

LEARNING MADE EASY



Social Media Marketing

for
dummies
A Wiley Brand



Discover the benefits of
social media marketing

—
Understand the role
of the influencer

—
Creating your SMM
roadmap

GETTING STARTED SERIES

DUMMIES CUSTOM SOLUTIONS

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Understanding social media marketing's role
- » Discovering the different roles played by social media markets and influencers
- » Knowing where to find your customers
- » Finding your social media marketing campaign direction
- » Remembering the keys to success

Understanding Social Media Marketing

With nearly 280 million people using the Internet on a regular basis in the United States alone and approximately 2.9 billion users globally, surfing the web has become a mainstream social activity and, as a result, changed the way people interact, learn, and even purchase products. This shift makes social media one of the most influential forms of marketing today.

As a modern marketer, it's important that you focus your approach on the social aspects of the web that help to increase brand awareness, encourage a network of influencers, and strengthen your online reviews, all of which can help make or break your products sales.

Defining Social Media Marketing

A discussion of any subject needs to begin with a definition, and so here's the one for social media marketing: *Social media marketing (SMM)* is a technique that employs *social media* (content created by everyday people using highly accessible and scalable technologies such as social networks, blogs, microblogs, message boards, podcasts, social bookmarks, communities, wikis, and vlogs).

Social media (which has probably been one of the most hyped buzzwords of the last decade) refers to content created and consumed by regular people for each other. It includes the comments a person adds at the end of an article on a website, the family photographs she uploads to a photo-sharing service, the conversations she has with friends in a social network, and the blog posts she publishes or comments on. That's all social media, and it's making everyone in the world a content publisher and arbitrator of content. It's democratizing the web.

SMM in the context of brand marketing

Brand marketing focuses on building equity around a brand, its personality, and attributes. Customers purchase products based on the brand promise. Through various forms of advertising and communications, the brand promise is brought alive to generate awareness, build excitement, and get specific products included in a consideration set. Mass media channels are typically used to build awareness for the brand, reposition it with more powerful attributes, or ultimately sell products. This will always be central to marketing efforts. All brands require significant effort to penetrate a market and generate desire.

SMM complements brand marketing in some key ways:

» **SMM places extra emphasis on peer-to-peer marketing and allows for peer-to-peer decision-making in a digital context.**

The focus is on understanding how consumers are interacting with each other on social platforms versus how they're interacting with the brand. Consumers are asked to do the marketing for the brand by layering their own voices and perspectives on top. The result is the socialization of a message or story in a way that's meaningful and relevant to their world.

» **SMM rarely uses mass media, whether television, print, or radio.**

Interactive channels that allow for the socialization and redistribution of a message are more important. But the brand cannot be simply pushed through the channels. Instead, invite consumers in the channels to experience the brand and make it their own.

- » **SMM is about becoming part of all media streams, across all channels, where consumers are responding to and discussing the brand messages.**

In many cases, they're self-organizing these conversations on the fly. In other instances, they gravitate toward existing community hubs where the conversations are already taking place. These conversations can also take place on your own corporate website.

Learning about the Roles People Play

To look at the framework of social media marketing, we need to look at the different roles played by those engaged in social media:

- » **Marketers:** They publish and share content online to achieve an organization's marketing and business needs. Today's marketer looks nothing like the marketers of the twentieth century. Customers now own the brand conversation. The opportunity to interrupt and annoy those customers has dwindled. Customers now meet businesses on their own terms.
- » **Influencers:** Several types of influencers contribute to the decisions customers make. They may be everyday people who influence the consumer as he makes a purchasing decision. Depending on the decision, the social influencers may be a wife (or husband), friends, peers at work, or even someone the consumer has never even met in real life. Simply put, the people who influence a brand affinity and purchasing decision are the social influencers. They may exert this influence directly by rating products and commenting or by publishing opinions and participating in conversations across the web.



REMEMBER

It isn't enough to market to the consumer anymore; as a marketer, you have to market to your potential customers' social influencers as well so that they in turn influence either overtly or just by what they publish and share online. And that's what social media marketing is about.

Changing roles of the social media marketer

Today, many marketers are looking for a specific set of rules to follow to be successful. We can assure you that there aren't any, but there *are* some guidelines. Following are some of the actions that social media marketers must take if they want their company to compete successfully in the new social marketplace:

» **Become the top persuader.**

When you lead a SMM team, you need to understand that persuasion is your most important tool. You persuade your team that you can help its members achieve success, and you persuade your customer to buy your product. Before you influence, you need to figure out the persuasive message that will sell. When you do that, you can unleash the groups that influence your customers.

» **Use a variety of distribution channels.**

The key mistake that some new social media marketers make is to focus solely on social media platforms to carry their message. This does half the job. Although it gets people's attention, it doesn't get them to the sale. For example, imagine that you have just tweeted about a solution for stain removal. Unless you provide a link to your product and a place for discussion and reviews, you have a missed opportunity. Draw a map of all your channels (blog, website, newsletter, and so on), and use it whenever you plan a new campaign. You need a link to all your venues.

» **Reinvent your strategy to emphasize value.**

Value is a secret weapon in this economy. When you boil away all the other ingredients of a product sale, you uncover value. This is a tricky concept because value is in the eye of the beholder. Understanding what imparts that value should underlie your entire marketing strategy. Think about your current SMM campaign. Are you focusing on features and benefits or on how the product makes your customer feel? For example, some companies focus on making people feel smart and sexy when they buy a certain model car. By the same token, others may focus on models that emphasize safety and responsibility. If you understand the value, you can establish a bond with your buyer.

» **Market to inspire.**

The globalization of our world via the Internet has given us a window into the lives of others. It's hard to ignore the poverty and disease that plague much of the world's population. Many companies are seizing the opportunity to use their businesses to help make an impact. SMM encourages awareness of the connection we share with others. Think about how your business can participate.

» **Create and curate content.**

Offering engaging content is a big part of any SMM campaign. You need an editorial calendar that lays out your topics, creation tools, and deadlines. You also need to focus on curating content already published on the web. Becoming a trusted source of information is key to getting your customers to visit often.

» **Know when to resist the next shiny object.**

New web tools pop up daily. The best way to avoid being distracted is to write your objectives down. The last thing you want to say to yourself is, “Everyone is using such and such, so we should use it.” Place your objectives in a prominent place and refer to them often. If they change, revise the document. But whatever you do, don’t try to do something on every social platform — you’ll quickly discover that you don’t have the tools, training, and — most critically — the resources to support all the tools.

» **Be prepared to be wrong.**

This is a tough one. In your role as marketer, you want to lead your company to successive victories. SMM is not a sure thing. You need to be prepared to experiment and change course using the feedback that you get from customers. You may start with a small idea and develop it into a full-blown campaign. It is unlikely that you can start out with a very expensive big effort and not have to correct along the way. When management and staff start out with the notion that they are testing and experimenting, changes in direction won’t seem as shocking. This cuts down on wear and tear of the psyche for everyone. It also limits the risks to your core marketing efforts while you learn this space.

Understanding the role of the influencer

To understand how social influence works, you need to look at how people are influenced in the real world, face to face. Social influence isn’t something new. Long before the web, people asked each other for advice as they made purchasing decisions. What one person bought often inspired another to buy the same product, especially if the original purchaser said great things about the product. That’s how human beings function; we’re influenced and motivated by each other to do things. We’re social beings, and sharing information about our experiences is all a part of social interaction.

How much a person is influenced depends on multiple factors. The product itself is the most important one. When buying *low-consideration purchases* (those with a small amount of risk), people rarely seek influence, nor are they easily influenced by others. Buying toothpaste, for example, is a low-consideration purchase because each product may not be that different from the next one, and they’re all fairly inexpensive — so you won’t lose much money if you choose one that doesn’t fit your needs. On the other hand, buying a new car is typically a *high-consideration purchase* (a purchase that includes a large risk). The price of the car, the maintenance costs, and its reputation for its safety all contribute to making it a high-consideration purchase, not to mention the fact that you want to identify with a certain brand versus another one. Social influence plays a much bigger role in car purchases than in toothpaste decisions.



TIP

Social influence matters with every purchase, but it matters more with high-consideration purchases than low-consideration ones. Most consumers realize that when they're making high-consideration purchases, they can make better and more confident purchasing decisions when they take into account the advice and experience of others who have made those decisions before them. That's how influence works.

Considering the types of influencers

When discussing social media marketing, people often ask us whether this means that they should add product review features to e-commerce websites or advertise on social networks. Yes, product reviews and advertising are important, but there's more to social influence than those two things. When you think about social influence in the context of your marketing objectives, you must separate social influencers online into three types: *referent*, *expert*, and *positional*. These categories come from thinking that social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven pioneered in 1959.

As a marketer seeking to deploy social media marketing techniques, the first question to answer is this: Which social influencers sway your consumers as they make purchasing decisions about your product? After you identify those social influencers, you can determine the best ways to market to them.

Referent influencers

A *referent influencer* is someone who participates on the social platforms. These users are typically in a consumer's social graph and influence brand affinity and purchasing decisions through consumer reviews, by updating their own status and Twitter feeds, and by commenting on blogs and forums. In some cases, the social influencers know the consumers personally. *Social graph* is a term popularized by Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook and is used to describe the relationships that people may have on a social network and how they connect to one another.

Since the consumers know and trust their referent influencers, they feel confident that their advisers are also careful and punctilious. Since they're people they trust, they value their advice and guidance over most other people. Referent influencers influence purchasing decision more than anyone else at the consideration phase of the marketing funnel, according to various studies

Expert influencers

A consumer who's mulling over a high-consideration purchase might also consult an expert influencer. An *expert influencer* is an authority on the product that the consumer is considering purchasing. Also called *key influencers*, they typically have their own blogs and huge Twitter followings and rarely know their audiences personally.

Positional influencers

A *positional influencer* is closest to both the purchasing decision and to the consumer. Called *peer influencers* sometimes, they are typically family members or part of the consumer's inner circle. They influence purchasing decisions most directly at the point of purchase and have to live with the results of their family member's or friend's decision as well.

Influencing on digital platforms

Social influence impacts every purchasing decision and always has in some form or other. Each time people make purchasing decisions, they ask each other for advice. Sometimes they depend upon an expert's guidance, and in other cases, that advice comes from people they know.

So why is influence such a big deal today? This is because Internet consumption, and social media consumption specifically, have hit the mainstream. Social media traffic referrals have risen dramatically in the last few years. Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter have 21 percent, 7 percent, and 1 percent, respectively, of global referrals per Shareaholic (March 2014). These numbers show how much people are also acting on the influence of others — they're visiting the websites that they're being told to visit.

People are making more and more purchasing decisions online every day. It's as natural to buy a product online as it is to go into a physical store. People buy clothes and shoes online, not to mention high-consideration items such as computers, cars (yes, cars), and jewelry. But that's not all. Not only are consumers buying online, but thanks to social media, they're also conversing, socializing, and influencing each other online on a scale never seen before.

Call it a shift in web behavior, but the way people make decisions in the real world is finally moving to the Internet in a big way. Social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube are just a few of the places where people are asking each other for advice and guidance as they make purchasing decisions. Smart companies are realizing that they should no longer design their e-commerce websites to convince buyers to make purchasing decisions in isolation. Rather, they need to design the websites to allow consumers to bring their social influencers into the decision-making process. As consumers, people expect and want that because that's how they're used to making their purchasing decisions. That's why social media marketing matters today. People are influencing and being influenced by each other every day on the social network platforms, community websites, and destination sites.



TIP

You may need to put a lot of effort into convincing your managers how important the social media platforms are. One of the best ways to communicate these ideas and techniques is by organizing lunch-and-learn sessions and bringing in external speakers who can walk your managers through the major social platforms and how best to market on them. Sharing case studies from other brands always resonates well and goes a long way to establishing credibility.

Researching Your Customers' Online Activities

When developing a social media marketing campaign or a broader, continuing program, determining what your target customers are doing on the Internet is important. Without this information, you can't formulate a smart social marketing strategy. You're simply shooting in the dark.

There are several tools you can use to find out where your target customers are going online. Tools that help you research online activity fall into two basic categories: free and paid. You can simply register for and use the free tools. Paid tools and services incur a charge and can get expensive very quickly. In this section, we discuss some of the free tools:

- » **Blog search engines:** These search engines *crawl* (sort through) just the blogosphere for the terms that you input. They search for those terms in the blog posts and the comments, and the searches generally include all publicly viewable blogs on the Internet. If you just want to get a sense of the conversations in the blogosphere about a specific topic or brand, these search engines can help you do that.
- » **Buzz charting:** Similar to the blog search engines are the buzz charting tools. These tools focus on giving you a comparative perspective on how many different keywords, phrases, or links are discussed in the blogosphere. They search for the terms and then organize the responses into a chart, with the x-axis being time and the y-axis the number of posts. Typically, you can choose the duration of time for the x-axis.
- » **Forums and message boards:** To understand online behavior in the social web, you must be able to scan the conversations happening in forums and message boards as well.

» **Video and image search:** For video search, you have to depend on a couple of tools, because no single one truly captures all the videos created. All video searches must begin with YouTube because it's the largest video website, but you should also look at Blinkx Video.

On the image side, you'd want to search Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Flickr and, to a lesser extent, Google Images. These tools are valuable for understanding broader trends, your consumers, and conversations about your industry and potentially your company, too.

Note: Google Images also searches professionally produced and published images, not just user-generated ones, so you might not get an accurate picture of what people are talking about.

Creating Your SMM Roadmap

As with any other good marketing campaign, you need to construct a roadmap that shows you where you are going and how you'll get there. Here are seven steps that you can take to bulletproof your campaign structure. They are as follows:

- » Define your objectives.
- » Develop a powerful story/experience.
- » Create an action plan.
- » Craft the content path.
- » Execute for influence.
- » Create partnerships.
- » Track the results.

Define your objectives

This may seem obvious, but it is amazing how many of us forget about articulating the objectives when it comes to a SMM campaign. Your objectives need to be tightly defined, and they must be practical and actionable, too. Saying that the objective of the campaign is simply to take a TV advertisement and make it *go viral* is definitely not enough.



TIP

The objectives must also specify *where* you're planning to run the campaign, *whom* you're targeting (which customers and which influencers), the *duration* of the campaign, and *how it synchronizes* with other digital and offline marketing efforts.

It is easy to forget that no SMM campaign happens in isolation. How you participate on the various social platforms is always a mirror of what you do and think in the physical world. If you ignore that fact, you'll lose your customers even before you've had a chance to meaningfully engage with them.

Develop a powerful story/experience

People's expectations about how they will learn about your business/products have changed completely. Since the Back button on the browser is ever-present, waiting to take users away from your website, you have a very short window to engage and educate. The days of posting a simple data sheet and a price are over. You have to work to communicate the intrinsic value of each offer.

Also, since people want to know whom they are dealing with, you need to inject the *why* into your business story. You need to let them know why you started your business and what you care about. The social aspect must be visible. The following are stories you should consider telling during your campaign:

- » **Why we are running this campaign:** Yes, you want to sell things, we understand that. But what is the larger picture? Are you contributing to charity, helping others be successful, providing a solution, or providing content that doesn't currently exist? You have to be specific.
- » **What value the customer will get from participating:** Customers want social proof that others you have dealt with have had a great experience. You need to gather testimonial stories to share. If you can provide video of previous customers speaking, you have a way to demonstrate authenticity. You also need to show how your brand will either specifically improve customers' lives or contribute to their sense of worth in relation to their friends (otherwise they won't share your content).
- » **People who are impacted/show visual stories:** Provide visuals that tell a story. Well-known screenwriter Robert McKee has said that stories "unite an idea with an emotion." Make sure that yours does.
- » **Who the hero is:** Have a story about the person or thing that is leading this effort. It can be a product that works, a founder who wants to do good, and so on. Show that hurdles have been overcome.
- » **How internal staff feels about what they do:** A recently produced commercial by General Electric shows children talking about what their parents do at GE. The message comes through loud and clear that not only are the employees proud of what they produce but their children are, too.

Create an action plan

Obviously, the actions you take are dictated by the length and complexity of the campaign. Every campaign has special features and highlights that need showcasing. However, following are some things that are common to most SMM campaigns you'll want to consider creating:

»» A clear call to action.

Decide what action you want the user to take, and make sure that everything you do supports that. If the user has to sign up for something, display the sign-up process at front and center at all times.

»» Hashtags and other tools.

Most SMM campaigns create a hashtag for Twitter so that people can follow the conversation. A hashtag has the number sign (#) and a word or phrase related to the project. For example, a 2011 campaign to feed people on Thanksgiving was started by Pepto-Bismol with the hashtag #HelpPeptoFeedAmerica. Whenever someone retweeted the message with that hashtag, the makers of Pepto-Bismol donated money to hunger relief.

»» A venue for crowdsourcing.

Are you going to create your own web page for people to share and submit their comments, or will you use the current platforms? Decide whether you want to create a Facebook page or a community on your own website or another third-party one like Tumblr. There are pluses and minuses to each choice. If it is important to own the content, by all means create your own. Just remember that getting people to participate is easier where they normally hang out. A new venue could be an impediment.

»» Content that can be shared.

The key to every great SMM campaign is creating content that gets attention. If you are a small business and can't afford to create something splashy, you can still do a video and create PDF posters, contests, and graphics. Look at all the content you have already created, and see what you can repurpose. If doing so makes sense, have your customers create content, and pick a winner.

Craft the content path

When creating SMM campaigns, people often forget to map out where their actual touch points will be and how they will look. It's not enough to say, "We'll send out a tweet with a link." You need to be specific about it. You need to document that

you will send out three tweets a day at 9 a.m., 5 p.m., and 9 p.m., say, with certain text and a link.



REMEMBER

Your preplanned content is only the first part of what you will be doing. You have to also organically create messages that respond to the ongoing campaign to make it real. When people post something about your campaign on Facebook or Twitter, make sure to respond to it in a reasonable amount of time, which should typically be no more than 12 hours later at the very most. The preplanned items are just the starting point. Social marketing means reacting to real-time events.

Execute for influence

Traditionally, most campaigns have focused on getting a potential customer to take a specific action or to view a specific brand message. The focus has always been on that individual engaging with the brand in some form. However, with a SMM campaign, you need to design for sharing, influencing, reciprocity, and social currency.

Unlike most other campaigns, a SMM campaign needs to accomplish two objectives concurrently:

» **It needs to engage the individual who's being targeted via the campaign.**

This is similar to any other type of digital marketing campaign. You want to engage with your target audience in a specific fashion and solicit a specific response.

» **You also need to design the campaign so that the target person shares or discusses it with someone else.**

Sharing is the social currency element. The person should feel that by sharing the campaign with someone else, he derives greater value from it. This greater value could be something as tangible as further discounts or something as intangible as status among his peers. The point is that the more people he shares the campaign with (or discusses it with), the more value he generates from it. In this sense, the campaign takes on a network effect, with its value growing each time someone participates.

Create partnerships

Few SMM campaigns are successful in isolation. A more traditional digital campaign, which is based on display and search advertising, comes together through a series of partnerships between the agency, the advertiser, and the publisher,

and the same is true of a SMM campaign. However, in this case, the participants vary slightly. Rather than have a regular publisher, you have the social platform to contend with. Your campaign must be in compliance with that platform's policies; otherwise, you can't run on that platform. For example, Facebook and YouTube have strict terms of service regarding the type of advertising that can appear on their platforms.



REMEMBER

The platform players aren't the only things you have to take into consideration. With most large brands, ad hoc user groups that have a sense of ownership over the brand or product category spring up on the social platform where you're planning to run the campaign.

For example, on Facebook, if you were to search for "Ford," you'd find not just the Ford Motor Company page, but literally hundreds of pages created by and for people interested in the Ford Motor Company. If you're a marketer at Ford, when you're planning a SMM campaign on Facebook, it's not enough to talk to Facebook and your own agency about the campaign. For it to be a truly successful SMM campaign, you must engage with these ad hoc groups when the campaign is starting. They can be your biggest marketers, helping the campaign succeed. On the other hand, if you upset them, they can turn into saboteurs.

Track the results

You can measure a SMM campaign in a lot of different ways. The best method depends on the objectives, the targeted audience, and the social platform on which the campaign is running. But you must determine what you're going to measure and how *before* you run the campaign. Otherwise, you're never going to know whether it's a success. SMM campaigns often spiral out of control, and the law of unintended consequences starts applying.

It's also important to measure a baseline of online activity before you begin the SMM engagement and decide what to measure. The baseline helps you determine how successful your campaign is relative to the level of conversations and online activity before running it.

You must measure not just how many people you reach or who is aware of your campaign but also the following: the influence generated; the *brand lifts* (increased awareness of the brand across key brand attributes); and, most important, whether any of this effort led to purchases. With the measurement tools in the marketplace (many of which are free or close to free), you can easily track your SMM campaign

to the point of sale on the website or potentially even in a physical store. The measurement tools that exist on the social platforms are getting stronger and stronger by the day, too. Don't hesitate trying to measure this.

Participating — Four Rules of the Game

Many different factors can make or break a SMM campaign, and sometimes it's even just a matter of luck. But four rules matter above all else when it comes to SMM campaigns.

These rules don't always apply to other forms of marketing. Pay attention to them, and make sure that your SMM campaign abides by these.

Be authentic

Authenticity is a tricky word. It's tricky because it's overused in the context of social media. Everybody talks about being authentic when marketing in the social media realm, but what that means is rarely explained. To spell it out, authenticity is being honest, transparent, and true to the values of the brand: It's as simple as that.

Here are some examples:

» **When you set up a blog as part of your campaign, make sure that you're using your own voice.**

Don't outsource the publishing of content to a third party or to your PR team. If you have to, make sure that the writer accurately identifies himself as contributing on your behalf. George Colony's blog *The Counterintuitive CEO* is a great example. The blog is written in the first person by Forrester's chief executive officer, George Colony. There's no doubt that he is the writer.

» **When you're publishing your thoughts and opinions or simply sharing information, don't do so anonymously.**

In the world of social media, your consumers don't relate to and care about brands as much as they care about the people behind them. People build relationships with each other, not with anonymous brands. Let your customers know who is behind the voice blogging, tweeting, or running the contest on Facebook. You're not authentic if your customers don't know who you are.

» **Learn from the community and respond to its feedback.**

A key part of being authentic is telling your customers the way it really is, hearing their feedback (both positive and negative), and being willing to respond to it. It's no use participating in the social realm if you don't respond to commentary or feedback. If you're worried about not having the time to respond, consider not participating at all.

» **Be humane in your approach.**

It is easy to forget that for every comment and every unique visitor, there's an actual person somewhere in the world. Make sure that you participate with consideration and with the same respect that you'd reserve for someone you're talking to face to face.

Operate on a quid pro quo basis

For all the altruism associated with the social web, it's easy to forget that it operates on the premise of quid pro quo. We're all good human beings, but most people expect something in return if they're giving you their time. As you develop a SMM campaign in which you'll be asking for your customers' attention (and often a lot more than that), think about the possible quid pro quo. Are you giving enough back in exchange? If you're not giving something back, your customers won't participate. They'll simply ignore you. The social web is littered with marketing campaign failures. These campaigns assumed that just by putting a banner advertisement in front of customers, they would achieve their objectives.

Give participants equal status

Many marketing campaigns are designed to make the consumer feel special — more special than everyone else around them. That's a good thing. They feel special, and they end up having favorable feelings for your product and go out and buy it. Furthermore, if someone is doing something special, others want to do that as well. If a person finds something interesting, others want to access it as well. That's human nature, and the social web encourages behavior through the voyeurism it allows for.

Let go of the campaign

By virtue of starting the campaign, you probably feel that it is your responsibility to moderate and shape it. That doesn't have to be the case. Successful SMM campaigns are the ones in which the brand advocates take the campaign in new

directions. As you develop the campaign, think of yourself as a participant and not just the owner of the campaign. You make better decisions regarding its evolution that way, and by letting go, you allow others to take it in new and amplified directions. And as always, remember that your consumers will be in control of the campaign. That's what makes social media marketing different. However, you will always be in control of your own response to the consumer participation, and that presents exciting opportunities.

Following these guidelines while taking the time to create a successful social media marketing strategy can help set you apart from the competition.

To get more tips on how you can expand your marketing efforts, visit dummies.biz and check out our ***Getting Started marketing series***. This series includes ebooks highlighting the basics behind several popular marketing methods and a guide to help you bring these tactics together into an integrated marketing campaign.

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