



# Suit Up & Dive In! The Water's Fine!

## Plunge into the World of Social Media

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Do you think that LinkedIn is made for stuffy three-piece suits, Twitter is worthwhile for sharing your breakfast menu, Blogs are for folks whining about their lives, and Facebook is good for sharing drunken college photos? (That last bit? Don't do that!)

Huge corporate brands, not-for-profits, and small- & medium-sized businesses are taking advantage of the benefits of engaging in social media. Getting started can be intimidating; there are so many options to consider, it can be daunting trying to figure out what's best for your company. Yet, if you have a website, you are already engaging!

When it comes to marketing on the internet, there is nothing as important as your website. Your website is your online headquarters and it is critical, before you plunge into the social media ocean, that you ensure that your HQ is ready for 'company.' Fill and update it with rich and relevant content. Nurture your website and keep it fresh with news and information for your visitors. Do your best to ensure that your website can be found. Engaging in social media can be a boon to your website's traffic.

But we're not here to talk about search engine optimization (SEO). That's a topic for another day but remember this:

"Fresh Content is to Google as Brains are to Zombies"  
(Todd Defren at Shift Communications <http://www.shiftcomm.com/>)

### Social Media is a Magnet

Traditional advertising works on a 'push' model; broadcast your message through print, TV, and radio and hope that prospects notice, listen, and respond by connecting with you. The louder and more often you yell, the more attention you'll attract (crossing your fingers helps, too, I hear). It's like using a bullhorn; the message moves in one direction – Out.

Social media marketing works like a magnet. Yes, just like one of the cartoon magnets that Bugs Bunny uses (and, as you know, Bugs always wins). It works on a 'pull' model and the message moves in both directions.

### So Now What?

## Strategy!

Nothing succeeds without planning. Before joining every shiny network, ensure you have a firm grip on your objectives. Everyone wants more 'members' (customers) but your goals must be specific.

Do you want more subscribers to your newsletter? Are you looking to build brand awareness? Have some crazy awesome deals to offer? Looking for donors or volunteers? Research where your prospects congregate and listen to what they are saying. Determine where you will engage and how much time and effort you can commit. The more you know going in, the better your potential for success.

Social media is not a business' panacea for a slow month. It requires commitment and dedication. A long-term, goal-oriented strategy is essential. If you don't feel you are able to commit (because you're busy running your business!), then work with a social media consultant.

## The Three Es!

**Engage:** The first rule of engaging with your audience is that you *Listen!* Lurk a little and hear what they are saying; their questions, their concerns, their attitudes. Social media gives you the unique opportunity to really get to know your audience. Take advantage of it.

**Educate:** Social media sites rank in the top five places where buyers go to do research. They put the questions out there, to their friends and followers, and ask for guidance and advice. You should *Be the Expert* – the 'go-to' resource when your prospects are looking for answers.

**Entertain:** You've listened. They're listening (or starting to). How are you going to keep your prospects close? Entertain them – shoot a funny video, ask them to submit their stories and make them the heroes, create a comic strip ... lighten up!

## It's not you ... it's me ...

No, it's not a bad memory from high school. When it comes to truly engaging with your audience through social media, it's all about them. Your potential customers want to be heard. They want to learn, engage, and exchange. The old method of firing out 'buy now' ads will not work with them. You don't want to be 'that guy', who hands out his business cards at the wedding.

Share – don't shill.

Your audience has become sophisticated and savvy. They have so much information at their disposal about you and your competitors' products and services and they are taking the time to investigate their options. They use the internet - search engines, websites, and social media to get the answers they need.

At the current rate of growth, Facebook will have over 650 million profiles by the end of 2011. New Twitter sign-ups average about 10,000 each day. LinkedIn is expanding to allow even easier ways to make connections. New social networks are being developed and released at an extraordinary rate. Customers for your business, supporters for your charity, or new members for your community group are online; it's just a matter of time before you join them there.

**Contact us to learn more about the world of Social Media  
and how we can help get your business involved.**