

# Get Real Results from Social Media

**Making the most of this critical marketing resource**

September 2016

All conclusions and recommendations are solely the responsibility of Porter Consulting.

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A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consists of a large orange shape on the left that tapers to a point, and a green shape on the right that curves upwards and then downwards, creating a wave-like effect.

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Smart companies are reaching out to individual consumers and engaging them directly and precisely. Broad-brush communications campaigns are being replaced by smaller, more nimble programs more effectively targeting the specific interests of specific audiences. Social media, viral marketing, mobile apps and blogs are rapidly crowding out traditional advertising, brochures, and tradeshow.

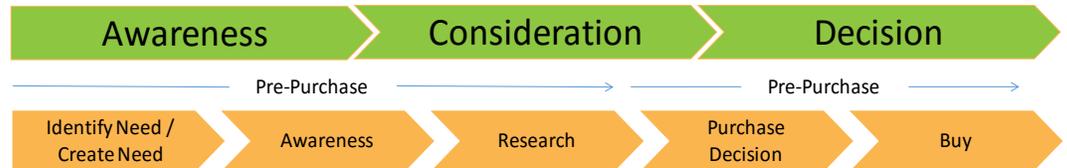
– Mary Allard, Director of Marketing Strategy at Porter Consulting

## Introduction

Age-old marketing patterns are being shattered in the new era of social media.<sup>1</sup> Traditional outbound marketing from a company to its prospective customer is often ignored. Big-budget advertising campaigns and splashy media events, once must-haves to get noticed, are falling by the wayside.

Customers now determine what they are looking for by sifting through all the information available at their fingertips. If you're not already on their radar, it can be difficult to get their attention. As a result, you need to attract their interest as early as possible in the Buyer's Journey, harness their attention, help them in their research, and ultimately convince them that your solution is the best fit.

## THE BUYER'S JOURNEY



Connecting with customers through social media is one of your best and most cost-effective methods of doing this. In our experience, social media has been an effective way to engage with customers at every step of the Buyer's Journey, from developing relationships, to driving revenue growth, to increasing customer loyalty, and ultimately to building advocacy.

Social media gives you the opportunity to connect directly with your customers, learn about their preferences and needs, develop strategies to appeal to them, and even extend your reach. It helps build your customer base, since the number of *likes* a message receives often carries more weight than a billboard poster, because followers forward information on to their friends with a tacit *recommended* status.

## Establish Priorities to Put Your Best Foot Forward

Like many businesses today, you know that your company can benefit from social media marketing. But, as with anything new, it is difficult to determine exactly where to start, whether you are doing it effectively, or what follow-on steps you should take. You probably have a lot of questions, such as:

- How much time should I invest, and in what?
- How will I attract the right audience?
- How can I ensure my social media marketing is aligned with my business goals?
- How do I portray the right image for my company?
- How effective is my current strategy?
- How do I ensure that I have a model for making increasingly better decisions down the road?

You want to put your best foot forward, but there's always the issue of limited resources. You need to set priorities to make sure your plan will be the best for you. This paper describes how Porter Consulting evaluates those questions on behalf of our clients, based on our [Social Media Assessment](#).

<sup>1</sup> <http://porterconsulting.net/index.php/marketing-and-brand-strategy/>

## The Benefits of a Strong Social Media Presence

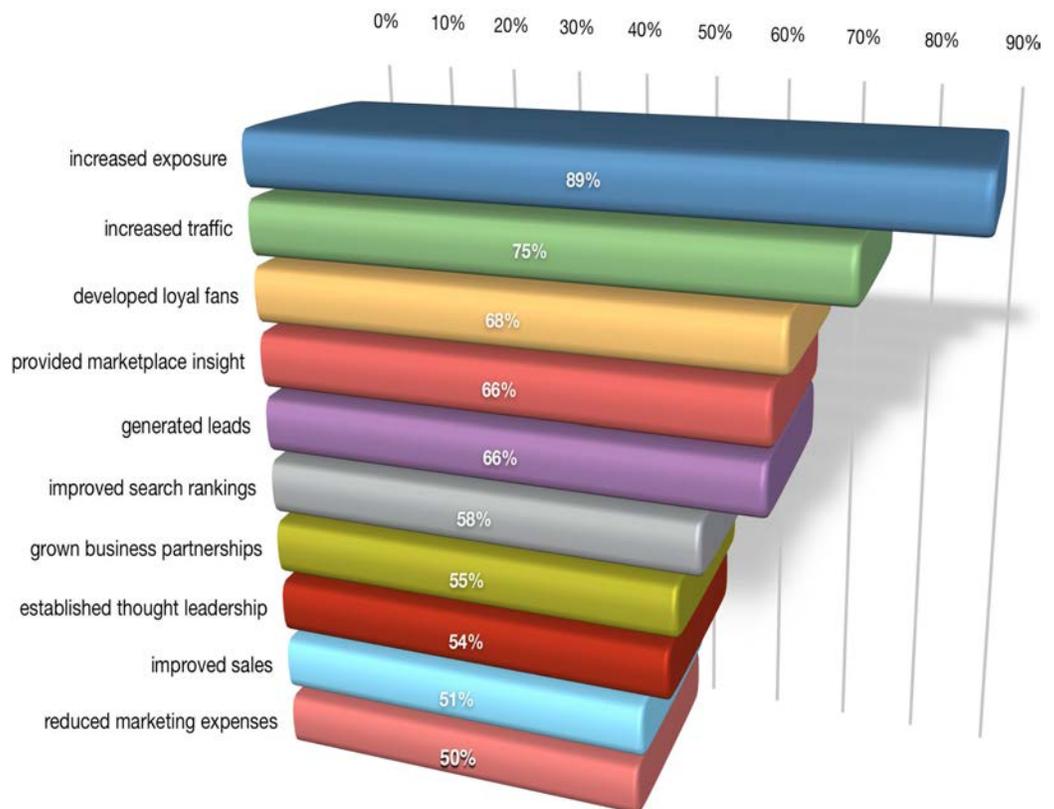
**Social Media Marketing** — the use of social media platforms to communicate and engage with people. Often used by marketing professionals as a megaphone to broadcast a message. A more targeted approach than broad-brush advertising, as followers opt in to receive content.

**Social Selling** — a targeted method of lead generation that uses social media to interact with and engage your prospects. A one-on-one experience that offers targeted personal, relevant content and accelerates a purchase decision.

Social media has come a long way in terms of acceptance as tool for use in marketing plans. A critical reason for its popularity is that it allows customers to have a voice. The market has evolved from one-way, business-to-client push communications to a world where customers expect to be heard.

With today's social media, buyers will share their opinions about businesses and products online, whether you are a part of that conversation or not. So it is important to engage with them. Engagement can help you learn a lot about your customers. Social media is an excellent tool that can provide your customers information about your company. And you can also hear what they have to say. Daily engagement and social listening often provides you with important information that can guide your business decisions.

In its [2016 Social Media Marketing Industry Report](#), Social Media Examiner pinpointed the many benefits of social media marketing. In their survey of over 5,000 marketers from mostly smaller and midsized businesses, they found that the two biggest gains realized by their businesses were increased exposure and traffic. However, market insights figured as well.



Source: [2016 Social Media Marketing Industry Report](#)

So there is real value to be found in social media for marketing purposes, both in terms of lead generation and for gathering customer requirements. The key to extracting its value is to have a plan in place on how to use the data being provided. Proper use of this information can help you make business decisions that capture more sales.

To develop such a plan, follow these three steps:

1. Examine where you are today.
2. Determine where you want to go.
3. Do what's required to help you bridge the gap.

This paper is designed to help you apply this approach to your own business.



## Where Do You Stand Today?

### Determining your position is the first step in charting your course

A strong presence doesn't mean you have to be everywhere at all times. It means doing what's right for your business. To determine this, consider these four questions:

1. Where are you today in terms of social media?
2. What do you expect social media to deliver for you?
3. What are your competitors doing?
4. What is the gap between the first situation and the next two?

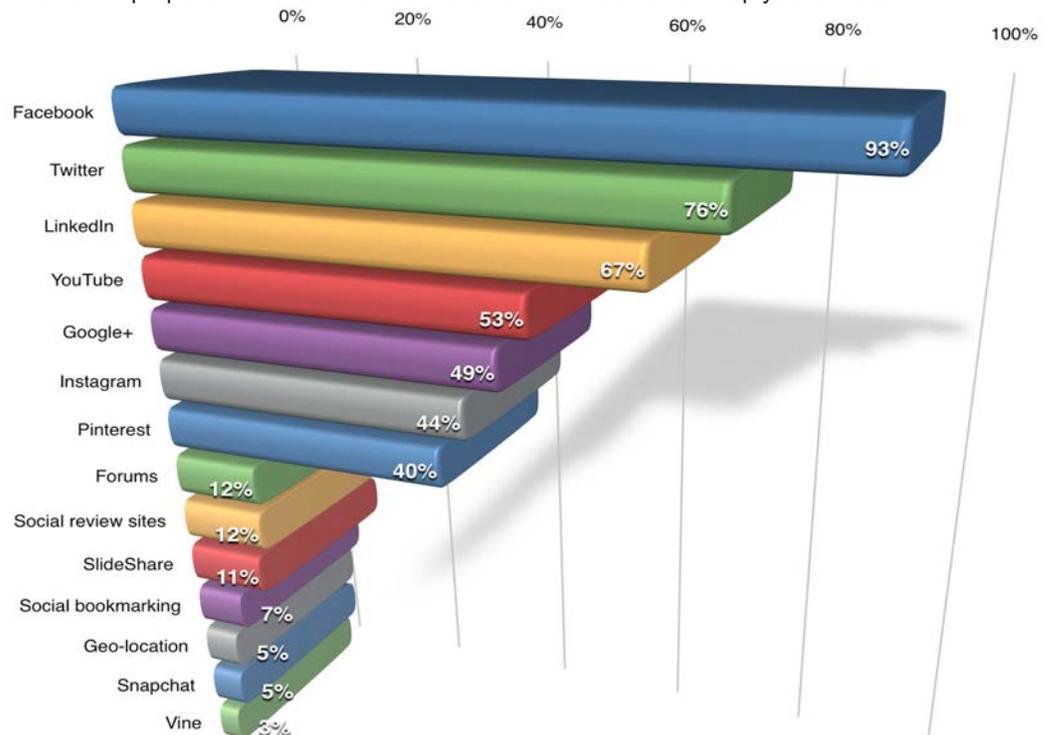
An interesting statistic was revealed by Forbes in 2015. Almost 75% of salespeople who beat their 2014 quota by 10 percent or more said they had an excellent understanding of how to use social media for prospecting, nurturing relationships, and closing deals. These salespeople were over 6 times more likely to exceed their quota than peers who had only rudimentary or no social media skills.<sup>2</sup>

Evaluating where you are with regards to social media marketing is the first step in a journey toward the broader aspect of Social Selling. If you haven't already jumped in, now is the time to connect through social networks such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Doing so will help you actively target audiences who can become your loyal followers and best opportunities for sales.

We have found that following these steps can be of great assistance. They can help those who have already begun investing in social media as well as those who have not yet done so and want to have a plan in place to make the most of the opportunity.

## Where Do You Want to Go?

Similar to financial investments, you want to take a balanced and optimized approach to choosing social media platforms. It's important to get the right messages to the right person without spreading yourself too thin. There are lots of ways to communicate. Different platforms suit different purposes. The fact that there are obvious leaders can help you to focus.



Source: [Social Media Marketing Industry Report 2016](#)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.forbes.com/sites/meghanbiro/2015/05/22/study-skilled-social-media-users-are-6x-more-likely-to-exceed-quota/#79a8e32232d7>



## Make sure you pick the right place

The key to optimizing your social media marketing plan is to ensure that whatever presence you have is a logical one. To determine whether a platform is a logical fit, check if your competitors are there, and then ask yourself these questions:

1. Who is my audience?
2. What are their likely objectives/pain points?
3. Which platforms are they likely to use?
4. What do I want my audience to know or do?
5. What are they likely to know already?
6. How does the platform I intend to use portray my brand or persona?

Other factors to consider when choosing which platforms to invest in include the size and type of your business. B2B organizations do well using LinkedIn, an ideal choice for interacting with like-minded corporate influencers. According to a recent study by HubSpot, LinkedIn is 277% more effective for lead generation than Twitter or Facebook.<sup>3</sup> In our experience, however, Facebook can still be an important place to have a presence. More than 75% of Americans use Facebook, and it's an incredible stage for advancing nearly any brand because of its exceptionally diverse audience.

## How Do You Bridge the Gap?

Once you've determined the right mix of social media platforms, how do you ensure your message is heard? We recommend following these four simple steps:

1. Evaluate your content and delivery.
2. Maintain a consistent pace of communications.
3. Use the two-way street for engagement.
4. Measure for continuous improvement.

## Evaluate your content and delivery

Think about how you use social media. Most people don't like to see their newsfeed clogged up with promotions, ads, or other marketing material. They want content that entertains them, enlightens them, or otherwise enriches their lives.

Try to make your content fun, engaging, and thought-provoking instead of hoping to make a sale with each and every post. The three top reasons people unfollow brands is because of repetitive or boring content, too frequent posts (more than six times a day), and lack of customer engagement (slow or no response to comments).<sup>4</sup> Also, given how quickly people scroll through posts, it's important that your content is split-second recognizable as yours and yours alone. You want to guide your audience along their buying process directly to you.

Here are things we look for when we evaluate content and posts for our clients.

- **Are the messages directed to your audience?** If you are trying to relate to CEOs or business analysts, make sure the content isn't too detailed; it has to hit their pain points. But if you are in the business of selling items aimed at IT professionals, you will want to talk to them in their language, spewing bits and bytes when necessary.

<sup>3</sup> <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/30030/LinkedIn-277-More-Effective-for-Lead-Generation-Than-Facebook-Twitter-New-Data.aspx#sm.0001j834jycnqdiitcu1ha1odd1kc>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/why-people-unfollow-brands-on-social-media-infographic/616622?utm\\_content=buffer507f6&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=Webbiquity.com](http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/why-people-unfollow-brands-on-social-media-infographic/616622?utm_content=buffer507f6&utm_medium=social&utm_source=Webbiquity.com)



- **Does the content reflect your persona?** If you wish to portray yourself as a trusted advisor, it's important to use language that sounds professional and supportive. Blogs that offer advice and expertise are very popular, as they demonstrate your ability to add value. On the other hand, if your persona is hip and trendy, your language and content should reflect that.
- **Is it visual?** Did you know that visual content is more than 40 times more likely to be shared on social media than any other type of content?<sup>5</sup> Consider leveraging your corporate logo. You can use it to establish brand recognition.
- **Can your audience find it?** You need to place content where your audience is looking and make it easy for them to find. Make sure it's mobile accessible. Hashtags can be used to group related content together, so users can find things related to their interests. While hashtags originated on Twitter, their use has grown, and they can be used on multiple platforms.
- **Have you taken advantage of content curation?** Content curation is the act of discovering, gathering, and presenting digital content, most often pertaining to a specific subject. Don't be afraid to pass on content and advice from others. If you believe it's valuable, there's a good chance your audience will find it valuable as well and start following you to benefit from your insight.
- **Have you bootstrapped your own content, and, if so, how?** It's likely not everyone has seen all that's available on your website. If you have a good blog you'd like to promote, do so. If you're about to have a sale on a particular product, make it known throughout your social media platforms. Break out larger pieces for use in multiple posts.

## Maintain a consistent pace of communications

We have found that too often companies focus their efforts on one or more social media platforms for a month or so but then never return to refresh their content. You need to keep customers coming back. Consistently refreshing your content will help you do this. One of the things we look for is the pattern of posts to help you address gaps and areas where you can improve.

Here are some things we suggest:

- **Develop a cadence that your followers can count on.** Your audience will register the schedule almost intuitively. They will look for more details being rolled out on the other platforms once they see an initial release.
- **Don't put all your cards on the table at once.** Hold things back for future communications. It can help you build a buzz by offering sneak previews followed by more detailed information.
- **Keep things short and sweet.** Keep customers wanting more. It encourages your audience to engage with their friends as they speculate about your post. It can build up a larger audience of people who are looking for your information.
- **Update each platform regularly.** A frequent mistake is updating one social media platform significantly more often than another. When you have something new to say, make sure it gets out on each platform.

It can be helpful to create a monthly, weekly, and daily schedule. For instance, you may opt to release the news on one particular platform one day and then roll out the message on the other platforms a day or two later. Whatever you do, make sure it's consistent.

<sup>5</sup> <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/visual-content-marketing-strategy#sm.0001j834iycnqdiitcu1ha1odd1kc>

## Use the two-way street for engagement



One of the biggest opportunities of social media is often ignored—customer care. Did you know that companies only respond to 30% of questions posted by their followers? Seven out of 10 questions from fans don't even receive replies.<sup>6</sup>

Social media is a two-way street. Customers often turn to social media outlets to unleash their frustration or pose questions. Seventy-eight percent of people who complain to a brand via Twitter expect a response within an hour.<sup>7</sup> While engaging with customers at this level opens you up to criticism and issues that need to be dealt with, you don't want to make the mistake of appearing to ignore your customers. It's only when you display your loyalty to them that you can expect their loyalty in return.

To engage with your customers, we recommend that you:

- **Open the communications door.** Give customers the opportunity to chime in.
- **Be responsive.** Make sure you respond to at least 65% of questions you receive.
- **Be prompt.** Remember to reply in a timely manner, while the question or issue is still top-of-mind to the customer. They will appreciate your responsiveness.

When you respond quickly and reliably, it shows that you care for your customers and are confident about your products and services. This type of nurturing will ultimately help you build a stronger relationship with them, resulting in more sales.<sup>8</sup>

## Measure for continuous improvement

Finding ways to measure your results can help you make adjustments as necessary. Even though social media marketing return on investment (ROI) is hard to quantify, there are analytics tools available that can assist.

Just because it's hard to pin down exactly how many sales are generated directly from a post doesn't mean it is ineffective. Similar to broad-brush advertising campaigns, social media marketing gets you visibility, resulting in the brand recognition required to engage potential customers early in the Buyer's Journey. Developing relationships this way helps you clear a path for more targeted Social Selling with higher close rates.

While measurement may not always be easy, there are some quick and surefire ways to get a good sense of how you're doing. We recommend you consider the following:

- **Native analytics.** The tools most commonly used to measure social media marketing results are the native analytics for "likes" and "shares" provided by the social networks themselves (i.e., Facebook and Twitter). Social media management platforms such as HootSuite and web analytics such as Google Analytics can also be used.<sup>9</sup>
- **Your depth of engagement within a community.** Peer influence is an important aspect of Social Selling. It's a readily accepted fact that almost 70% of millennials are influenced by friends' posts on social media when deciding whether to purchase products or services. An important measurement is how much of your content you can get them to pass on or respond to.
- **Competitive analysis.** Comparison with your competitors and their social media visibility can also provide significant insights into how well your social media program is doing.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.socialbakers.com/blog/655-70-of-fans-are-being-ignored-by-companies-now-what>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.lithium.com/company/news-room/press-releases/2013/consumers-will-punish-brands-that-fail-to-respond-on-twitter-quickly>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.business.com/social-media-marketing/7-ways-to-build-your-brand-with-social-media-marketing/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://learn.infusionsoft.com/marketing/social-media/best-social-media-marketing-stats-and-facts/>



## How We Can Help

There's a lot to think about when setting goals and determining priorities. Today's go-to-market strategy is all about delivering content at the exact moment your target audience needs and expects it. Social media marketing will continue to be an increasingly important way of doing that. If you're just starting out, or if you've already started but feel as though your plan needs to be adjusted, consider calling in an independent expert to assess your approach and give you specific, actionable guidance on how to improve it.

At [Porter Consulting](#), we specialize in using solid, proven marketing methods to ensure your messages reach their target audience. A **Porter Social Media Assessment** starts with your goals, researches your presence, and provides a one-on-one session with a social media expert to discuss recommendations. Using this approach, you can gain the insight you need to create and drive a strong, long-term social media plan. Our approach is designed to take minimal time with your staff yet help you make sound decisions that will improve your business results.

For those that are new to social media, the assessment can kick-start your efforts by providing you with simple yet powerful techniques to improve your presence.

The Porter Social Media Assessment:

- Pinpoints what's working, obvious gaps, and areas where you can gain advantage.
- Reviews your competition and shows how you compare.
- Tests your audience's objectives and pain points to ensure you address them.
- Makes recommendations on cost-effective next steps.
- Helps you set your priorities in accordance with your goals.
- Provides an assessment report that summarizes our findings.
- Offers optional quarterly or semi-annual assessments to help you measure progress.

With decades of experience enabling enterprise technology sales, [Porter Consulting](#) can help you apply social media best practices toward your short- and long-term goals.

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