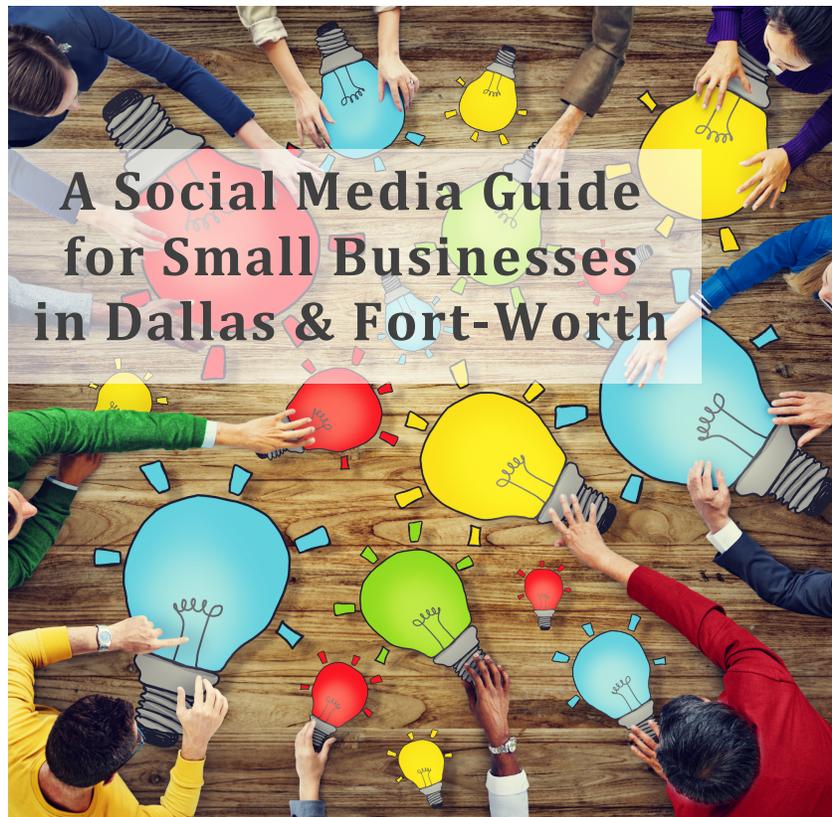


Enhance Your Marketing Efforts With Social Media

The way you should use
social media in your small business



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Hello. I'm Jimmy Epperson, your messaging coach and marketing trainer. This guide's purpose is to give you enough information about social media, so you can make educated decisions for your business.

This guide is for small businesses offering services. This means you do a physical or mental action to finish your job... opposed to simply selling a product online or in your store.

This guide will teach you how social media can enhance your business.

What qualifies me to talk to you?

I've been in communications for almost 15 years. I studied journalism in college, worked for newspapers, business-consulting firms and then did communications for AT&T.

But the thing that really qualifies me is that I resigned from AT&T (on great terms). I created an online business called Points on Paper, which helps you develop messages. Then I started my own marketing company called, Clear Points Messaging. I learned what social media does for businesses from trial and error.

Have I made millions upon millions of dollars? Of course not.

But I did get hundreds of people to sign up to a free service and brought on 25 customers... just from my social media marketing efforts. These customers are loyal and respect my expertise.

I can hear you say, "25? That's it?"

I hear ya. I wish it was 2,225. But landing these customers with social media tactics only... and

starting my company without really knowing what to expect... It's quite an accomplishment.

But I had to work damn hard for those 25 customers. Very hard. And a lot of the work I did was too difficult to deem it valuable and necessary.

As a good friend noted, I should have been out on the streets selling and knocking on doors. He's right. If I really wanted to make some money I should have. But I wanted to see how much effort it required to use social media to get actual customers. And I know... I should have knocked on doors while using social media to enhance the relationships I began making.

What's the Point of this Guide?

There are a lot of misconceptions out there about social media... and because of that we can often get the wrong advice for our business.

Most of us are afraid we will be taken advantage of by gimmicks, fads and con artists who fancy themselves as social media and business know-it-alls. At least I was. I had this fear because I didn't know enough about social media. (And I even worked on AT&T's social media team!)

Plus I saw so many Internet "consultants" promising to increase my sales by 120%, or immediately giving me the ability to make five figures. That is **NOT** what this guide promises.

This guide is not a gimmick. This guide is simply to help you make an educated decision, and it will help me nurture relationships with existing customers and future prospects.

Read the next page to understand what social media is

and why small businesses want to use it...

Marketing, Social media 101

Social media is an arm of marketing, just like advertising, public speaking, public relations, and snail mail. Social media is a piece of your overall offline and online marketing campaign.

Let me say this a different way. Social media *is* marketing... but marketing is **NOT** purely social media. Marketing is so much bigger, especially for small businesses offering services in local markets. Social media is just a piece of your marketing efforts.

So why is social media good?

Companies market on social media because it's a more affordable way to gain traffic, attention and get prospects' information by giving away valuable content like how-to guides and promotions. Everyone can benefit from it... but it's not always going to be the main channel that finds customers for a sustainable business offering services. For many businesses, social media will only enhance the marketing efforts they are already doing.

Go to the next page to learn five social media fallacies.

5 Social Media Fallacies

1) Whatever I post will get my business attention

A dentist I knew had little time to devote to social media. She hired a small marketing company and they began posting content on her business Facebook page. She complained that the social media strategy did not work. Upon asking her what the strategy of the Facebook posts were, she said it was to push content to get people's attention. This simply does not work. We must create useful content that will help the customers we have and prospects debating a purchase.

2) If I have a Twitter or Facebook account people will follow me

This is the equivalent to being scheduled to speak at a conference. But instead of speaking you are happy with your name being in the program. You think the name recognition in the program will gain you customers. We know this will not work. Instead... what works is giving an amazing speech, teaching your audience and being useful. The same is true with social media. You need to show up and help others.

3) If I blog I'll get more attention

There is a theme in social media... it is almost altruistic. If your blog content does not help people, is not interesting and does not clearly point to your value proposition, then it probably won't work. Just like in the example above, you must show up and give your customer base and others value.

4) Social media is a powerful enough marketing tool that it can be my only channel of communication

If you offer something you can only purchase online, then yes, social media is going to be critical. A friend of mine started an online training university for developers, Free Code Camp. He strictly uses social media to attract new students. But several news outlets and blogs have covered his new university. So *even he* does not strictly use social media to get his message out.

5) If I am on social media I will immediately get customers

The best internet personalities will tell you it takes about six to 18 months for your social media posts to start working. When I started Points on Paper, a company devoted solely to creating good messages, it took about six months of continuous blogging before I landed a valuable customer. The return on investment was great, but we don't always have that kind of time and runway.

Now I know what you're thinking: "Wow, Jimmy Epp! Social media is absolutely pointless for my business!"

Let's look at the advantages of social media real quick before you give up on me entirely...

5 Ways Social Media Can Help Your Business

1) Enhances the marketing you are already doing

Let's pretend that you are a seven-figure landscaping business in Dallas and you're not using social media. You're probably not going to need social media to find customers since you are already making seven figures. Your word of mouth and referral system is extremely effective. To say otherwise would be presumptuous.

However, the landscaping business could still use social media *to improve* their word of mouth and referral system.

For example, the company could offer a how-to guide on keeping your yard in perfect shape all year and promote it on social media. "Hey even if I can't get your business... check out our guide on Facebook. It tells you what you need to do each season to keep your yard, bushes, trees and shrubs in shape. We also send our fans tips and reminders throughout the year: when it's time to fertilize in the winter, weed prevention tips, watering tips in a drought and more."

Prospects and customers would be interested in this. They might even give the company key information to receive it... like an email address. Then the business could do even more marketing to get this prospect's business!

2) Helps you stay connected with customers you already have

You have an advantage over online companies. You are face to face with your customer. Imagine if you

could send them information that will make them value your relationship more? To keep using the landscaping business, you could send tips on watering when it's hot. You could send freeze warnings and tell your customers when and how to cover bushes or shrubs. We can send this kind of information to our audience on social media to enhance their lives.

3) Helps customers with purchasing decision

If you do your social media, website and messaging right, all of it should point to the same consistent message. And when customers go to any of these places... it should give them reassurance that you are an expert, that you can help them and that they will have a good experience.

4&5) You can specifically target customers using social media... and it's inexpensive.

Social media uses (4) inexpensive ads and you can (5) specifically target the people you want. This is helpful if you are trying to build brand awareness about your company.

The Connection Economy

The real marketing guru of our time—Seth Godin—said we are in the connection economy. It's easier than ever to connect with others. And what we're all looking for is *meaningful* connection... a place to belong.

I believe with so much digital communication, we're going to begin taking steps backwards. We're going to long for connection, and the company that can provide this closeness the most is going to win more customers. Face-to-face meetings will become even more critical to do business, but social media will become even more critical to enable, facilitate and nurture these relationships.

This communication needs to be authentic and needs to be with the motive of really wanting to help our customers.

Prospects and customers are smart these days. They know when we are just trying to impress someone with artificial speech or writing.

So to be truly authentic, you need to be honest. Original. True. Authentic communication does not try to dupe someone into believing something, and it does not bring out a cane and pony show to dazzle and amaze.

If we take this approach with social media, it will be a channel worth investing in to enhance our marketing campaign.

We simply cannot show a presence and expect to get results. We must participate if we want to fully take advantage of this channel.

The Need for Clarity Throughout Your Marketing

To get a connection... we need to make sure our messages line up everywhere we communicate.... Or we will confuse our customers.

This is a problem I see. The message that pulls a customer into a sale is not uniformly distributed throughout your brand's communication. In other words, when you talk to a prospect about the service you provide, it is not the same message they get when they search for you online and see your Facebook or your website.

This sends different messages to our customers, and it can confuse them and give them doubts about their purchasing decision.

Here are some questions to ask yourself to determine if you have a uniform message:

- What's the message that makes customers want to buy?
- If I look at my brand online does it represent the same message?
- Is all of the stuff I post on social media pointing to this overarching messaging I am trying to get across to my audience?
- Does my website, Facebook or LinkedIn represent what I think my customers want?

If you answered no to more than one of these, it might be time to rethink your messaging and marketing strategy.

About the Author

I'm Jimmy Epperson and I live and work in Dallas, Texas. I worked as a news reporter and in corporate America before becoming a fulltime independent marketing trainer and messaging coach for local businesses.



My goal is to arm you with the knowledge you need to make the best possible decisions for your business. I believe you are in a much better position to let social media enhance the marketing you are already doing. You get to interact with you customer face to face.

Social media is not complicated. But the problem is there is so much information out there... we usually end up confused or misinformed.

If you have questions about marketing or communications, you can email me at jimmy@clearpointsmessaging.com.

If you know a business owner or someone who could use this guide, I hope you will share it with them.

My best,

Jimmy Epp