

6 Tips How Social Media Can Help Your Business

Social media refers to the online tools that people use to share content, opinions, interests, experiences and media itself, all while facilitating online interaction between groups of people. These tools include: blogs, forums, podcasts, bookmarks, networks, communities and wikis. Some of the new social media brands include Facebook, YouTube, Myspace, Twitter, LinkedIn, Digg, and Stumbleupon. Social media is a great way to connect with other people, and a smart social media strategy can help small businesses compete, thrive, and survive.

“Social media can dramatically raise the profile of small business products or services,” explains Kelly Cutler, CEO of Marcel Media, a Chicago-based strategic interactive advisory firm. “Small business leaders can use social media and Web 2.0 campaigns to generate quality links, forge relationships, generate direct sales, and build a company’s authority in their respective industry.”

Here are some of the benefits that businesses can expect from leveraging social media:

1. Easier access to more people

With the rise of popularity of social networking sites like Facebook and Myspace, more and more businesses are utilizing these sites to access more people with greater ease. Social networking sites also have tools, which allow for mass messaging, chatting and link and file sharing, just to name a few. The same can be said of tools such as message boards, online communities, blogs and bookmarking sites.

2. A more engaged and loyal audience

Social media brings people together through their interests, which already gives businesses an advantage. If businesses reach audiences who already have interest in their industry or niche, then they are more likely to capture an audience of higher quality. The audience then effectively creates a larger buzz about the business.

3. Building a rapport with users

Through interaction with users, businesses can form relationships that are more intimate with prospective customers. Profiles on social networking sites, for example, create a point of contact for users.

4. Direct feedback

Once businesses build a rapport with their users, it is easier for users to share feedback with them. Users can direct comments, questions and concerns to the point of contact. This is beneficial, as businesses will learn directly from their customers what has been successful and what areas need focus to improve upon.

5. Ability to share content

By using Social media to share content, businesses will keep users up to date on the news, events and all pertinent information that the business has to offer. The content thus generates user interaction and stays current by promoting discussions on the topic at hand.

6. Increased referral to main website

By bookmarking and sharing content related to the business, users will drive traffic back to the business’ website. These higher quality visitors will have a greater chance of generating new customers which results in higher return on investment.