Using social media for marketing can enable small business looking to further their reach to more customers. Your customers are interacting with brands through social media, therefore, having a strong social media presence on the web is the key to tap into their interest. If implemented correctly, marketing with social media can bring remarkable success to your business.

Social Media: Start With a Plan

Before you begin creating social media, consider your business’ goals. Starting a social media presence without a plan in mind is like wandering through a forest without a map—you’ll only end up lost.

Create a social media plan and brainstorm about your goals: what are you hoping to achieve through social media? Who is your target audience? Where would your target audience hang out and how would they use social media? What message do you want to send to your audience with social media?

Social media can help with a number of goals, such as:

- Website traffic
- Conversions
- Brand awareness
- Creating a brand identity and positive brand association
- Communication and interaction with key audiences

Best Social Media Tips:

- **Planning** — As discussed previously, building a social media plan is essential. Consider keyword research and brainstorm content ideas that will interest your target audience.
- **Content is King** — Consistent with other areas of online marketing, content reigns king when it comes to social media. Make sure you are offering valuable information that your ideal customers will find interesting. Create a variety of content by implementing social media images, videos, and infographics in addition to classic text-based content.
- **Consistent Brand Image** — Using social media enables your business to project your brand image across a variety of different social media platforms. While each platform has its own unique environment and voice, your business’ core identity should stay consistent.
- **Blog** — Blogging is a great social media marketing tool that lets you share a wide array of information and content with readers. Your company can blog about your recent social media efforts, contests, and events.
- **Links** — While using social media relies primarily on your business sharing its own unique, original content to gain followers, fans, and devotees, it’s also great to link to outside articles as well. If other sources provide great, valuable information you think your target audience will enjoy, don’t be shy about linking to them. Linking to outside sources improves trust and reliability, and you may even get some links in return.
- **Track Competitors** — It’s always important to keep an eye on competitors—they can provide valuable data for keyword research, where to get industry-related links, and other social media insight. If your competitors are using a certain social media technique that seems to be working for them, do the same thing, but do it better!
- **Measure Success with Analytics** — You can’t determine the success of your social media strategies without tracking data. Google Analytics can be used as a great social media marketing tool.
tool that will help you measure your triumphant social media marketing techniques, as well as determine which strategies are better off abandoned. Attach tracking tags to your social media campaigns so that you can properly monitor them.

Various social media sites will require different techniques, so develop a unique strategy tailored for each platform.

**Facebook**'s casual, friendly environment requires an active social media strategy that begins with creating a Facebook Business Fan Page. You will want to pay careful attention to layout, as the visual component is a key aspect of the Facebook experience. Social media for business pages revolves around furthering your conversation with audiences by posting industry-related articles, images, videos, etc. Facebook is a place people go to relax and chat with friends, so keep your tone light and friendly.

**Google+** is the new Facebook competitor, and it promotes the same fun, casual atmosphere. On Google+ you can upload and share photos, videos, links, and view all your +1s. Also take advantage of Google+ circles, which allow you to segment your followers into smaller groups, enabling you to share information with some followers while barring others. For example, you might try creating a “super-fan” circle, and share special discounts and exclusive offers only with that group. You can also try hosting video conferences with Hangouts and experiment using the Hangout feature in some fun, creative ways. Some social media ideas: if you’re a salon, host a how-to session on how to braid your hair. If you own a local bookstore, try offering author video chats. If you’re feeling adventurous, invite your +1s to your Google+ Community. Google+ Communities will allow you to listen into your fan's feedback and input, truly putting the social back into social media.

**Pinterest** is the latest in social media trends. Pinterest’s image-centered platform is ideal for retail, but anyone can benefit from using Pinterest for social media purposes. Pinterest allows small businesses to showcase their own product offerings while also developing their own brand’s personality with some unique pinboards.

**Twitter** is the social media tool that lets you broadcast your updates across the web. Follow tweeters in your industry or related fields, and you should gain a steady stream of followers in return. Mix up your official-related tweets about specials, discounts, and news updates with some fun and quirky tweets interspersed. Be sure to retweet when a customer has something nice to say about you, and don’t forget answer people’s questions when possible. Using Twitter as a social media tool revolves around dialog and communication, so be sure to interact as much as possible.

**LinkedIn** is one of the more professional social media marketing sites. LinkedIn Groups is a great venue for entering into a professional dialog with people in similar industries and provides a place to share content with like-minded individuals. Encourage customers or clients to give your business a recommendation on your LinkedIn profile. Recommendations make your business appear more credible and reliable for new customers. Also browse the Questions section of LinkedIn; providing answers helps you get established and earns trust.

**YouTube** is the number one place for creating video content, with can be an incredibly powerful social media marketing tool. Many businesses try to create video content with the aim of having their video “go viral,” but in reality those chances are pretty slim. Instead, focus on creating useful, instructive
“how-to” videos. These how-to videos also have the added benefit of ranking on the video search results of Google, so don't under-estimate the power of video content!

Social media platforms like Yelp, FourSquare, and Level Up are great for brick and mortar businesses looking to implement social media. Register on these sites to claim your location spot, and then consider extra incentives such as check-in rewards or special discounts. Remember, these visitors will have their phones in hand so they will have access to providing reviews which could hurt or significantly aid your users.

Reddit, or similar social media platforms such as Stumble Upon or Digg, are ideal for sharing compelling content. With over 2 billion page views a month, Reddit has incredible social media potential, but be warned that only truly unique, interesting content will be welcomed. Posting on Reddit is playing with fire—submit spam or overtly sales-focused content and your business could get berated by this extremely tech-savvy community. If you have content you believe the Reddit community (majority is young, geeky, liberal, and internet-obsessed) would enjoy, you could reap tremendous benefits and earn valuable traffic.

Pay-per-click marketing is a growing form of online advertising that continues to be very successfully for small and medium sized businesses. Pay-per-click marketing is a way of using search engine advertising to generate clicks to your website, rather than “earning” those clicks organically. You know those sponsored ads you often see at the top of Google’s search results page, marked with a yellow label? That’s pay-per-click advertising. Every time your ad is clicked, sending a visitor to your website, you pay the search engine a small fee. Google AdWords – by far the most popular PPC platform – operates on a pay-per-click model, in which users bid on keywords and pay for each click on their advertisements. Every time a search is initiated, Google digs into the pool of bidding AdWords advertisers and chooses a set of winners to appear in the ad space on its search results page. The “winners” are chosen based on a combination of factors, including the quality and relevance of their keywords and ad text, as well as the size of their keyword bids.