

A Web Content Rx White Paper

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Nine Steps to Social Networking Success

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Introduction

Social networking is not optional if you are to continue to run a successful business. These steps are guidelines that you can use as you see fit.

Combine them, alter the order. They are your to use as you please.

Treat these steps as guidelines. Let them create questions. Social networking (SN) is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor. You need answers to specific questions. These steps will help you ask the right ones. Rearrange them, combine them, use them any way you wish, but use them.

1. **Goals are not wants and wishes.** List the goals of your social networking campaign (SNC). As a goal approaches completion have the next goal ready to go. Your success depends on always having a goal.
2. **Who will conduct your social networking campaign?** Whether you hire someone, task an employee, or do this yourself, you must be ready to create superb content on an ongoing basis.
3. **How will you motivate your audience to tell you what they want, what they care about?** Ask, and offer a free report, discount coupon, entrance in a contest, or other premium of unquestioned value in exchange for their time. Remember, if you don't pay attention to the needs of your audience, they won't pay attention to you.
4. **Determine what social media sites are best for your needs.** Ask your customers what SN sites they frequent. Choose one, or several, that work for you and for them. Don't rule out offline activities (see step nine) like a newsletter, or over the counter flyers. What works best for your needs and the needs of your audience is what you want to determine here. Go with a winner.
5. **Your web site is the crown jewel of your social networking campaign.** Be sure you bring it up-to-date before your SNC goes live. Verify that it provides pertinent information to your audience and *for your critical business needs*. Integrate it with your SNC. See, "Is your Web site a good employee? Take our 30 Second Test." at <http://WebContentRx.biz/web-content-30second.htm>.
6. **Create your content, place it online, and implement your ongoing content creation plan.** Your content must be of unquestioned value to your audience because you are "selling" your SNC for something more valuable than money; time.
7. **Go live and tell the world.** When your SNC is up and running notify your audience. Place your online information on company paperwork, vehicles, advertising, everything. For an over-the-counter business place signs in

the store, put an insert in bags. Consider running a contest, or have a scavenger hunt, to boost interest and create buzz.

8. **Determining the effectiveness of your social networking campaign.**
Look for increased activity on your Web site, readers at your blog, comments from customers. Have your Web master provide you data on where your visitors are coming from. There are many tools to choose from to track and measure the effectiveness of your SNC.

9. **Offline activities to assist you in making your social networking campaign a success.**
 - **Ask** for recommendations and testimonials.
 - **Attend** conferences where your target audience can be found.
 - **Become an acknowledged expert in your field**, publish in industry magazines and newsletters. Use Twitter and a blog to establish your bona fides. Sign blog posts with your signature block
 - **Be outgoing**, chat with everyone you meet.
 - **Cause marketing** benefits both of you. Collaborate with a cause you believe in.
 - **E-mail marketing**, for selling, marketing your services, and to stay in-touch.
 - **Engage** your employees. Publish a SN policy that tells them what they can do, not what they can't do.
 - **Give free seminars** at your place of business. Promote them online and with a press release.
 - **Help people** solve problems. There is no better way to gain trust and first class professional standing.
 - **Join** Chambers of Commerce, networking, and business groups. Start your own networking or mastermind group. Use your business address to host these events.
 - **LinkedIn** is the place for you to be. Use it.
 - **Market** to those who can refer business to you, and to those who do business with you.
 - **Newsletter**, include trivia, winter driving tips, a crossword puzzle, Windows and Mac tips, products with links to independent reviews, gift ideas, and material relevant to your business. Keep it informative, timely, and fun. Do not use it for marketing or selling.
 - **Publish credible testimonials.** Saying J. Smith in New York likes your work borders on bogus. Compare: "Excellent work. On time and on budget." John Smith, President, Fictional Corporation.
 - **Send** Christmas cards and thank you notes to your clients.

- **Quality content** provides unquestioned value. Customers want answers, expertise, experience, and brains. Provide them. Information is stronger when shared. Do not hold back what you know.
- **Speak** at conferences and industry events.
- **Subscribe** to magazines, blogs, and newsletters that your customers read. Send links on pertinent material to your customers.

- **Throw a party**, companies have saved themselves from going under with this technique. It works.
- **Use both sides of a handout.** The space you waste could be marketing for you, selling for you, or making people aware of who you are, where you are, about your products and services.
- **Video.** Put videos on YouTube. It's the second most popular search engine in the world.
- **What's In It For Me? (WIIFM)** Tell people what you can do for them, not what you do. The difference in wording may be subtle, but the effect is not.