



...'Creating ACTION from Your Database'

## *Why Social Media Should Be a Key Ingredient in Your Marketing Mix*

Let's face it, when it comes to getting and keeping profitable customers there are only four basic components that we can manage:

- **Product** (your offering — the unique combination of product, service and experience)
- **Price** (the value that your customer perceives translated into money)
- **Distribution** (putting your offering within arms reach of the customer)
- **Promotion** (communicating your offering)

That's all there is to the marketing mix.

And when we skilfully and creatively combine these ingredients in the perfect proportions, Voila! We have a tasty stew of happy customers, happy employees and enough profits to go around as well as to invest in the future.

Of course, it can't be that easy, right? Some of us go wrong by becoming entrenched in traditional marketing strategies. And the rest of us go to the other extreme and become paralyzed by the overwhelming number of tools and Internet applications that seek to bring us together, yet separate us from real face-to-face contact.

Social media has been one of those magical and mysterious technical terms that seemingly everyone under 30 has been all a-twitter about. And those of us over 30 have been curious and more than a little suspicious about.

The challenge that traditional marketers have is in understanding how to use this new "ingredient" in their marketing mix. Is it like a "meat" or just a "spice?"

### **What Role Should Social Media Play?**

If I had to put social media in just one category of the marketing mix, I would choose promotion, i.e., communication. That's not to say it doesn't play a role in the other components, just not as BIG a role.

Social media's primary benefit to your communication strategy is its ability to build relationships and communities between individuals who share interests AND who would not be brought together otherwise except for those interests. If you play the role of bringing people together around a product, service or interest — you increase your credibility, build your brand and may, in time, increase your profitability by creating a loyal following.

## 5 Easy Ways to Spice Up Your Mix with Social Media

**1. Develop a social media strategy YESTERDAY.** Deciding to put together a social media strategy is like deciding to have the sex talk with your kids. Either YOU can be the one to explain, or you can leave it to TV, their friends – or the internet. It's insane to ignore the movement to this kind of communication. But it's wise to learn and make decisions about how to use it so it doesn't use you.

**2. Choose the critical few social media applications.** No one says you have to use every single social media application that's out there. Choose a few and choose carefully. Always ask yourself: Who is my ideal customer? What is important to them when they are buying what I'm selling? And which tool will help them connect with my business in an easy and relevant way?

Some questions to consider: Are your target customers using social media to make their decisions? Which tools are they using and do they want to connect with each other?

**3. Build your brand from the inside out.** Think of social media as a giant digital billboard. Treat every post, every tweet and every comment as an opportunity to build your strength and build value around what you offer.

To start, consider adding a blog to your traditional Web site. Don't forget to use your logo, company colors, and a picture of yourself or any other branding vehicle. You can customize many of the social media tools to match your image.

**4. Find the right place for social media in your strategy.** Right now social media is a shiny new toy. The real work is in finding the right balance between social media and more traditional marketing tools like your printed materials. The ideal outcome is to have them all working together.

As a business owner, create a [LinkedIn](#) profile and use it as a place to connect to customers and collect testimonials. Once you feel comfortable with that, move into [Facebook](#) and either create or start a group that is focused on your industry, product or service.

**5. Go mobile.** Many blog platforms offer mobile applications (like [Typepad](#)) that you can download to your phone. Twitter is designed to be mobile. This gives you the opportunity to report and communicate discretely in real time. If you are a salesperson, you can document a creative application of your product. If you are a business owner at a conference you can share links, experiences and feedback with your customers or communities.

No matter how you slice it, if you want to be in business in the next 20 years, you'd better be using the tools that 20 year olds are using to decide who to buy from. People can and do have conversations about you, your company and your products and services. Don't put your head in the sand and wait for the market to define you.

*For more information, please contact [Gail@eXtraContact.com](mailto:Gail@eXtraContact.com)*