



# Internet Marketing Basics

## Learning Outcomes

**By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:**

- ✓ Market your online business using social media and the Internet

# Internet Marketing Basics

## What it Looks Like

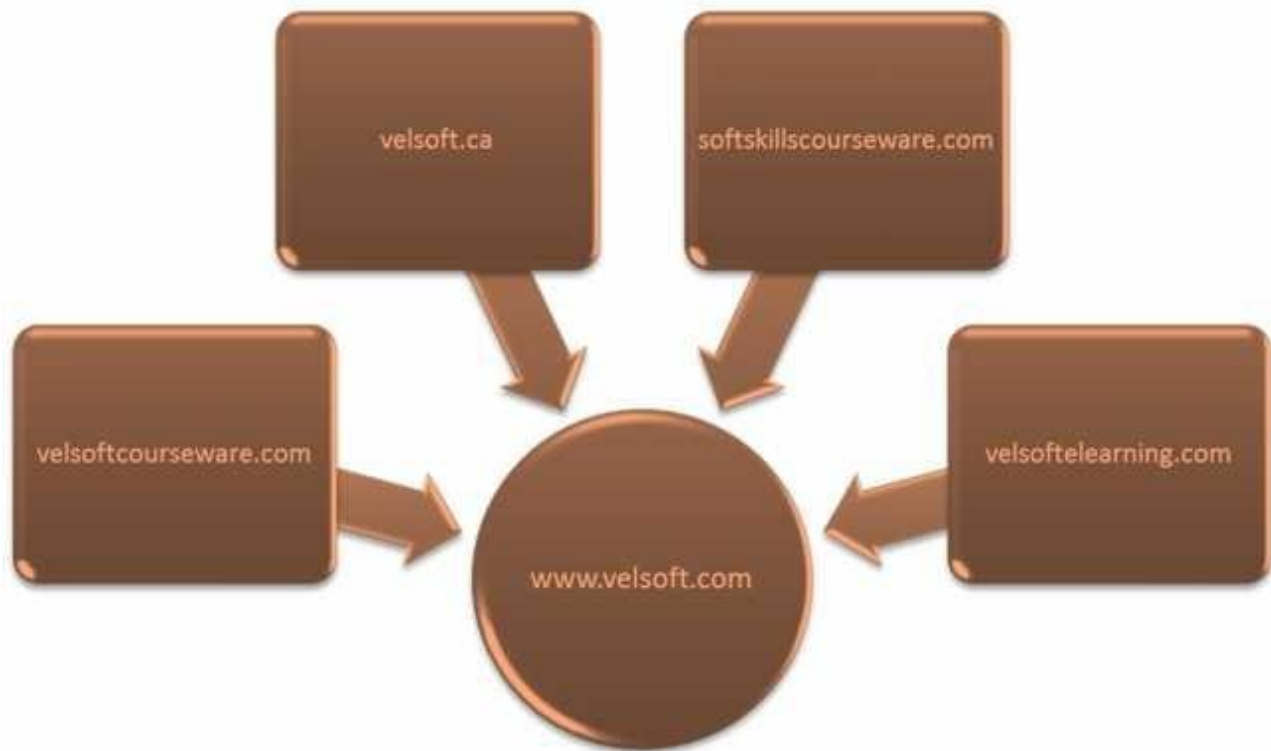
### What is Internet Marketing?

Internet marketing is just what it sounds like: using the Internet to leverage your marketing strategy so that your company flourishes. Marketing strictly by the Internet is not the goal, so you will see that we refer to an Internet marketing strategy as an element of your overall marketing strategy.

If you are going to have an Internet marketing strategy, you need to be ready to establish (or if you already have one, expand) your digital presence and reach. In this course, we will sometimes refer to your **website**. Since you may have several sites that are related to one company or one individual, we sometimes also refer to a **hub site**. Your hub site is your main web site, to which any others are linked.

### Sample Site Structure

Here is an example of Velsoft's different sites, which are built around the hub site [www.velsoft.com](http://www.velsoft.com).



## Test Your Knowledge

What is the hub site for your company?

What other sites does your company own/use (sub-domains, blogs, social networking sites, etc.)?

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## Popular Strategies

There are some preferred and effective strategies that companies use when it comes to Internet marketing. You may find that only some of them fit with your overall marketing strategy, but we recommend that you consider each of them. Your goal is to use the strategies which best connect you to your customers and prospects, and also fit into your overall marketing strategy.

### Web Design and Development

Your business is going to be reflected in your website, so it needs to look good. Your website needs to be a comprehensive and engaging demonstration of what you do with and for your customers. It is no longer enough to have a brochure style website (which just lists your products and services with a few pictures).

In 2007, I met a business owner who said that she budgeted \$10,000 a year for her website, which supported her two-million dollar a year company. This gave me a lot to think about, because on scale \$10,000 for a couple of million dollars in revenue doesn't seem to be too much. How much should a business budget for a website? The answer depends on what you want to do.

There are plenty of templates available to get you started if you want to create your own website. Some small businesses manage to start with a tiny presence and a free page on a site like Facebook or Etsy. However, if you plan for your company to grow and be taken as a serious member of the business marketplace, consider what your web presence will be, how much you will spend on it, and what you want to accomplish. Bigger isn't always better, but content is most important. Unless you are putting good content on your site, don't bother with a website at all.

### Affiliate Programs

With affiliate programs, you can use your web presence to recruit others to sell your products, or you can sell products for other companies from your website. This approach can be helpful if you do not have a lot of products to offer of your own, or if there are complementary products out there that can help you get started.

As an example, if you write a blog and include posts about great books that you have read, you could set up affiliate links to a bookseller, where you get a portion of sales (a commission) that come from people who click on the ad on your blog.

If you have plenty of products available and you want people to sell them for you, then you can set yourself up where you act like the book wholesaler in the example above, and people who sell for you receive a portion of every sale that originates from their web links, while you get to keep the profits from the overall sale.

### **E-mail Marketing**

You can create a list of subscribers and create an e-mail that goes out periodically and engages readers. There are lots of services you can use (both paid and free) to help you get your messages out in an appealing format that can be read on computers, tablets, smartphones, and so on. Make sure you check the rules (often called **terms of service**) about e-mail marketing, since the law in many places now states that you cannot just send these messages to whomever you want. (Typically, you need people's permission to add them to your mailout lists.) We'll get into more detail about e-mail marketing in Session Five.

### **Using Social Media**

Social media is an effective and growing resource that allows you to connect with your consumers. Whether you use one site or many, if the people you want to connect with are on social media, you probably need to be there too. Social media sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter are almost essential for companies with lots of consumers using those sites, but the return you get depends on your business. Niche businesses may be better off using niche social networking sites.

Social media marketing takes a lot of very skilled work and patience in order for you to see a return on your investment, but it is an effective way to connect to lots of people.

### **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

There is now a whole industry called SEO (which stands for Search Engine Optimization) that helps you get strong rankings in major search engines. This helps people to find you easily and for you to engage with them. We use SEO to understand what our consumers want, how they look for it online (through analyzing what search terms and patterns of usage they use), and then we design our digital spaces so that they can find us easily. We'll discuss SEO in more detail in Session Six.

## **Creating an Internet Marketing Plan**

### **Leveraging What You Already Have**

#### **The Role of Internet Marketing**

To be successful, you should set up an Internet marketing plan that supplements your overall marketing strategy and complements your social marketing strategy. With this in mind, let's review some marketing basics. Remember that any marketing plan will undergo plenty of revisions until you get it to a point where you are satisfied that all stages are working effectively.

Given the fluidity of the Internet, you may be making more changes than ever. This can be frustrating for people who are not used to working in such a changeable state. It will help you tremendously if you work with marketing professionals who are good at what they do and have a clearly demonstrated track record.

**The Marketing Cycle**

Marketing uses the steps illustrated below. Your Internet marketing strategy will draw from the information in the first three steps, and then become part of step four (creating a marketing plan).



**Making Our Way through the Marketing Process**

**Stage One: Consumer and Market Analysis**

In stage one, consumer and market analysis, you are conducting research about your consumer and what they need. You have to be honest and look at their needs, which might be in direct contrast to what you think of as your ideal consumer. Since we are looking at Internet marketing, it makes sense to connect to your consumer through an Internet pathway to find out what you need to know.

Your goal is to identify groups of people (called **segments**) who have related or similar needs so that your marketing dollars can be directly pointed at them. There are several questions to ask here:

- What do they need?
- Who is buying our product? Who is using our product?
- How can I leverage segmentation? Once you know which segment of the marketplace is interested in your products, how will you make the most of their interest in buying from you? Will you offer supplementary services or products? How will connecting to them via the Internet help to spread your digital reach and increase the influence you have over their decisions?
- What is the buying process? It generally follows the steps below:



### **Stage Two: Analyzing the Competition and Yourself**

You need to take an honest look at your operation in order to create a plan that helps you to exceed the competition. We can camouflage all kinds of things in an analysis, so be honest and protect the viability of your business.

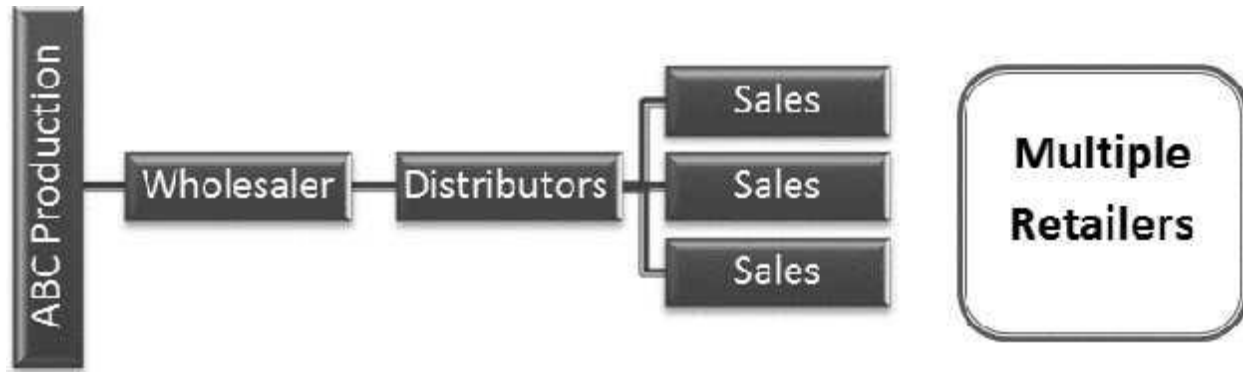
Some questions you must ask include:

- What are your advantages?
- What are your core competencies (the things you do well)?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Where are your shortcomings?
- What can you do to capitalize on your strengths?
- What can you do to exploit the competitions weaknesses and shortcomings?

### **Stage Three: Analyzing Distribution Channels**

There are plenty of options for getting your product to your customer. Deciding which ones to use will have an impact on pricing, profit margins, servicing, and timing. There are plenty of options available, and in choosing yours you may need to consider what your goals are and how many layers of people are involved.

In a product that is typically used by an individual purchasing in a retail store, the product can go from your production facility to a wholesaler, and then to smaller distributors to be sold to a retailer. Each step in the process has to produce a profit, just as it does when you sell a service. In a complex system, you may be surprised at how many people are involved. The flow below is common:



At each stop on the chain, the participant does something that adds value to the product (packages, labels, or advertising, for example) and earns a profit.

#### Stage Four: Creating a Marketing Plan

Your market research gets applied in a marketing plan based on the five P's of marketing:

- Product (what it is and what it does)
- Price
- Place (Are you selling wholesale, retail, through a franchise, online, or from the back of your car?)
- Promotion (The way you present what you are selling and your public relations campaign)
- Packaging

#### Stages Five and Six: Implement, Evaluate, Review, and Revise

Once you have decided what you are doing and take action, you'll start to evaluate results, make revisions as needed, and keep going. Remember that marketing is a cyclical process. At any time in the cycle, you may need to return to an earlier stage to fix some kind of problem. If you are in the midst of pricing and realize that the product is not going to be affordable for your market segment, you'll have to step back and adjust. On the other hand, if you realize that your product is pre-selling in better volume than you ever imagined, you'll need to make sure that production can keep up with the demand.

### Extending Your Influence

#### Sharing Messages

Marketing has changed over the years, becoming committed to and focusing on **influence** much more so than about messages that reflect an approach to direct advertising. A part of this subtle difference is a change from messages that say "This is why you should buy from me," to messages that say, "This is how we help people who have needs just like you do. Look at how your neighbor/best friend/favorite uncle uses what we have."

Consider what your products and services are. Position your messages to **tell a story** about who uses your product and how it helps. Stop yourself from just explaining features and benefits.

Marketing over the Internet, and through social media in particular, allows us to connect and share stories much more easily than print media used to. If you think of this in terms of influence rather than selling, you can start to consider how you can share what your company does, what it stands for within the context of a community, and how to present yourself.

The **community** is a big part of marketing and social networking today. You can create connections to your community and influence their decisions without having to sell directly. Sponsoring a team, helping out a charity, or offering people information instead of commercial advertising all help to create an atmosphere of influence. These approaches reflect the successes of **relationship building and consultative selling** rather than direct sales.

With the lowering costs of producing **videos**, we can quickly put together a video that has real people who have used our real products talking about how they benefitted. Even better than testimonials, you can show (rather than tell) people using and benefitting from your products or services. If you think back to the marketing cycle and the research you have done about what your consumers need, you can also create instructional videos, informational pieces, and more that have some benefit to the viewer.

The video does not have to be directly about your products or services because you are creating them based on the ideas of influence and creating community. You could create parody pieces, interviews with interesting people, or share a piece about a project you learned from. The options are numerous, and really only limited by your own imagination and budget.

As Seth Godin has said in several of his books, what we really need is to **be remarkable**. So go ahead and get away from your ordinary way of doing business, step out of the proverbial cubicles and boxes, and entertain something different. Get your message out by daring to do it differently than everyone else, including yourself.

**Test Your Knowledge**

**Within your industry, what evidence do you see of organizations spreading influence?**

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**Does your organization influence or sell today?**

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**Come up with six ideas where you can influence your consumers rather than rely on direct selling. (You can get help from people in your group.)**

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### **Test Your Knowledge**

#### **Making it Real**

**You have created six ideas where you can influence your consumers and prospects. Starting with your favorite idea on the list, draft a brief plan for implementation. Work through the list in order as time allows.**

#### **Idea One**

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#### **Idea Two**

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#### **Idea Three**

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#### **Idea Four**

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## Idea Five

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## Idea Six

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## Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

### What is SEO?

No matter how popular your company is, or how unique your name is, people still have to be able to find you online. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) needs to be one of the tools you use in order to help you gain and maintain a digital reach that is both broad and deep. When you optimize your web pages, social media sites, blog, and wherever else you have an online presence, SEO helps you to get as close as you can to the top of search results – preferably to the top of the first page.

In order to get to the top of a search page, you need to select search terms and keywords that people look for, and then optimize your content to make it easy to find, or “search friendly.”

Your best SEO results come from having great content on your sites. This will also help you attract people who are interested in what you have to offer; the **qualified prospect**. Throughout our conversations about SEO, it’s important to remember that nothing is effective unless you offer good, strong content. Unless you appeal to visitors to your site, they don’t become qualified prospects and convert to customers.

### Understanding Search

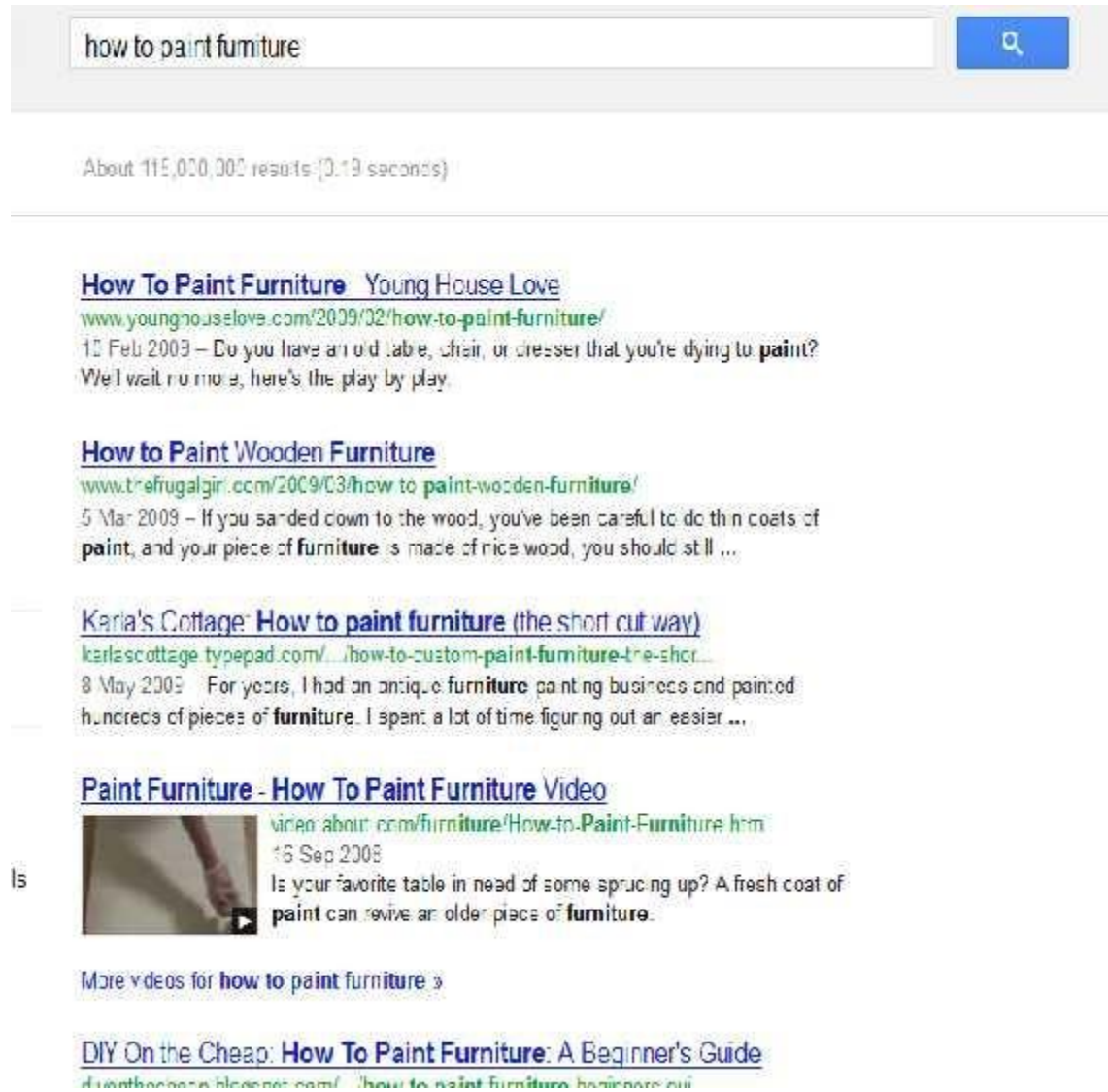
When it comes to getting found on the Internet, there are plenty of different tools that get used. We’re fortunate that a shared language has developed around them.

#### Spiders, Crawlers, Bots (or Robots)

These are automated processes that search engines use to visit all your sites and index what they find there.

## Natural and Organic Searches

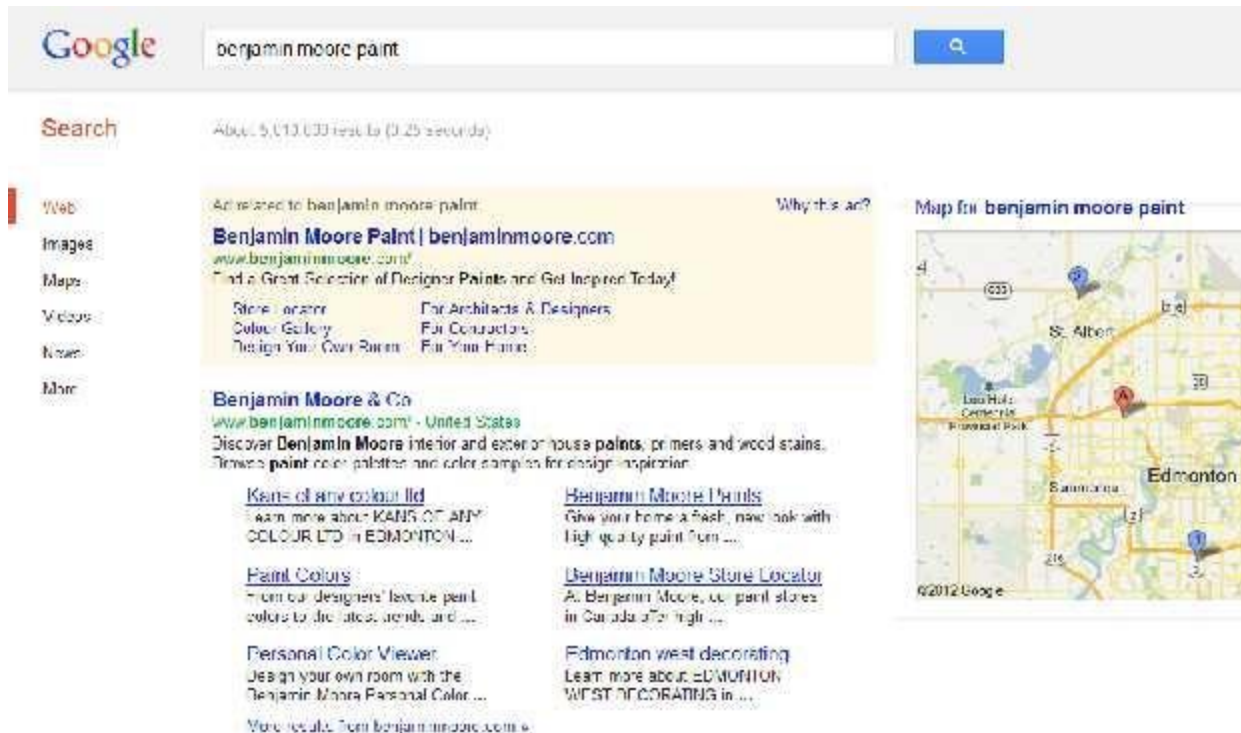
These are the lists of unpaid advertising sites that are generated after you do a keyword search. They are the result of the search engine's algorithm (a set of mathematical rules). They are different than a non-organic result (which may include paid advertising). In the example below, we searched for "how to paint furniture" and we got about 115,000,000 results. They are all natural or organic, because there are no paid ads on the page.



The screenshot shows a search engine interface with a search bar containing the text "how to paint furniture" and a blue search button with a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, it displays "About 115,000,000 results (0.19 seconds)". The search results are listed below a horizontal line. The first result is titled "How To Paint Furniture" from Young House Love, dated 10 Feb 2009. The second result is "How to Paint Wooden Furniture" from thefrugalgirl.com, dated 5 Mar 2009. The third result is "Karia's Cottage: How to paint furniture (the short cut way)" from karlascottage.typepad.com, dated 8 May 2009. The fourth result is "Paint Furniture - How To Paint Furniture Video" from video.about.com, dated 16 Sep 2008, and includes a small video thumbnail showing a hand painting a surface. Below this video result is a link for "More videos for how to paint furniture". The fifth result is "DIY On the Cheap: How To Paint Furniture: A Beginner's Guide" from diyhobbies.blogspot.com.

## Paid Searches

If we search for something more specific, like "Benjamin Moore Paint," the results show a paid ad first (with a very pale yellow background) and even a map with the nearest location, before the natural leads follow:



If you want to test how your site ranks by using different search terms, you can use a free trial at WebPosition.com or an inexpensive tool like ZoomRank.com. (Neither of these sites is endorsed nor recommended by us, but are simply provided here as a reference point.) If you are working with a professional marketing company, they can and should be testing your site rankings.

## How It Works

Search engines use tools like spiders, crawlers, or bots to trawl the Internet for new information. They are working all the time! Remember, though, that they may work on a different schedule than you do, so you need to prompt them to come look at what is new on your site by sending them a message.

You can update a search engine like Google, Bing, or Yahoo by using their webmaster tools and submitting the URL of the new or updated page. You have to submit to each search engine separately, and they don't like it if you are sending them all the same link.

Instead, you can choose to update one site and wait for the spiders from the other sites to find your new content, or you can stagger things. For example, you could send one site the updates for your hub site, another your blog updates, and the third an update to your social networking page. As you can already tell, this could get to be a big job, so you might find this easier if you use something called **pinging**.

**Pinging** is a process where you can advise the search engines that a change has been made. You can start pinging with a third-party service, or you can set up your website, blog, and so on to do it automatically. For example, large blogging sites such as WordPress, Blogger, or TypePad have pinging built in to their service already. For other sites, you simply have to submit the URL of the page you updated, the name of

the page or title of your article or information, and then click Submit. The service you are using will respond by broadcasting a message that your URL has been updated.

## The Search Engines

Once you get started with SEO, you will probably start getting sales e-mails from companies that want you to pay them a prince's ransom to get your site submitted to hundreds or even thousands of search engines. In reality, though, if you get ranked on the top sites, you will be captured in about 94% of all searches. (As of June 2012, 82.63% of global Internet searches were done using Google, followed by Yahoo at 6.84%, and then Bing at 4.46%. Source: (<http://marketshare.hitslink.com/search-engine-market-share.aspx?qprid=4>)

When you enter a search term, the search engine tries to offer you specialized results based on your past searches and what it gauges as your preferences. If you do a lot of research about fast cars, for example, that history also contributes to your results. Are you a researcher? If so, you'll see recent search topics in your results, too.

Let's look at how the three top search engines responded to a query for "marketing online."

### Bing

The screenshot shows the Bing search engine interface. The search bar contains the text "marketing online". Below the search bar, there are several search results. The first result is "Build an Online Business" from www.youllsoon.com. The second result is "Marketing Your Site" from www.capitolarea.com. The third result is "Marketing Magazine" from www.marketingmagazine.com. The fourth result is "Internet marketing - Wikivoyage, the free encyclopedia" from en.wikivoyage.org. The fifth result is "Online Marketing Articles, Tips & Expert Advice" from www.entrepreneur.com. The sixth result is "News about marketing online" from bing.com/news. On the right side of the page, there are several sponsored links, including "Affiliate Marketing Exch", "Free Email Marketing", "Try EmailChair for Smart Local Marketing, Newsletters, Sales Email", "\$29.95 Video Spokesperson", "\$29.95 For Top 3 Results", "Want Passive Income?", and "Free Online Course Events At On Wealth Creation".



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SafeSearch On

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[www.entrepreneur.com/marketing/online-marketing/index.html](http://www.entrepreneur.com/marketing/online-marketing/index.html) - [Cached](#)

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**Internet marketing - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**

[Types of Internet...](#) | [Business models](#) | [Advantages and...](#) | [Security concerns](#)

Internet marketing, also known as web marketing, online marketing, web advertising, or e-marketing, is related to as the marketing (generally promotional) of products or...

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet\\_marketing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_marketing) - [Cached](#)

**Online Marketing blog**

Grow your business with Top Rank Online Marketing tips, articles, interviews & how to's on social media, search engine optimization & content marketing.

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[See your message here](#)

Google

The image shows a Google search interface for the query "marketing online". The search bar at the top contains the text "marketing online" and a search button. Below the search bar, the results are categorized into "Search" and "Ads".

**Search Results:**

- Web:** A list of navigation options including Web, Images, Maps, Videos, News, Shopping, Books, and More.
- Related to marketing online:** A section with a yellow background containing:
  - Online Marketing Tools | Floqua.com** (www.floqua.com/Online-Marketing) - Head Floqua's Free Marketing Guide. Get tips to succeed in Marketing.
  - Expert Internet Marketing | TechWysse.com** (www.techwysse.com/) - Increase Web Traffic & Conversions. Make the Customers. Not Visitors.
  - B2B Online Marketing | Bizu.com** (www.bizu.com/2b) - Target only prospects that matter with smart rich banner advertising!
- Headed searches:** marketing online, business, marketing strategy, online.
- Marketing Magazine** (www.marketingmag.ca/) - Offers a Canadian source of news and articles on marketing, advertising and media.
- Online Marketing Articles, Tips & Expert Advice | IntrepidSource.com** (www.intrepidsource.com/marketing/online/marketingindex.html) - 25 Apr 2012 - Online Marketing is growing rapidly and getting your business out there is important. Our Online Marketing content will show you how to market...
- Internet marketing - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia** (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet\_marketing) - Internet marketing, also known as web marketing, online marketing, web advertising, or e-marketing, is referred to as the marketing (generally promotion) of...
- Types of Internet marketing - Business models - Advantages and limitations of...**
- Online Marketing Blog** (www.toprankblog.com/) - 1 day ago - Grow your business with TopRank Online Marketing Tips, articles, interviews & how to's on social media, search engine optimization & content...
- Marketing Online** (www.marketingonline.co.uk/) - Marketing Online for Internet marketing and e-marketing resources for marketing professionals and students.
- Official Site of Guerrilla Marketing**

- Ads - Why these ads?** A section with a yellow background containing:
- Advertising on the Internet** (www.google.com/AdWords) - Use AdWords to grow your business. Start advertising with Google today.
- Top Pay Per Click Agency** (www.burkeperclick.com/) - Get Website Traffic in 5 Minutes. Get 1-100 on Free Quality Clicks.
- Online Marketing for SMB** (www.tbond.com/bmi) - Small Business Internet Marketing Orientation Training Program.
- Starting A Business?** (www.partybypost.com/online/consulting) - Get help with your online business. From the creator of PartyByPost.com.
- Archie SiteCatalyst** (www.scriptrlabs.com) - Digital Analyst Powers Our Predictive Marketing Capabilities.
- Marketing for your brand** (www.marthealmarketingconsulting.com) - Strategic marketing. Free initial consultation.
- Free Email Marketing** (www.gupl.com/) - Send 1,000 Free Marketing & Sales Newsletter per Month. Try it free.
- Internet Marketing** (www.scriptrlabs.com) - Custom Marketing Plans. SEO by ScriptLabs.

## Alternative Search

Portals, directories, resources, multimedia, and social networking sites all offer search functions, and your consumers are using them. We use search functions on sites like eBay, Kijiji, Squidoo, Amazon, and others to look for almost any kind of product. According to researchers at Comscore (<http://www.comscore.com>), we used all of them more in 2011 than we did in 2010, and the reliance on these alternative sources is growing.

Although these searches may not be what we would think when we think of search engines, people are using them, so you must be monitoring them, too. What does this mean for you as a company embarking on Internet marketing? You must be found by people who may not even know they are looking for you.

## Test Your Knowledge

Take a few minutes and reflect on your business, referring to your marketing plan that you brought as your pre-assignment. You should think about which alternative searches your customers are using, what is currently on your hub site, and what you should be thinking about adding to that site so that your customers and prospects can find you.

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## Optimizing Keywords

### What Do They Want?

When people look for your company or your products, they will put terms in a search box on your site or a search engine page. People are different and live in different parts of our global community, so not only do you need to know what they are searching for, you also need to figure out how they will ask for it.

For example, fizzy sweet drinks in America are called soda; in Canada, they are called pop; in the United Kingdom, they are called a fizzy drink, soft drink, or pop. In all three places, some versions are referred to by their brand name (such as Coke, Pepsi, or Dr. Pepper) as well. Even though everyone is speaking about your product in English, they are all using different words to express the same thing. This happens with other items, like anoraks, jackets, toques, knitted caps, chesterfields, and sofas.

### Keywords, Search Terms, and Tags

Allow us to introduce you to **keywords** and **search terms** (which in social media are referred to as **tags**).

When a potential customer is looking for your product, they are only going to type a few words into a search box. The total number of words can vary by search engine, but as a rule of thumb, the fewer words they need to find you, the larger your profile gets. However, some marketing resources also tells us that longer search queries tend to lead to more conversions (sales), possibly because the searcher already knows exactly what they want.

Search engines ignore certain words, so you can leave them off your phrases. (You can leave them in so they make sense to you, but just know that search engines ignore them.) This includes **prepositions** (about,

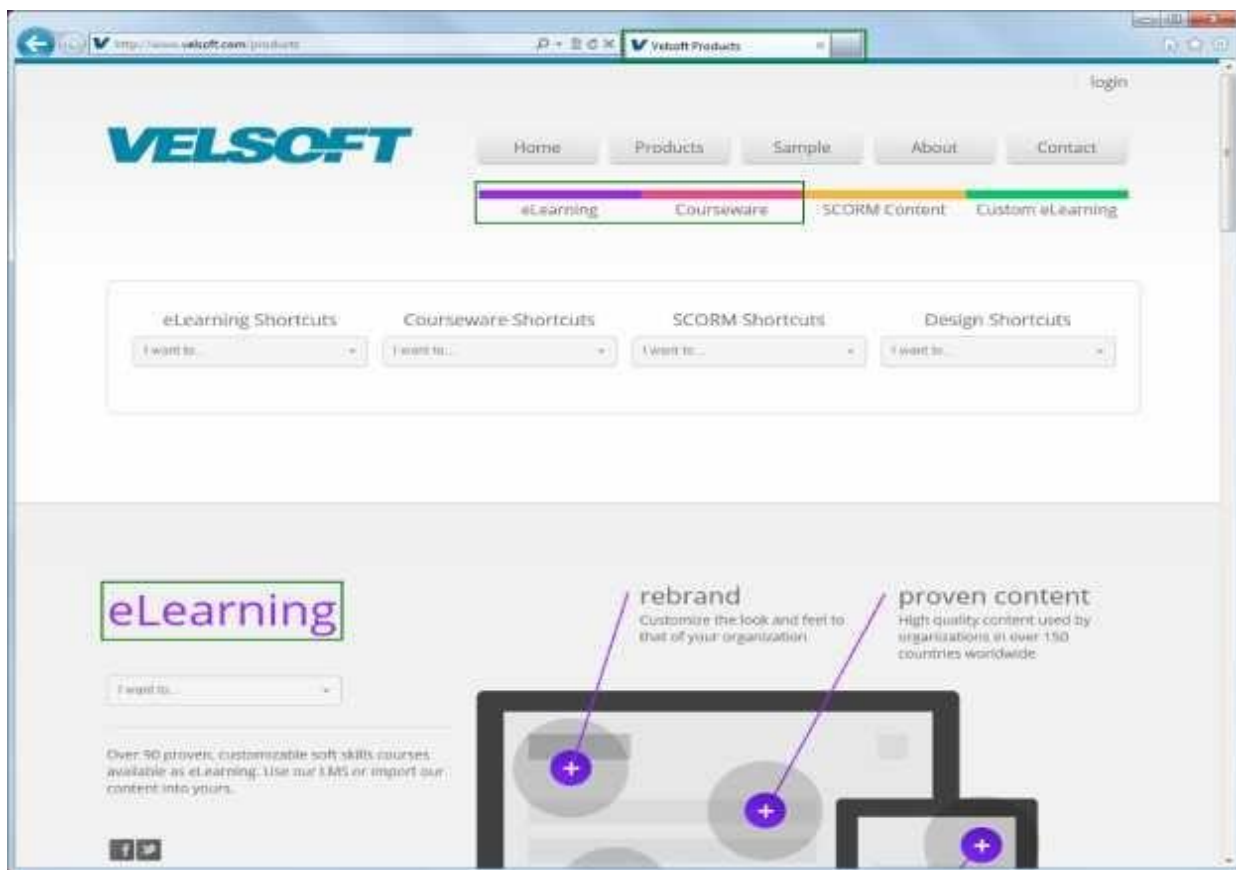
beside, of, than, under, etc.), **conjunctions** (for, and, but, yet, etc.), **articles** (a, an, the, etc.), and **punctuation**.

To keep your keyword list reasonable, words that have the same root when in plural form can be entered as a singular word. You would use the words dog, skunk, or car but you don't have to use dogs, skunks, or cars. However, knives, mice, and companies will need both versions of the root added as a keyword, because they change from knife, mouse, and company.

## Metatags

When the programmer (or you if you are a do it yourselfer) create your webpages, there will be a space for a **metatag** where you can list and track your keywords. These metatags are not required for the search engines, but they do help you to keep track of your keywords. Visitors to your webpage don't see the metatags either, but they do appear in your coding. A good strategy is to vary where you position search terms on different pages because the search engines truncate the keyword tags at different lengths.

The images below show the homepage for [www.velsoft.com](http://www.velsoft.com). We have circled the keywords that are right on the page:



Here is how the keywords and metatags are captured in the source code:

```
1 <!DOCTYPE html>
2 <html>
3 <head>
4
5 <meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=utf-8" />
6 <meta name="keywords" content="velsoft | products | training | virtual | products | training | products | courseware
7 products" />
8 <meta name="description" content="Velsoft provides over 200 instructor-led soft skills and Computer Skills
9 courses. Velsoft also offers eLearning, blended-learning, and blended-learning solutions." />
10 <script type="text/javascript" src="http://ajax.googleapis.com/ajax/libs/jquery/1.7.2/jquery.min.js"></script>
11 <script type="text/javascript" src="http://dibomypruddid.cloudfront.net/velsoft.com/assets/js/products.js"></script>
12 <script type="text/javascript" src="http://dibomypruddid.cloudfront.net/velsoft.com/assets/js/dropkick/jquery.dropkick-1.0.0.js"></script>
13 <link type="text/css" href="http://dibomypruddid.cloudfront.net/velsoft.com/assets/css/pages/products.css" rel="stylesheet" media="screen" />
14 <link type="text/css" href="http://dibomypruddid.cloudfront.net/velsoft.com/assets/js/dropkick/dropkick.css" rel="stylesheet" media="screen" />
15 <link type="text/css" href="http://dibomypruddid.cloudfront.net/velsoft.com/assets/css/base.css" rel="stylesheet" media="screen" />
16 <script type="text/javascript">
17
18 var _gaq = _gaq || [];
19 _gaq.push(['_setAccount', 'UA-15712591-1']);
20 _gaq.push(['_trackPageview']);
21
22 (function() {
23 var ga = document.createElement( 'script' ); ga.type = 'text/javascript' ; ga.async = true;
24 ga.src = ( 'https:' == document.location.protocol ? 'https://ssl' : 'http://www' ) + '.google
25 analytics.com/ga.js';
26 var s = document.getElementsByTagName( 'script' )[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore( ga, s );
27 })();
28 </script>
29 </head>
30 <body>
31 <div id="fb-root"></div>
32 <div id="top-bar"></div>
33 <div id="page-wrap">
34 <div id="header">
35 <a id="login" href="http://www.coursewareassurance.com">login</a> </div>
36 </div>
37 <div id="main-wrap">
38 <a href="/">Home</a> <a href="/products">Products</a>
39 <a href="http://www.velsoftcourseware.com/free-demo">Sample</a>
40 <a href="http://www.velsoftcourseware.com/about">About</a>
41 <a href="http://www.velsoftcourseware.com/contact">Contact</a> </div>
42 </body>
43 </html>
```

## Tips and Tricks

Here are five tips to getting a solid list of keywords:

- Brainstorm a list of every potential keyword and phrase that you can think of.
- Marketers should not isolate themselves. Ask your colleagues, friends, and employees for ideas.
- Use the names of all your key products and services, company name, subdomains, and nicknames.
- Include industry and geographic (location) terms and jargon. If you have a popular name, try to secure as many versions of it as possible. For example, London is a city in England and Canada.
- Use a search tool like the Google Keyword Search tool (used for Google AdWords) to help identify lots of keywords and phrases.

Remember that searchers have to be desperate before they will look onto a second page of search results.



## Test Your Knowledge

### Debrief

What have you learned about Internet marketing so far?

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What will you apply to your marketing efforts?

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Why will you, or why won't you, apply some of what you learned so far?

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How many places can a customer find your links?

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Do you have products that warrant a domain name and would increase the options of your company / brand showing up in searches?

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## Monitoring Search Engine Ranking

### Understanding Rankings

Now that you've invested all this time and effort on search engine optimization, you need to collect, analyze, and make adjustments to maintain your ranking at the top of the results list. Good rankings come from having popular pages, and popular pages come from having great content and lots of traffic (visitors) to your site.

A **search engine algorithm** ranks your pages from 1 to 10. Right now if you were to visit Google's page, they rank as a 10, but if your page ranks at least a five, you will probably reach the first page of search results (although there are no guarantees). In order to monitor your page ranking, you can download the Google toolbar and then enable it for your browser (or you can just use Google's Chrome browser). (As of this writing, the link was <http://google.com/toolbar>. We take no responsibility for the accuracy or content of this link, and does not endorse this plugin.) Then you can use the page rank tool to rate any page that you like by following the directions.

If you want to maintain a decent ranking, you must commit to checking your rankings regularly and to adjusting your content. Remember that your webpages must be visible and easy to locate if people doing searches are going to find you.

### Improving Traffic

If you measure your rankings and find that you are not getting enough traffic, here are some suggestions.

**Improve your inbound links** (also called backlinks) by making sure that your links appear in places that your customers visit. (Your blog and social networking sites may allow this. You can also ask to have your links placed on other sites with complementary products and a shared target market.)

Check and see what kind of traffic your **competition** is getting. You can get help for this with specialized sites such as [www.alexacom.com](http://www.alexacom.com) or [www.quantcast.com](http://www.quantcast.com) or through an Internet marketing specialist. (These links were accurate as of the time of publication. We take no responsibility for the accuracy or content of these sites and does not endorse the sites mentioned.)

**Know who and where your target market is.** Links to your site from other related sites will help direct qualified traffic to your web site. Get to know site owners and work with them to increase traffic to your mutual benefit.

Improve your **page ranking**. Make sure your page(s) score five or higher on the Google PageRank tool. Highly ranked pages help with your own visibility and help increase your traffic volume.

## Getting Started

### What is Social Media?

Social media is a technology that facilitates communication and sharing by using a platform. Those platforms are changing and evolving all the time. Although there are some steady platforms available, there are many more that appear and then disappear rapidly. Around the world there are hundreds of millions of people (also referred to as “users”) who interact with at least one social media site at least once. As a marketing opportunity for you and your company, the options seem endless!

Business owners and marketers often ask if they really need to get involved with social media. It can be a lot of work and take up time and resources, and we’re not even sure how to measure the payoff. However, the savvy business understands that if your customers are on social media, you should be contacting them there. If your clients are not on social media, then don’t spend your marketing time and money marketing there right now, although you’ll need to be ready if they are headed that way.

## Understanding the Marketing Mix

### The Five P’s and Social Media

Lots of companies say – and even believe – that they have a social media strategy. They encourage employees to create profiles and to promote or share news about what the company is doing, and they set up profiles on every site they can find. But, if you think back to what we understand about marketing, we know that we need to have a strategy for how to leverage social media if we are going to get some kind of return, rather than just taking random shots in the dark.

Around the world, your customers and potential customers have embraced social media to such an extent that it is not just popular, but is a part of everyday life. At the same time, we cannot be fooled into believing that social media is the best way to market your product. Social media is simply another way to get your message out, but it’s not the only way. If you remember nothing else in this course, keep in mind that social media is simply one element within your overall marketing strategy.

When it comes to using social media, your marketing research gets applied in a marketing plan based on the P’s of marketing: product, price, place, promotion, and packaging. All of these P’s influence the **positioning** of your product (how your product compares to similar products from other companies).

### Product

Marketing your product and/or services includes differentiating it from other products/services in the market place. You will need to pay particular attention to how those products and services appear in search engine results. There are lots of ways to do this, so you will want to pick a few that make sense. Some things to pay attention to:

- Capabilities
- Style
- Warranties/guarantees
- Service
- Labeling
- Size

Make sure you really understand what makes your company stand out from the competition. For example, when Lululemon was first established, they were looking for a name that was attention-grabbing and that people would remember. They also wanted something that had appeal around the globe. Their made-up word, with three l's, helped them to stand out.

If you read Seth Godin's book *We Are All Weird*, you'll read about a shift where instead of always trying to appeal to the masses (and an average consumer), it makes good business sense to pay attention to the diversity present in the marketplace and offer choices that reflect the people we are actually marketing to.

## Price

Whether you are a for-profit, non-profit, or not-for-profit company, you have to be making money in order for the business to flourish. This means that no matter who you are, you need to understand every aspect of your business when establishing price. If you forget to allow for certain costs and sell the product at a loss, your stakeholders won't stand for it.

On the other hand, some products are deliberately priced at a "deal" price (also known as a **loss leader**) to draw people in to the store where they will be sold other products. A car can be priced below cost, but by the time that the extended warranty, roadside service, fabric protection, and chrome package are added, there is no loss for the company any longer.

**Psychological pricing** is what has stores using prices that end in 95 or 99 cents. The idea is that people will pay \$39.99 for a product they won't pay \$40.00 for.

In a competitive market, you will see marketing strategies that will meet or beat a competitor's price in order to gain (or regain) market share. If you visit a website or pick up a flyer and see the phrase, "We will match any competitor's advertised price and beat it by 5% on all our products," you are witnessing **meet or beat competition** in action.

**Price** and **quality** are things that must always be considered in pricing services and non-tangible products. If you have a service and price it very cheaply, people may not value what you offer in terms of the knowledge and expertise that is required to develop that service. Make sure that you are doing sufficient research.

**Penetration** refers to introductory pricing that is deliberately low in order to gain market share. The idea is to price products at a low per unit amount and then sell a high number of units with the objective of gaining recognition in the market.

## **Place**

This is all about how you will distribute and provide your product. Your analysis of distribution channels will help you flesh out this part of your plan. Will you be a wholesaler, distribute products through a franchise, have brick and mortar retail outlets, or be an online-only store? You can also choose several methods to create a big presence. Leveraging social media can help you to create a large “place” with or without having an actual physical presence.

## **Promotion**

Promotion refers to the way that the market sees your product. It is very difficult to get shelf space in a retail store, so you have to decide how you will draw your potential purchasers’ attention. Pizza shops might send staff members to stand on the corner with a sandwich board describing this week’s deal. Cupcake stores might have someone dressed in a giant cupcake costume waving to passersby. Coupons, flyers, newsletters, banner or pop-up ads on a website, and special deals are also part of a promotion strategy.

**Public relations campaigns** can also be used to promote a product. **Internet marketing** is another form of promotion that can use programming and keyword techniques to ensure that a search for products like yours will lead to your company’s website.

## **Packaging**

The esthetic value of your packaging can draw a customer’s eye or can turn them away. Designers and marketing firms aim to create the best packaging possible to attract consumers or at least create some kind of reaction. In addition, items must also be packaged in a way that protects the contents. Cardboard boxes, protective materials (like Styrofoam), labeling, color, and appeal must all be considered to present your product appropriately and protect it from damage.

## **Test Your Knowledge**

### **Exercise Your Muscle**

**Using the 5 P’s described earlier in this session, let’s review your current marketing approach and how it could be influenced by a social media strategy.**

**Describe how your company is currently positioning their primary product/service(s) in the marketplace. If you have a lot of products or services, select one for this exercise that has a lot of value or some kind of connection for you personally.**

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**Describe the current product marketing that is taking place.**

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**Describe the current pricing strategy. (Are you using loss leaders, psychological pricing, or other strategies?)**

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**Where is your place of business? If you implement a social media strategy, does that mean you will move to a greater online presence?**

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**What kind of promotions do you offer?**

## Developing a Social Media Plan

### Things to Think About

Social media, like all marketing, is about developing relationships with your customers. It is not a short road to profits. You also need to know (and may have already discovered this while exploring your personal social media networks) that it can take an enormous amount of time if you approach it casually.

We have seven guidelines for developing your social media plan and making the most of time and resources.

### Stretch

As you develop your social media plan, you need to work with people who have a deep digital reach. Traditional marketers focus on what they know in order to help you establish a niche in the marketplace. They rely on tried and true methods for design and marketing campaigns. (Think about flyers, brochures, contest entries, or contact forms on a website.) If your usual marketing is not getting you the results that you need, make sure you increase your strength by bringing on expertise that gets you what you need. Don't hire someone to be your social media marketer if they have no knowledge about the areas that you want to reach.

### Build a Community

What you really need is to get people talking about you in a way that they promote your brand independently of you. Seth Godin has written about this as **tribes**. The Grateful Dead, a wildly successful band for more than 40 years, focused on providing their fans with experiences at their concerts rather than selling albums. Fans (called Deadheads) went to the concerts because they knew that each one was different from the last. Think of the things that you can do for your customers that are different than what everyone else is doing.

### Watch Out for Social Media Experts

Social media is constantly evolving, and it is one aspect of marketing, but it is not all there is to marketing. Marketing consultants who are also specialists in social media understand its fluidity. They can help you navigate and establish your brand in the social stream as one aspect of your marketing plan. However, make sure that they can do what they say they can do. Ask for references and look at what they've done in the past.

### Be There

Whichever social channels that you use (and there are more coming out all the time), make sure that you participate **with** your community. Don't ask a question on Twitter, for example, and then not be around or available to reply to people's answers, or you will turn them off. Better still, give them something they have not even thought to ask for yet.

## Find Your Customers

When you conduct your market analysis, be very clear about where your customers are. Make sure you reach them and their friends so that they are able to talk about you. This doesn't mean that you need to sign up on every social platform there is, because you won't have time. Focus on methods of reach that work for your customers.

## Be a Person

There is a lot of artificiality in social media. While systematizing and pre-planning updates makes sense, you look like a robot if you come off like something that has been automated. Make sure that some of your personality and character shines through the things that you say.

## Follow Others

It's not appropriate to be a one-way machine in social media. For example, if you are on Twitter and have 2500 followers, and you only follow 20 people, you will not be able to reply to people who are speaking with and about you. We know you cannot read comments from 2500 people a day, but we also know that you can organize people into categories and lists. That way, you can participate in the community you are trying hard to build, instead of being a sandwich board on the street corner that simply makes an announcement. If you are blogging, make sure that you reply to people's comments on your blog posts and that those posts provide people with information they can use, rather than just writing them as a billboard for your products.

## Utilization Guidelines

In order to effectively leverage social media, you must have a strategy and establish utilization guidelines. **Utilization guidelines** will help all staff in the company to make efforts that will help the company reach its goals. For example, if staff will be sharing responsibility for updating your company page on Facebook, their messages might also include their name so you know who made the post. You could also have a guideline set up to say that any messages about the company need to be positive, to reflect your brand, and to only release news about the company after an official news release is released. (This way, there are no early releases or information leaks.) Some companies will have a rule that only one person (such as a communications officer or even the CEO) will release public messages.

## Test Your Knowledge

Why are utilization guidelines important?

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**Is there an existing social media plan? If so, are you conducting an update, or creating an entirely new strategy?**

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**Does the company have an existing website, social media profiles, or social media sites? List the URL(s) here.**

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**Does the company have an existing social media presence? What is currently taking place? (Some ideas: blogs, podcasting, or status updates)**

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**Who is the target of your social media campaign: businesses, individuals, or someone else?**

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**What geographical region will the social media campaign target: local, regional, national, or international? Write the details of the range below.**

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**Rank the goals of your social media campaign in priority order, with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least important. Each item must have its own number; no ties allowed!**

- \_\_\_ Building relationships with customers
- \_\_\_ Increasing visitors to the web/hub site
- \_\_\_ Improving search visibility
- \_\_\_ Increasing sales
- \_\_\_ Saving money on print advertising
- \_\_\_ Increasing customer connection to the brand
- \_\_\_ Other (Details: \_\_\_\_\_)

## Campaign Budget

Fill out the table below to create a draft budget for your social media plan.

Category	Amount Per Month
Design and Writing	\$
Photography and Video	\$
Marketing and Paid Ads	\$
In-House Labor (costs and hours)	\$
Programming	\$
Tools and Equipment	\$
Revisions and Changes	\$

Return on Investment: \_\_\_\_\_% within \_\_\_\_\_ month(s) / year

## Campaign Objectives

Fill out the objectives that apply to you.

- Number of Visitors per Month: \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of Downloads per Month: \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of Comments per Month: \_\_\_\_\_
- Conversion Rate: \_\_\_\_\_
- Monthly Sales: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Average Dollar Amount per Sale: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

List any other objectives here.

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## Competitive Analysis

Describe your target market very clearly. Use specific demographics, geographics, industry, segments, job titles, etc.

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**Why should a customer buy from you instead of a competitor? Use this space to clearly describe your value proposition.**

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**List at least ten competitors and their websites, blogs, and related social media pages.**

<b>Competitor</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Blog</b>	<b>Social Media Pages</b>

## Important Notes

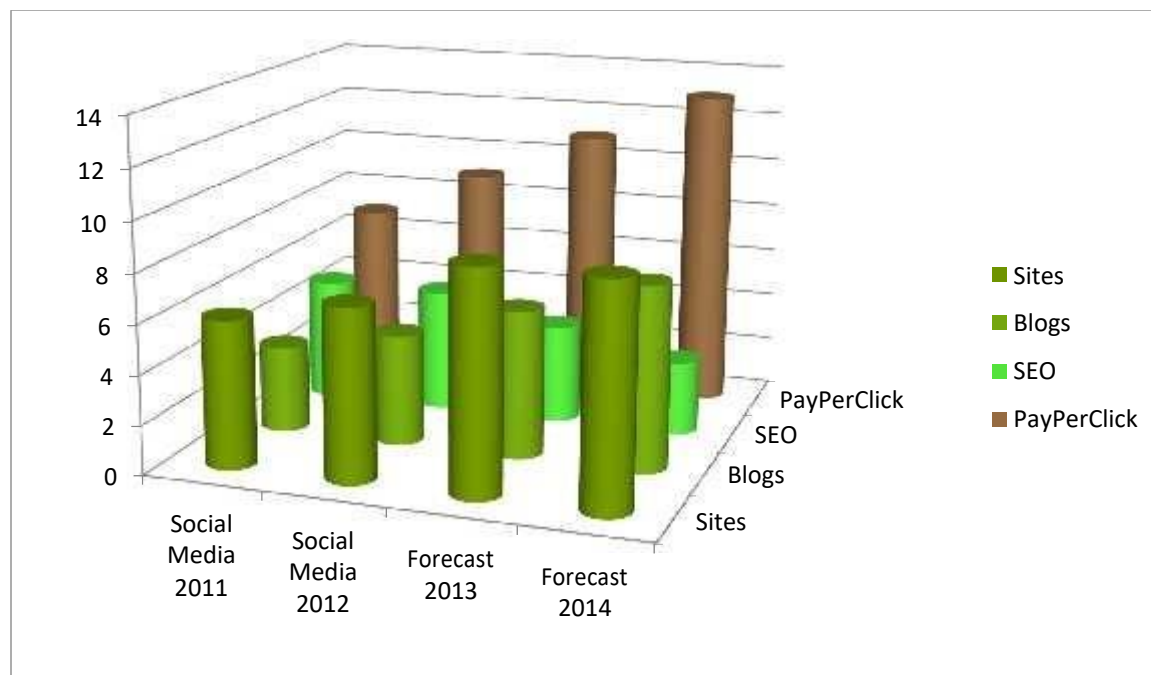
- Costs are generally easier to track in social media marketing than revenues are.
- Be very conscious about your budget. Social media is easy to use and can also be very time consuming. Make sure that you are actually planning, and able to stick to, budgeted resources and time.
- It is unlikely that you will be able to push customers or prospects to a particular social media site or service. You will need to determine where your customers and prospects already are. Then, you can direct your efforts to where they are and encourage them to visit your own sites by offering them a good reason.

## What's the Value?

When you start to calculate what social media costs your company, one of the easier methods is to calculate the **inbound cost per lead**. You probably already calculate what your cost per lead is, so you can incorporate your social media leads into this in many ways. Your goal is to come up with something that is accurate and is a true reflection of what is taking place.

Consider the cost of each lead, whether it is through a social media site, a blog, pay per click and adwords, or a natural search. (**Natural search** is when someone puts a search term into their search bar and your company comes up in the listing because you have a unique name or have optimized your search engine optimization – SEO for short.)

Your **cost per lead, segmented by channel**, could look something like this:



After you have been using, and tracking, your results for a while, you will be able to see whether your planned investment in social media is on target with your budget and resourcing or not. If it isn't, you need to make some immediate adjustments in order to keep your marketing budget on track. Remember: your social media strategy is a portion of your overall Internet strategy, which is a portion of your overall marketing strategy.

## Using Facebook

### Getting Started

Can Facebook help you grow? Can it help you make more sales? The answer to that is multi-faceted and will depend on where your customers are, as well as what you have to offer.

Facebook is an internationally successful social media platform that, in 2011, had amassed over half a billion users. This is an enormous market for any business; if your prospects or customers are on Facebook, you need to establish a presence there too.

Businesses are not allowed to sell directly on Facebook. Instead, they can offer information, make connections, develop relationships, and share news by creating interesting posts, notes, and so on. We refer to this process as **building a community**. Some contests are allowed, but you need to check their terms of reference (which change regularly) to make sure your approach works with their site. Otherwise, your page could be shut down by Facebook administration.

### First Steps

Before you set up any kind of business page on any social media site, review your marketing plan. This will help you to make sure the page fits with your plan, supports your business, and is not going to take you in a different direction.

### Next Steps

Visit [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). If you don't have a personal account, you cannot set up your business page. You might not want your personal information shared with all of your employees or customers, naturally, and you have the option to adjust your privacy settings so that people can see only what you want them to. This means you can set up your personal page along with your photo (perhaps a way to contact you), and that's all anyone else has to see. It's really up to you.

An important note about Facebook is that from time to time they change their privacy and visibility settings. This means it is essential that you keep an eye on their terms of service and that you check your account and privacy settings. As an example, in June 2012, Facebook changed every person's e-mail contact information to a Facebook e-mail address. This outraged some subscribers and people were rapidly making adjustments so that their information reflected their personal e-mail addresses. You simply have to be ready (or assign someone on your staff to be ready), alert, and flexible.

## Due Diligence

Before you get too far, visit Facebook's terms page at [www.facebook.com/policies?ref=pf](https://www.facebook.com/policies?ref=pf) and make sure that you agree with the rules and are able to follow them. You may also want to check out the rules for promotions, which are at this link:

[https://www.facebook.com/page\\_guidelines.php#promotionsguidelines](https://www.facebook.com/page_guidelines.php#promotionsguidelines). (Note that these links were accurate at the time of writing. We take no responsibility for the accuracy of these sites or the content within.)

## Now You Can!

From your personal Facebook page, you can set up a business page that visitors can visit. If they want to see your updates in their own news feed, they can click "like" on your business page.

Your updates need to be interesting and capture attention. If they don't, even people who have "liked" your page may hide your posts and not see them. This means that you are not trying to gather numbers. Instead, you must focus on developing relationships and interacting with your community.

## Building Your Community

There are lots of ways that you can engage your community. Initially you may find yourself getting a bit frustrated with the amount of work, so we're encouraging you to keep the faith and stick to your social media marketing plan!

At first, you want to get people visiting your business page, adding comments, and engaging with you (and possibly each other). Encourage them to click links to your hub site, if you have one. (There are plenty of small startup companies that include craft operations, family businesses, and more, that are starting out with just a Facebook page). Get people talking on your page, interested in your business, and sharing the link. You can encourage them to post recommendations if they get great service or like a product, post pictures of themselves with your products, and more.

You can also use the page to post pictures of your products, your location, the people who work with you, and more. Businesses will post information about charity events they get involved with, teams they sponsor, and more.

As the administrator of your business page, you will receive an e-mail each week that shows the interactions on your page. When you have enough of a community presence that you can start leveraging your analytic information, you can make marketing decisions based on that too.

## Taking it Further

When you initially set up your business page, it looks like all the other business pages: the colors will be similar and the layout format will be the same. Make sure that you learn how to use features that allow

you to tailor the page to your business, incorporate some of your brand, and to demonstrate the connection between the page and your company.

In addition to the business page, you can also advertise on Facebook to promote your page. Facebook has some pretty sophisticated advertising so that your ads are directed to the right people. Users will see these ads on their personal page, along the right margin.

You may have noticed that if you are visiting a particular business page, those will be the ads that start appearing in the margin. This is targeted advertising that businesses pay for on a **pay-per-click** (PPC) basis. (Pay-per-click is a way for you to pay for your advertising as you go. You design your ad, supply a credit card number, and then assign a limit to the number of times you want people to click on your ad. If you can only afford to pay for 2,000 clicks, for example, you set that limit and your ad is pulled after 2,000 people click on it. As well, your account will be charged accordingly. See our course on *Basic Internet Marketing* for more information.)

Depending on the nature of your business, you can have several ads on the go at one time. Just watch your statistics because a catchy ad can get clicked on a lot! Keep in mind that if your social media marketing plan has no budget available, you cannot afford pay-per-click advertising.

## Test Your Knowledge

**Does Facebook have a role in your social media marketing plan?**

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**Have you set up a business page on Facebook? If so, are you developing a community there?**

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**What else can you do to increase the quality of connections to your community? Add these elements to your social media marketing plan.**

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## Using LinkedIn

### LinkedIn Essentials

LinkedIn is a business-focused social media site. Its aims include helping people in business connect, helping businesses do business with each other, providing services to business people, and networking within your industry (as well as related or complementary industries).

Within the LinkedIn network (found at [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)), you can establish a profile, create a company profile, and engage in communities that already exist, while considering the benefits or establishing your own community there.

LinkedIn has several ways that you can locate other people. You can search for them from the home page of the site before you even join and see if there are like-minded people there that you want to connect with. LinkedIn is a consistent, content rich, place to find people and information. It is a site that has focused on what it is good at, so you won't games or chat. They do, however, offer an enormous network of groups where you can find blog posts and articles, connect in conversations, and expand your own network.

LinkedIn does have the ability for you to enter a status update that will show in your news feed on your profile page and the news feeds of people you are connected to. In order to save you a bit of time, you can update your status on LinkedIn and have it automatically feed it to your Twitter update. Since both statuses are restricted to a concise 140 character limit, things that you say in LinkedIn do not get cut off in Twitter.

However, Twitter announced in June 2012 that users will not be able to automatically post their updates to LinkedIn. You can still send your LinkedIn updates to Twitter, but not vice-versa. Be judicious in your LinkedIn updates and people will be more likely to be curious about what you do so and follow you along.

### Setting Up Your Account

Whether you already have an account set up on LinkedIn or not, this section has something for you because plenty of people have set up a LinkedIn account and never updated it.

LinkedIn profiles are set up to look similar to a resume. You can provide details like where you attended school, jobs you've held, recommendations you receive from other people, who you are connected to, and more. You can also add keywords and statements about projects you've done, what you want to accomplish by being on LinkedIn, and more. This is handy if an old colleague or perhaps a complementary business wants to reach out to you and add you to their network because it shows where you are at. You can make some great connections to people by being involved in LinkedIn, so you want to really pay attention to how you set up your profile, the way you word your information, and how it looks on your page. Think of your profile as a resume. Consider getting some help with it from someone who is a writer or even someone who specializes in resume writing.

Once you have set up an account and started building your profile, you can have LinkedIn search your email contacts to see who else has a LinkedIn profile that you can connect to. You can also import your contacts from several different e-mail platforms. This helps you to quickly build your LinkedIn network.

## Getting Connected

### Connecting to Others

LinkedIn is all about connections, and as with any social media platform, those connections help you to build and/or connect as a community. When you log into your LinkedIn profile, you can then add connections from the Contact tab. You can look for connections by selecting schools you attended (to connect with classmates), companies you've worked with (to connect with colleagues), and so on. There are also plenty of helpful how-to links on LinkedIn to get this working for you.

When you are logged in and you want to search for a connection, you simply enter the person's name in the LinkedIn search bar. You can also search for them quickly if you know their e-mail address. If you want to connect to someone you do not actually know, LinkedIn encourages you to connect to people that you know and people who are connected to someone you know (a second-degree connection) and that they know (a third-degree connection).

You can connect to second- and third-degree connections by sending them a request directly (and you should mention who you know in common if you do so), or, you can request that your friend (the first-degree connection you have) introduce the new person to you. This sounds more complicated than it is, but helps to stop people who don't know each other at all from connecting and simply building huge lists of connections that they really have nothing in common with, and don't wish to have in their network.

LinkedIn also provides HTML code for you to add a LinkedIn button to your website or blog so that people can find you on LinkedIn easily. This is especially handy if you have a pretty common name!

### Using Groups

LinkedIn groups are also a great way to get connected. There are plenty of them to try out. We suggest that you visit, read, connect to, and start communicating with some of the groups that are already there. You can adjust your settings with the groups so that each day or once a week you get a digest of conversations that are underway, resources that have been made available, etc. Some groups will have to give you permission to join.

If you are connected to groups that are right for you, join in the conversations and see what is happening. If you don't enjoy being a part of a particular group, you can always leave and disconnect yourself.

When you have been part of these groups for a while and are getting involved in some conversations, it may be time to consider whether it makes sense for you, your company, or an association you are connected to, to start a group. You'll want to have plenty of conversation starters as part of your plan. You also need to devote time for visiting the group regularly – (once a day at least) to engage in the

conversations there, answer questions, provide links to resources, or to connect people together. If this sounds like a lot of work, it can be.

You need to refer back to your social media marketing plan to consider if your involvement in LinkedIn is part of your marketing strategy and make sure things stay on track. Get as involved as you would like and have time for, and see what kind of information and value you get from particular groups in your industry or other areas of interest. If you do set up a group, you need to be dedicated to it to ensure that it thrives.

## Using Twitter

### **Tweeting**

Twitter is another large and very popular social networking platform. It has amassed millions of users around the world who are sometimes referred to as Twits.

Twitter allows you to build a profile centered around you personally or your business. As with other social media networks, it encourages people to organize in communities as you connect with people you know, do business with, or who find you randomly.

When you use Twitter, you will get used to speaking in very concise terms, because each update that you post on the site is restricted to just 140 characters. (That's not 140 words, but characters, as in the individual letters and spaces that you include in your message. You can link your message to a photo that represents a thought or particular moment, a blog post, an article, or provide a link to your website. As you develop fluency with Twitter, you will find it easier to create short, snappy comments that compel people to read your messages and make them want to know more about you and your company.

When you start to use Twitter, you will find that you can get bogged down in the number of other people's messages. In keeping with the theme of this course, we're reminding you again to check back to your social media marketing strategy and make sure that what you are doing on Twitter fits with your plan.

One of the weaknesses of Twitter is that people post whatever they are thinking about or doing at that moment, so there are pages and pages of banality to filter through as you look for people to connect with. Then there are people who post links to nonsense you won't be interested in, spam, and hours that you can sit and simply read streams of information.

However, Twitter has some excellent features from a marketing perspective, which we'll talk about below.

### **Hashtags**

Do you remember not that long ago when we called the # symbol a number sign? Twitter has re-branded that symbol and it is now commonly called a hashtag.

When you add a hashtag to your message, you can track, organize, and communicate with other people who use the same hashtag. In order to communicate with their communities directly, a business owner

can start a “meeting” and everyone there answers or asks questions that end with the same hashtag. People following along with the hashtag can see the conversation going on within its own stream, and outside of everyone else’s conversations.

Say that you represent a business that sells smartphones and you’d like to get people talking about it and answer their questions before the next release is due out. You could set up a status update that says: “Join in on new I’m Smart phone apps Tuesday at 7 P.M. Eastern. Use #smarter.” That message tells people what you are talking about, when to be on Twitter, and which hashtag to use. If you send the message out and change the wording slightly to catch people’s attention, you can host a virtual conversation that helps you connect to your community. You might try something like this: “New I’m Smart phone is out in two weeks. Come ask questions Tuesday, 7 P.M. Eastern. Use #smarter.”

### **Re-Tweets**

By keeping your status updates short (the example above about #smarter is 98 characters), you leave space for people to forward your messages along to their followers by re-tweeting. The space that you left allows them to add a brief comment like “Great idea,” “A must see,” and so on. A re-tweeted status update also starts with the abbreviation RT. If your status is long, people can use MT in front, which stands for “modified tweet,” where they will edit your message so that it fits alongside their own.

If someone re-tweets the #smarter message, they might say something like this: “RT @helper New I’m Smart phone is out in two weeks. Come ask questions Tuesday, 7 P.M. Eastern. Use #smarter. <--Great idea! I’ll be there!”

Initially, your staff and friends can re-tweet messages if you ask them. You’ll soon see that if you are offering something of value to people, and your message catches their attention, that your messages will spread.

By looking under the “Interactions” tab and selecting “mentions,” you will be able to see who re-tweets your messages. By searching for your hashtag, you can also see who is using that moniker to connect.

As well, Twitter courtesy is to thank people who spread your messages by sending them a message via a status update, like this: “Thanks for the RT @helpful, @helper, @moniker.”

### **Your Name**

Your name on Twitter needs to be a reflection of your brand, so choose wisely. Most people use their name, or their initials if their name is long. You need to use something so that people can find you. If your name is Martin MacDonald Smyth and people don’t really know if you are a Mac or Mc, or a Smyth or Smith, they won’t be able to find you and they may not look too hard. Make sure that you include a link to your Twitter name in all the obvious spots, like on your website, your blog, your Facebook page, and so on.



directed to you or your organization. You can also check into the lists you are most interested in to see what people are saying that might catch your eye.

As an example, my personal Twitter account (which represents my business) has about 1,300 followers right now. Some of those people tweet frequently, so it is not possible for me to keep up with what everyone is saying. To organize things, when I follow someone new, I put them into a list if I want to keep an eye on what they are saying. All of my lists are private so that other members of Twitter cannot see how I organize them, but you can make your lists public if you think other people might be interested in them or sharing the lists benefits you in some way.

You can create lists very easily and give them any name you want. Currently, I have lists for:

- Folks to watch
- Local businesses
- Media
- National businesses
- Training and education

The big advantage of lists is that you can check into Twitter quickly and see what's most important to you. When you have some extra time, by all means click on the Home tab and see everything in your stream. Lists are handy, however, to keep an eye on people you are most interested in.

## Building a Blog

### Should I Be Blogging?

This is becoming a more difficult question to answer. Three to five years ago, every business was starting a blog and it was essential to create a good one in order to promote your business. With the wide adoption of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn (all sites from which you can microblog with short updates), blogs have had to adapt to stay on people's minds and remain relevant. In addition to **microblogging**, we can also create video blogs (or **vlogs**).

With people's very short attention spans, one of the key things to remember about blogging is to keep your blog posts short. Seth Godin, who writes about marketing and has a brilliant blog, sometimes creates posts that are only a few hundred words long. Whether you are creating short, informative pieces that are less than 500 words, or longer, more introspective pieces, you want people to read, remember, and think about your blog.

Choose a voice (the tone of what you say) that reflects who you are, what your company stands for, and catches people's attention. You can explore being informative, being controversial, asking questions, and having some fun.

Avoid the mistake that many beginning bloggers make and don't assume that you are a writer unless you really are. Instead, come from the position that you are learning to write and blog, and then behave like a student and learn what you need to do.

When it comes to getting started, our first recommendation is that you read as many blogs as you can, and see what's working (and what's not!). Notice the attention that they pay to page layout, length of posts, columns on the margins, pictures, color, and, of course, the content. You can look at some of the popular blog sites that offer free spaces, such as Blogger and Wordpress. Depending on who is hosting your hub site, they may also offer a blog space, or you can have one created for you.

When you start posting on your blog, you can create traffic by posting a link on your Facebook page, LinkedIn status line, or on Twitter to announce it to people.

## Blog Rules

When you create a blog, there are some guidelines that can help you along. Like every other area of Internet-based marketing, things are changing continually, so make sure you keep on top of things.

When you write a blog post, you also add **tags** or **keywords** to it. This will help you to find your old posts, to categorize things, and for people to find what you are writing. Make sure that you set up some kind of analytics, too, so that you can see which posts attract attention, which ones didn't, and who is reading them.

**Don't lose sight of your old posts.** If your content is good, it has staying power. A blog post you wrote six months or a year ago that remains relevant can be included in another blog post or re-posted to Twitter because it seems like a timely topic. For example, if you write a great series of blog posts for health and safety week this year, you can refer back to them again at the bottom of a health and safety post that you write next year. Keep up the interest and don't be afraid to do a little recycling!

Your blog needs to **look like you are interesting**, and as though you are interested in your readers. There are lots of free and inexpensive templates available, or you can quite easily have someone set something up for you. Don't feel like you have to do all of these things yourself, but remember that you are responsible for your own outcomes and, ultimately, for the success of the blog. If you represent a design company, your blog had better be stunning to look at. If you are from a financial industries company, then your blog is expected to include some pertinent, informative, and meaningful information. Check back with your marketing plan and remind yourself what you are trying to accomplish and how you intend to get there.

You can use paid services that will promote your blog for you, but this can take up lots of money and actually lead you nowhere further than you take yourself. Do your research before you decide to use a paid service and remember to incorporate the costs into your social media marketing plan.

Research the **keywords** for your industry and set up a glossary so that you can use them (without overusing them) in your blog posts. There are lots of programs that can help you do this and someone on your marketing team will make a good resource for this. Using keywords will help search engines locate your posts and push your page to the top of the search listings. If you search for your own posts (or have someone test it for you), and things show up on the second page of search results, people cannot find you. This kind of search engine optimization (SEO) is essential if people are going to find you on any kind of social media.

## Help People Find You

Make sure that you optimize your blog for the range of reading platforms that are available. If you don't know what I mean, have a look at a blog you like to read now (if you can't think of one, try [www.velsoftcourseware.com/blog](http://www.velsoftcourseware.com/blog)) and look at it from a desktop computer, a smartphone, and a tablet. On each device, your blog needs to look good and be readable. Don't expect that your readers are all coming to you via the same media, because they aren't!



Most blogs will allow (and encourage!) you to use RSS feeds to update your followers when you publish a new blog post. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication and is a way for you to distribute (or syndicate) your posts in multiple locations. You can place the RSS icon on your site, and then people can sign up to receive automatic updates every time you publish. This method is very straightforward for your readers, but does take some programming knowledge for you as a distributor. Your programming guru can help you with this.

Your readers can then get all their RSS feeds in one place and never have to search for your blog again. They can also organize their feeds in a convenient way where news, businesses, and friends are all updated in the same location (usually via an RSS reader or an aggregator). Individuals can set these feeds up through their web browser (like Mozilla or Google Reader), their e-mail application (such as Microsoft Outlook), or many other solutions. We don't recommend that you offer RSS as the only option, however, since many readers like being notified via e-mail.

## What Will I Write About?

That is a very good question. What will you write about? What is it that you have to share with the world? Or, perhaps you've already been blogging and now you want to set a more certain direction, so your blog is ready for an upgrade!

First of all, you need to **set up a plan**. Don't feel like you have to blog every day, because you can flood people's e-mail and RSS feeds with nothing to say, and we don't want that! Instead, we suggest that you sit down and write about some topics that you think might be interesting or helpful for people who are interested in what you do or what you have to share. Then, go through the topic list and cross out anything that doesn't really interest you or that you don't want to share. Now that you have a list of topics, you can



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## Vlogs and YouTube

Video is a very popular form of communication and vloggers have adapted quickly to this technology. You can take your print blog and simply record yourself discussing what is there and add a video link to your blog, or you can use a site like ever-expanding YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) to set up your own channel, get people to comment on your vlogs, share instructional videos, allow people watch you in interviews, and much more.

Vlogs are created in a similar process to blogs, but they are normally more expensive to produce. You need to have a good room (with no noise, echoes, or interruptions) in order to record video and audio files. You also need to have some kind of editing software. No one really wants to watch the fumbles and mishaps that go on while you are recording, except for maybe your mom.

If you are creating a series of instructional videos, for example, you need to have the course well scripted and recorded by someone who has had instruction in drama, recording arts, television, and even music. Also, you must be very aware of copyright law at all times, especially if you want music clips in the introduction or credits, or during transitions.

There are people who create reasonable quality vlogs simply using their webcam and speakers with a decent microphone. Others create poor quality vlogs, and that can be a dint in your reputation. If you decide that you would like to be a vlogger, we recommend that you look at lots of samples and then speak with a few people in the recording arts industry or take some classes that are specifically about this topic. Once you do so, you are in a better position to decide if vlogging is something that you want to invest in either on an ongoing basis or as part of a special project.

## Using Specialty Sites

The beauty of social media is that there are so many options. However, this can be a downside as well.

Specialty sites allow you to focus your interactions, contribute to a community, and/or expand your network in a highly specialized place. We are providing some examples here, but we want to remind

everyone that these sites are continually launching, evolving, and refining. We encourage you to keep your eyes and ears open for what is new and could be a good fit to your business.

## **Yammer**

Yammer calls itself “The Enterprise Social Network” and is a social network for people within companies. Yammer allows you to chat, share, and collaborate within your company structure, without the distraction that is often attributed to public sites like Facebook or Twitter. When the company sets up an account on Yammer, all employees with a dedicated e-mail can also join. Members set up profiles, enter interesting information about themselves, and can communicate within their own company-specific site.

You’ll find this site at [www.yammer.com](http://www.yammer.com). At the time of writing, accounts were free, but Yammer has also recently been purchased by Microsoft.

## **Pinterest**

Pinterest is a visually-based site that allows a member to set up a profile, start pinning pictures that they like, and organize their own pictures onto pinboards (like adding pictures to a bulletin board). People can link with you and create a network of shared interests based on your pinboards. While there are commercial benefits to this, there are also some challenges, particularly if you do not have a strong visual element to your business. However, if you start to pin things that might be of interest to your customers (including complementary and even competing products), this can help you to serve your network.

For example, someone who works as a dietician and counsels people on nutrition may not have a whole lot to offer. However, that dietician can pin all kinds of healthy recipes (including directions and stunning pictures) to share with their clients. A wedding planner has access to thousands of ceremony and reception ideas and a landscaper has a wealth of garden ideas for budgets of all sizes. Think outside the box and you’ll probably think of an application for your business!

Pinterest can be found at [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com). (As of this writing, this is a free service.)

## **SnapGuide**

SnapGuide is an application that is specific for iOS products (such as iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch) that allows you to create an instruction guide that can be read on these devices. With a little effort and some really good digital photos, you can create a visually appealing instruction guide about any of your products or services and share them with your network. There are samples on the site that include instructions for entertaining, cooking new recipes, repairs, do-it-yourself projects, and a lot more.

You can link SnapGuide to your Facebook and Twitter accounts so that each time you publish a SnapGuide, everyone that follows you will get the message. This is a great option if you would like to spread the news about what you are doing and appeal to visual customers and prospects.

Visit [www.SnapGuide.com](http://www.SnapGuide.com) for more details and to get in on the fun. (As of this writing, this is a free service.)

### **Staying in the Loop**

There are other sites that list interesting networks, offer associations, and have the potential to help you market your business. However, there are many sites that come and go, so we encourage you to look for them online, particularly those that are related to your industry. No matter what you do, there is probably something out there for you. We have encountered sites that focus on dogs, athletics, organization, music, writing books, and more. Have some fun searching!