with community features like discussion forums and message boards. Or, create a LinkedIn Group around a shared interest of your customers.



*41% of B2B
companies are
acquiring customers
through Facebook.*

Source: Hubspot, State of Inbound Marketing Report, 2011

- **Photo Sharing** – Let customers share the fun of your product with photos. Flickr is the primary channel for this, but Picasa is also good. Supplement the photo sharing with discussion threads and other content. Let customers dominate the spotlight. A local custom T-Shirt printing company, for instance, may find new or interesting ways customers are using their products.
- **Virtual Trade Show** – A virtual trade show is a great way to overcome the time and travel costs of hosting an actual trade show or conference. Consider a mix of live and pre-recorded content – videos, slideshow presentations. Companies like INXPO have platforms to power virtual trade shows for organizations large and small such as Forbes, Hilton, United Business Media, and TechTarget. As a plus, you can sell opportunities to sponsors. A virtual trade show would be a good application for a global B2B supplier that has a new product and wants to share it with sales, business partners, and distributors at one event.
- **E-Learning Series** – a carefully planned curriculum of educational content that is delivered via a series of webinars, slide show presentations, videos, or other platform. It's a good way to educate potential customers on complex topics and gradually introduce them to your solutions. A plastic surgery center can offer a series of videos educating prospective patients on various procedures that minimize the effects of aging and offer a fresher, more youthful look.

●●● Effectively Integrate Social Media

Social media should be a component of everything you do. And no, this doesn't mean put your Facebook and Twitter logos on every piece of marketing collateral and call it a day – although it's surprising how many marketers still overlook this key task. Integration means making social media an integral core component of your all marketing communications. Allow all your content to be shared. Publish a blog. Put QR codes on billboards. These are basic tactics.

Integration is a two-way street. A good way for make more people aware of your social media efforts is to drive them with your traditional outbound efforts. If you currently publish a newsletter, think about how you could drive readers to your social media channels through that vehicle. Promote Twitter-only specials in your radio ads. Run contests via social media that tie to a new ad campaign.

Also, integrating social media is more than just integrating it into your traditional marketing programs. Social media should be integrated into every aspect of your business including customer service, product development, market research, and more.

The key is to start with the business goal, not the communications goal. Know your audience. And think of ways to extend the conversation from offline to online. Here are some considerations for going beyond the basics.

- Make sure all of your social media profiles are properly branded to match the look and feel of your brand. Skin your YouTube page. Have branded wall paper for your Twitter profile. And create a messaging document to make sure your tone and voice in social media match your offline messaging.
- Every e-newsletter and email should have a call to action for the social web. This includes having your company's social media links included in every employee's email signature line. Think about it. People reading email are already online.

B2B companies are far more likely to use Twitter than B2C companies (75% versus 49%).

Source:
Business.com, September 2009

- Make all your content easy to share with services like AddThis or ShareThis. Facebook says companies who integrate Facebook “Like” buttons throughout their website see an increase of 65% more referral traffic from Facebook (SOURCE: Facebook – Verify)
- If your company gets mentioned by a third-party blog, include that in your press room. Almost 80% of Internet users read blogs (Source: Social Media Examiner). Getting blog coverage is as credible as getting traditional press coverage.
- Create a microsite where you consolidate all your social media activity, so consumers have one place to go to view all your activity. Have feeds from Facebook and Twitter, an RSS feed from your blog, current YouTube videos, a Google News RSS feed for your company news and press releases, etc. Use the portal as your social media home page and call-to-action for all your offline (and online) activity.

OBJECTIVE

- Generate exposure for business
- Identify new product or service opportunities
- Drive traffic
- Increase your ranking in search engine results
- Create company buzz

STRATEGY

SEO

Search engine optimization

SEM

Search engine marketing

SMM

Social media marketing

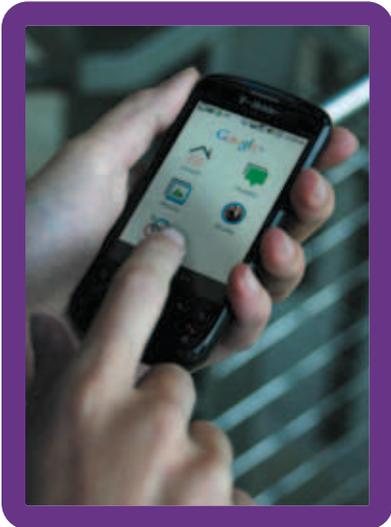
TACTICS

- Content Development
- Google Places
- Yahoo Site Explorer
- Meta Tags
- Alt Tag
- Title Tags
- Anchor Text
- PRNewswire.com
- PRWeb.com

- Google AdWords
- MSN Bing
- Yahoo Search
- Business.com
- GlobalSpec
- Zibb.com

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- You Tube
- Flickr
- Blog
- Hootsuite
- Tweet Deck
- Slideshare.net





- Companies that blog get 55% more website visitors than companies that do not blog (SOURCE: Hubspot). To get credit for this traffic from an SEO perspective, make sure you host the blog under your corporate domain. Blogs hosted on Tumblr or Blogger, for instance, do not increase your website rankings. Use a platform like Wordpress to integrate your blog into your corporate site.
- If you're hosting a conference or event, provide a Twitter hashtag so attendees can tweet about the event. The average Twitter user has 126 followers (Source: The Guardian). If ten people tweet during your program, that's over 1,000 additional people exposed virtually to your event. You can even use Twitter hashtags to let audience members tweet questions during a panel discussion. Tweets can be projected on a screen behind the panelists.
- Create a mobile version of your website so people on the go can access your site from smartphones. Use QR codes to drive people to your mobile site and have links to your social media profiles. If you're a local business, use Facebook Check-In Deals to reward frequent visitors with special discounts.
- Analyze your search engine traffic to see what keywords people are using most often to arrive at your site. Then, create an automated search feed for these keywords on Twitter to identify conversations people are having using these keywords. These people may be prospects. Tweet with them.
- Run a Facebook fan contest and promote it beyond Facebook. Add it to your radio spots, print ads, and e-newsletters. Require people to become a fan for a chance to win a prize. But don't stop there. Tell them they will get three extra entries for mentioning the contest on their wall and for inviting friends to participate. Now you're taking advantage of social media's viral effect. Develop a custom Facebook tab for the contest and require people to provide their email address as they sign up (winners being announced via email). That way, you accomplish two things: you get new Facebook fans and at the same time build your email database.
- Run a Facebook promotion with the prize being tickets to a local sporting event or concert. Local events encourage entries specifically from people in the area you service. Team up with a local media partner for co-promotion, such as a local radio station or newspaper, to save costs on promotion and publicity. You'll get more coverage in the press than if you did it alone. Have people either "like" your Facebook page or write on the media partner's Facebook Wall. That way, both organizations benefit.

●●● Measure the Impact of Your Social Media

Do you know where your most valuable customers are talking about you? Harvard Business Review says 44% of businesses don't know. That's a problem. Without proper monitoring and measurement, you'll never know where opportunities are for growth and you won't be able to identify issues before they become problems.

It's crucial to measure everything you do on Facebook, Twitter, and elsewhere. When you measure, you can see what is working and what is not working, and you can do more of what's working. Facebook and other social networks equip you with limited analytic tracking tools. Once you start to delve deeper into social media marketing, you will find you need a more robust measurement platform.

Some of our favorite tools are Social Mention (free), Klout (free), Google Alerts (free), Radian6 (paid) and Marketwire (paid). If you're looking for tools to help manage and streamline your social media activity, try CoTweet (free) or HootSuite (free). Tools like these track your social media efforts in real-time, allowing you to stay on top of the latest Tweets and more. Some even manage workflow to appropriately assign people Tweets and Facebook posts to follow up on.

69% of B2B marketers are shifting their budgets toward social media.

Source:
MarketingSherpa, October 2010

There are a ton of things you can measure with social media – the number of Facebook fans, Twitter followers, YouTube subscribers, mentions of your company name in the social space, your influence via retweets and reblogging, etc. Whatever metric you measure should be tied back to a business objective, whether it's building loyalty (number of fans), increasing awareness (brand mentions), customer service (social sentiment), or something else.

Marketing Sherpa's survey of over 2,000 marketers shows the following three social metrics at the top of what's being measured: (1) Website traffic (2) Number of fans and followers (3) Number of times the company's name or product is mentioned in the social sphere.

These are easily understandable common social metrics. Many companies track them. However, monitoring data is only valuable if it's being tied

to a business objective. Having 500 Facebook Fans or 5,000 doesn't mean anything if your business goal is generate leads and you're not measuring lead referrals from Facebook. At the end of the day, you should track metrics that align with your business goal, whether that's generating demand for a new product or generating leads.

Many businesses want to know the impact social media is having on their bottom line.

Social media helps B2B marketers improve search results.

Source: BtoB Magazine, July 2010

One of the most important steps in understanding where your lead came from is to know when someone clicks on a social media link and then converts. The most reliable way to do this is to place a "cookie" on the user's machine with the campaign name for the social media channel that generated the click. Then use your campaign reporting to track the number of leads and conversions you've generated. You'll need to have a mechanism in place to know when a lead comes from social media. Most people use the combination of a URL shortener and some form of a "cookie" to attach a campaign to a lead. Hootsuite has integrated Google Analytics into their URL shortener for a seamless transition to success metrics in analytics.

You can also use an advanced function of Google Analytics to create a custom segment, allowing you to look at percentage of traffic that came to your website from social media versus other places and what that social traffic did once they got to your site. If you're not an advanced Google Analytics user, get help from a marketing provider who has passed testing to become Google Analytics Certified. When you have the social media segment created, you can compare them against a control group of people that had not interacted with social media. Look for how social media compares in areas like lead conversion rates, website bounce rates and time spent on your site.

●●● Use A Listening Monitoring Tool

Don't try to track every single social media metric. You'll get lost in data and lose sight of metrics that matter. Having a centralized dashboard where you can get a glance at your metrics in one place helps. A marketing agency can build you a custom dashboard that aggregates your most important social media metrics – Twitter mentions, blog searches, Google Alerts, Facebook feeds, and more.

The right mix of social platforms is different for every business. The answer to this question is to know your audience. If your customers are actively using Twitter, then you'll want to make sure you're present. If your customers are not using Foursquare to check-in to various locations, then it's a waste of time for you to be on Foursquare. Know where your customers are spending their time, which platforms they're using, and then be there. Remember, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are tools, not a social media strategy.

●●● Takeaways

Have a Content Strategy: If you don't know where you're headed, you'll never get there. Have a content marketing strategy before you begin social media. Valuable content will attract prospects and ultimately generate demand for your services.

Integrate Social Media: Those who have been least successful in social media have often been so as a result of using traditional messaging in an environment that it doesn't resonate in. Social media communities tend to respond best to authentic, helpful, and informational conversations. Integrate your social media efforts throughout your business.

Determine and Measure Goals: We are firm believers that businesses can't manage what they don't measure. We ask clients to first examine the business challenges they are facing and then use the right tools (social media or otherwise) to address those specific issues. The course of action taken should be measured with the same scrutiny as traditional marketing efforts.

●●● About PWB Marketing Communications

Are you happy with your social media marketing? Are you effectively converting your efforts into tangible results? Have you aligned social media with the rest of your marketing effectively? Perhaps you're thinking of getting started with social media but need help devising a clear strategy and direction. You may not have the time or resources to devote to managing the social sphere.

If you're ready to gain followers, get noticed, and build credibility, contact us for a social media consultation. Whether you're a social media practitioner or still on the sidelines, we will help you take your social media initiatives to the next level. Call us at (734) 995-5000 or send us an email at dialogue@pwb.com for a free social media consultation.

About the author

Chad Wiebesick is the Social Media & Interactive Marketing Director at PWB Marketing Communications. Chad has over 10 years of experience helping companies reach business goals through innovative online marketing communication programs, including social media, search engine marketing, online community building, rich media advertising, and viral marketing. He is Google AdWords Certified, Google Analytics Certified, a recipient of Online Media & Marketing Magazine's "America's Top 20 Interactive Media Rising Stars," and a national finalist in Media Magazine's "Creative Media Awards" competition.