



Welcome to Comm@, our regular gift of PR and marketing insights and tips!

For years, businesses have sought ways to find ways to really communicate one on one with our customers and consumers, and now, social media has given us just that opportunity to engage.

Yet when you give people the chance to discuss your company and products, there is a danger they won't say everything you'd like. Is this a good enough reason to avoid what could be a great opportunity to further your business?

And do you really understand what it's all about? Are you down with 'Digg', have you just come across 'Stumble Upon' or does the thought of Twitter leave you reaching for the binoculars and looking outside?

So, take five minutes out of your day, and open your mind to a whole new world of communication opportunities with the Social Media edition of Comm@.

**Vanessa
Managing Director**

Don't tell me the sky's the limit; there are footprints on the moon!

Comm@

Guest Speaker ...

Natalie Norton is the Enterprise Lecturer at the University of Winchester, who provides training opportunities and consultancy for businesses in Hampshire. Find out more at twitter.com/win_enterprise.



When looking at using social media tools for your business you first need to think carefully about what you are using it for, and how it fits in with the rest of your marketing strategy. For example, you can use Twitter to build a brand, provide customer updates, give or receive feedback and advice, to research, to network within your industry or community or even recruit.

Once you've decided what you are going to use Twitter for, you can set up your account. Think about whether a logo or a photo would be most appropriate.

You can then start searching for relevant people to follow. They might be customers, suppliers, people within your industry, news sources – it comes back to what you are using it for. Aim for 20-30 people initially.

Start reading the tweets coming through, and then you can start tweeting yourself! Try and think of things that would be interesting to your followers, not just about you or your products.

Finally, be nice! Twitter 'etiquette' is regarded as important, so thank people, re-tweet, reply and don't automate.

Social networking can be time consuming, so set yourself a limit of how long you will spend on it in line with the benefits it brings. Remember it does not replace other marketing tools, and needs to be aligned with them. Not all your customers will be using them, and it should just form part of an overall strategy.



91% of business buyers are using social media.

Be where your customers are!

Forrester Research, 2009

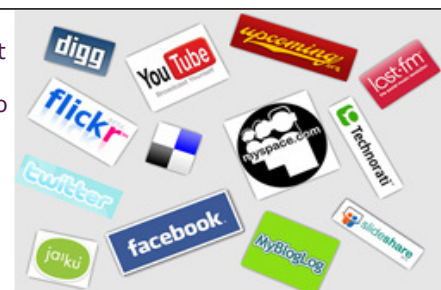


Forward Step

A guide to best free events that could help you with Social Media.

The Achilles Heel ... Where's Your Soft Spot?

Placing your organisation in the spotlight has always been fraught with complexities. But with social media, it's especially important to take some steps to ensure that you are doing your best to make sure that the communicators in your organisation are engaging with your publics and potential customers in the right way.



Take a few moments to consider the following points before embarking on a social media strategy....

Web, PR & Social Media Marketing

eOffice, Bristol
2nd July 2009

Free seminar to help you understand how to build an online marketing strategy.
www.bristolmedia.co.uk

The Oxford Social Media Convention 2009

Saïd Business School, Oxford
18th September 2009

Explore deeply how social media affects the way we communicate with this free one day seminar.

www.sbs.ox.ac.uk

Social Media in Business

Microsoft, Marlow
23rd October 2009

Conference to help empower your company to understand the potency of online conversations & more importantly when and how to engage with a meaningful response.

www.socialmediainbusiness.co.uk

Or if you can't wait to get started and are overflowing with ideas, why not get in touch with us? We'd be happy to advise you on pulling together a great strategy!



You can follow in our steps by checking out the Footprint feed on Twitter.

Our website is also packed full of hints and tips to help you with Marketing and PR.

Use the new 'Sharing' function at the bottom of each of our pages online to make everyone aware of our free advice!

If you've not read Comm@ before, then you've missed a whole load of marketing and PR tips and tricks!

Click here to see our archive of newsletters on CSR Policies, Media Relations, Making Your Website Work Harder and more

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- 1. Do you have any restraints?** Check to make sure that are no confidentiality issues, or company restrictions on using social media for your organisation before you start.
- 2. Have you chosen the right social media sites?** Your target audiences 'hang out' on specific social media sites, just like they read specific magazines. Choose the most appropriate one for your customers, or you'll be talking to the wrong people!
- 3. Have you decided on the personality of your brand and how it speaks?** It's important for your brand to talk in the same voice, use the same reasoning and communicate in the same language. Just like press releases, consistency is the key.
- 4. Have you looked at the competition?** Seeing where and how your competitors are communicating in the social media world will give you a good idea of what you could be doing too.
- 5. Are you measuring the usefulness of your social media work?** You need set up the processes to see where website visitors, telephone and email contacts, and converted customers are coming from.

If some of the points above have really got you thinking, yet you're not quite ready to jump in head first, then [feel free to call Footprint Communications](#), and we'd be pleased to advise you on your social media strategy.

BackStep ... The Footprint Blog

Thoughts from Steve Cross

Although many business owners regard their brand as their baby, and do everything they possibly can to protect it from harm as it grows, at some point you will have to set it free.

Your baby has to go to nursery, school and college, and learn to look after itself against negative comments and difficult times. And your brand has to do the same too.

So many brands are scared of engaging with their consumers on an equal footing through channels such as social media because they lack control and can open themselves up to criticism. Yet, as a mother or father, you realise that opening your child up to this criticism is part of growing up. So why not your brand too? It allows you to create understanding, innovate and build trust and loyalty!

Unfortunately, all too many business owners decide that keeping their brand at home, and telling consumers what they're like, without really engaging will protect them. But we all know that's not the case. People will talk about your brand even if you choose not to join the conversation. If you do that, you don't have a chance to answer your critics, show them where they are wrong and portray your good credentials.

Some of the biggest brands have gained a personality because they engage with their consumers, talk with them, not at them, and use the feedback to make their products and services better. If you put yourself on a pedestal above everyone else, preaching as opposed to listening, you will lose out.

Let your brand grow up into the real world, stand on its own two feet, and engage.



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