

## The Social Network Trap of Convenience - Social media tips from special contributor Randall Craig

Randall Craig is the author of seven books, including the just-released *Everything Guide to Starting an Online Business*. Watch for him at the CSBC Symposium in September, where he will be speaking on Social Media Strategy and Risk Management. More at [www.RandallCraig.com](http://www.RandallCraig.com).) Here's what Randall has to share with Newsletter readers.

Just get a Facebook page! Tweet to grow your followers! Spend your time on YouTube! LinkedIn! Pinterest! Devote 2-3 hours a day, and magic will happen!

Yes, magic will happen: your day job won't get done, and you'll be called to account for your much-reduced productivity.

On the other hand, most "expert" marketers seem to forget a critical concept when it comes to social media: The multiplier effect starts with those who are currently in your real-world network – not the nameless and faceless followers, friends, and connections.

Consider the following three differences between an early Social Media strategy and a modern *best of class* one:

**Early strategy:** Blog, Tweet, and Post as much as possible to attract prospects

**Problem:** Doing it as much as possible is terribly unproductive. And who says that followers, friends, and connections are really prospects at all? They could be located geographically elsewhere.

**Best of class strategy:** Schedule your posts strategically and target the content to appeal to people who are likely going to engage and transact.

**Early strategy:** Broadcast repurposed content, to avoid spending time creating something new.

**Problem:** No one likes being shouted to, which is what broadcasting effectively is. And irrelevant content leads to shorter attention spans.

**Best of class strategy:** Write for the reader, but make it a conversation: solicit their opinion and get them involved.

**Early strategy:** Focus outward to prospects.

**Problem:** no problem as far as it goes – except this strategy completely neglects the role that other stakeholder groups can play.

**Best of class strategy:** Empower different stakeholder groups to reach out to their networks. Vendors, for example, have employees, suppliers, and customers, all who have people connected via Social Media. The same is true of Community groups, Industry groups, and government agencies. Having 200 groups actively sending out your key messages to their networks is 200 times more powerful than you doing it alone.

This final point is the most powerful, especially for groups with limited resources that can be devoted to Social Media. Here are the steps to exploit this concept:

1. Identify the categories of organizations and people whose networks can be tapped into. Partners, Suppliers, Service providers, Volunteers, Members, Funders/Donors, Customers, Alumni, and others.
2. Create a thematic series of messages for each group. The messages should be designed both to engage, but also to increase pass-along. Depending on the season, the message goal would be to either increase affinity or drive attendance.
3. Use automation through tools like Hootsuite to schedule these messages.
4. Invest time in follow-up conversations, to improve affinity even more.
5. Create real-world collateral and communications – QR codes are an example – to drive users to the social web.
6. Close the loop with traditional media – and your partners – with newsworthy items that let them know about what is happening online.

Social Media is easy: easy, that is, to fall into the trap of convenience. Spending a few minutes considering how to use the channel more strategically is the only way to actually get a return on your investment.