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1

Introduction to digital marketing

Digital marketing is a catch-all term for all of your online marketing activities.

Gone are the days when building a website was enough – you need to let potential customers know you exist and ensure they come back again and again.

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Why digital marketing?

Quite simply, it's no longer possible to consider marketing without considering digital. Consumers are always connected – be it on their desktops, laptops, tablets or mobile devices. In fact, consumers are even “second screening” – i.e. engaging with their phone whilst watching TV or working on their laptop – which means if your brand isn't part of the conversation or available across all devices immediately, it's likely your product or service won't even be considered and another more digitally aware company will enjoy growth at your expense.

If you're a business owner intent on finding new customers and retaining the ones you have, no matter what product or service you provide, you will need to have a digital marketing strategy. Granted – there will be aspects you will utilize more than others but an awareness of what's out there, and how it works, will make it much easier to decide which methods you should use to reach your potential customer base.



Digital marketing is an ever-changing discipline – keep abreast of new developments by visiting HubSpot's blog: <https://blog.hubspot.com/>



Digital marketing moves fast – every month there are new tools, platforms and apps being launched to help business owners achieve their goals. So, how does a book about digital marketing avoid becoming outdated? Simple. This book shows you the disciplines and mindset you need to employ to market your business successfully – the apps and platforms mentioned will change and improve over time, but the techniques and the fundamentals will remain pertinent, valid and effective.

Can I master digital?

Of course! By both understanding and approaching each aspect of digital in a structured way, and by using this book as your guide, you will be able to apply the same techniques to your own particular business and reap the rewards.



This book looks at the underlying principles behind each of the key aspects of digital marketing, namely:

- **Content marketing**
- **Social marketing**
- **Search marketing**
- **Customer journey**

Then, of course, how to measure it all. It will help you to define what your goals are and provide a structured way for you to achieve them – whether that's acquiring new leads, converting leads into customers, retaining the customers you already have, and creating brand champions (or even communities of advocates) who like your business and/or products so much, they feel compelled to tell others.



Content marketing

Content marketing has become a core marketing activity for many businesses. For small businesses, sharing useful content online offers a powerful way to engage with customers – via blogs, case studies and email newsletters. At the same time, social media is helping businesses distribute their content – as videos, infographics and more are all shared via social media platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram and Facebook.



Sharing relevant, interesting and valuable content allows your business to build relationships with your customers. By sharing useful information that solves your customers' problems, you can improve your customer service and inspire loyalty and trust.

By providing evidence that you can meet your promises – such as case studies and testimonials – you can also convince prospects to become customers without having to resort to a hard sell.

Today, everyone expects to find the answers to their questions on your website. The right content can demonstrate your expertise, show you understand your customers and their needs, and position you as a leader in your field.

Marketing content works incredibly hard for businesses. It can show your brand values and prove that you're up-to-date in your field. What's more, it can attract more website visitors, improve your search rankings, and widen your reach.



A good content marketing strategy won't be created overnight – you will need to invest in resources to have the very best content that drives business success.

Social marketing

Social media marketing has many platforms that you can use, and it can be difficult to decide which platforms are right for your business. With its ability to reach audiences, social media marketing is rapidly positioning itself at the core of many brands' marketing strategies. Despite the plethora of social platforms that seem to appear every few months, there are five main platforms that offer businesses a unique set of opportunities: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest.

Social media marketing **is** time consuming, especially if you want to do it well. Yes – you can automate posting to these networks with the various scheduling tools available, but to maximize your brand awareness and customer retention efforts it needs to be managed daily. Plus, only posting your own content will just irritate users; social media is also about reposting informative and entertaining content from your wider industry to your users.

Increasingly, companies are posting images and photographs of their teams at work, representing a “human” element to their business that is paramount to consumer buying decisions. Furthermore, to really reach consumers, social media advertising is an excellent way to reach consumers beyond those who do not follow your brand.

Don't be disheartened – the time you spend marketing your business via social is time well spent. Using the techniques and advice in this book, you can quickly position your business as a leader in your space, engage with customers, and gain valuable feedback about your products and service by being part of the conversation.



There are specific chapters in this book looking in depth at each of the social media channels.





Check out Chapter 4 – SEM & SEO to get the most out of search.

Search marketing

Search marketing (sometimes referred to as search engine marketing or SEM) encompasses search engine optimization (SEO) and paid advertising. And, frustratingly, it is these abbreviations and the jargon that surrounds the industry (CPC – cost per click, CPA – cost per acquisition, CPL – cost per lead, and CPM – cost per thousand) that tend to alienate business owners from dipping their feet in the water when it comes to embarking on a search marketing campaign.

But if you can understand the terminology, you can understand how you too will be able to make search marketing an integral and important part of your digital marketing mix. We will explore search marketing in greater depth later in the book.

In summary, SEO is the practice of earning traffic through unpaid or free listings, while paid advertising is buying traffic through paid search listings.

Paid search ads help marketers get more web traffic via desktop or mobile web search. It's instant, it's effective, and you have complete control of your budget.

SEO is the generic term for a number of techniques you can use to help search engines better understand your web pages and ensure that when a user is searching for something relating to you or your business, it's your web page that appears high up on page 1 of the search results pages (SERPs).



Measuring digital

As with any aspect of business, it's important to measure what you are doing to know if it's having a positive impact. With digital marketing everything is trackable, traceable and measurable, which means that you will know very quickly which aspects of your digital marketing campaigns are working and which are not.

It is this level of visibility that makes digital marketing such an exciting aspect of running a business, and why – even if you feel you're new to many of the topics contained within this book – you should take the plunge and give it a go.



There's an old marketing adage that goes: "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half." This can be true with traditional magazine, radio and billboard advertising but it's not the case with digital – whether you measure success as Facebook "likes", or new leads for your sales team to contact, or actual sales via your website, what you spend on digital marketing can be closely attributed to specific campaigns and channels, meaning that you're no longer operating blind.

In Chapter 15 we'll take a closer look at Google Analytics – a critical tool that will help you manage and monitor your digital marketing success. We'll also look at the essential metrics you will need to become familiar with to monitor your social media presence.

The importance of social

Social media has exploded in recent years. We have now entered the age of the relationship. With the help of social media, marketing has evolved into a two-way dialogue, not just a monologue. By using social media as a way to advertise your product or service offering, you can speak directly to the consumers in an arena they are comfortable with. Social media allows businesses to connect with their customers and prospects while shaping their perceptions of products and services.

Social media can be extremely powerful for business. But it can also be a big risk as well. Social media is not a fix-all, and if your service is weak, your products are poor, and you do not respond quickly enough to those business failures, then your customers will use social media to enhance and vocalize those feelings for the world to see. Not being online does not take the problem away. Customers will still air their issues online; you just need to make sure that you are also online, and implementing a listening strategy so you can nip any grievances in the bud quickly and efficiently before the problem escalates.



People will talk about you and your business, whether you are on social media platforms or not.



Set up a listening strategy for your company name.



So, before you begin with your social marketing strategy and begin to explore the wider world of content marketing, it's crucial that you set up an effective listening strategy for your business.

Your listening strategy

Google Alerts is a service that allows you to receive email alerts on any keyword or phrase you wish to monitor. Whilst it doesn't catch everything, it's a free service, and you can turn up some gems so it's well worth the time it takes to set it up. You can elect to receive alerts as often as you like. The more specific your search phrase, the more relevant the results. However, Google Alerts is not the same as it used to be, and it is likely that it will eventually be another tool that Google will terminate, in a similar way that they switched off so many excellent Google products such as Google Reader, etc. In addition, Google Alerts only sends you emails if new articles, web pages or blog posts make it into the top 10 Google news results, the top 20 Google web search results, or the top 10 Google blog search results for your query. If the top results remain the same for a while, you will not receive emails on your topic. For this reason, there's a great product called "Mention", which will monitor and listen to what is being said about you or your company online.

How to get started with Mention

Go to the homepage (www.mention.com) and click the **Start your free trial** button to get started with your 14-day free trial. You can sign up using your existing Facebook, Twitter, Google, or LinkedIn account, or just enter your name, email address, and a password to create a new account.



If you sign up using an existing account, you'll be asked to enter an email address. Then, you can choose which brands you'd like to receive alerts for. The Mentions are displayed according to the keywords or phrases that you've chosen for your alert.

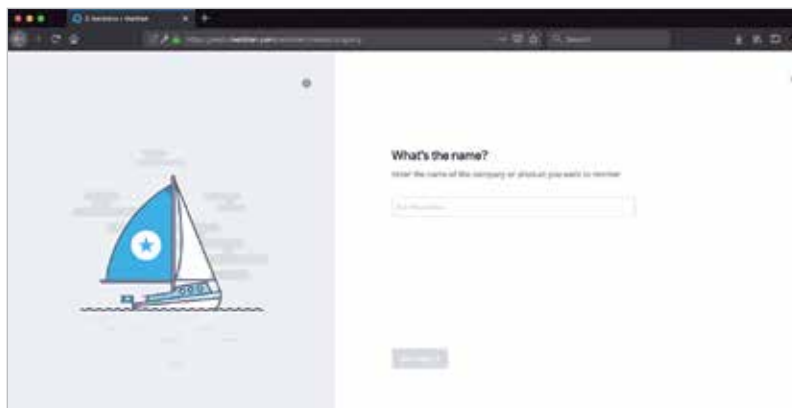


Google Alerts is good to get started, but you'll need a more robust listening tool such as Mention to truly have your ear to the ground



Register with mention.com to perfect your listening strategy.

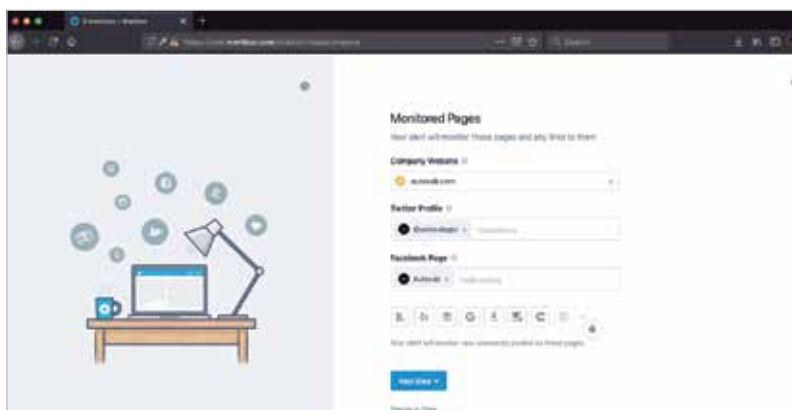
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Creating a new alert on Mention

Once you've set up your account, you'll be prompted to create alerts for your own brand/product and those of your competitors. You should set up alerts for your own company and products, as well as for those of your main competitors and for the main players within your chosen industry.

Your own brand/name: Get started with Mentions of your own brand or name to get immediate feedback on where your company name is being mentioned on the web.

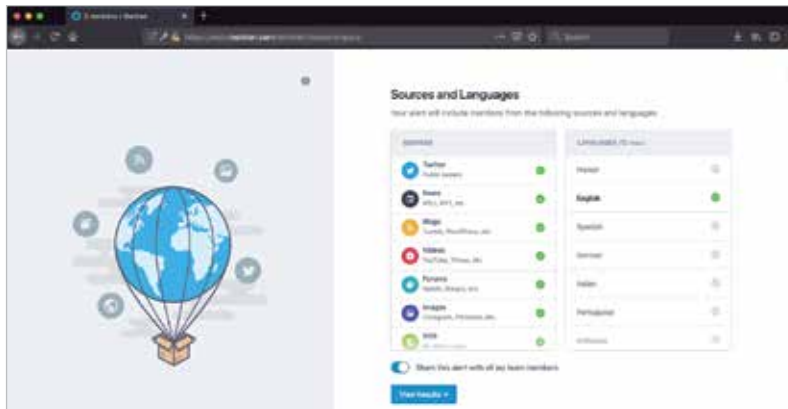


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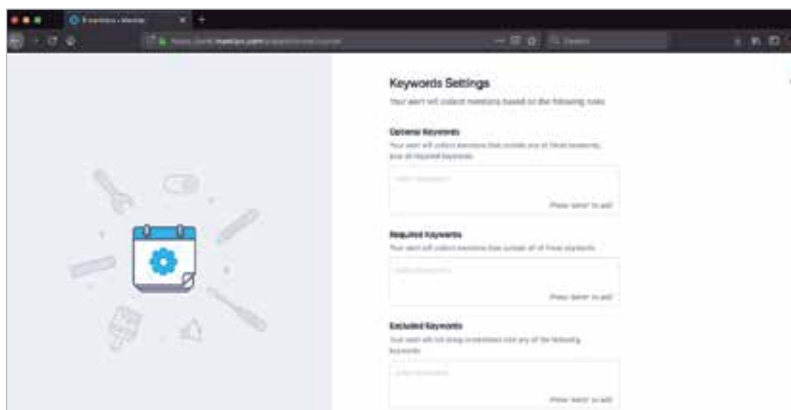
Choose your languages: English is the default, but you can choose to receive alerts in French, Spanish, German and many other languages too. You can also manage and filter your sources. You could receive alerts from all sources (the web, Facebook, Twitter, news, blogs, videos, forums and images) but you can exclude some of those sources if you wish, or block a specific site.



Set up alerts for your competitors' names and industry news.

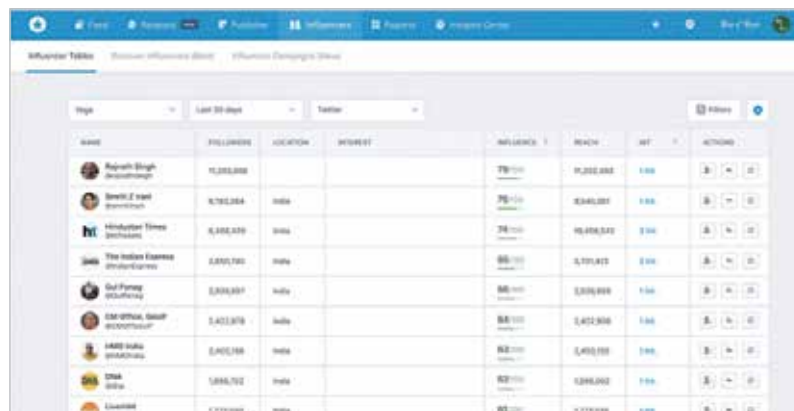


Expand your listening reach: If you do decide to pay for Mention, I suggest creating additional Mention alerts for key staff members' names along with key figures that operate within your industry. You can also set up alerts for industry news, more competitors, and individual product names, etc.



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Choose your influencers: You can now create your own lists of influencers. This will allow you to organize and keep an eye on your existing brand ambassadors and the influencers you want to work with in the future.

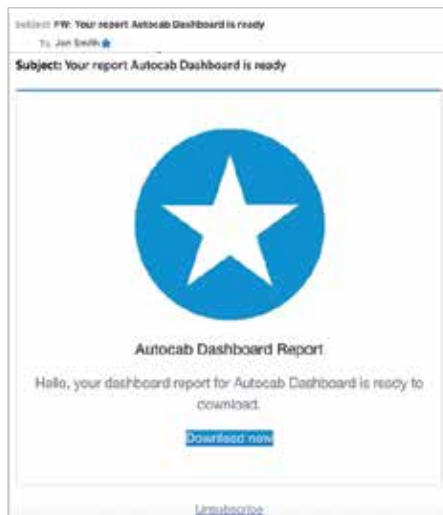


Name	FOLLOWERS	LOCATION	INTEREST	RELEVANCE	REACH	COST	ACTIONS
Aswath Singh (@aswathsingh)	11,252,268			79%	11,252,268	1.00	[Icons]
Smith J Paul (@smithjpaul)	6,792,264	India		76%	6,792,264	1.00	[Icons]
Industrie Times (@industrietimes)	6,455,439	India		74%	6,455,439	0.94	[Icons]
The Indian Express (@theindianexpress)	5,892,720	India		66%	5,892,720	0.94	[Icons]
Self Posing (@selfposing)	5,209,897	India		66%	5,209,897	1.00	[Icons]
EM OFFICIAL GROUP (@emofficialgroup)	3,422,376	India		64%	3,422,376	1.00	[Icons]
SAAR India (@saarindia)	2,942,156	India		62%	2,942,156	1.00	[Icons]
Shah Alisha (@shahalisha)	1,946,722	India		62%	1,946,722	1.00	[Icons]
Lovekesh (@lovekesh)	1,775,888	India		61%	1,775,888	1.00	[Icons]



By monitoring influencers in your industry, you'll have an endless supply of content ideas.

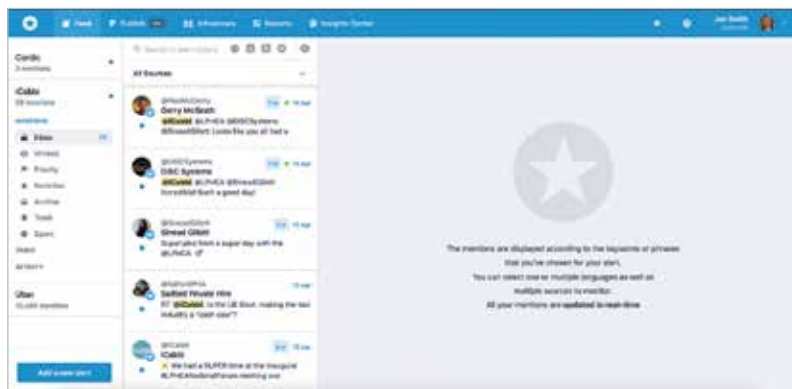
Include and exclude expressions: Type in the words or phrases that you want to get alerts for. You can include common misspellings or variations, and you can also exclude terms – i.e. tell Mention not to send you alerts for pages that include a given word or phrase. For example, I have a particularly common name and there are a number of people tweeting under the name “Jon Smith” so I have excluded all of the other Jon Smith Twitter accounts from my summary email.



...cont'd

Mention notifications

Mention also sends you an email when you have new results:



As you can see, the Mention application is much more user friendly and it also has more options than Google Alerts. Click on any of the links to read the Mention, mark it as a favorite or delete the Mention.

In the far left column, you have a list of views. The default view is Mentions, which you can see in the next column, with the most recent Mention at the top.

You can filter the Mentions column by source, and toggle the view between All, Unread, and Priority.

On the right, in the main view, you get a preview of the page with your Mention. This is really cool because you can see the context of the Mention without having to actually visit the page – it's obviously much more robust than the little search-style snippet you get in the Google Alerts email. From this view you can choose to click through to the original URL or the source, and you can also “favorite” the Mention, block the source, or trash it using the little icons at the top.

Is there a cost to Mention?

Yes. Mention is a paid-for service. At the time of going to press, Mention offers a 14-day free trial with prices then starting at \$25 per month for a single user, with more comprehensive starter and enterprise packages available. Visit <https://mention.com/en/pricing/> to find the latest prices.



After your 14-day trial has ended, you will be charged to use Mention.



Social media is not a numbers game.



Review your platforms at least once every six weeks.

Your social media success

It is interesting to see what people consider to be the steps to social media success. Some people just see the numbers. For example, they look at a Twitter account that has 20,000 followers, or they view a Facebook page that has thousands of “likes”, and they assume that they are successful in their social media activities. This is not quite true! Social media is successful if you are communicating and building relationships with your target market, which will ultimately convert into new business. There is no point in a kitchen designer from Northamptonshire, UK or Des Moines, Iowa having 3,000 likes on their Facebook page if those likes are all from people in Cambodia.

Social media success will rarely happen overnight. When you break it down, there are really only four steps to achieve social media success online:

1 Build & maintain your platforms

The oft-used phrase, “If you build it, they will come” is a cliché, but there is no getting away from the fact that if your platforms are not professionally designed, if you have an inactive or poorly designed website, or have not bothered to change your Twitter profile picture from the generic “egg” picture, then this will have an effect on your overall strategy.

2 Grow your network

It is a well-known fact that if you do not have a network of people to talk to online, then you are really just talking to yourself! Have a strategy for growing your network online for each platform. Decide and define who your target market is and start to follow them. Use tools such as www.followerwonk.com to find people on Twitter. Run some adverts on Facebook to see how to grow your audience. Make sure that your strategy is ongoing and reviewed at least every six weeks. These tools will be covered in more detail later in the book, as well as giving you more inspirational ideas on how to build your following, connections and “likes”.

3 **Define a listening, engagement and content strategy**

This is probably the area of digital marketing where most businesses fail. Their posts are all over the place, with no consistency. They fail to set up listening strategies to respond to people who are talking about them online (good and bad). Try **mention.com** (see pages 17-21), which offers a 14-day free trial, to help you listen to your audience. The scattergun approach to producing content does not work.

Make sure that you are using a social media management system such as Hootsuite (**www.hootsuite.com** – a social media scheduling platform that allows you to prepare your social posts in advance and have them post automatically when you want) or TweetDeck (**www.tweetdeck.com** – a tool to help you manage and monitor multiple Twitter timelines in one interface), and start planning what you are going to say and do. Decide on a blogging topic for the month and plan what you are going to write about, with set dates for publication.

But the most important strategy in Step 3 is the word “engagement”. Thank people for mentioning you in a tweet, ask people questions, comment on others’ posts, etc. You must talk to people in order to build those important relationships that lead to business and referrals.

4 **Measure the results**

As with any type of marketing, whether it is printing leaflets, your website activity, or special offers, etc., as we’ve learned earlier in this chapter, you need to measure the results, and social media activity is no different. If you don’t know what is working and what is not working then how do you know if it is successful? Whilst vanity metrics such as number of “likes” and followers have a place, you need to be going to the next level and measuring engagement – what is the number of people exposed to your social media content who are going on to be customers of your business?



Plan your content topics in advance. Write the topics down for each month and then gear your content posts around those topics.



Don't forget the word “social”. It is important to engage and talk to others online for a successful social media strategy.

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Remember Einstein's famous quote:

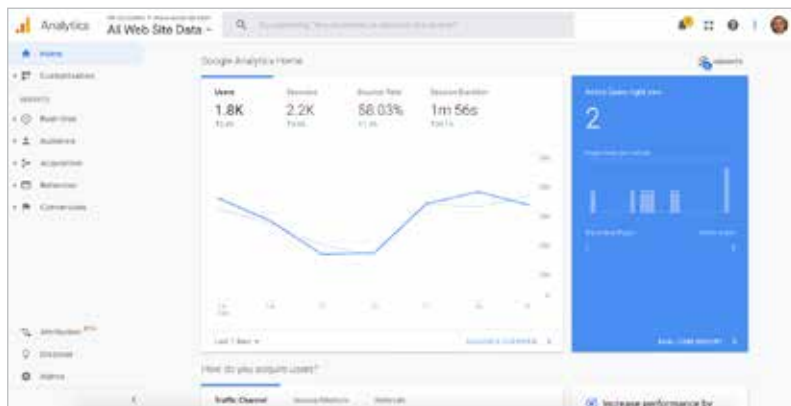
“ *Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.* ”

albert einstein

It makes good business sense to make sure that you are measuring your activities. As we've seen, if it's digital then it's trackable, traceable, and accountable, meaning that the data is there to accurately measure and draw conclusions – throughout this book we'll show you how to find and interpret this data to help you make sound business decisions, each and every time.



Check your Google Analytics account (see Chapter 15) to see how much traffic is being generated by your social media activities. You may be pleasantly surprised. Simply click **Acquisition**, then **Social** to view the results.



Setting your digital marketing goals

So many companies are “winging it” when it comes to social activity. The expression “social media ROI” has many names – for example, “return on investment” and “return on influence”, to name but a few – but do you really know what you are trying to achieve by having an effective social media strategy?

Where do you start and how do you relate what to measure online with your overall business goals?

We will discuss 10 reasons that businesses, small and large, are active online. Read through each goal and then choose just two of those goals before you indulge in the rest of this book. Once you decide where you are going, you will have a better vision of how you are going to get there.

Most people will answer the question “Why are you doing social media?” with “To get more sales”. Many of the reasons below will result in more sales. Therefore, this has been removed as a reason to be active online.

To drive traffic to your website

If the majority of your sales come from your website, then it is a no-brainer to have this goal as top of your list. Traffic to your website is important for all businesses, but especially important if you are selling your products or services online.

You can create an amazing website that looks stunning and is extremely functional. However, without traffic to the site you are going nowhere fast.

Using social media to drive traffic to your website is easy:

- **Twitter.** You can embed the link to your website in a tweet.



(Check out Chapter 12 for help with Twitter.)



Setting your digital marketing goals and objectives is the first stage to social media success.



Use a URL shortener (see pages 217-218) to gain statistics on how often a link has been clicked on from your social networking sites.

...cont'd

- **Facebook.** In Chapter 11, we will talk through how to post a link to your website on Facebook, which is also a highly effective way to drive traffic back to your website. You can also use the Facebook applications or Facebook adverts to achieve similar results.



- **LinkedIn.** Post updates into your LinkedIn status update to drive traffic back to your blog, products online, or any part of your website. We'll cover this in Chapter 13.



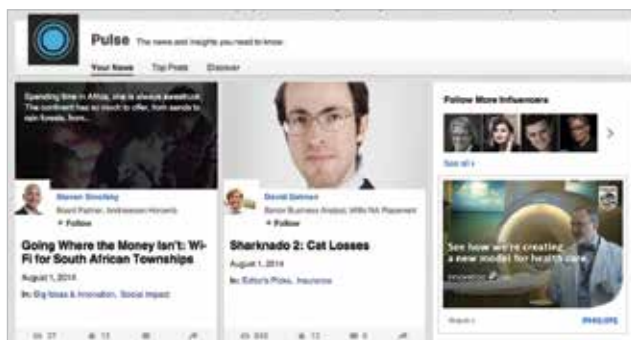
There are many ways in which you can use social media to drive traffic back to your website. Always check that your website is visible in the “About us” areas of your online profiles or biographies for additional opportunities.

To appear an expert in your field

Everybody trusts an expert! As every salesperson will tell you, individuals want to do business with people they know, like, and trust.

...cont'd

The best way to brand yourself as an expert is by using a strategy that leverages social media. This includes LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and top of the pile is blogging. We will go into more detail in Chapter 3 on how you can appear an expert in your field within each platform.



Did you know that you can publish articles on LinkedIn and become an influencer? What a fabulous way to appear a subject matter expert! If you have a longer piece of writing, instead of writing a post, write an article (see page 234 for more information about this).

Brand awareness

There are many reasons that brand awareness may be top of your social media goals. You may be a fledgling company that is dipping its toes in the business world, or you may have been established for many years with a solid customer base and are now looking to expand into different markets. Perhaps you have a new product to launch, or a new service to sell to a niche market.

Reputation management

Social media helps a brand reach out to their customers and communicate with them, playing a significant role in online reputation management. 70% of people who look for reviews online trust posts by friends and family, while 90% trust reviews from other consumers. From a business-to-business (B2B) point of view, 42% of people look up the people that they are going to do business with, and 45% of people learnt something from searching online, which changed their minds. (Source: <https://statuslabs.com/reputation-management-stats-2020>) What better place to be constantly looking for reviews than social media?



Don't forget to give away your knowledge and expertise as much as possible to gain credibility.



Provide videos on YouTube to show your expertise in a particular subject, sector or industry. See pages 36-37 for more on creating effective videos.



Make sure all your platforms are branded professionally.

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Surveys (<http://ow.ly/tt6Mw>) tell us that 22% of people who have had a bad experience are likely to comment about it online, while only 9% of people who have had a good experience will do the same. All these numbers point to a growing trend where the reputation of a business online directly impacts bottom-line revenue.

Having a strategy for reputation management is key for many businesses, especially in the service industry. Perhaps you have bought a business from a previous owner who did not have a brilliant reputation, in which case having “reputation management” as your main social media goal should be top of your list.

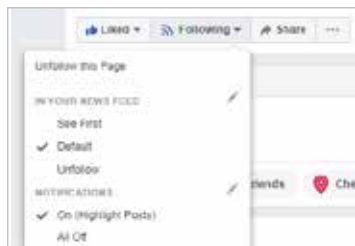
To keep an eye on the competition

If it is important to find out what kind of customers your competitors are targeting, or what their social media marketing strategy looks like, then the reason “keeping an eye on your competitors” should be toward the top of your list.

As important as it is to keep an eye on the competition, many small business owners don't know much about what their competitors are doing to reach customers. The benefits of watching your competitors are almost immediate – you learn what you can do to make your business unique, you see their weaknesses (i.e. customer service issues), and you get great ideas to improve your own strategy.

You can set up Twitter lists for all of your competitors (see the Twitter lists section in Chapter 12 on how to set up lists).

It is easy to keep an eye on the competition on Facebook by clicking the **Follow** button on their page and choosing from the options in the drop-down menu, so you do not miss any posts. Once you have done this, for any posts that appear on their page, you will see a red notification symbol on your personal profile.



Don't forget you do not need to actually follow your competitors on Twitter – you simply add them to a list.

...cont'd

To uncover new opportunities and meet new people

Expanding your customer base has always been expensive, and it may be even more so today. In an uncertain economic climate, few companies seem ready to take the risk of starting out with new suppliers. Instead, it makes sense to look for new opportunities in industries where you are already doing business.

If new sales are top of your list, then this should be your number-one goal. Your social media strategy for uncovering new opportunities will be based on listening and engagement.

There are many strategies to gain opportunities for potential new sales. These are covered in the detailed chapters for each platform later in the book.

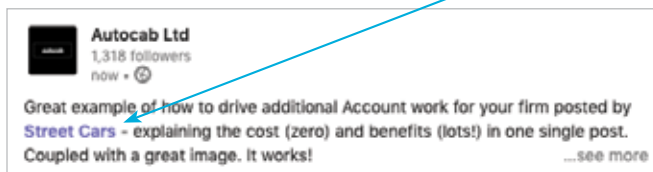
Customer loyalty

If you are struggling to retain customers and find yourself having to search for new clients, then customer loyalty will be important to you. Implement a social media strategy to ensure customer retention and loyalty.

There are many ways to keep in contact with your customers online.

- Make sure that you are tagging your customers in posts that are relevant to them. Here is an example of how you can do this on Facebook:

Tag the business in the post



- Feed your customers with regular free content utilizing your blog and social networking platforms.
- Set up Twitter lists for your current clients.
- You can tag your clients in all platforms to say that it was good to meet with them, retweet their messages to your network, or share their blog articles on your LinkedIn page, etc.



Remember to use the tagging facility on all networks to ensure that your customer will see the post.

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- Have a listening strategy set up for potential customer complaints so that you can react quickly. Providing a first-class service online will always help with customer retention.

To get news instantaneously

If you are a local business, then having a listening strategy for local news is key. You may be in an industry that constantly needs to be ahead of the game to be successful. Therefore, this is the goal for you.

- Are you following your local newspapers and radio stations online?
- Do you have notifications set up for your local town?

To help improve your search results

Search remains the main way in which many people discover a business, and search engine optimization (SEO) (find out more in Chapter 4) should be a key part of your online communications strategy. An active presence on social media, and sharing and distributing keyword-rich content, will improve your placing on Google and other search engines, ensuring that more people find you online.

Social media is the future of communications

Social media is not a fad and it is not going away. Millennials – your next pool of employees, customers, and competitors – prefer to use text messaging and the social web over any other form of communication. It is the natural evolution of communications. If you are not involved in social media at this stage, then you will simply be playing catch-up in a few years' time or your business will not exist.

The social web is where a generation is going to connect, learn and discover. Ignore this at your peril! You have got to be in it to win it! Here are some examples of what we do at **In Easy Steps**:

...cont'd

Facebook



Twitter



...cont'd

Website



Pinterest



LinkedIn

