

Ten Do's and Don'ts for Social Media Marketing

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Social media is important for your business and how you behave when you're on a social media site is just as important. Your online personality is part of you - it is an interactive experience for you and your business. Who is the face or voice of your product or service? How do you want to be perceived? Here are some helpful do's and don'ts to keep your image intact and make you and your business a social media success.

Do's:

Define your goals. What do you want to accomplish through social media? Do you want to reach potential customers or share knowledge with others who work in your field? Always keep your goals in mind to guide you through your actions in social media.

Be respectful. Treat others as if you were face-to-face with them. People online have feelings, too. A lot can be conveyed in what you write and how you write it.

Participate. You want to make sure you are seen and heard, so submit articles, post comments and stay visible. Keep it on the positive side. Contribute constructive comments after you read something that is interesting. Don't forget to congratulate the author of a really good post. You know you would appreciate it.

Be open-minded. One of the main goals in social media is sharing and collaborating, so if someone says you missed an important point or they are right and you are wrong, be gracious about it. You should openly welcome feedback from your peers. They could be customers.

Be vigilant. Keep an eye on your competition and see what they are up to. Where are they listed? Who are their fans on Facebook? What kind of promotions are they offering?

This is one way to stay ahead of the game when your business is on social media.

Don'ts:

Don't spam. This is the biggest taboo of them all. It is counterproductive and might even get you banned or penalized.

Don't stalk people. If you invited someone to become your "friend" and they have declined your invitation, don't keep bothering them. If a business connection hasn't replied to any of your messages, quit while you're ahead. Any effort on your part to insist on a friendship could be viewed as stalking and your image could be damaged.

Don't social climb. Social climbers take note. As you build your social media personality, don't only connect with people who have a lot of "followers," "friends," or "connections." It makes sense to engage with popular members of social media, but it's even better to connect with other quality audiences. Start slowly and begin to build your personality one social media platform at a time

Don't be negative. As the saying goes, "if you can't say something nice..." That doesn't mean you can't disagree with someone and offer constructive criticism. What should be avoided at all costs is a type of environment where accusations are made and insults are traded. It will get you nowhere and only reflect negatively on you and your business.

Don't be a broken record. If you are using Twitter, reach out to everyone talking about your product or service with a personally written tweet. Do not resend the same thing over and over. People you interact with will read your Twitter stream and want to see what useful information you provide

In conclusion, act like a decent human being and you will do well. Treat people like you would like to be treated yourself. Promote your business, products and services, but do it in a non-invasive way. Try to be positive, take criticism in stride and keep your negative thinking to yourself. Participate and encourage others to do so. Let everyone know about what you do and how it contributes to the collective effort. And remember - it takes time. Follow these basic rules and your business will thrive.

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