



SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL SELLING

How To Find, Manage
And Close More Business
From The Social Web

MATT HEINZ

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More Business From The Social Web

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This book is dedicated to my wife, Beth.

She knows why.

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INTRODUCTION

Think you can't find qualified prospects on the social web? Want to attract even more of them to your business with just a few minutes investment each day? It's possible, with immediate results, and if you don't take advantage your competitors will (if they aren't already).

The opportunity to find and close business, as well as manage an exponentially larger network of customers, prospects and partners via social media, is enormous. But if you don't do it right, it can also be a huge waste of time.

In the following pages you will learn best practices, insights and specific strategies for your business to find prospects, build a bigger sales pipeline, close more business and accelerate both word-of-mouth and referrals for your business using social media and content marketing.

The social media world is evolving quickly, but many of these best practices are universal and will help you take advantage of new networks and opportunities that evolve in the coming months and years.

BUYING CYCLES AND BUYING SIGNALS

Sales Is Personal (And Technology Is Helping Make It More So)

Technology has a habit of making our personal interactions less intimate, less meaningful, and more uniform. The volumes of people we can connect with now via email, Twitter, other social networks is great at scale, but superficial in creating the kind of bonds and relationships that have historically driven preference and decisions in the business world.

And despite the proliferation of electronic networking channels, we still make decisions based on decidedly offline and personal criteria. We prefer to do business with people we like, people we trust. And although relationships can be fostered and extended via online means, they are created and converted most typically in far more traditional fashion.

So it's interesting to me that we see so many new technologies being built to help us better tap into and "reconnect" with the deeply personal and offline nature of relationship-building and sales acceleration.

LinkedIn can only go so far. It fails to effectively differentiate a strong connection from a weak one. It doesn't say anything about offline bonds, family and social connections, let alone relationships that haven't been proactively entered and documented in the channel.

New technologies such as IntroRocket are working hard to better approximate and identify where the true offline leverage and relationship building can happen. By looking at a combination of LinkedIn, Facebook, email habits and more, IntroRocket is able to paint a far more accurate picture of where the most valuable relationships lie.

It's still incomplete, but getting closer. And it's interesting to me that what we're using technology to try and reach, is what our parents and past generations did so well without any of this.

Five hours on the golf course may be inefficient. It may not scale. But it worked then, and it works now.

Relationships, as well as sales, are personal. We can use technology to more effectively identify and leverage opportunities, but consummation will always be more about what's happening in our hearts and minds.

How Buying Signals Have Changed (And How To Find Them Online)

Sales professionals have talked about buying signals for a long time. And traditionally those buying signals have focused on immediate ready-to-buy moments. For example, asking about price, time to installation, etc.

These buying signals still exist, but a whole new set of buying signals exist today that few sales and marketing professionals look for and leverage.

One of the greatest benefits of the social web, especially to B2B sellers, is how early buyers start signaling a need. They don't ask for price or delivery time. They express a need or a pain. They describe an obstacle to which they haven't yet identified a solution.

Your prospective customers are also complaining about their current vendors. Expressing frustration with an earlier way of doing something (which they're still using). Looking for something that will help with this problem, but which they can't yet explain or articulate.

If you watch and listen, you'll hear prospects ready to switch. Some are still discovering the pain and others are actively seeking solutions.

But these are the buying signals that surround us every day. If you're not listening—if you aren't actively seeking the channels your customers and prospects are using to communicate, and establishing listening platforms to capture what they need—you're missing a huge selling opportunity.

Of course how you respond to these buying signals is also key. Most of these prospects are in the very early stage, and will not respond well to a sales offer. They will respond, however, to advice. Help. A link to a best practice article. Someone who helps them discover and self-educate.

The source of that information has a leg-up a sales process that hasn't begun, but where the prospect is already becoming qualified and establishing solution preferences.

Your new customers are looking for you. They just don't know it yet. How will you respond?

CHOOSING AND MANAGING YOUR CHANNELS

How To Pick The Right Social Channels For You

The volume of social media channels available to engage with is exhausting. And they keep coming.

As an individual or a business, there's no way you can keep up with them all. And the good news is, you don't have to.

Take a step back, and answer these two questions:

1. Where are my customers?
2. Where am I most comfortable?

The first question is, by far, the most important. If your customers aren't on Twitter, for example, don't worry about it. But if your customers are on Twitter, you'd better figure it out.

Your social media ROI will increase significantly if your social behavior mirrors those you're trying to influence, engage and sell to.

It's also important to engage in channels you're comfortable with, at least after an initial getting-to-know-each-other period. If the channel doesn't feel like a good fit, if it's not something you'll commit to sticking with over the long term, if it's not something you'll be disciplined enough to engage with on a regular basis, then think again before you get started, create noise, then abandon the channel (which would be worse than not starting in the first place).

Don't overthink this second question. Answer the customer question first. Let that guide you, let it filter out those you no longer need to think about. Of the rest, pick one or two that are the least intimidating. Or the most comfortable to you.

You don't need to do everything right away. What's important is to get started, get active, and build momentum and community.

Start there.

Seven Ways Social Media Can Save You Time (Instead Of Wasting It)

Make no mistake, the proliferating social media channels out there can waste a whole lot of your time. It's all too easy to get sucked into the updates and videos and retweets and more. It's a fun diversion perhaps but not always the best use of your time.

However, there are several ways social media can actually save you time. The trick is to know what you're trying to accomplish, how you're going to do it, and to then get in and out quickly. Here are seven specific uses of social media that can save you significant time.

1. Research

Trying to find something? Ask your social network. It's almost better than Google. You'll get fast responses, personalized feedback, automatically filtered based on what your network already has tried, used or preferred. Search in real-time by asking a question, or search the past by using keywords in the search fields of Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and more.

2. Resources

Let's say I need on-demand IT help for my business (seriously, I do need that). The social web, and my network specifically, can help me find that. What's more, if you do a search or make a request with keywords or hashtags, service providers and others who can help with your request are increasingly trained to see your request and respond in kind. I've found that most providers who do this well also have their act together and can successfully help with your problem or opportunity.

3. Drip Marketing

The passive but frequent nature of social media makes it a great drip marketing tool. Plus, if you're sharing content that's as good today as it will be one week from now, you can queue up your social media updates for days at a time. I do this with Twitter, using [timely.is](#) to post three articles on sales, marketing and productivity a day to my followers.

4. Remember Birthdays

I have historically been awful at this, but thanks to both LinkedIn and Facebook I don't have to remember anymore. It's easy to give a quick "happy birthday" post on someone's wall, or look at upcoming birthdays once a week to decide who should get a card, or a gift, etc.

5. Stay In Touch

By watching updates from your friends you can more frequently share a quick congratulations, note of support, or just a “thumbs up” on a great photo or announcement or update. It’s shallow, yes, but it’s a much faster way of staying connected with more people you care about in a shorter amount of time.

6. Attend Events From Home

I can’t tell you how many events, conferences and more I’ve been unable to attend but that I’ve been able to watch virtually through Twitter hashtag feeds. It’s like buying a used textbook from someone you trust who’s already highlighted the most important passages. Don’t worry about following the feed in real time, either, you can always check in at the end of the event (or just at the end of the day or a particularly interesting session) and read quickly (and all at once) what people thought was most valuable and worth sharing.

7. Meet New People

Who else is writing about B2B sales and marketing or a topic you care passionately about? I find new people worth meeting and knowing almost every day by using the social web. I don’t believe social network-only relationships are nearly as valuable as when you get to finally meet someone and get to know them, but the social Web enables a significantly higher number of relationship “starts” that can bloom over time. I’d never know half of the people I’ve gotten to know the past few years in the B2B sales and marketing world if I hadn’t been able to find, nurture and convert online relationships that started on Twitter, LinkedIn, Focus.com and more

How Top Salespeople Are Using Social Media

Most of today's most successful salespeople are using social media strategically to build deeper relationships with prospects and referral partners, find new prospects earlier in their buying process, and accelerate their own path towards credibility and trust with prospects they don't even yet know.

Here are five specific ways top salespeople are using social media today to find and close more business.

1. Getting New Introductions From Their Existing Network

It's so easy on sites from LinkedIn to Facebook, and more to see who your existing "friends" and connections already know. On LinkedIn, for example, you can quickly search for contacts you want to meet based on which of them are already connected to people in your existing network.

This is one of the best ways to get referrals and introductions, not by asking your network to "keep you in mind" but, instead, periodically asking for specific introductions. By getting specific, your conversion rate goes up and you're talking to the people you specifically want to meet and sell to.

2. Getting New Introductions From Others In Your Organization

Your existing organization—the sales team, yes, but I'm thinking the rest of the company too—is a gold mine of potential introductions. Especially founders, long-time employees and others who have spent a long time in your industry. They know people, people know them, and they're more likely to help you make connections and new introductions.

There are some interesting new tools that facilitate this by creating what is essentially an internal version of LinkedIn, but you can manage that yourself by simply using filters on your primary LinkedIn account to search your colleagues' networks for new prospects.

3. Watch For Buying Signals Across The Social Web

One of the greatest opportunities for salespeople via social media is to see into the buying cycle far earlier than we've typically had access to. Before social media we could deepen our understanding of the buyer and use outbound marketing to connect with a particular need, try and find resonance with a buying signal, etc. But that, at best, was a fishing expedition most of the time.

Now, if you know the buying signals and pain/problem keywords your prospects typically exhibit before they're ready to buy, you can watch for those discussions and keywords across the social web. Do a couple keyword searches on Twitter, for example, and you'll be surprised how many people, in real-time, are talking about their existing challenges, their frustrations with competitive products and more.

4. Build Deeper, Early Relationships With New Prospects Here's exactly how you do it (at least with Twitter, but other social channels can likely be done in a similar fashion). Build a list of the prospects in your territory or market (companies and the individuals who work there). With the help of an admin or an outsourcing service like eLance, go and collect the Twitter handles of each company and as many of the individuals as you can find.

Using your own Twitter account, follow those companies and individuals. Then, using a tool such as HootSuite, set up a separate column where you can specifically watch activity from those prospects. This makes it easier and faster to engage with them on a regular basis. Answer their questions. Share a resource. Retweet their articles. In other words, use their attention to this social channel to build value by interacting where they are already spending their time and looking for information.

5. Directly Share Information, Become An Expert, And Generate A Following

You are an expert. You understand your market, your customer's problems, and the information they need to be more successful. You read the trade publications and regularly (possibly daily) find articles that your prospects and customers should read.

Through your own social channels, you can become a go-to resource for current and prospective customers. If you're filtering information that's specifically interesting to them they'll gravitate towards you. And when they follow you and their peers see that as well, you'll increase access and introductions to even more new prospects.

Nine Tools That Will Help You Sell More Via Social Media

You have to start with a strong understanding of your audience, and an active content plan that speaks to, engages and builds trust and preference with that audience. Once you have that, and it comes time to execute, you need to find and rely on a set of tools that will help you execute faster, more efficiently and more consistently to achieve results.

Here are nine of my favorite tools for helping sales professionals and organizations (big and small) accelerate customer engagement, lead generation and closed business from social media.

HootSuite (Free or Pro)

I prefer HootSuite to TweetDeck, but both work fine (and there are others). HootSuite lets you not only separate and filter groups of social contacts and content you may be following, but allows you to do so via multiple social channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and more) all in one place. This really is the hub for engagement, and with a dedicated process you can get in, do your business, and get out—social engagement with minimal time requirement. HootSuite helps make that possible.

TwitHawk

Think of it as Google Alerts for Twitter. Say you want to know when anybody says, “car broke down” within 50 miles of your city. TwitHawk does that for you. Not only does it push those alerts to you but it also makes it fast and easy to respond with up to five different offers per search, and throttle those responses out over time so you aren’t spamming the world all at once. Great tool for finding new early buying signals you may have otherwise missed in the social fire hose.

TweetAdder

Lots of ways to slice and dice the searching, great way to find people headed to a conference you may be attending, and so on. I don’t recommend using TweetAdder to mass-add followers to your account (which is what the tool was built for). Rather, I like the search and sort functionality TweetAdder offers to find more prospective customers, influencers and more you may want to follow, engage and eventually sell to. For example, you can search for anybody with certain keywords in their bio and more than 1,000 people following them back.

Dlvr.it

Simple, free tool that saves you time and will accelerate visibility of new content you publish. Anytime your RSS feed is updated, Dlvr.it automatically syndicates your new content to the social channels of your choice—Twitter, Facebook, Foursquare, etc. It also separates the tracking links so you can see unique clicks on shortened links by channel.

Timely.is

If you find a bunch of links worth sharing with your followers all at once (say, by reading through your collection of RSS feeds), the last thing you want to do is post or tweet them all out at once. Timely.is separates those tweets out over time, sending for example three a day into your Twitter stream with auto-determined timing based on the highest engagement, clicks and retweets from your past Twitter performance. At any given time, I have about a week of great sales, marketing and productivity links queued up and throttled out.

UnTweeps

To keep your Klout scores high and your follower list clean, you should occasionally unfollow anyone who's gone socially dark. UnTweeps helps you do that by sorting your followers by those who haven't posted in XX days. Fast and easy. Do it once a month.

TextExpander and ActiveWords

If you find yourself typing the same things often as a response to followers or requests via social media, consider an auto-entry tool that fills in a full set of text for you with just a short keyword or key combination. ActiveWords is my favorite, but works only on Windows. TextExpander has less functionality, but works on the Mac. Both will save you a ton of time.

Email Alerts

Those who stand out in the social world not only publish but respond. One of the best ways to filter your followers is to sign up for email alerts that highlight news, profile updates and more from your primary accounts. You can get daily alerts from sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Focus, Quora, Gist, etc. Set up an email rule to put them all in a special folder that you look at once a day and take action on what looks good.

Morning Coffee

This is a Firefox plug-in that when you press the embedded browser button, opens up a series of pre-determined browser tabs. You can designate some sites to come up every day, or only workdays, or only Tuesdays. But if you're in the habit of checking certain sites once a day, want to be reminded to send birthday notes on Facebook each morning, give K+ to new people, Morning Coffee is a quick and easy way to remember and execute.

OK, that's my list. What's missing? What tools are part of your regular social arsenal to help you engage and sell better?

Do You Need A Social Media Budget?

I get this question a lot, so wanted to address it.

People are inclined to think that everything worthwhile in this world costs money. Today's modern, business-driven society created a paradigm that essentially communicates to people the idea that a great product or concept usually costs a lot of money or requires substantial financial investments. We often judge the quality of things by how much money they cost.

Although this is mostly true in many areas of business and society, it does not have to be applied to social media. In fact, social media is a great exception to this financial rule in the sense that it emphasizes creativity and originality, rather than money and budgets. Social media is all about the content, the high-quality interaction, the interesting communication and feedback.

With the rapid development of Internet and mobile technologies, social media presence for business is a must if they are to survive in the modern competitive environment. The company that manages to communicate more efficiently with its customers, keeps its partners up to date with its newest releases, or just maintains a warm relationship with every potential client is going to emerge as the winner in the race for success and public recognition.

While others plan budgets and have elaborate financial plans for development, there is no need for that in the social media department. Aside from a few basic tools, there is no need for a large budget to build your presence in the social media space. What one needs to achieve public success is investment in strategy, content and people. We are talking about enthusiastic, dedicated and knowledgeable social media managers who will build an effective communication pattern and will design and execute a sophisticated engagement plan that will bring trust, recognition and preference.

People have always admired a beautiful and sophisticated painting that sends a unique message to its viewer. In fact paintings created by genius painters often end up costing millions of dollars because of their complexity and artistic value. But how much do brushes and paint cost when compared to the final product? The most valuable assets that are invested in a painting are the artist's creativity, originality and unique world vision.

Social media is not and does not have to be different from this. Just like a beautiful painting, a company can create an exquisite pattern of communication with partners, clients and prospects. Building credibility, maintaining high-quality relationships and creating meaningful content does not require large budgets, but rather the enthusiasm, the creativity and the professionalism of social media managers whose task is to create a positive image that will yield the expected results.

How To Build A Social Sales Engagement Platform (For Free)

No matter your market, you have customers and prospects using social media. What if you could find and engage them, far earlier in the buying process, in just a few minutes a day?

What if you launched a custom social sales listening and engagement platform for every sales rep in your organization, helping to accelerate relationships and meet/engage with more of the right prospects more often?

Getting started is surprisingly simple. I recommend getting started with two simple steps—one proactive, and one reactive.

Proactive (Target Lists In HootSuite)

If you know exactly whom you're trying to sell to (companies and/or individuals), find their Twitter handles and start following them via your own Twitter account. Then sort them into lists (you can make these lists private in Twitter) and load those lists into separate columns in HootSuite.

By doing this, you will have (all in one screen) access to all Twitter updates from your target prospects. Especially if you're working in a defined territory with a finite number of prospects, this is a great way to be the proverbial "fly on the wall."

Much of the conversation you observe won't have anything to do with what you're trying to sell, but that's good too. You'll learn what else makes them tick, what they're thinking about and worrying about. You'll also observe the early buying signals (needs, pain, desired outcomes) that will help you engage in a more consultative way.

Reactive (TwitHawk)

Let's say you can't keep up with the more than 200 billion tweets generated each day. Let's say you really only care about when people tweet about a specific topic, or use a specific phrase in their tweets.

TwitHawk is perfect for capturing that for you. Think of TwitHawk as Google Alerts for Twitter. You can set up as many searches as you want, filtering based on keyword(s) and geography, if desired. Then TwitHawk finds search results for you daily, plus allows you to semi-automate and throttle out responses to get and keep you engaged with prospects you may not have known about before.

If you have a geographic territory and want a daily feed of new prospects expressing interest and/or need, TwitHawk should quickly become part of your daily routine.

Of course, there are fantastic tools out there that go deeper and cost a lot more, but you can get the above two steps set up in about 20 minutes, and they work.

Four Keys To Building (And Improving) Your Online Presence

Ask most people how to build out or improve your online presence and they'll immediately get tactical. They'll tell you you absolutely must be on Twitter. Or that you have to build your site a certain way. Or write everything with SEO in mind.

And they might be right. But before you can execute, you have to put your entire online presence and strategy in context. The best online strategies (for enterprise organizations as well as small businesses) focus on the following four key areas:

1. Customers

Everything you do is for them. You need to know who they are, whom you're targeting and prioritizing, where they hang out, whom they hang out with, and so on. The more you understand this customer or prospective customer audience, the more their behavior will tell you where to be, how to write and how to interact.

2. Content

In a variety of formats—written, audio, video, and driven by your customers' preferences—content is the engine that will drive performance, engagement and action with your customers and prospects online. You need to translate your customers' needs and pain points into advice, recommendations, best practices and other content specifically focused on helping your customers succeed.

3. Community

Marketing will never be a one-way street ever again. To quickly earn trust and credibility, you need to comment, connect, engage and otherwise interact with your customer and prospect community. Even if you're not engaging 24/7, at minimum make it very easy to engage with you, or respond to something you've published. Better yet, find other places online where your customers are participating and join in right with them, not as a seller but as a peer.

4. Call To Action

Never leave your customers or prospects with a dead end. Put yourself in their shoes—what would they need next? What additional article would be valuable as a follow-up to what they just read? What additional information will they likely want to request after educating themselves? Include and measure calls to action throughout your online presence.

By having a plan that includes each of the above four components, you can get tactical and execute with confidence that you're engaging the right people in the right places with the right content, with an end game in mind.

The Three Social Networks Your Company Needs To Build

The channels may be the same, but there are three distinct audiences and contexts you should separate and consider a unique strategy to engage, influence and mobilize.

1. Employee Network

How is your company leveraging social networks, channels and tools to more effectively communicate with employees? How are you using these tools to improve communications and connectivity with remote offices and teams that need to work more closely together? How are you regularly gathering and using internal feedback without disrupting workflow and productivity?

2. Customer Network

I include prospects in this as well. This is the network where most companies devote their time currently. Avoid the impulse to move prospects too quickly through the funnel, or field aggressive offers that don't respect the audience or channel's unique expectation about content, tone and delivery.

3. Product Network

Some of your products may need a social network of their own. Allow fans and detractors alike to share feedback openly with you and each other. Learn from them and innovate on a daily basis. This is a missing piece of the social strategy for most companies, but done right it's a great way to get focused insights and two-way communication with customers about specific products and services you offer.

Keep An Active Social Media Presence In 15 Minutes A Day

Eight minutes in the morning. Seven minutes in the afternoon. That's all you need.

Yes, you can spend significantly more time in your social channels—chatting with friends, meeting new people, and learning new things. But you can also stay active and reap the benefits of online networking and engagement with just 15 minutes a day of your time.

The trick is to use that time more efficiently, and focus your activity in three places: 1) create, 2) curate, and 3) engage.

Create

Add value to the social web. This includes posting links to your new blog posts, updates on your product strategy, or other recently-discovered or uncovered nuggets of information that your network will find interesting. I recommend setting these up to stagger out or go out automatically. For example, use [dlvr.it](#) to automatically syndicate new blog posts from your RSS feed to a designated set of social channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, even Foursquare).

Curate

Add links to content you find elsewhere on the web. Attribute it back to the originator, either via a retweet or by adding “via @theirname” at the end of your short post. If you choose to find and publish multiple such curated articles at once, use a service such as [timely.is](#) to automatically publish and throttle this content throughout the day, based on the number of daily posts you specify as well as a determination (by [timely.is](#) algorithms) of when exactly each day your posts are most likely to get noticed, read, retweeted, discussed, etc.

Engage

Scan through the posts of others in your network, and respond where appropriate. If they write back and you don't get to their comment until the next morning or later that afternoon, it's not a big deal. Better to stay engaged in a few hours than spend chunks of your entire day checking and checking (and not getting real work done).

With practice, I bet you can get this done in 15 minutes a day.

Seven Biggest Mistakes Companies Make With Social Media

Gary Vaynerchuk's communication style is infectious. Read his books, watch his podcasts, or see him in person and you get the real deal—passionate, opinionated, but usually spot on.

His latest, *The Thank You Economy*, is worth the fast read. My copy is dog-eared throughout. In the back, in what he calls “Sawdust”, Gary lists among other things his take on the seven biggest mistakes companies make with social media. Here they are:

1. Using tactics instead of strategy
2. Using it exclusively to put out fires
3. Using it to brag
4. Using it as a press release
5. Exclusively re-tweeting other people's material rather than creating your own original content
6. Using it to push product
7. Expecting immediate results.

It's worth picking up the book to read the rest.

CONTENT STRATEGY

How To Blog More (Five Tips)

I've written about where to find blog post inspiration, but continue to get good questions about how to actually get more blogging done.

Some of this has to do with simply setting aside and being disciplined about the time required to create good content. But there are other tactics you can use to jump-start that time to be more productive and efficient at driving more “shipped” content. Here are a few suggestions.

1. Write More Ideas Down

When you have an idea for good content, write it down immediately. Keep paper and pen close by, or use a service like Dial2Do to quickly record an idea that can be translated to text and email for review later. If you're like me, a good idea that sits in your head unrecorded for too long (and when I mean too long, I mean more than 15–20 seconds) gets lost to the next thought. The more you document, the more blog posts you'll have to choose from.

2. Keep A Single, Ongoing List Of Those Ideas

I use Outlook Tasks, and have a category called “Pending Blog Posts”. When I have time to write something new, I go to this list and find something to get started. Ideas are constantly coming and going from this list. Whether you use Outlook or Evernote or a Moleskine, keep them somewhere together.

3. Ideas, Then Outlines, Then Drafts

Don't sit down and intend to write a blog post in one swoop. Start with the core idea, then jot down primary points and themes related to that idea. This piece, for example, started with nothing more than the title. It eventually became a short bullet list of points I wanted to make. Eventually, I sat down and wrote the context and deeper context behind each of those points. By doing it this way, I produced the final post more quickly and it took far less time in aggregate. Breaking new blog posts down into individual steps makes the whole process more accessible (and more likely to happen).

4. Write Ahead Of Time

Don't write today with the intention of posting today. That's only going to make you anxious. Work on something today with the intention of posting later. Tomorrow, next week, or whatever makes sense. By writing content in advance and setting it up to post later, you can also block time to write several posts at once. Take your ideas and outlines of primary points, and lock yourself in a room for a couple hours to bang out new content while you're focused and on a roll.

5. Use Guest Bloggers

You don't have to write everything yourself! Others you work with—peers, colleagues, partners, customers, etc.—can create content that's just as good, just as relevant, and just as magnetic to drive more traffic and interested readers. It takes the full burden off of you, and will drive new people to your content from the original writer's set of channels and networks.

How To Identify And Create More Dynamic Content

Great content is built with three things in mind—what they want you to know, what they want you to think, and what they want you to do.

Dynamic content does all three of these things, with a focus on the third component—driving action.

Dynamic content should stir your emotions, and make you want to do something. This isn't just direct-response we're talking about. Dynamic content can make you forward an article to 10 friends, change the way you think and/or act, and impact long-term behavior—both yours and those around you.

Dynamic content, in short, makes you want to do something about it.

Look through the content you've created recently, and the content on your plate in the near future. What is its purpose? What do you want from the audience? How can you adjust the topic, the tone, the approach or the message so your readers do more than just read and think?

Get them to act.

Three Questions All Content Must Answer

I think we all generally understand and accept that content needs to do something. It needs to speak to and influence an intended audience or else it's really a waste of everyone's time. This applies to a wide range of content in a variety of formats—web pages, white papers, blog posts, videos on YouTube, etc.

But it strikes me that, although content can be audience-centric, it's not always complete. Well-designed content is built by answering three questions:

What do I want people to see, hear and/or learn?

What do I want people to think?

What do I want people to do?

Notice the progression of audience understanding and action here: awareness, interpretation, response.

That doesn't always mean a direct response call to action. But if your audience reads or experiences your content and moves on without any change in perception or behavior, I'd argue something was missing and your content didn't work.

Ten Essential Elements To Make Your Content Go Viral

In no particular order, these elements are most often seen in content that quickly spreads and takes on a life of its own.

1. Humor
2. Sarcasm
3. Satire
4. Sex
5. Controversy
6. Organization
7. Brevity
8. Originality
9. Immediate practicality
10. Statistics

The more you effectively combine (without looking like you're trying too hard), and better it typically works.

The 5-3-2 Rule For Social Media Content

TA McCann from Gist.com spoke at the American Association of Inside Sales Professionals (AA-ISP) Seattle Chapter recently, and among a number of really great insights he shared his 5-3-2 rule for social media content. It's fairly simple—out of 10 Tweets or LinkedIn updates or similar:

- Five should be content from others, relevant to your audience
- Three should be content from you, relevant to your audience (and not directly selling your products)
- Two should be personal, something non-work related to help humanize yourself and/or your brand

Even if you don't follow this to a tee, the gist (no pun intended) is simple:

- Focus on your audience more than yourself
- Humanize your voice, even if it's from a branded social channel vs. an individual

Good advice.

Social Media Editorial Calendar Template

A great way to be more proactive and frequent in publishing new content is to start with an editorial calendar. It doesn't have to be complicated or take a lot of time.

Just start with a handful of themes that are relevant to your audience, and list them down the left-hand side of a spreadsheet. Then, over the course of the next few weeks (listed across the top of the spreadsheet), identify 1–2 specific topics you'll address and write about that week.

Even if you don't follow the calendar exactly every week, I guarantee this will help you feel more confident and prepared to get something published.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	
1	Social Media Content Development											
2	Annual Content Template											
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												
12												
13												
14												
15												

www.heinzmarketing.com/2011/05/social-media-editorial-calendar-template/

Five Common Content Marketing Mistakes (And How To Fix Them)

Don't overthink your content marketing strategy. It's more important to have a bias for action and get rolling. That said, when getting started with content marketing for your organization or brand, there are a few things to make sure you've thought through up front. Here are five mistakes I see organizations making most often.

1. Not Having A Plan Up Front

Before you start any marketing activity (no matter how strategic or tactical), you have to know why you're doing it. What does success look like? How does this activity translate to immediate or eventual sales and revenue?

2. Writing For The Company Instead Of For The Customer

Too many content programs focus on new features, chest-beating on company milestones, and otherwise weaving strong product tie-ins into every new piece of content created. That content has its place, but your readers (customers and prospects) will gravitate towards content that independently provides value. What are your customers' issues? What do they need help with, right now? That's the content that will spread like wildfire for you.

3. Not Encouraging And Participating In Two-Way Communication

Creating content isn't enough. To really accelerate your audience and impact, you must devote time to responding, commenting, engaging questions and so on. If you're just a one-way communication channel, even with good content, your prospects will go elsewhere for the interaction they crave.

4. Not Promoting, Aggregating And Curating Great Content From Others

It's not all about you. You can drive significant audience volume (and accelerated awareness and positive brand impressions for your business) by simply aggregating and promoting great content from others. By doing this, you'll create awareness and interest from other content originators as well as demonstrate to your growing audience that you're filtering great content from numerous sources for them.

5. Only Producing Written Content

Written content may be the core of your content strategy, but don't forget video, podcasts, or short, embedded slide presentations. Or, whatever other formats your audience naturally gravitates towards.

Ten Proven Sources For Blog Post Inspiration

Few people argue with the value of creating regular content—more prospects, more web traffic, more thought leadership and a better educated set of prospects are just a few of the benefits regular bloggers enjoy.

A primary hurdle I hear from many would-be bloggers is the lack of content inspiration. So where do you find new blog post ideas? The answer is all around you. Experienced bloggers will tell you that they're bombarded with possible blog topics. Their challenge isn't finding topics, but choosing the best on which to focus.

Here are ten sources of blog post inspiration I use most often. Some I do actively seek out, but all of them take very little time and produce an ongoing source of inspiration and content.

1. Customer Questions

Every day you're answering questions from customers and prospects—via email, phone, in-person, and in your social networks. Inherent in many of your answers is the subject-matter expertise that people want from you. Every time you answer a question, it's a potential blog post. Think about it.

2. Stuff You Read

It doesn't matter what you're reading: books, other blogs, magazines, and even advertisements. What's your reaction? Do you agree or disagree? What's your take? Blog post.

3. People You Disagree With

Someone says something in a meeting you think is wrong. Why do you disagree? Blog post. You read about a business or business leader who prioritizes something you think is taking them down the wrong path. Blog post.

4. Your Customer-Facing Teams

If you're not on the daily front lines with your customers, someone at your organization is. Your sales team, customer service team, and support team. What are they hearing from customers? What issues are affecting their lives or businesses? What's keeping them up at night and getting them up in the morning? Blog post.

5. Trade Press

You don't have to read everything. Flip through the magazines, scan the online headlines. You'll find news stories, features, opinion pieces, trends, and quotations from other thought leaders. Just keep asking yourself: What do I think of this? What would my customers think? How could I help my customers understand or navigate this issue?

6. Conferences, Panels And Webinars

I come back from conferences with pages of potential blog posts. Not just from the speakers and panels, but also from the trade show floor, the sales and marketing techniques other exhibitors use to try and woo me, and the new people I meet.

7. Twitter Hashtags

Take a keyword relevant to you, your business or your customers, put a hashtag in front of it and do a search on search.twitter.com. See what other people are talking about, right now.

8. LinkedIn Answers

Find the topics and sub-topics most relevant to your business and customers, and sign up for daily email summaries. It's like getting a whole list of possible blog posts in your inbox every day.

9. The News

Scan MSNBC.com. Have the local news on in the background as you make dinner. I can't remember the last time I read (or even scanned) the *Wall Street Journal* without coming up with at least 3–4 topics to blog about.

10. Things You See That Are Dumb

Other people's marketing. Management mistakes. Examples of inefficiency or thoughtlessness or lazy execution. Some people don't know better. Help them get better.

You may need to be proactive and intentional about using some of these sources at first. But once you build the habit, it'll become natural. The day you see or read something and automatically think to yourself, "wow, that would make a good blog post," you're in.

CONTENT CURATION

Eight Keys To Successful Content Curation

There are plenty of good, tactical guidelines out there for content curation (as well as rationales for why it's so important). In addition to the day-to-day tactics and objectives, here are eight keys to making your content curation efforts more efficient, effective and productive.

1. What Would Your Customers And Prospects Want To Read?

This isn't about you. It's about your customers and prospects. You know that they're starved for time, yet they wish they had more time to consume valuable information. What magazines are stacking up on their desk, too important to cancel but without time to read? Which RSS feeds are the same? Email newsletters, etc.? Narrow in on those sources and treat them as the core of your curation efforts.

2. What Channels Will They Use? Where Do They Want To Read It?

Curation is as much about delivery as it is content. Don't assume your customers will all gravitate towards your Twitter feed, just because that's where you're most comfortable sharing content. Consider using a weekly email newsletter, or a blog digest, or a printed newsletter. Know your customer's consumption and channel habits.

3. Curate From The Curators

Find the customer-friendly news sources that are already curating content for like-minded audiences. SmartBriefs newsletters, for example, are a daily source of great content from across the Web focused on a single subject or audience. Many popular blogs also do weekly or occasional digests of great content they find from across the web. Similarly, many popular Twitter feeds that your customers and prospects should be following (but don't) offer content to curate. A handful of sources may become your primary curation sources, because they provide a wide variety of source content.

4. Set Everything Up In Advance

If you're using a service such as Timely.is to spread out Tweets, for example, put a bookmark in your browser so that you're always one-click away from adding great new content to your feed. If you're using email or blogs as your channel, build the template in advance and simply add newly-found content to that template until you fill it up to distribute. In summary, make it as easy as possible to curate content on the fly as you see it, so that you're more consistent about doing it.

5. Follow A Daily Process

Get into a routine to check the same sources on a regular basis. Schedule it specifically on your calendar if you need to, but otherwise build an explicit daily checklist that allows you to execute curation tasks in a shorter and shorter amount of time.

6. Be Consistent

The more your followers can expect regular, consistently good content, the more likely they will regularly follow you, read you, and forward your content to others. Setting up curated content in advance is an easy way to do a bundle of curation work at once and have it spread out to readers over time. If your readers establish habits and expectations of following you, don't let them down.

7. Watch Metrics For What Resonates Best

Keep close watch on what content gets the most clicks, the most shares and retweets, and what day/time that happens. [Timely.is](#) does some of this work for you, for example, but you'll learn a ton about your prospects by watching what they respond best to, and that will only improve your engagement metrics and curation selections over time.

8. Curation Does Not Replace Good Original Content

Successful curation is a great way to service your customers and prospects, but it is not in any way a substitute for creating original content. Curation gives you a following, but creation gives you the traffic and opportunity to build deeper relationships, drive value-added registration, and accelerate pipeline progress.

How To Be More Social In Five Seconds Or Less

So you want to be more active in your social circles but don't have time. It takes too long to think about new content, to be thoughtful in a response or comment, and there are far too many social networking sites to monitor.

All true, but there are a handful of ways you can instantly increase your participation, visibility and impact in social circles without taking more than a couple seconds to do it. For example:

- “Like” more content on Facebook. Just one click. Everybody wants to be “liked” and constantly monitors who likes their content.
- “Vote” for more content you like. Again, just one click. Many social sites have a voting feature next to the headline, allowing you to quickly agree or approve the message. These features are also often in cross-site platforms like Disqus.
- Retweet. Don't worry about a pithy comment, just click the retweet button in Twitter, Hootsuite or your other dashboard.
- Use pat answers. It's more than OK to respond quickly and briefly to Facebook posts, tweets, even emails with a short “thank you”, “I agree”, “Nice job!” or similar. It's an acknowledgement that you saw the message, and it goes a long way to the originator.

There are more, but you get the idea. Of course, deeper and more thoughtful participation will help you too. But you don't have to do that every time. Frequency and quantity can be just as important as quality.

How To Get Your CEO To Blog And Tweet More

It's not for everybody. For many CEOs and others in leadership or influential positions, getting them to participate (if not lead) via the social Web may be an ongoing, uphill battle.

More and more, I hear from CEOs that truly want to give it a go, to engage with their customers and other key constituents more actively via social channels, to accelerate their own thought leadership and personal brands via more frequent writing.

For those CEOs—the ones who should be more active and have a propensity to do it—here are six tips to get them motivated and moving.

1. Make It Easy To Get Started

Break down the start-up process into small, bite-sized steps. Sit down and walk them through the basics if necessary, or point them towards guides that take just a few minutes per step. Then give them a deadline to get it done. Especially if they want to get it done anyway, they might need it made easier plus a little accountability (deadlines) to make it happen.

2. Leverage Peer Pressure

If the CEO should be more active, it's likely their leadership team thinks they should be too. Get others to reinforce the value and priority of getting started. Find the other members of the leadership and management team who are already doing it, and showcase some of the results they've already achieved for themselves and the business in general.

3. Translate The ROI

Point out the specific business value of being active, not just overall but specifically based on the business priorities the CEO has already focused on this year. Demonstrate clear lines between activity, performance and business results. Show examples of how this has worked for other CEOs and other companies.

4. Point Out Their Peers

Pick a handful of CEOs in the same industry who are already active on Twitter or regularly blogging. Show the impact it's having on their brand, their visibility, and their perception of leadership. This sometimes is motivation enough.

5. Do A 30-Minute Idea Brainstorm

For blogging specifically, sit the CEO down with a whiteboard and walk him/her through a brainstorm of possible topics. What does he/she have to share, unique to their position or perspective? What will customers want to hear from them? I can almost guarantee you'll fill the whiteboard in less than the allotted time, and having specific topics will make the CEO more motivated to convert ideas into content.

6. Hire A Ghostwriter

Even if the CEO is a good writer, don't require them to sit down and draft themselves. Hire a ghostwriter to listen to the CEO pace in their office and talk, and then translate that perspective into a solid first draft. Over time, they may want to do more of their own writing. But to get started, and see the early results, make it easier and faster.

How To Gain Influence And Authority In Online Communities

In the traditional marketing world, we bought our way into everything. This meant sponsoring events, placing ads where your customers are gathering, and throwing sales pitches in front of active communities.

Marketers still do this, of course. They just increasingly look bad doing it. The smart marketers know that building trust, credibility and preference via online communities is about earning your way in.

Participate As A Peer

You should know enough about the industry you're in, and the customers and prospects that live there every day that you can engage in a peer-to-peer conversation with them on their issues. Answer their questions, ask new questions, be an equal member of the community. Earn the community's trust, respect, and following by demonstrating the value of your ideas, not the size of your budget.

Don't Sell

If your content and contributions are good enough, prospective customers already active in these communities will want to know more about you. They'll ask YOU for a sales pitch. But if you sell first, or sell too early, or sell too often, you instantly lose the credibility you may have already worked hard to build.

Make Connections And Introductions

You don't know everything, but you may know enough people who do. Make yourself a go-to resource for anything community members need. The more they come to you with questions and for unbiased information and connections, the more often you'll have the ability to demonstrate expertise and earn the sales conversation when the timing is right.

Ten Keys To Success For Online Community Managers

It's possible to successfully manage your online social channels and communities without a dedicated resource. But a dedicated online community manager is a smart investment for organizations that want to more completely tap into and leverage the social web's potential to cost-effectively and sustainably drive awareness, thought leadership and direct lead generation for your sales team.

Below are 10 keys to success for anyone starting or already engaged in an online community manager role.

1. Clear Objectives And Measurable Goals

What does your success look like? What are you hoping to achieve? What does success look like in 30 days, 6 months, 12 months? Establish a crisp set of short-term and long-term, measurable goals, both tactical and strategic.

2. Executive Buy-In

Your manager, their manager, and the top people in your organization need to buy into your program. They need to believe in what you're doing, why you're doing it, and how it fits into the broader business objectives. You need to help them see this—connecting the online and social world they may not yet fully understand with the market growth, awareness and margin challenges/objectives they stare at every day.

3. Tools

Once you establish the specific tactics you'll employ on a daily and weekly basis, identify the tools that will help you execute more consistently and efficiently. Many of these tools are free, but even those that have fees can be leveraged at a fraction of the cost of having to execute manually, again and again.

4. Reporting And Dashboards

You can use the amazing tools from providers such as Radian6 or a simple spreadsheet. Either way, take the crisp set of metrics you defined in the beginning and communicate those back to your team, your manager and your executive team on a regular basis. This will reinforce the growing value of the business assets you're building.

5. Editorial Calendar

Know what you want to say, and to whom. Put it on paper in advance, and use a calendar as a loose guide for what you want to publish. New ideas will come up on a regular basis, and that's fine, but if you start with a plan you're far more likely to create content and propagate a consistent brand presence across your own and third-party channels and communities.

6. Clear Content/Format Standards

What formats are you most comfortable with? Which formats will your customers most likely use? Focus on these channels and formats first, and create some templates and prototypes for how your content will look, will be created and be published. Start with some experimentation, but settle on some consistent execution methods that make it faster and easier to execute moving forward with consistent results, and in formats that your customers are comfortable with.

7. Pre-Determined Escalation Paths

Inevitably, the customers and prospects you engage online will have questions you can't answer. Who in your organization can answer? Do you know who you'd want to use in what context, and with what content areas? Identify your experts, train them on how to be socially savvy, and create clear escalation paths to help them respond quickly.

8. Customer "Assistant Managers"

You will also begin to identify customers and members of your social community who want to help you manage conversations, solicit feedback from other members, and more. Think of these members as your assistant managers. Create some clear roles and responsibilities, guidelines and incentives to participate at a leadership level.

9. A Network Of Writers

Employees, peers, customers, partners, industry influencers, other industry community managers—the potential sources of content and writers go on and on. You're not in this alone. You simply run the show. Empower, encourage and invite everyone else to join with you. They are your team.

10. Patience

This will take time. Your efforts won't generate revenue in the first week (at least not in any sustainable way, not yet). If you set your goals up front, have executive support, and have a clear set of measurements to demonstrate growth, trust your plan and your focus and your execution to deliver results.

How To Manage Social Media Without A Social Media Manager

The number one pushback I hear from companies who want to better leverage social media but aren't, is that they don't have time. More specifically, they don't have someone who can devote enough time each day to publishing, curating and engaging prospective customers, partners and influencers on the social web.

This isn't a problem of bandwidth as much as it is about process. If you have a system to follow every day that effectively translates the tasks required for effective social engagement into a checklist, it's far easier to not only find the time, but also get the work done in a fraction of what you think it would take.

Below is a sample of a daily social media "punch list." There are more explicit tactics behind some of these steps, but it's a good start for separating the work required into easy-to-execute buckets.

Read And Filter

- Scan news articles in Google Reader for relevant pieces for target personas
 - ID those for retweeting, responding to, drafting your own version/perspective for blog
- Scan new tweets from your Twitter followers
 - Look for those to retweet and respond to
- Scan key "trades" for relevant articles
 - ID those for responding to, republishing via Twitter or blog
- Scan Facebook updates
 - Identify issues, topics, etc. you might want to engage

Publish/Republish

- Post interesting third-party articles into Twitter, Facebook and/or blog
 - Consider a one paragraph intro on blog before sending to third-party link (if time allows, but this helps with traffic and SEO)
- Aggregate content into "Best Of" formats for 1–2 times/weekly publishing
 - Best of blog posts
 - Best of Twitter blog posts
- Publish new, original content onto your blog
 - Pull from editorial calendar
 - Assign and pull from other employees, customers, influencers
 - Republish third-party content with permission

Syndicate

- Distribute original content via syndication services
 - StumbleUpon
 - Digg
 - Tumblr
 - Del.icio.us

Engage

- Identify content (from above) that needs a response or engagement from your company or individuals therein
- Distribute response “jobs” to others at the company based on content roles and areas of expertise
- Monitor for “responses to responses”
 - Most publishing platforms will let you get email notification when this happens

SOCIAL LEAD GENERATION

Five Ways To Find More Sales Leads On Twitter

Twitter will never be confused with a direct response channel, but it's still a proven and measurable tool for finding, engaging and closing more prospects. That goes for small business and enterprise sales, as well as a broad spectrum of industries.

Below are five specific tips to start finding more sales via Twitter. You don't need thousands of followers. And if you're just getting started today, every one of these tips still applies.

1. Follow Your Prospects

Create private lists of your prospects in Twitter, and follow them via segmented columns in HootSuite. You can add prospects to a Twitter list without actually following them if you want to stay more “stealth” until you're ready to reach out and engage. Knowing what your prospects are thinking and saying will help you get to understand them better, learn quickly what their priorities are, and give you plenty of opportunities to engage at the beginning of their buying cycle.

2. Follow Your Partners

I've found that fellow service providers and complimentary businesses working with the same target audience often share needs, questions, look for help with existing projects and more directly via Twitter. And even if they aren't, they're working with your prospective customers every day. The more these partners see and interact with you on Twitter, the more likely they'll remember you when those customers and prospects have a need you can fill.

3. Curate Customer-Centric Content

One of the quickest ways to attract prospects to you via Twitter is to read everything they wish they had time to read, and filter the best content into your Twitter feed. You don't have to originate content to attract a following on the social web—it's good enough (and sometimes better) to curate the best content from a variety of sources so that your prospects begin to trust that you're, effectively, doing their reading for them.

4. Listen For Buying Signals

What are some of the things your prospective customers experience before they need what you're selling? These buying signals are from people who aren't yet ready to buy, but are about ready to start looking for solutions to a problem or pain. If you know your customer targets well enough, you can specifically search for those keywords and phrases from prospects on Twitter and other social channels. HootSuite, TwiThawk and a variety of online (and usually free) tools can help you with that.

5. Watch And Use Hashtags

Hashtags, especially those tied to associations or events, are a great way to follow conversations and find prospects who already self-associate with a group, a cause, an interest or a need. It's a great way to engage in those real-time conversations and help your message reach new prospects directly. It's particularly important when using hashtags to add value, and don't directly sell. But if you engage in the conversation naturally, new prospects will be drawn in to learn more.

Six Ways To Drive More Sales On LinkedIn

I get asked about this a lot. Here are six quick tips (mostly relevant to B2B sellers) for building relationships and finding prospects on LinkedIn.

1. Read The Daily Digest Every Day

First of all, make sure you get it delivered every day (not everyone has this turned on, and it's prone to hit your spam filter if you're not careful). Then take the time to read it. I guarantee you'll find someone you care about or who you haven't talked to in awhile has an update. Great excuse to reach out again. You'll also find prospects that just released something, or just changed something in their profile. Great excuse to send a note of congratulations, offer a new contextual suggestion, etc. Be the guy or gal who reaches out first, and takes notice of the little things. People appreciate that.

2. Join And Participate In Groups

Groups on LinkedIn aren't for selling. But there's a group for everything there. It's a long trail of interests to mine for ideas, customer pain points, and prospects who are early in the buying cycle. Instead of selling, use this opportunity to create value. Answer questions. Post interesting and relevant articles. Start to generate visibility and awareness for yourself and your organization in the group as a trusted resource of information.

3. Keep Your Profile Up To Date

Describe your expertise. Use benefit and outcome-oriented keywords and statements to describe your company and what you do. Feature recommendations. Add modules to auto-integrate content from your blog, Slideshare account, Twitter feed and more. Make your profile content-rich and relevant. The more relevant, the more people will be attracted to you (and find you in searches). And the more updates (without going overboard), the more often you'll show up in the Daily Digest emails for others.

4. Ask And Answer Questions

The best way to maximize eyeballs and impact from LinkedIn Answers is to ask the questions instead of just answering. What kind of questions should you field? Look at your consultative selling questions for inspiration. What questions relate to your prospect's current priorities or likely problems and pain points? What questions can you ask that attract prospective customers and get them talking about what they're doing and what they need?

5. Give Recommendations

What goes around comes around. Make a habit of giving people who deserve it a recommendation on LinkedIn and you're likely to get a few back too. This is a great way to "do good" for those in your network without asking for or expecting anything in return. Believe me, it will be appreciated and remembered.

6. Ask For Specific Referrals And Introductions

Most companies and salespeople ask their contacts generally for referrals. But your response rate will go up significantly if you ask for specific referrals. Browse through the network of those you want to get help from, and if your relationship is strong enough, ask for introductions to the 1–3 people you specifically want to meet. The more specific you are, the easier it is for someone to comply.

Three Examples That Prove Nurture Marketing Works

The idea that most of your prospects aren't ready to buy, and that you can increase your sales conversion yield with that list by staying in touch with value over time, sounds good. But unless you've seen or experienced the effect of that theory, it's often too easy to just push to close as many prospects, right now, as possible.

But if you can effectively separate out the qualified and ready-to-buy prospects to close now, while simultaneously building value and preference with the much-larger list of everyone else, you'll close considerable business over time with minimal incremental work.

Here are three very quick anecdotes that prove it works.

1. "These Leads Are Dead" Becomes A 2X Sales Result Six Months Later

We started working with a company a few years ago, and to start they handed us a database of 60,000 leads "of dubious origin" (their words). The sales team hated this list, was tired of calling it, and said these leads were either unqualified or just plain dead.

Without a lot of fanfare or marketing automation tools, we started creating and delivering value-added content to this list—newsletters, webinars, white paper offers, lots of content that focused on addressing and answering questions the audience had, well beyond what they were selling.

Long story short, six months later, 45 percent of the company's sales had come from that "dead" list. The list continued to deliver sales in subsequent months as well.

2. Right Time, Right Place Becomes Biggest Deal Of The Year

That same program and list generated the largest single deal of the year for the company. A prospect on the 60,000 "dead" lead list received an invitation to an upcoming webinar. He didn't attend the webinar, nor did he register. He simply replied to the email invitation, telling the sales rep that he just got out of a meeting and "finally" got the green light to move forward with the project he'd been pitching for more than a year.

The prospect was qualified, educated and wasn't shopping around. That deal, the biggest of the year for the sales organization, closed in less than half the typical sales cycle length.

3. Easiest Deal I've Ever Closed

Took More Than Two Years Of Hard Work

Not long ago I got a call from the CEO of a fast-growing technology company on the East Coast. We had met at a conference two years ago. At the time, I did what I usually do with people I meet at events—followed up immediately after, invited her to join my newsletter list, put her into my nurture marketing systems, and pretty much moved on.

Two years later, she called. Her business was exploding, and she wanted help organizing and accelerating her marketing efforts. Less than a week after her call, she was a recurring-revenue client for our business.

On one hand, that's one of the fastest deals we've closed and the least amount of work I've put into a pitch. On the other hand, I worked that deal hard for two years. The CEO had been reading my newsletter, following my blog, and knew I could help her with exactly what she needed done.

At What Point Do You Stop Nurturing A Lead?

Short answer: Never.

Long answer: Most nurture programs have a natural end date. Typically, that end date is defined by the end of a string of emails written and deployed in a marketing system (automated or otherwise).

This end date, of course, is usually arbitrary and ridiculous. How do you really know when a prospect is dead and gone forever? How do you know how long they'll actually take to mature into a qualified and ready-to-buy prospect?

Another key to how you answer this question is the quality of the content you're using to nurture. If you're pushing content about yourself—your products, their features, use cases, etc.—the end of a nurture campaign is likely more defined by when the prospect gets sick of your thinly-veiled sales pitches.

However, if your nurture program is about the customer—addressing their needs, educating them on things that help them throughout their business, making them more successful even if they're not handing over money (now or ever)—then the nurture may never end.

You may nurture a prospect for years before they convert. That's a long time, but I assume you still want that business when the prospect is ready to move. You may also nurture a prospect for years who never converts, but who sends you referrals from others they know are closer to needing your solution.

The incremental cost of sending another email is minimal. The incremental cost of one more person reading your content is zero. So why would you intentionally cut off communication with someone who could directly or indirectly help your business, be it tomorrow or five years from now?

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY BY CHANNEL

The Complete (But Short) Guide To Getting Started On Twitter

There are countless would-be Twitter users out there. There are those who know that their prospects, customers, partners and more are also on Twitter, but aren't sure how to get started.

Those same would-be Twitter users don't have the time or patience to read through most "How To Twitter" guides. They want something fast, straightforward, but complete. This guide is for them.

Here are seven simple but specific steps to get started with a new Twitter account.

1. Prepare

Before doing anything, make sure an audience you care about is active on Twitter. Do you know how they use it? What information they share about themselves and with each other?

What are your objectives with Twitter? Is it to build your personal brand? To find new business opportunities? To build awareness and thought leadership for your business? A mix of these?

Now think about how your approach, personality and content might combine these things into the type of content you create and curate moving forward. Yes, you could get more formal and start with an editorial calendar or similar, but this guide's reader doesn't have time for that. Let's get started.

2. Set Up

Create your Twitter account. Choose a handle that reflects you, what you want to portray to your followers, and what they might be interested in following. You can include your name, your company name, and/or combine that with something you care about and will tweet a lot about. Twitter will give you some suggestions of alternatives if the specific handle you want is gone.

Many would-be Twitter users get stuck at this stage. Pick something you're generally OK with and keep moving. You're not going to get 1,000 followers in the next couple days, and you can always go back and change your handle anytime.

Now complete your profile with a photo, short bio and URL. Choose a photo, again, based on the nature of the content you'll likely tweet and what you want your audience to think about you. Formal headshots and casual shots are all fair game. Keep your bio tight, and embed as many keywords as you can relevant to what you'll cover. Many would-be followers will search Twitter bios for clues that you might be interesting.

Finally, include a URL to your company site, a blog, even your LinkedIn profile page. If a follower wanted to learn more about you or your company, where would you send them first? Use that URL.

3. Getting The Ball Rolling

Don't worry about followers yet. Stay invisible on Twitter, at least for a few days, until you get the hang of the content side. Besides, you'll want a handful of tweets already in your account before you start inviting others so they not only see you're active but also can gauge the relevance of your content to them.

Now, seriously, start posting stuff. Don't worry about frequency or consistency. Don't worry too much about your voice or a "theme" or anything like that. Just get started. What you naturally tweet in the next few days (or first 20 tweets, whichever comes first) is likely the natural style that best reflects you and will keep you engaged. If a particular style doesn't fit you, and you're forcing it, you won't stick with it.

Keep posting naturally until you feel comfortable with your voice and the type of content you're posting.

4. Add A Few Followers

Start with people you know well—close friends, family, colleagues. Trusted folks who will not only help promote your early content but also give you feedback if they see something that just doesn't seem like you. Most if not all of these folks will immediately follow you back.

Beyond your close circle, find others in your professional network that are also on Twitter and follow them. LinkedIn has a great tool that makes this fast and easy, particularly among people already in your LinkedIn network. Eventually, you can use any of a handful of tools to follow others outside of your network that tweet about things of interest to you.

5. Manage Activity And Access

Twitter allows you to create lists of subsets of your users that have things in common. I, for example, have separate lists for B2B sales and marketing experts, clients, Twitter friends in the Seattle area, etc. I most often watch and interact with these specific lists, even though I follow far more.

Several free tools including HootSuite and Tweetdeck make filtering these lists easy. I stay fairly active on Twitter but do it in about 15 minutes a day.

HootSuite and Tweetdeck also make it easy to send new tweets, retweet content from others, respond, schedule new posts in the future, and so on.

6. Find Ongoing Content To Tweet

Look around you, right now, and I bet you find a constant source of content to potentially tweet. This starts with newsletters you read, blogs you read, and articles sent to you by colleagues. How about reflections on things you see or that happen to you during the day? Photos and videos. Comments about a game you're watching. Part of your 15 minutes a day can include scanning these sources and finding content that you want to share with others.

7. Start A Daily/Weekly Routine

Eventually, staying active on Twitter will become a habit you don't have to think about. Until then, consider putting something on your calendar 2–3 times a week to ensure you get something up. Try a morning routine that includes a visit to Twitter or your HootSuite account.

Four Fundamental Twitter Best Practices

We get a lot of questions about Twitter—how to get started, how to use it, and how to get more readers and followers. The answer usually varies—depending on your audience, objective and focus.

That said, here are four pieces of advice we give often, specifically to those just getting started.

1. Use Hashtags (“#” Before Your Keyword) That Are Relevant To Your Audience

People will read your tweets if they follow you or find your content via a keyword search. Hashtags extend your reach beyond those who are following you, and help you accelerate new followers directly to your account. Tools like hashtags.org can help you find popular keywords. But don’t over-tag in a single tweet—no more than three hashtags per tweet.

2. Make Your Tweets A Two-Way Street

Don’t just publish. Participate in the conversation. If you see something that piques your interest, retweet it or respond to the Tweeter. This increases exposure to you and your message.

3. Write For Your Audience, Not For Yourself

Twitter’s not a press release page and it’s not your company newsletter. If you turn your Twitter account into a promotional channel it’ll be difficult to get a wide audience. Think about reaching people who don’t yet know your business. Draw them in through content they care about (independent of what you actually sell).

4. Have A Personality

Take time to interact and develop your public voice. Show that there’s a real, live, interesting person behind the account. The more personality you show, the more people will be attracted to you (and share you with their own network).

How To Reach And Influence Bloggers In Your Industry

The purpose of PR has never been about influencing press. It's about reaching your target audience through their published channels. And yes, the traditional media still has significant influence and reach worth pursuing.

Now more than ever, the “blogosphere” offers an even greater opportunity to reach both wide and very narrow audiences. And while some blogs are written and operated by professional journalists and publications, many (if not most) are written by people like you and me—passionate individuals with something to say and share.

In every industry, there's an opportunity to find and influence bloggers to tell your story. And the key to doing this is to (temporarily) forget about your objectives, and focus entirely on helping the blogger.

First, understand their situation. If they don't blog for a living, then what they're doing is likely a labor of love. They also have limited time to do it, and finding good stories to tell is a primary constraint.

Get to know their content, their angle, and their interests. Make yourself familiar to them first by commenting on their posts, retweeting their Twitter updates, and generally helping them extend their audience and facilitate online discussions.

When you do finally reach out directly, do so with value independent of a pitch. Be a resource or expert on a particular topic they care about. Point out an external link or resource or potential story source they may not have known about. Offer an introduction to someone in your network who could give them a new perspective.

Generally, make things easier for them without expecting anything in return. Yes, this is an investment and yes, it takes time. But this is how you can create long-term trust, credibility and eventually coverage for your own stories and priorities through their channel.

Ten Ways To Improve Your Klout Score

Who can you trust online? When it comes to Twitter, that question can be answered with Klout, an independent service that takes into account a number of factors to determine which Twitter users are most authentic, most influential and most worth following.

The specific algorithms used to determine Klout aren't explicitly known. The impact of a higher Klout score is still being developed as well, but I expect these scores will increasingly be used by a variety of search and sort tools (including Google) to increase visibility of tweets from users with high Klout scores.

Therefore, the higher your score, the wider reach and influence you have beyond your direct followers.

You can learn your current Klout score via their site or third-party tools such as HootSuite. To improve your Klout score, I recommend the following ten tips.

1. Create Content Worth Sharing

This may sound obvious, but it's all too easy to focus on content that you alone care about. Who are your followers, what are they interested in, and what are they likely to read, engage with and share with their own networks?

2. Start Discussions And Ask Questions

All social networks thrive on conversations. Start some. Ask questions not just to learn, but also to find out what a group of like-minded people think. Ask about things in the news, for feedback on a particular product or service. Ask questions that you know others need answers to as well, which will spark the discussion and generate retweets.

3. Respond And Participate

Go out of your way to help others on Twitter. Help those who ask questions, offer unsolicited advice to those who are struggling with something. If you're ambitious, do a search for keywords you're particularly knowledgeable about and respond to new people you don't yet know. This is a great way to get new followers and increase the measured reach and influence you have across the network.

4. Register With Klout (And Connect Facebook)

No cost, takes three minutes. Make sure Klout knows who you are. They'll even give you direct, personalized stats and recommendations for how to improve your score. If you're active on Facebook, connect your account so that Klout gives you credit for influence on other networks as well.

5. Host A Twitter Chat

Pick a topic, a time and a hashtag. Get friends, colleagues or like-minded followers to go online at a specified time and start talking. By initiating the chat, your account will be at the center of dozens if not hundreds of tweets. You'll also meet and be exposed to a bunch of new people.

6. Show Appreciation And Thank People Publicly

If someone retweets your stuff, thank them. Individually. It will mean a lot that you did it, and Klout likes etiquette.

7. Make Time For Twitter

You don't have to be on Twitter all day. Set a few pockets of 5–10 minutes each day to go on, be active, and engage. Even that short amount of focused time can go a long way.

8. Be Careful Who You Follow

Don't automatically follow anybody who follows you. Make sure those you follow are relevant and interesting to you. Set the bar wherever you want based on that definition, just avoid spammers.

9. Keep It Short

Leave plenty of room for retweets. I try to leave at least 25 characters at the end of a tweet.

10. Use Hashtags (Sometimes, And Only When Relevant)

Klout likes tweets that don't have a bunch of hashtags. If you include 3–4 hashtags in each post, it looks like you're trying to bait people into finding your stuff. If you're at a conference or event with a hashtag, by all means join the community. But be careful about using hashtags too often, or tagging generic words throughout your tweets just to get them noticed.

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You can find more information on much of the contents of this book, as well as additional information and insights, at www.mattonmarketingblog.com.

We hope this book inspires you to keep thinking, innovating, and inspiring those around you. The author was particularly inspired by Bill Lawler, Don Gregory, Robert Pease, Craig Rosenberg, Anthony Iannarino, Jill Konrath, Tom Searcy, Claude Hopkins, Jeff Thull, Verne Harnish and many many others.

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Matt has held various positions at companies such as Microsoft, Weber Shandwick, Boeing, The Seattle Mariners, Market Leader and Verdiem. In 2007, Matt began Heinz Marketing to help clients focus their business on market and customer opportunities, then execute a plan to scale revenue and customer growth. He launched Heinz Marketing formally in late 2008.

Matt lives in Kirkland, Washington with his wife, Beth, two children and a menagerie of animals (a dog, a cat, a fish and seven chickens).

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Matt on Twitter

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One of the greatest opportunities with the social Web is to find, engage and convert prospective customers well before they're actively ready to buy. The channels, relationships and content available openly across the Web make it easier than ever to build strong, scalable pipelines of near-term and future business.

This book will help you organize, harness and capitalize on the information, buying signals and qualified prospects identifying themselves to you online every single day. With a mix of strategies, tactics and tools, you can immediately start filling your sales pipeline with more qualified prospects and conversion opportunities.

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Nancy Nardin, President, Smart Selling Tools

"Matt covers social selling from A–Z! The author's authoritative yet breezy style makes this an easy read. Whether you are just starting out, or consider yourself an old pro, you will definitely learn something and improve social selling results by reading this book."

Dan McDade, President, PointClear



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