

[Home](#) [Mail](#) [News](#) [Sports](#) [Finance](#) [Weather](#) [Games](#) [Groups](#) [Answers](#) [Screen](#) [Flickr](#) [Mobile](#) | [More](#)

Paige

Mail

## 7 Steps to Productive Business Use of Social Media

# Forbes

By Martin Zwilling | Forbes – Sat, Aug 17, 2013 1:08 PM EDT

Most startups, and many big businesses, still don't have a clue on how to use social media productively for marketing their business. They randomly churn for hours a day on a couple of their favorite social media platforms, with little thought given to goals, objectives, or metrics; and ultimately give up and fall back to traditional marketing approaches.

The first thing that entrepreneurs need to realize is that the process and framework for making social media marketing work are different from traditional marketing, and trial and error certainly doesn't work. Ric Dragon, an expert in online marketing, in "Social Marketology," outlined the best set of steps I have seen so far for the new world:

**Focus on desired outcomes first.** Valid social media objectives for a business should include one or more of the following: increased brand awareness, lead generation, service and support, or reputation management. Obviously, the platforms and how you use social media would be different for lead generation versus service and support.

**Incorporate brand personality and voice.** Popular culture these days expects a more humanized brand voice, and constituents are listening carefully to the tone, vision, and expertise of that voice. Think about how you can project the voice you want, and make sure it is consistently used by all team members across all platforms used.

**Identify the smallest segments possible of your constituents.** Due to the information overload felt by consumers today, marketing at the generic segment level no longer works. Social media is the only one which allows you to be hyper-granular and drill down to micro-segments, to dramatically improve engagement levels and conversion ratios.

**Identify the communities for these micro-segments.** Traditionally, community implied a physical grouping, but today a community is characterized by what they value, more than proximity. More important than finding a community, is creating one, with your blog and other social media engagement. The best communities then become your advocate.

**Identify the influencers of these communities.** Social media brings all the aspects of important influencers these days, including peer pressure, authority, credibility, and in some cases, celebrities. Because feedback from social media operates in real time, you don't have to wait months for results. You spend the months influencing the influencers.

**Create an action plan with metrics.** Good action plans include a listening plan, channel plan, SEO plan, and a content creation plan, with activities and metrics. Social media activities span the gamut from curation to gifting, building relationships and groups, blogging, service actions, to lead conversion. Pick the ones that fit your desired outcome.

**Iteratively execute and measure results.** Measuring is all about return-on-investment (ROI). This can be customer acquisition cost, revenue growth, profit, or whatever other parameters are key to your success. Iterate and expect to pivot, based on results, because you can't get it all right the first time. This is not trial and error.

In fact, marketing in the social media is fundamentally different from conventional marketing. The depth in which connections can be made with the "audience" or "customers" is far greater than it possibly can be with any other medium. The very nature of influence at this level means that values and vision must be in tune.

Of course, with social media marketing, trial and error is not the only way to fail. You can fail by not being there at all (see the United Breaks Guitars story), or making the big mistake (see Red Cross Rogue Tweet).

More positively, social media also brings many more ways to succeed. See the classic examples of Dell Makes \$3M from Twitter (customer retention), Australia's Tourism via Facebook (large rewards), and Blendtec You-Tube "Will it Blend" (brand building). It's time for you to learn the best practices of using social media in your company, and putting them to work before your competition puts you out of work.

### More On Forbes:

[10 Myths About Social Networking For Business](#)

[Twenty Female Entrepreneurs To Follow On Twitter](#)

[5 Steps To Making A Sale Through Social Media](#)