

The Social Media Marketing List: 45 things you should be doing but probably aren't

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When discussing social media marketing, lots of folks, including me, say things like 'be authentic' and wave our hands around. That makes you want to kick me in the coccyx, I'm sure. So, here's a list of 45 specific things you should be doing.

1. Learn HTML. Learn. It. It's not that hard. Read Pearsonified's cool post about semantic markup for blogs if you want to dive deep. If title tags make you itch, then just focus on learning the following HTML tags: P, H1, H2, H3, A, UL, OL, LI, STRONG, and EM. Come ON. It's only 10 tags. That'll be enough to keep you going for a while.
2. Learn to listen. Wait! Don't kick me in the tailbone! I've got specifics: Download my free e-book about Google Reader as a social media monitoring tool and use it. That'll cover you for a while. Later, look at using something more robust, like Trackur.
3. Learn to help. Now that you're listening, set a goal: Answer one question a day. Don't make a sales pitch! But provide a useful answer to one person every day. The question might be related to your business, or it might not. Either way, your answers will earn you trust, friends and a reputation. Reputation = currency.
4. Track results. Use Tweetmeme, bit.ly and other services that track audience response.
5. Get a Tweetmeme account.
6. Get a bit.ly account.
7. Don't track ROI. You can't track return on investment from social media. Not directly, anyway. Don't set that expectation, and smash it anywhere it shows up. Social media marketing is about building a reputation that you can trade on to boost other marketing efforts.
8. Don't trust anyone who says they can track ROI. I've looked at dozens of tools promising to track social media ROI. They all end up tracking clicks, which you can already do with free stuff like Google Analytics. None tie reputation to ROI. Because they can't.
9. Destroy all auto-follow software. If you're using Twitter, avoid auto-follow programs and all other schemes that promise to get you 'thousands of followers overnight'. Auto-following is like the guy with the major nose whistle next to you in the library: Persistent, maddening, and may end in violence.
10. Avoid schemes. Following #1 a bit further, avoid anything that promises to make social media marketing an 'overnight success' for your business. There is no overnight success in social media! K? Shoot for overnight success and you'll end up like the last 3-4 armies that tried to take Moscow: Out in the cold, with no friends left.
11. Take ownership. Of yourself. Use Michael Streko's most excellent Knowem service to own a profile on every major social media site. That'll keep nasty buggers from stealing your name and/or brand.
12. Take ownership. Of the person/brand otherwise known as yourself. Be sure to also set up profiles, particularly on Twitter and Facebook, for permutations on your name. If you've already got @thebikeshop, try to get @the_bike_shop, too. If you can't, so be it. But it pays to own your name as completely as possible.
13. Never lie. Never. NEVER EVER. The social media universe has the combined lie-detecting power of every mom, dad, cynic and psychic online. They. Will. Catch you.
14. Own. Then apologize. If you screw up (WHEN you screw up), don't be defensive. Just say "Argh, I'm sorry, I really screwed up there". Own the mistake. Then apologize. You can even take it a step further and make some contribution/offer to win folks back.

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15. Don't be mean.
16. Don't steal. EVER. If I catch you plagiarizing so much as a tweet from someone else, I will find you and kick your ass so hard your tongue will swell up. I despise plagiarism. So do most other people. I just happen to be a little psycho, too.
17. Tweet at least 5 useful links a day. That does NOT count your own blog.
18. Tweet at least 5 other things per day. Try to make it something funny/newsworthy/informative. Or, it can be totally random.
19. ReTweet at least twice a day. Everyone's helping you out by re-tweeting your stuff. Be sure to pay them back.
20. Integrate everything! Have your Twitter feed show up on your Facebook fan page. Put links to both on your web site. Show your YouTube videos on your favorite social media site. You get the idea.
21. Create a social media rolodex. As you meet new folks online, record their account name and the network on which you met them. No, you don't have to keep track of everyone. But do keep track of anyone in your industry, folks you find interesting, and Aunt Myrtle. Myrtle will pinion you at the next family reunion if you don't answer her annual Facebook post.
22. Track repeat contacts. If one of the folks in your rolodex starts to chat with you, record that, too. Nothing fancy - just a check or a count. That'll help with the next step.
23. Set a routine for keeping in touch. Flag the top folks in your rolodex. Schedule time every day to read their blog/Tweets/whatever and respond. Relationships take work.
24. Don't keep score. Note that I'm not saying you should keep score in a 'This person ignored my post about toilet paper sculpture, so screw them' way. Just keep an address book, the same way you keep an e-mail address list or an address book on your computer.
25. Make a 'must comment' list. In Google Reader, take the blogs of the top folks in your rolodex and put them in a separate 'must comment' folder. When you have time, go through the folder. See if any posts grab your attention. If they do, comment!
26. Link. If you're blogging, link to smart folks who have written great stuff. If you're not blogging, go back to step 1 and start over. What were you thinking?
27. Let go of your web site. Every piece of content you create doesn't have to live on your web site. Put something on Facebook that won't go anywhere else. If your video gets more views on YouTube than on your site, rejoice! It's still helping you. Your web site is still the hub - the most important asset you've got. But it's not the only asset.
28. Hide from your boss. When you start dabbling, don't tell your boss. Or, tell her just enough to keep yourself from getting fired. But I promise you: If you try to get a formal plan or some such in place, you'll be accountable for reporting every dime not generated by ROI. You'll also be deluged with e-mails from higher-ups asking why you're not using this scam artist's Twitter tool or that moron's 'magical' auto-blogging tool. Hell on earth.
29. Understand the fear. 99% of the American workforce has one goal: Avoid getting fired. Your managers don't want to take risks. Your co-workers don't want to make the managers take risks. The manager's managers are paranoid that any gamble will clobber their bonus. Unfortunately, scoffing won't help. Nor will snotty remarks. I've tried both. Understand why folks are afraid, and try to work with them.
30. Take away the risk. If you're really passionate about making something happen in social media, you can address your boss's fears by taking away the risk. Tell them you'll stay away from mentioning your brand for a while. Make it a personal project. Show them how you build an audience. Then slowly expand the campaign. Think of it as social media therapy for your boss.
31. Use social media to build SEO. Social media can generate links, directly and indirectly. If you write a great blog post, bloggers you know may link to you. Then bloggers they know will link to you, too. And so on. That's part of the reason you've been building your reputation all this time. Enjoy it!
32. Use SEO to build social media. Do a little link building for your Facebook fan page. If your fan page ranks #3 for your

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brand name, or for another great term, that's a win, right? Also, look at putting content on YouTube. If a video gets enough attention, it may show up in blended search.

33. Don't obsess about the numbers. If you start comparing Twitter follower counts or Feedburner subscribers, you're gonna get depressed. The first 2 years I blogged I tracked subscriber numbers. My wife had to remove sharp objects from the house.
34. Approach it one person at a time. Instead of numbers, think about people and relationships one person at a time. Each one of those people becomes a conduit to their networks. Over time, that will build your own network in a lasting way.
35. Meet one person, in person, every month. OK, so I such at this one. But if you can, try to meet one of your rolodex folks in person. Maybe they're in your city, or they're going to be at a conference you're attending. Say hi. Shake hands. Attach a voice to the avatar.
36. Reward followers. Give your Facebook fans a special coupon code. Offer free advice (for a limited time) to Twitter followers. Make those folks feel special, and they'll pay you back by bringing you more fans. Oh, and they'll probably buy stuff, too.
37. Don't reward them too much. If you start giving out deals left and right they'll lose their appeal. Stick to special occasions like your birthday, or a holiday, or the fact that Aunt Myrtle went home.
38. Always take the second step. There's always one more thing you can do. For example: Say you do a coupon offer. The offer expires. You know you have 100 people in your rolodex, but only 30 used the coupon. Reach out to the other 70 - don't be cheesy, but let them know you're sorry they missed the offer. Then give them a smaller possible offer as a makeup gift. It works.
39. Create fame. Watch Laura Roeder's great videos about this. Use a little bit of fame to create more by offering advice via a contest. One way or another, turn a few people from your Rolodex into references.
40. Use social proof. If you speak at an event and get rave reviews on Twitter, don't be afraid to post those to your site. I'm not saying you should write a post titled "Why I'm great" and then list the compliments. Be humble, but acknowledge the praise. That becomes powerful social proof that you are Someone Worth Listening To.
41. Learn to speak human. Most folks turn into automatons when they're asked to write something. Try using humanspeak, instead: Expressions like 'uh-oh', 'crap', 'SWEET', 'indubitably' and 'wow' spring to mind. Everyone has their own language - use yours, instead of reverting to grammar school dictionary writing.
42. React! If you get into a great discussion on Twitter, Facebook or some such, don't just walk away and leave folks hanging. Stay in the conversation until it runs out of steam. Normally, I don't like folks to obsess overmuch about updates, but this is one time when it can be a Good Thing.
43. Set a routine. Put an egg timer or stopwatch on your desk, or something similar on your computer. Run it in 1-hour increments. Every hour, check e-mail, check Twitter, and maybe post to Facebook, Twitter or elsewhere. Then turn them all off and go back to work. It's OK to break this rule if you come across something great and want to post it. Just remember: You probably have other work to do. You need to keep the massive flood of social media background noise to a minimum.
44. I have to say it: Be authentic. Don't try to adopt a persona or voice that isn't you. That will turn social media into hard work. Plus the facade will inevitably crack, leaving you with an angry mob. It's a lot easier to just be you and converse. (Please don't kick me.)
45. Persist. Every now and then, someone you despise will brag that they sold 999 of their newest widget by following 999999 people on Twitter and spamming them relentlessly. Stay good! Don't quit in frustration. Don't start spamming. If you stick to your routine, success may take time, but it's inevitable and lasting.

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