



## Center for Economic Vitality

Western Washington University  
College of Business and Economics

### Social Media for Business

#### Part 1: Overview

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#### So what is Social Media?

You may have heard of Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube and Buzz. While this list is not complete, these are all social media networks that people use to interact with each other online. Social media is media that uses technology to allow for interaction between people, groups and organizations in the form of audio, video, blogs and images through social networks.

Before we dig deeper into what social media is, here is a small exercise for you. To do this exercise you will need a computer with internet access. Follow these instructions:

Step 1: Open your web browser

Step 2: Go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

Step 3: Type in your business name in the search box

Step 4: Click on Google Search

You might ask what the relevance of this exercise is. Is someone other than you talking about your business? If the answer is no, this Social Media Summer Series will help you start conversations online about your business. The series will help you understand what social media is, the importance of a social media strategy, tools that can help achieve a strategy and how to measure returns from social media.

#### Social Media and Marketing

The internet is the most important innovation in communication since the creation of the printing press.<sup>1</sup> The World Wide Web, a part of the internet, allowed interaction among people helping to create relationships between them.<sup>2</sup> People started using the internet much faster than the speed at which

Word of Mouth  
FourSquare HootSuite  
Complaints YouTube  
Feedback Podcasts Internet  
Measurement Facebook Online  
Reputation Tweet Tools Listening  
**SOCIAL MEDIA**  
Yelp LinkedIn Interaction  
Share Like Comment RSS Feed  
#Blogs Relationship Conversation  
Strategy Customer del.icio.us  
Compliments Buzz Twitter Business  
Marketing  
Authenticity

they adapted to the TV or radio.<sup>3</sup> This has forced businesses to respond quickly. Technology has allowed people to interact with each other and to access and share information with each other. Businesses have been forced to use this technology to connect with customers to develop relationships with customers. Businesses must adopt new marketing and public relations practices to cope with changing communication channels.

Why do businesses need to develop relationships? There has been a shift in the media that businesses are using to get their messages to their customers. Traditional media include newspapers, radio, television, magazines, brochures and such other media. It focused on how businesses could push the product or service to the customer.<sup>4</sup> Businesses spoke at customers who would then self-select and associate themselves with a product or service.

Today, customers are seeking products and services from businesses with which they share a relationship. They are finding and sharing a lot of information about businesses, products and services on the internet. Anyone can publish information online, comment on other people's opinions and build relationships with like-minded people around the world. According to Seth Godin, a popular blogger and social media author, "new marketing treats every interaction, product, service, and side effect as a form of media."<sup>5</sup> This ability to publish has given customers a lot of power in terms of their demand for different and better products and services. In other words, customers use the internet to find reviews about products and services.<sup>6</sup> They listen to and read what current customers have to say about a product or service, influencing their decisions.

The importance of customer satisfaction and positive customer relationships cannot be overstated. Marketing has become customer-centric rather than a focused on the product. Marketers are moving away from focusing on selling what the manufacturer chooses to make and instead are focusing on products and services customers want to buy. Ignoring customer's time, patronage or feedback will cost businesses money.

Another important point of difference between traditional marketing and social media marketing is the cost. Traditional media is more expensive, considering the investment in advertising and promotion. A small business does not have such large sums of money to spend on marketing. Social media is inexpensive and in most cases free to use. This can be beneficial for a small business that has limited marketing dollars to spend but wants to reach a broad customer base.

## Getting Started

Andy Sernovitz, author of *Word of Mouth Marketing - How Smart companies Get People Talking*, says, "Make sure the word-of-mouth is good." Social media has made word-of-mouth marketing relevant online and louder than ever before. The first step in getting started with social media for a small business is to listen. Listening to what customers are saying online about your business will help you understand who is talking about your business, what customers like and dislike about its products/services and competitors' reviews and activities. This listening is followed by putting a plan in place to join online conversations using the right tools and then measuring success of the plan.

## References and Additional Resources

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<sup>1</sup> Hoffman. D.L. (2000 Winter). The revolution will not be televised; introduction to the special issue on marketing science and the Internet. Marketing Science, 19 (1), 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Cooley. T. (1999, Summer). Interactive communication-public relations on the web. [On-line} Public Relations Quarterly 44(2), 41-42. Available: WINSPIRS 4.0B2, ABI, Inform Global Edition with text.

<sup>3</sup> Holtz, S. (1999). Public relations on the net: winning strategies to inform and influence the media, the investment community, the government, the public, and more. NY: American management association (AMA) Publications.

<sup>4</sup>Scott, David Meerman. (2007).The New Rules of Marketing & PR. John Wiley, & Sons, Hoboken, New Jersey.

<sup>5</sup> Godin, Seth (2007), Meatball sundae, Is Your Marketing Out of Sync?, Penguin Books Ltd. London, England.

<sup>6</sup> McConnell, Ben & Huba, Jackie (2007).Citizen marketers. When People Are The Message. Kaplan publishing, Chicago.