

Super Networking at Events and Tradeshows Using Social Media

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About the Author

Tim Patterson is the guy behind TradeshowguyBlog.com, YouTube's TradeshowMarketing Channel, and the nearly 10,000 tweets from @tradeshowguy on Twitter. With over 12 years in the tradeshow and event industry, Tim has leveraged his 26+ years behind the radio microphone in unique ways to learn about tradeshow marketing, strategy and positioning in the industry to become a leading voice on using social media in connection with tradeshow, events and conferences. Tim started his own company, Communication One Exhibits, in 2011 that focuses on helping customers to more efficiently market their brand and increase customer awareness by offering exhibit design, implementation, analysis and managerial support to generate new business and maximize profitability through tradeshow marketing.

Dedication

Thanks to Jenny for being a valuable sounding board, as always.

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Introduction

If an inventor had ingested all of the most creative brain-enhancing drugs he could find, teamed up with a couple of whizbang computer geeks with the idea of figuring out how to increase connectivity at tradeshow, events and conferences, they couldn't have done much better than all of the currently available social media platforms.

Not to say that drug ingestion by inventors lead to Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram. But it's kind of fun to think about.

Tradeshows and events are often chaotic and unpredictable. Exhibitors are hawking their wares. Visitors are looking for cool products and services during the day and trying to find good parties at night. Client dinners and entertainment abound.

And networking is king at events. Even before smart phones, before social media, even before the Internet, connecting with the right people at tradeshow was important. Tradeshow visitors and exhibitors went to great lengths to find out what was happening and when. Before the internet information was passed on via word of mouth, printed invitations, scribbled directions and calls from phone booths.

Now throw social media into the mix, and you have a powerful one-two punch: not only can you find events and people easier, but you can let those in your network know about them immediately – in real time.

Not only can you promote a special event, contest or deal at your tradeshow booth, but you can send out updated details or changes in real time.

It's all about CONNECTIVITY. And it's all about making those connections IN REAL TIME.

Social media does that in spades. And if you're not taking full advantage of the opportunities to connect in real time during shows, you're missing out!

Event marketing is undergoing a sea change. Exhibitors have to adapt to a fast-changing world where responding in real time to comments, negative and positive, are critical. Letting them know about new things at a big expo event used to be the responsibility of public relations machines and ad agencies. Those entities are still involved, but if they're any good those same agencies are adding the social media component. They're sharing photos, videos and comments through social media.

People love social media, and it means a lot to them.

Companies jump on events to promote their brands and ideas. Look no further than the 2013 Super Bowl power outage. Within minutes of the beginning of the outage, Oreo cookies tweeted out a photo of a cookie and glass of milk with the text 'You can still dunk in the dark.' They got great press and it reinforced their brand in a friendly, positive way.

Of course, companies can do the wrong thing, as well. There are dozens of examples in the last few months of companies that stuck their foot in their mouth, tried to sell products at a discount during a catastrophe and more.

Why write a book about social media and event marketing? After all, the best news and advice is found online, right? And a book is PRINT, not a blog that can be updated.

But putting all of this into a single book should be helpful. At least it's designed to be that way. After all, our online reading habits tend to be like the feeding habits of a hummingbird: we flit from one blog to another, from Facebook to Twitter to Instagram. So how do you find useful information about using social media – especially using social media at events – in one place?

This book is meant for that.

Social media works incredibly well with events, tradeshow and conferences, if done correctly. Therein lies the rub.

Beyond listening, we assume that you have at least rudimentary knowledge and experience in interacting with social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, et al.

The idea of this book isn't to teach you how to sign up for accounts on the social media networks, but to instead jump past the basics and start to crystallize your strategy and objectives for using social media, whether it's to enhance the marketing and execution of your next trade show event, or any other marketing campaign.

A large percentage of companies are still trying to figure out what a tweet is, how to use one, what it looks, sounds and smells like and what in the world would they want one.

So let's figure out what to tweet, how to post, how to use social media for engaging at tradeshow, conferences and other events together. It's damn fun. Really!

Chapter 1: Social Media is Useless

Useless? Why is social media useless? Well, it can be – if all you do is share cat videos, photos of food and try to debunk the latest political theories from the other side of the aisle.

Or to expand a bit: social media for the sake of social media is useless. If the only thing you're doing with social media is tweeting for fun, posting stuff on Facebook just to stuff some things into the cyber-ether, or goofing off with silly videos on YouTube, you're most likely wasting your time.

However, if you're doing useful things in social media, such as listening to the talk about your industry and products, responding quickly to comments and questions and reaching out to those who both praise or complain about your company, that's good! You're using social media in such a way that can actually impact your bottom line.

It's the same if you're getting involved in social media at tradeshows, events and conferences just for the sake of 'being online'...you're probably not getting much bang for your buck. If on the other hand, you are consciously communicating with clients and potential customers in such a way as to engage them thoughtfully, it can definitely impact your bottom line.

Let's face it: social media is not free. Oh, sure the tools are generally free. Getting those Twitter and Facebook accounts just take a few moments, and there's no monthly fee to have those accounts. But you are spending TIME to tweet and post on Facebook. And TIME is MONEY. If your employees are engaging in social media on your company's behalf and doing it

on the clock, yes, it costs money. So they'd damn well better be doing something useful.

This is where most companies tend to let the negative potential of social media keep them from doing anything. The trouble is, those companies that are operating on fear are going to be so late to the party that they might as well not bother to show up. They might as well go back to using the telephone, fax machine and cold calling as their only methods of sales communication.

It's all about TRUST. If you don't trust your employees to engage with your online community in a thoughtful and positive way, chances are they WON'T do it! However, if you're letting your employees get involved in social media because you feel they know your company better than some highly paid consultant, and you TRUST them to represent the company in a positive light, good things happen.

They share stories about why they love working there (we'll assume that you treat your employees nice and that they enjoy the work). They help customers and prospects to solve problems and leave them wanting and willing to tell friends and acquaintances about the great experience they had.

In a tradeshow setting, social media can be used to not only bring people to your tradeshow booth, but to wholly engage them while they're at your booth – and get them to share that great experience with their community, making you look like the stars you are. Shoot videos of them raving about your product, share photos of them on Facebook or your blog, tweet out that 'so-and-so just stopped by the booth!' Or ask visitors to tweet out photos from your booth for a contest, using the show hashtag in exchange for a chance to win a prize.

Using social media to show off your customers is a great way to make them feel loved and wanted. If you can do that successfully, you have created a customer that will naturally bring you more customers...without even trying.

Bottom line: social media is ubiquitous. It's like sand in your swimming suit on a nice day at the beach. Even if you don't want it, didn't ask for and can't avoid it, you still have to deal with it.

So if you take the attitude that social media is here to stay (psst – it really is here to stay!), you might as well learn to do what you can with it. If you don't figure it out, social media will be USELESS to you. In fact, it'll be worse than useless because your competition will be using social media to interact with your potential clients or customers, to drive traffic to their booth, to respond in real-time to issues and questions that come up (that you should have responded to first) and generally outflank you in the marketplace.

And you'll wake up one day wondering why your business growth is looking more and like an inverted hockey stick every month.

So, how do you best use social media?

Who are the 'digital natives' in your company? These are the people that are naturally adept at diving into social media and figuring out how a new platform works. They're the ones sharing photos on Instagram before anyone else heard about it. They're the ones with a personal blog that has hundreds or even thousands of readers. Digital natives 'get it' and they can be very valuable if you can identify them and bring them on board to help with your company efforts.

There are any number of ways to answer that question, so let's start at this: *what is your objective for using it?* That's a good question to ask of any outreach endeavor you undertake, by the way.

But what might your objective for social media be, especially in terms of using it for an event, conference or tradeshow? Certainly, you might consider driving traffic. Or

branding. Or doing contests. Or perhaps letting people know about a special one-time deal, or a semi-famous booth visitor.

All of those are worthy objectives for using social media at events, conferences or tradeshow.

But the real strength – the real power of social media – is in its ability to capture people’s attention and move them, to connect them. It’s the most powerful set of networking tools available to bring like-minded people together at events. If someone had decided to invent a digital tool to help event and tradeshow attendees find each other at parties, booths, classes and meet-ups, they couldn’t have done better than inventing Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.

In fact, the brilliance of the invention (or more accurately, the evolution) of social media is in the various platforms that each serve a different purpose and reach different people for different reasons and at different times.

LinkedIn is best used for connecting people in the B2B world. YouTube is for showing *what* and *how* things work using video. Twitter is for spreading short bites of information throughout a social media universe in a very short amount of time, such as sharing links and making pithy comments. Facebook is for sharing all of it to people who have already raised their hand by liking your page: photos, videos, blog posts, contests and more – and for getting feedback and for (most importantly) responding to that feedback in real time. And your blog is where you bring it all home. More on these tools later.

It’s all about REAL TIME. That’s the other key thing to remember when you dive into social media. You must be ready to respond in real time. More about that later, too.

So, again: *What is social media?* It’s an exploration of the current changing social media landscape. And the fact is that savvy businesses are using these tools to get results. A quick look at some of the results that other businesses are getting: for

instance, 67% of B2B businesses and 41% of B2C businesses have acquired a new customer through Facebook. Is social media a conversation? Is it a broadcast medium? Is it for customer service? Real-time engagement? Is it a connectivity tool? Social media is all of these things and more.

A compelling case can be made for engaging in each element of social media, as long as you know what you're doing and why you're doing it. Otherwise it can be a risk and ultimately a waste of time.

There are pitfalls to social media. Any half-way conscious digital devotee can point to at least a half-dozen people in the last year who have gotten burned by a tweet and lost a job, gotten flamed or shamed by thousands online, or found out the hard way that Twitter ain't for racist rants, insults or bigotry. Not if you want to maintain any sort of decent business reputation.

Most people have the common sense to know when to tweet and when to bite their keyboard's tongue, so to speak. But others just let it rip and see where the chunks land.

Navigating the social media waters isn't that hard, but it helps to have a few guidelines, or perhaps more accurately a few good principles. According to Red Branch Media leader Maren Hogan, there are four principles to the art of using social media. First, it's not about you. Second, it IS about you (after all). Third, the use of photographs helps personalize you and your business. Fourth, it's all about time management: don't be on social media unless you are already getting all of your work done.

Other thinkers in the social media field refuse to confine themselves to just four principles. Blogger, author, strategist and speaker Jeff Bullas came up with a hefty dozen:

1. Share
2. Go Real Time (see, there's that real time aspect again)
3. Educate – don't sell
4. Entertain – don't market

5. Go Multi-channel
6. Give info away for free
7. Think like a publisher
8. Think multi-media
9. Target your niche
10. Show your passion
11. Listen
12. Engage

Jeff's list of bullet points is a place for starting and assembling your thoughts on how to use social media for you. Throughout this book we'll dig deeper in these and other principles of social media engagement.

Social media is dynamite. But, like dynamite, if you don't know how to use it, it can blow up in your face.

Are you getting the picture yet? Good. So how do we use all of these principles and warnings to navigate the various elements of social media in regard to events? Let's take a look.

Chapter 2: Getting Started, Not Being Left Behind

Social media is described as a modern-day gold rush. But just like the California gold rush of the 19th century, not everyone is getting what he or she wants or expected. Where do you start? Should you start by just listening for a time to see what the conversation around your industry is telling you? This chapter offers an examination of the various tools to start your social media educational journey.

Getting started with social media can be as simple as setting up a listening station to gather information about what's happening.

For instance, setting up a few Google Alerts will immediately start moving information about specific people, products, companies or things into your email box on a daily basis. Simply search for 'Google Alerts' and follow the instructions. Choose a few key people or products that you'd like to learn more about on a regular basis. Choose between news, blogs, videos, discussions or books (or everything). Let's say you're in the natural products industry and your main competitors are Clif Bar, Lara Bar and Power Bar.

Set up individual alerts for each company. If you'd like to dig a little deeper, do some research and find out the name of the CEOs, Marketing Managers or other key managers. Go a little further and add in the names of specific products. It won't be long before you have a virtual torrent of incoming information:

news releases, blog posts, product reviews, rants and raves and more.

Soon you'll be the most educated person on your competition in your company, and you'll continue to get breaking news in real time. You'll be able to discuss new products, event appearances, company issues and more without batting an eye. People will wonder how you knew all that and where you found out. Just smile. And keep your lip zipped. Or tell them to pick up a copy of this book 😊.

There are dozens of social media listening tools. Some stick around a long time and others come and go. Some are free, some are inexpensive and others cost as much as a mortgage. Depending on your level of interest, you can certainly find the right set of listening tools to keep abreast of what's important in your business world.

During a 9-month listening project for a big player in the heavy metals industry, our company recently used a premium search tool that allowed us to track any mentions of specific terms and keywords, whether they showed up on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, news stories, blogs, press releases and so on.

However, it soon became apparent to us that most of the good information came from following a set of engineers in the industry that hung out on Twitter. So we ditched the premium listening dashboard and followed those active people on Twitter. They shared comments, blog posts, links to news stories and more – and we were able to share that information with our client on a real time basis. And seriously, it made us look like heroes, when in fact we were just doing the basics. And it worked, damn well.

Spend some time completing profiles and connecting dots between various social media platforms.

Profiles: complete and up to date. It's easy to miss a few things, or forget to update URL's, job titles and other items.

Connecting the profiles: There are opportunities on YouTube to post links to other social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter and others. Google+ also allows you to show connections to as many social media profiles as you want. By showing the connections, you're leaving a trail of digital crumbs to get more people to follow and like you in more locations.

Google Analytics for your website or blog: A simple Google Analytics account allows you to regularly track incoming traffic to your web properties and determine how much is coming from social media links and clicks. You can get more sophisticated and also learn how that traffic is leading to conversions in sales or clients.

Website links and icons: Use the official icons and logos as clickable links to your social media outposts. It's done all the time by most of the savvy players, so if you're not doing this simple step it shows that you're not savvy. And vice versa.

Use Facebook Insights: in fact, once you're adept at reading the glut of information available using the FB back office, move beyond insights to more useful tools, WebTrends, AllFacebook Stats, Simply Measured and more.

Go beyond Google alerts with Smartphone connectivity. When someone sends a tweet to you or re-tweets one of your tweets, an alert will ping your phone. This is a great way to show your tribe that you're in touch by thanking those people who re-tweet your stuff and responding quickly to other alerts, which might include Facebook conversation, Instagram re-posts or likes, Google+ 1+'s, LinkedIn updates and more. Set these up in the notifications area of your Smartphone apps.

Use Search.Twitter.com for deeper searches on Twitter. This helps you track names, keywords and other information – including finding out what people are saying about you.

Blogging: if you're blogging, great! If not, why not? A blog is generally considered the most important piece of online real estate that you can have. After all, it's where you control the look and the content (unlike all of those social media platforms). You can also steer all of your social media followers to your blog.

While this book is not intended to be a thorough treatise on blogging, here are some basic notes on blogging – more in Chapter 11:

Make it about your readers, not you. Keep press releases, bragging about awards and other self-centered material to a bare minimum. Instead, use your blog to address issues your potential clients and customers are facing, and to show them that you're a thought-leader in your industry. Take risks and have fun.

Make sure your blog is connected to your main company website. Some blogs are separate from the main site and others are part of it. In any case, make it easy for visitors to navigate (or move) from one to the other.

Don't let it become a dry, dusty web outpost. Keep it fresh. For some blogs, that means 4 posts a month. For others, it means 24 a day. Find out what schedule works best for you, and stick to it as best you can.

If you're fairly adept at social media but are looking for ways to pump up your interaction, you might be surprised to find companies that are still virtually uninvolved in social media. Yes, it's true. Just like your grandmother (and my mother), they're not interested in setting up profiles, engaging in conversations with family and friends or showing off photos of their great-grandbabies, no matter how much you may believe in it.

Chapter 3: Building a Strategy, Creating a Plan

Now that you've gotten started listening to blogs, forums, video postings, news outlets, tweets and more, you can start to learn where your community hangs out. As a result you can start to plan where you should be. Not everyone should be on all of the major outlets – Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest and LinkedIn – although there would have to be strong evidence not to at least try each one of the major outlets.

Consider performing a full social media audit, and creating a social media internal policy for suitable company-wide engagement. Start to build a social media engagement calendar, using the framework of your tradeshow exhibition and attendance schedule.

Social Media Audit

There are a lot of good reasons to do a thorough social media audit. If you've never done one, your initial run-through should be as thorough as you can afford (time and/or money). After that you should, at a minimum, do a yearly audit of the pertinent pieces. Six months between audits would be more preferable.

Who's going to do the audit? First, figure out if it's internal or you're going to hire an outside agency to do the work. If it's a basic look and you're not planning to dig too deep at this point, perhaps an internal operation is sufficient. If you want to dig

much deeper, it may pay to have an outside organization that specializes in social media audits do the work.

A bare bones social media audit should include the following:

- **Strategy:** identify visions, goals, and desired outcomes. Choose your target market, platforms, and listening/monitoring tools. Define internal policies and evaluate your assets.
- **Implementation:** tools/platforms, community growth and development, training, potential partners, monitor and evaluate
- **Integration:** organization website, blog, social media platforms, offline support (print, business cards, etc.)
- **Support:** executive, funding for personnel, staff involvement

The process should start with interviews with the principals involved: the tweeters, bloggers and creators of video and other social media content.

Talking with all of these various folks at length will give you a good sense of the overall reach and current shortfalls.

- Surveys also work well. They offer all participants a chance to answer the same questions with the same methodology.
- Event analysis: there's a good chance that each participant in an organization's social media initiatives have anecdotes about how something worked or didn't work. Analyzing these events helps to see how communication works in real-life situations.
- Communication flow: how is information exchanged between all parties? By taking a close look at how a company's communication network works, it's possible to reveal where blockages happen and show opportunities for untapped paths.
- Observation: as part of the social media audit, you should spend time actually observing how each person interacts with the company's community.

If you've been involved in social media for some time but

still are trying to get a handle on what exactly you're doing and how it's affecting your marketing efforts, a social media audit is a solid place to start.

A social media audit will also give you information about your competition. One goal of the auditing effort is to take a longer look at the various outposts your competition is using. Check what platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, etc.) and then track their level of engagement: followers, likes, responses, real-time engagement, etc. It adds to the complete picture, and the more information you have, the better the understanding you'll have.

When you drill down, try to learn not only what your company does on social media around the various events and tradeshows, but what your top 3-5 competitors are doing as well. This will give you clues and information on how to position your approach and prioritize your tactics when the next show comes around.

Is your top competitor driving traffic to their booth during the show? Are they doing contests? If so, perhaps you can outflank them with contests of your own. Do they appear to be uninterested in any special show engagement? What does that mean, in your opinion?

In any case, feel free to download a Social Media Audit Outline at TradeshowguyBlog.com/audit (free PDF download).

Get Organized

The best way to be effective in your social media engagement during tradeshows is to get organized and plan on automating some of that engagement. Hootsuite is an effective tool for scheduling tweets and Facebook posts. Premium accounts are available for a nominal monthly fee, and it also allows you to assign duties to various team members. There are tracking and analysis tools that give you metrics on responses, re-tweets, engagement and other activity.

As part of your organization and planning, start making lists. If you're a list person, you'll love this part. If not, hey – try it – you might like it!

Digital Natives: who's involved in your social media effort and their expertise?

- Who's great at composing tweets
- Who's got the skill to shoot and edit video on the fly
- Who's a good photographer
- Who can write a 500 word blog post in 60 minutes or less

What are the specific show objectives? This can range from branding to lead generation to product launch to sales. Those objectives can change from show to show, so each show should have its own set of lists.

If you are launching products or services, make a list of what the priorities are around those.

If you are planning giveaways, contests or special show-only deals, make a list.

Now that your lists are compiled, assemble a tentative schedule of what you're going to promote and when: show specials, giveaways, contests, in-booth demos, guests, etc. Use this list as a jumping-off point for scheduling your social media engagement. Some of these tweets and posts will be written and scheduled before the show, and others will be live. Once you are satisfied with the list, start writing the tweets and posts. Plan on putting these 'live' into the schedule via Hootsuite a week or so before the actual show.

Speaking of lists, let's insert one here. This list of tips about social media engagement came from a mash-up of a Peter Shankman post and a webinar from David Meerman Scott. If you

don't know who Peter or David are, look 'em up and read. You'll learn a lot about social media from both.

1. Awareness – what is the conversation about regarding your products and industry?
2. Add value – don't just try and get more followers to increase your numbers; what of value are you really offering those followers?
3. Know the difference between social media and social marketing
4. Be available – break the 'impenetrable wall of stupid' that seems to surround most companies
5. Why? Make the connection with your customers by telling them WHY it matters to you and them
6. It's not about YOU. It's about your customer.
7. Twitter, Facebook, et al are TWO-WAY, not ONE-WAY communication platforms
8. Engage. Respond. Repeat.
9. Operate in the NOW. Not the past. Not the future.
10. Social media are tools. Real-time is a mindset.

And be sure to respond as quickly as possible. Social media is not something that you can wait a day or two on if you see an opportunity. As Scott says, "Speed and agility are decisive competitive advantages."

Real Time!

You keep hearing 'real time' but what does it really mean? If you have alerts set up so that you are notified immediately when someone tweets about you or responds to one of your tweets, is that enough? What else is there to do?

One memorable example came from United Breaks Guitars. This was a song that Dave Carroll of Sons of Maxwell wrote out of frustration with United Airlines inaction in regards to their mishandling of his guitar several years ago. After spending months getting absolutely nowhere, he penned a song called 'United Breaks Guitars' and posted a video on YouTube. Within hours it started to get traction, getting noticed and was being shared throughout the web.

Two things happened that are worthy of your attention: United Airlines didn't respond. Either they weren't aware of the video or didn't care, or didn't have the ability to craft a response to the growing chorus of people who shared their frustrations with United and the shitstorm of negative comments that multiplied online.

Secondly, it's worth noting what entities DID respond, and in *real time*. Taylor Guitars put together a quick video response featuring owner Bob Taylor, with an offer to Carroll to rebrand a guitar in his honor. They ended up giving Dave a couple of guitars.

Jim Laffoley, the president of Carlton Cases, jumped into the stream as well, offering to provide Dave and his band some industrial strength guitar cases for the rest of their tour. They soon released Carroll's Traveler's Edition Guitar Case with aggressive pricing. Talk about having a real time mindset!

David Meerman Scott, in his book 'Real Time Marketing and PR' says, "an immensely powerful competitive advantage flows to organizations with people who understand the power of real-time information."

While this is a great way to approach online engagement in general, by focusing on how to use this during tradeshows, events and conferences, you can gain advantages over competitors in any number of ways.

Actually, using social media in real time during events is probably easier than non-show times, since there is always action that you can respond to by commenting, tweeting or posting about. The challenge comes from carving out the time to make it happen.

Mindset is the key. By keeping your mindset in the mode of ‘okay, what can I respond to or create this hour?’ it becomes easier to fit it in. Of course there will be times that you simply are swamped with booth visitors and appointments and it becomes impossible. If that’s the case, perhaps it’s time to consider putting someone on that task for the company fulltime.

The following examples may provide you with some food for thought – and action:

Have a visitor that raves about your product? Have them sit down in front of your booth with the company logo in back and ask them 2-3 questions about it. Record the video, do a quick edit and post on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Google+, Pinterest and perhaps a short edited version on Instagram.

Did one of your booth visitors come in with an honest complaint or perhaps misunderstanding about one of your products or services, or a question on how something works? Grab one of your techs or customer service folks (maybe it’s you!), and shoot a quick video of the two of you (customer and company rep) discussing the issue. Quickly edit the video and post. By posting something like this, you’re showing your audience that you’re transparent and looking to improve by taking customer feedback seriously, and that you can take critiques seriously.

Do you have a famous or semi-famous visitor? Snap a photo and post it before he or she is more than a booth or two away. Or better yet, post it while they’re still in the booth!

Notice a competitor’s tweet about one of their products? Hey, have a little fun and use the same show hashtag and say

something cool about your product, maybe even positioning it against the other by name.

And speaking of real time contests, this one takes the cake: working with Team Epic, AT&T set up a 'Twitter Balloon' at events. The 6-foot balloon is inflated by tweets that react to a specific hashtag. At some point the balloon will pop. Whoever posts the tweet that causes it to pop will win a million dollars! Okay, not really, but they do win a cool prize, such as a new phone.

As the balloon gets bigger, crowds gather, causing the balloon to expand more quickly thanks to more people tweeting the hashtag, hoping to win. The technology allows the air compressor to push another bit of air into the balloon. The balloon was unveiled at the 2013 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament and has shown up at several other shows, including Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival in San Francisco, the College World Series and others. It takes anywhere from 200 – 700 tweets to cause the balloon to pop.

The same technology could also be used to trigger other effects, such as smoke machines, sounds, lights, etc. What could you do using technology like this?

While that shows a great way to engage visitors on a larger scale, think about how you might use that to focus on a specific product or service. Perhaps that might mean using a hashtag of your specific product, and entering all tweeters in a contest that requires entrants to post a tweet about a feature of your product. This way the whole Twitterverse has access to those tweets, and you have a trail of those people that you can then reach back to with a brief comment or thanks.

Or this: the twitter hashtag causes a light to flash, but the entrant doesn't actually get an entry until they sign up in the booth. And to sign up, you have to ask them a couple of questions that are designed to qualify or disqualify them.

Once you understand the technology, you and your marketing team can brainstorm on what the best and most creative approach might be for social media engagement during each show.

Chapter 4: Creating a Community

Your customers and your potential clients are all potential community members. Identify where they are hanging out online. Learn to engage with them. Determine what kind of identity you want to present to the world. Show off your company culture. What makes your company tick? How do your products affect the lives of your customers? What's important to your role in the world? Answer those questions and find ways to share that with your community.

- Where do you build the community? What platform should you choose?
- How do you build it?
- Who can help?
- What are your objectives in building the community?
- How much time will it take?
- When should you start?

The world is moving quickly, and while Facebook's billion users might be a great place to start an online community via a Facebook page, you might consider what you can do with Google+.

Google+ is proving, after a slow start, to be a boon for a number of businesses that have figured out how to use the free tools to connect various people and bind them into a loose knit or tight knit community.

Having a Google+ account means you can start a Google Hangout within a few seconds. It's as easy as clicking a button and inviting people to participate. Or you can get more formal, schedule a hangout a few days or weeks in advance to promote it and then kick it off.

What can you do with Google Hangouts? For starters, it's changed the game for webinars, which had been the province of companies like GoToWebinar and the like, where you were required to pay a monthly fee and use their platform. With Google Hangouts, you can put anyone on screen, share screens and have a more fluid exchange than is possible with traditional webinars. It's about time that some entity shook up the webinar world and made it more fun. Google Hangouts don't have quite the bells and whistles on followup and webinar attendance at GoToWebinar, but it can still be extremely effective as an online meeting platform, and videos can be immediately posted on your YouTube channel.

It's easy to start a new community on Google+. There are four options for communities: Public (anyone can join), Public (moderator approval needed to join), Private (let people find through search and request to join), Secret (hidden from searches and only made available through invitation).

Once you've determined the type of community, you'll need to do a couple of other things to launch it: post a photo that shows what your community is about, complete the *About* section by describing the purpose of your community, and then invite people to join. Depending on your intention with the community, you may want to do what some other groups have done, by strictly managing entry in to the group through a process that sends applicants to an off-Google site to fill out an application, which may ask for information ranging from detailed contact info to answering a short questionnaire and walking them through the participation process.

Of course, the easy part is starting the community. Now that you've started it, you've got to manage it. And if not done conscientiously, you may lose control of the community, or your members may not stick around for long. Or the growth will be slow and small.

Doing it properly is a time commitment like any social media. Make sure you have the time to commit to handling the community, or enlist like-minded individuals, who may come from the early applicants, to handle duties like moderation, applications and more.

When it comes to creating the community, let's look at some of the important issues that you'll want to address with your team before getting too far into it.

What's your reason? Do you have a specific objective for the business, or for the members to accomplish by joining the community? For example, if I were to start an online community for tradeshow marketers, I would probably want to emphasize the objective of helping them gain more information and connections and insight into what it takes to be a successful tradeshow marketing program manager. (Stay tuned! I'm in the planning stages for a tradeshow-themed Google+ Community!)

How to make people feel at home. A member of a community will feel more welcomed and wanted if they're made to feel a part from the very beginning. As you start your community, this will probably be easy. As you gain momentum and members, greeting each new member individually will become more time-consuming, so this might be a task to assign to one of your team members. Encourage members to complete a profile so that other members can learn about them. A personal touch goes a long way.

Keep pouring out the relevant content. The more useful information they can find in the community, the more likely members are to stick around and invite others to join. This

means shepherding those content-creators and enticing them to share blog posts, articles, videos, photographs and other ideas on a regular basis. Perhaps it means to create an ongoing program, such as a Google Hangout every Tuesday morning at 10, or a regular radio show on BlogTalkRadio.com that is shared online, where you invite experts, consultants and industry names to discuss ideas and useful topics. By doing this, you not only give your audience useful content, which grows your audience, it also makes you more visible to your community and the guests you invite to your show. The larger your community, the more you'll be able to leverage the knowledge within the community, which will benefit the community even more.

Recognition: Foursquare had a great idea: badges, mayorships, etc., which are nothing more than digital currency. Yet for some reason it works. What can you create that will give recognition for participation and influence within your community?

Offer a few privileges for membership, such as special content, more intimate access to you or other members. This gives a further incentive for joining the community.

Finally, **determine what your guidelines** are for participation – and gently enforce them. No doubt you will have members that will try to push their products or company, or solicit other members for business, but if those activities are against your guidelines, don't hammer them in front of the rest of the group. The best approach would be to pick up the phone and discuss the guidelines amicably. Not only will they be amazed that anyone bothered to actually call them, but it will drastically cut down on any abuse of the protocols.

Facebook

Creating a community on Facebook is a different matter than creating one on Google+.

First, you have to choose what kind of page to create:

- Local Business or Place
- Company, Organization or Institution
- Brand or Product
- Artist, Band or Public Figure
- Entertainment
- Cause or Community

Each type of page operates a bit differently from the others, so do your research to determine what kind of page you really want to create. In general, if you're looking to gather like-minded people around your objective, the obvious choice is 'Cause or Community' but be sure to check out the other types of pages as well.

If you want to grow your community on Facebook, there are a number of suggested ways to accomplish that growth, including connecting with other page managers, networking, sharing original content, posting about your community page from your personal page, linking your page to your profile, comment on other pages as your community admin, have a contest, add a like box to your blog or website, advertise on Facebook for likes, and more. According to 'Facebook Marketing All-in-One for Dummies' author Andrea Vahl, 'watching what works' is one of the best ways to continue to grow your community.

Don't make the same mistakes lots of other people make! Michael Silverman of Chicago-based Duo Consulting, lists a number of common mistakes that online community builders often make:

- Believing that the number of members is the most important metric. It's not. The interactivity and engagement is critical, not the number.

- Online communities rise organically. Not really. It often takes creating a business plan and putting aggressive marketing and advertising in place to grow the community.
- You're too late: someone already beat you to your idea for a community. Competition is good, and no matter how successful a community is, another community always has the potential of growing bigger.
- You know what's best! Not necessarily. Instead, keep an open mind and listen to your members. They may take you to places that you had not anticipated. If you try to exert too much control, they may rebel. Or just leave, which is the easiest thing in the world.
- Adding features means you're moving forward. Just because you have what you think is a great idea to add another feature to your community, doesn't mean that it's a good idea. Again, listen to your members.
- Have strict guidelines. Yes, this contradicts what I said about five minutes ago! But Silverman believes that "once you've fostered an active community, you don't need to spend time policing it. Your members will do that for you."

Regardless of whether you think a formal community is right for you, or whether you just want to build a community organically through followers on Facebook and Twitter, your community should be thought of as a living entity. You need to feed it, respond to it, nurture it and give it good stuff in the form of valuable content. Do that, and your community will be a valuable resource to you and your business.

Chapter 5: The Power of Twitter

It's been said numerous times online in blogs and news accounts that 80% of tweets are mobile. However, a recent posting from StatisticBrain.com (January, 2014) shows that 43% of Twitter users tweet from their phone. There are almost 650 million registered Twitter users, with 58 million tweets per day.

That's a lot of tweets!

In just a few years Twitter has gone from a goofy time-waster to a worldwide instantaneous news-broadcasting tool to IPO, bringing in nearly half a billion in advertising revenue in 2013. Careers have started and cratered on Twitter. Jobs have been lost due to a bad tweet. Book deals have been made thanks to Twitter. So how do you use Twitter in conjunction with a tradeshow, conference or event? What drives traffic to your booth? How do you get people to share in the activity? There are literally hundreds of ways to use Twitter to boost interactivity, networking and booth attendance.

Face it: tradeshow, event and conference attendees are on Twitter. They're tracking down deals, parties and people. You can do the same. And if you manage to organize your efforts, you can multiply the results, unlike the last time when you just tweeted randomly. Remember that, right?

Build Buzz. Drive traffic.

The most obvious way to use Twitter to enhance your tradeshow marketing is to bring people to your booth. Twitter

can help spread the word, but you still have to have some good stuff happening there. Are you selling something at a show-only special price? Do you have a cool contest going on? Do you have a special in-booth guest for a few hours? All of these ideas and more are good reasons to take to Twitter and invite people to your booth.

Remember these few things:

Use the freakin' #show hashtag! If you are not using the show hashtag in each and every tweet you are not reaching most of the show visitors. This is the easiest thing to do, but unfortunately its an oft-missed elements.

Timeliness. Tweets are consumed in real time. People generally don't go backwards to search the past hundred tweets unless they're looking for something specific. Most show attendees have neither. So that tweet should come out literally within minutes or seconds of when you want them to be aware of it. Certainly, there's nothing wrong sending out a few tweets a week ahead of time to clue in attendees about the cool stuff in your booth. But they'll forget it for the most part. Plan on sending out tweets just a few moments before the event happens, whether you're doing it in real time from your Smartphone, tablet or laptop, or program them ahead of time using Hootsuite.

Repetition. Tweets get lost because they are consumed in real time (see timeliness above). You want more people to know about the special event in your booth? Send out multiple tweets. Tip: don't overdo it, and be sure to at least re-write them a bit so it doesn't look like you're copying and pasting.

Engaging. If you get a response to a tweet, respond as soon as you see it. Don't wait a few minutes. If they say, for instance, that they're looking forward to coming by because of your, get right back to them and invite them to look you up. They mostly likely will be glad to.

Follow up and build relationships. When people do come by your tradeshow booth for sale, contest, visitor, testimonial video, whatever, make sure you ask them the normal questions that you'd ask any other visitors. Get contact info, gauge their interest in your product or service, and if appropriate determine what follow up will happen, and when. If nothing else, get their card and make a note on the back: 'Twitter pal' and write their Twitter handle if it's not on the card. Now you know who they are and you've just added an online friend to your circle. Send an email inviting them to your other social media outlets, blog, etc. Ask them to follow you on Twitter. Chances are good that the visitor saw the tweet by searching the show hashtag. That doesn't mean that they are followers. Ask!

Get retweeted! It's kind of crass to ask for a retweet, but if you keep your tweets short, relevant and valuable, it increases the chances they will be retweeted without asking, which moves them into view of larger audiences.

Keep your audience informed. Twitter is a good place to let visitors know about unplanned changes in schedule and product offerings, reminders and notifications. An active Twitter account is a healthy account.

Do some pre-show preparation: contact individuals through LinkedIn and Twitter. Figure out who your best prospects are for visiting your booth, reach out to them individually and ask if they are going to be at the show. If so, invite them to your booth. If they determine that they may be interested in becoming a client or customer, consider setting up an appointment with them at the show.

Prior to the show, reach out to industry bloggers and journalists. By offering free merchandise, access to the CEO or other company representatives, personal demonstrations and more, you can start to build a relationship with them that will extend beyond the show. After the show, continue to stay in touch with information on new products and services, or changes in your company that may be of interest to them. Be sure to

reach out to them prior to next year's show as well. For a few of the prominent bloggers or journalists, consider offering an exclusive on a particular product or service if you feel that they might write a story that will get your company in front of their audience in a timely manner.

Now that you've found those bloggers and journalists, spend some time on the blogs and news outlets they represent. Comment on blog posts or articles as you see fit, but don't try and sell anything except your insight and expertise. Depending on the outlet, a single comment can get ready by hundreds or thousands of readers, which may help you reach an audience that you've never reached before.

While we encourage you to tweet out what's happening at your booth or at the show on a frequent basis, keep your communication focused on valuable content. Ask yourself before each tweet "how does this help someone?" If you have a good answer – even if it only helps someone a little bit – it's probably a good tweet. If it's funny or insightful, it's probably a good tweet. If it's kind of silly and just sits there and doesn't really help someone, perhaps it's not that great of a tweet. No worries; just delete it and wait for something a little better to come along.

Keep it clean, grammatically speaking! Social media is often a place where you see shorthand: shortened spellings, loose grammar and slang. Keep in mind though, that even though it's social media, it's still a representation of your business. Those tweets will stay there on Twitter, archived forever. A tweet with poor grammar, misspellings and inappropriate thoughts is out of place and shouldn't be sent out. Hey, if it's bad enough someone is likely to ridicule it in front of his or her audience. The Internet is unforgiving.

If you wouldn't put it on the front page of your website or next to the cash register, you shouldn't put it on Twitter. A business Twitter account should not be a soapbox for jokes or politics. If you're witty, certainly let that wit come through and have some fun, but leaven that wit with thoughtfulness. People

offend easily and what's funny to you might be offensive to someone else – and could easily get called out and shared. The next thing you know, you could be in defensive mode, backpedaling to explain what you did and why you did it, and perhaps having to apologize.

Multi-media: Post videos and photos. While people at the show can stop in your booth and see your products or demonstrations in person, there are hundreds that wish they were there and couldn't make it to the show this year. Video is so easy to do in this day and age. Virtually every Smartphone has the ability to shoot HD video, and editing software is cheap and easy to learn. By sharing demonstrations online, you can earn your way to new audiences. By placing video demonstrations on YouTube, you might join other successful campaigns like “Will it Blend?” and UltraTech’s “hydrophobic” spray, both of which gathered millions of views!

After the show, stay in touch with those people that you met at the show. Let them know via social media or email or even phone about new products and services and company info. In fact, I encourage you to use the phone and connect with those people you met via social media. Suddenly you have a new friend in another city. Next time you're in that city, you can visit for lunch or coffee and develop that relationship.

Chapter 6: Friends on Facebook

Facebook is an effective tool to interact with your community and find new customers. You can create event listings, post videos, photos, comments, promos – and even ads.

But when it comes to posting on Facebook, don't dwell on 'self-promotion.' Instead, think 'how can I solve problems?' By coming from the viewpoint of assisting people with their problems, you are going to position yourself as the expert in the industry. If you are just promoting new products and services, and trying to get people to pull out their wallet, you're positioning yourself as greedy and self-centered. Which kind of company would you like to do business with?

Avoid press releases. Facebook is informal. Press releases are usually quite formal, so leave 'em to the PR folks.

Post regularly, but don't make a nuisance of your brand and page. Which means, if you're posting 15 or 20 or more times a day, you have too much time on your hands. Chances are you're getting in people's news stream too often. Post regularly, but no more than a few times a day, unless you're at a special event – tradeshow are good places to break that rule. But if you break the rule at the tradeshow, be sure to go back to your normal schedule once the show is over!

Have you spent time determining exactly who the audience of your company page really is? Take some time to do

that. There are a number of ways to do it. The proactive, personal *in your face* way is one of the best, albeit the most time-consuming.

Pick up the phone and call. No, seriously, you'll be amazed!

“Hi, this is Jessica from Blankety-blank Company. I see that you're one of our Facebook friends. I wonder if you mind spending a few minutes discussing what you think about the company and how we might help you.”

Silence. They're dumbfounded. This is the first time anyone has ever done this. What - a company is actually calling them because they're following you on Facebook?

Here's where it gets fun. Have a prepared short survey. You already can see some of what they're about on their 'About' section of Facebook. So dig deeper. Ask 4 or 5 questions that are positioned to uncover a little more information. Like what products of yours they like. What they like about it. What don't they like. What could be improved. Etcetera, etcetera.

What kind of valuable information could you assemble if you surveyed just ten percent of your followers? Chances are you'd get detailed information that no competitor would have. Once the survey is over, you might thank them with a small gift – perhaps a discount on a product, or better yet, send them something through snail mail. Now there's a way to make an impression!

With the information chances are you're going to run into some folks who are real advocates for your brand. These are the people that you can run new products that are still in beta testing phase by. Get their reaction; make notes; improve the product. These advocates then become one of the most valuable online elements of your brand. Brand advocates such as these – who don't work for the company, but simply believe in the products and services – will step in and stand up when there is negative backlash online. Ask Apple how that works. The 'Apple Fanboys'

will go to great lengths to stand up for the company and the products, defending decisions the company makes or explaining how the products are used when issues come up.

Interacting with Facebook Friends

Check out popular Facebook pages and see if you can determine what makes them popular. Whether it's the brand, the products or services, the one thing that seems to echo through all the pages is the engagement. Popular Facebook pages have someone in charge that reads all of the visitor posts, responding with comments, answers and directions. And they do it in a pleasant manner.

How to NOT do Facebook.

In 2013 there was a mighty social media kerfluffle involving Amy's Baking Company Boutique and Bistro in Scottsdale, Arizona. The restaurant was featured on Gordon Ramsey's Kitchen Nightmares program May 10, and during the episode it showed the owners yelling at customers, throwing people out of their restaurant and even being accused by servers of stealing tips. They were ultimately dumped from the show for being too difficult to work with.

The episode was filmed in December 2012, with the intent of helping them revamp the restaurant. However, they took no blame for the massive problems they faced, and Ramsey walked away from the filming.

When the show aired in May their Facebook page started getting some negative comments based on the show. Reddit users shared some of the comments via screenshots, which garnered more attention. The owners started pushing back, using ALL CAPS (shouting!), profanity, and inviting all of the 'pussies' to come to Arizona and face them 'man to man.'

It was a massive meltdown and takedown of the business, all from social media and the owners' inability to grasp how it can

really work. By getting angry, posting in all caps, and taking on the commentators as if they really thought they would win an online shouting war, the owners of Amy's helped make the whole thing much worse than it might have been. As a result, the restaurant had to close temporarily.

Bottom line: they had no clue on how to handle social media (or, apparently, other types of media as well), and watched as control simply slipped away from them.

This case is often used as an example of how NOT to do social media, and it's a good one. Whether you side with the restaurant or not, or don't even care, you can learn a few lessons on how to deal with negative comments.

For instance, keep in mind that how you handle negative comments can profoundly affect your business.

Determine first where the comment came from. Was it a random tweet from a disgruntled customer? If so, it can probably be safely ignored. If, however, it is on Yelp! or is an Amazon review, or some other certified feedback, determine how much it can really hurt you in the long term. If the answer is 'ehh, not much,' then the best thing to do is to not do the thing that caused the comment in the first place. Should be easy, right?

Some advisors say you should delete negative comments, but in my opinion that's not necessarily the right thing to do. In fact, negative comments that get deleted can often bring the same person back (with friends) to post more negative comments. And soon it can start to get out of hand. The only time to delete negative comments would be to remove profanity, insults, name-calling, racism or bigotry.

Otherwise, use negative comments to learn from. If there is a specific issue you can address, do so. Perhaps they claim an item wasn't received. Check the tracking and see if it was shipped and if it was received. Pass that specific information along.

If there is a more general issue (there's too many pickles in your burgers!), remind your commenter that they can order the burger without pickles. If they're having an issue figuring out how to use a product, or if the product doesn't meet their needs, ask more questions to determine the answer to the problem.

By addressing the negative comments with poise and patience, you can often diffuse the situation. If you are able to make the complainant happy, they can often become bigger supporters. Think of it this way: if they didn't like your products or services in the first place, they probably wouldn't spend time coming up with negative comments on your Facebook page.

Checking the Back Office

Facebook page admin access allows you into all sorts of fun bits and pieces. You can assign admin roles with your company or agencies that work with you. You can adjust the Posting Ability tab so that only admins can post. This prevents readers from posting, and while this may seem like a great idea because it cuts down the time you might need to spend moderating the comments, it also tells your readers 'No, we really don't want to hear from you, so...uh...go away!'

The admin page also gives you access to Insights, which lets you see what really drives engagement on the page. For example, you might find that posts with photos get more comments or shares. Test that assumption by posting without photos for a while and see what happens (note: photos almost always get more engagement, whether it's Facebook, Twitter, or Google+).

Setting the stage for your Facebook page

Determine company-wide guidelines for engagement. Who's going to do the majority of the posting; what the main thrust of the page should be, what is the *voice* of the page, etc. It wouldn't hurt to have regular Facebook trainings or reviews to make sure all of the folks involved are on the same page.

Another good piece of advice is to keep admins to a bare minimum. Figure out how many people you really need to accomplish your goals, and stick to it.

Linking with other business pages is also important. Posts from those pages will appear on your timeline, so it's important to see what kind of posts they regularly feature. You can also choose what pages to feature on the left side of your main page.

Don't forget that you can use Facebook as that company Facebook page, too. Usually the easiest way to post to your page is to just type the page in the search bar; go to the page and post. But if you click the settings icon in the upper right page, you can use Facebook as that page, which allows you to go to other pages and start to build alliances and relationships. You can network with similar businesses and meet people. And, as always, I recommend picking up the phone regularly and reaching out to them to say hi, introduce yourself and ask how you can help them! In most cases, that's easy to do because their phone number is listed on the page.

Chapter 7: Eye on Video

Google is the Internet's largest search engine. YouTube is the second largest. YouTube viewers watch more than 2 billion views a day. Over 45 years of video are viewed every single day on YouTube. You can watch history, cartoons, music, politics, education, lectures, sales pitches, cat hi-jinx, risqué dancing – you name it, it's on YouTube.

“Video is easy.”

“No, video is hard.”

“Video is cheap.”

“Video is expensive.”

Which is it? Is video easy or hard, cheap or expensive?

It can be both. It depends on what you want out of it.

Are you shooting a commercial for the Super Bowl? Or are you shooting a booth visitor discussing your product or service?

The former will cost a ton of money, involving a team of video production specialists: writer, videographer, make-up artist, actor, props, etcetera, etcetera...

The latter takes nothing more than a capable smart phone or Flip video camera (okay, Flip cameras are so 2010 – but still,

they're cool), and an inexpensive piece of video editor software. For under a hundred bucks, you can pick up editing software that allows you to insert intros, music and voiceovers and edit it all into a slick little video. Check out software such as Adobe Premiere Elements, Screenflow, Camtasia, Cyberlink Power Director, Pinnacle Studio 16, Sony Movie Studio, Apple Final Cut Pro (okay, that's about \$300 or more), or many others, which can all be found by searching online for 'video editing software.' And of course, if you have a Mac computer, the iMovie software is also a good choice and comes with the iOS.

So what about video? If you've never shot video – or at least never thought about doing it in relation to your business, where do you start?

Think about this approach. It's the same for writing blog posts, putting out a tweet or sharing photography: what makes it valuable to the viewer?

Is it informative, enlightening, educational or entertaining? Or is it a combination of those elements? Then you're on the right track.

Within those parameters, anything is fair game. Want to put a GoPro camera on your helmet and interact with visitors, or do a demonstration of your product? What about editing together a dozen quick comments from visitors as they answer a question about your product as they sample it? Anything that makes it worth watching is worth experimenting with.

For video to work effectively, keep the following points in mind. You don't have to adhere to all of them in every video, but each point will help you prepare a video that is better equipped to invite viewers in and to share the video.

1. Video clips should be short and focused.

When people are online, they have short attention spans. They're bouncing from Facebook to Twitter to new sources to

searching for a faucet at Home Depot or some other snappy eye candy or mini-mission. So they won't watch a video unless they feel they have time *at that moment*. And that's a key part of getting people to watch online video: do they have time *at that precise moment*? If not, they won't watch and you've likely lost them for good. Who bookmarks a short video just so they can come back and watch it later? Not many people.

So keep in mind that shortness is important. But what is short and what is long? Is 30 seconds too long? Is three minutes short enough?

Think about how you decide what videos to watch. When I'm surfing and I see a link to a video, the first thing I look at is how long it is. Can I spare a minute or two? Yeah, probably. Can I spare four or five minutes? Mostly likely not, unless I am taking a little break, such as having a snack or a cup of coffee or lunch. Then I might think I have time. But in the fast-paced work world, when I'm doing business on Twitter, writing an article or working on a book, if I see a tweet come in with a link to a video, I'll usually ignore it unless the content teaser looks compelling enough.

In general terms, a video under two minutes is going to get a lot more viewers and traction than a ten-minute video. That ten minute video may be more valuable, but unless it starts getting shared by people that are so knocked out by the content they insist that friends have to see it, it's not going to get as many views.

So think short. You can do a lot in two minutes or less.

And by sticking to one issue, you'll make it much easier to produce. Try and answer more than one question (unless they all revolve around one issue) and you'll muddy the waters.

2. The video addresses or solves a problem.

Whether you have a talking head in an interview, or you have a demonstration on camera, if you can help solve a problem, you'll get viewers. Oddly enough, it's easier to do this approach on video than it is when writing a blog post. Writers often get caught up on themselves, and end up writing about how great the company is or talking about a new product or posting a press release. Video, on the other hand, lends itself to talking about problems and solving them. The easiest thing in the world is to put a camera on someone and ask him or her 'how did you do it?' And people who know how they did it are comfortable and relaxed as they explain 'how they did it.'

3. The video shows, instead of tells.

A friend of mine shoots videos on auto body repair and painting. He demonstrates how it's done by showing them, not telling, and his collection of videos have garnered hundreds of thousand of views. If he were instead staring into a camera explaining it, I suspect that it wouldn't be nearly as effective.

Make plans to shoot video of any demonstrations in your booth. Even if you eventually end up not posting them online for whatever reason, you can at least have them in the can for potential use.

4. The video is engaging.

What makes a video engaging? Certainly any number of things can play into what makes a video worth watching: storyline, personality, problem-solving ability, good production. But if you're shooting a video in your office or on the floor of a tradeshow, many of the tools that you might have at your disposal in other situations may not be available. So the elements of what makes a video engaging might be limited to having a good story or anecdote, solving a serious problem that shows up often in your industry, or having someone who is personally engaging.

5. Keep the audio clean and the view uncluttered.

It's hard to find a suitable background at a busy tradeshow. If you're shooting a testimonial, instead of having the busy tradeshow floor as your background, consider using the tradeshow booth graphic as a backdrop. It's much easier on the eye and will focus viewers on the person talking instead of passersby. Try to avoid a white background, which tends to lead to overexposure and leads to other subjects that are out of balance lighting-wise.

As for audio, recording from a Smartphone's built-in microphone is certainly possible, but if that's all you have, keep as close to the subject as possible, so their voice is dominant even with all of the background cacophony of the tradeshow floor.

Many Smartphones now have the capability of using the headphone jack as an audio input as well as output. Look into the specs on your specific phone to see if that's the case. If it is, you might consider getting a lapel microphone for your phone, which you can then attach to the subject's clothing for a nice up-close audio recording. This will give you a much better audio recording for your video.

If you're in your office shooting a video before a show to invite people to visit the booth you'll have a lot more control over the production elements.

Of course, if you are able to step up to higher quality video cameras, you'll have an entire suite of lenses, tools, microphones and more to create a higher quality recording. This book isn't meant to be a tutorial on those cameras or elements, but to give you a sense of how to bootstrap your way into a decent video.

Beyond video background and audio quality, consider using artificial lighting. A simple stand lamp gives you full lighting on the subject and will make your video stand out from the crowd.

Finally, if possible, shoot the video twice, or shoot it with two cameras from different angles and then use both during your editing session for the final video.

6. Final production bits and pieces

For demonstrations, adding a few close-ups and cutaways of the action will not only make the video much easier to watch and more entertaining, but will likely make it more useful. Close-ups can be filmed after the main video is recorded, and can be included in your final production at a key moment. Keep continuity in mind: if a cook picks up a spatula with his right hand in the main video, make sure he picks it up with his right hand in the close-up.

Adding simple graphics is also a way to easily add production values. It can be as simple as putting in a text box with the name and title of the individual onscreen. Or you could invest \$5 or \$10 and have some video whiz on Fiverr do a video logo for you as a 4 or 5 second introduction to the video.

YouTube, Vimeo, Viddler, self-hosted or...?

Where should all of those great videos end up? The obvious choice is YouTube, but that doesn't mean it's best for you. Vimeo hosts videos and offers good packages and exposure.

Self-hosted means you are storing the videos on your site, or through a third-party site such as Amazon's cloud services, and putting the video player on your main site or blog.

But when it comes to potential eyeballs, you can't beat YouTube. Not only is YouTube owned by Google, the biggest search engine in the world (which means that your video is getting indexed immediately), but also YouTube is often called the second-biggest search engine in the world right behind Google. So if you're NOT going to have a YouTube account, you should have a pretty good reason to avoid all of those potential eyeballs.

If you think you can create enough videos to warrant a stand-alone channel, by all means do so. You can create an identity or brand through your account, upload a distinctive logo, create play lists and more.

Mashable detailed a few reasons why you might choose Vimeo over YouTube, including:

Vimeo is a smaller, niche-sized community of film fans and professionals. The quality of videos posted is generally pretty high. Can you live up to that quality?

There's less fluff than YouTube. Nuff said.

The website has a better aesthetic than YouTube. A much cleaner layout makes it easier on the eye.

No ads. No, really!

You can password protect your videos on Vimeo. On YouTube you can make a link private, but you can't keep the link from being spread around.

The choices are Vimeo Plus and Vimeo Pro, which gives more bells and whistles and storage availability.

As for Viddler, it's a popular alternative to YouTube and Vimeo. It is aimed more at controlling access to your corporate videos, tutorials, trainings and demonstrations. You can implement advertising, resell Viddler to clients, and customize the interaction with clients to a very large degree.

By hosting on your own website, you can create a compelling experience for your readers, and engage with the audience through timeline commenting and tagging. Viddler has positioned itself as a premium professional choice that many companies find attractive for a number of reasons.

Self-hosting your videos may be a worthy choice if you're looking for direct traffic, or increased conversions. You might also benefit from having a professional-looking page that looks a whole lot better than the ad and video-thumbnail cluttered YouTube page. You might also get some backlinks if the video is worthy of them, so traffic comes to you instead of YouTube.

However, there are a lot of reasons not to host the video exclusively on your website. Some of them are technical (limited bandwidth, file size or storage limits, formatting or converting videos) and some are perception (slow-loading, black boxes if it doesn't work correctly and varying compatibility across platforms).

Beyond that, YouTube is still the place where people search for topics and if your video is properly optimized with keywords and title, you'll find yourself with more viewers.

And what about live video? While there are a number of choices including Livestream, Ustream and Google, it's not always an easy choice. It used to be that the obvious choice is UStream, which is free. But lately the Google Hangout platform has challenged UStream. Livestream is similar and the best approach is to check them all out and work with the one that you're most comfortable with.

Chapter 8: Connecting on LinkedIn

It's been said that every single Fortune 500 Company vets candidates through LinkedIn, checking the profile of potential hires. So if you're not on LinkedIn, your career prospects are dimmer than those who are there. But the real value of LinkedIn is the effectiveness of finding people.

When it comes to making an initial connection, LinkedIn has published a list of where to find those connections:

1. Contacts in your email address book
2. Colleagues – former and current
3. Classmates – former and current
4. Group members
5. Business contacts
6. Twitter followers
7. Facebook friends
8. Email recipients, include LinkedIn in the signature
9. Friends and family
10. People you may know as suggested by LinkedIn
11. Networking contacts
12. Conference speakers and attendees
13. New prospects
14. People found using LinkedIn's search toolbar
15. Key people on company sites
16. Professional or trade association colleagues
17. Bloggers you like
18. Real life contacts
19. Chamber of Commerce associates
20. LIONS [LinkedIn Open Networkers] who agree to accept invitations

All are great ideas and you should spend time on each item as you see fit to continue to grow your network. According to Alex Pirouz in a Forbes article, the top three tips on using LinkedIn are: as a value bank, connecting with a purpose and segmenting your connections.

By offering value, instead of trying to market to someone when you connect, you are standing out from the crowd. Ask them how you can help them. Be interested in them. Ask questions. Take a few moments each day and pick up the phone and call someone.

If you connect with a purpose instead of just trying to grow the number of connections you have, you'll have a better chance of succeeding. What are your goals of connecting? Are you looking for business? Trying to get more visibility through branding? As Alex put it, he wanted to build his brand through PR, so spent a few months connecting with over 500 journalists, bloggers and editors and managed to get featured in several business magazines.

Segmenting your connections goes back to what we discussed earlier in this chapter. By taking time to tag your connections as you get them, you can easily determine how many connections you have in each industry or segment. For instance, in my 1500+ LinkedIn connections, I have people from my old days in radio to the more recent tradeshow exhibit field, to friends from different businesses and industries. By segmenting them, I can more easily reach out to those in any group.

LinkedIn is the sleepy cousin of Twitter, YouTube and Facebook when it comes to promoting your event. However, there are some definite areas in which you can use LinkedIn for event and tradeshow promotion.

There are a few caveats. First, keep up on what's happening on LinkedIn. In 2010 it was popular to use the

LinkedIn Events tool to promote events. In 2014, the tool is no longer available. LinkedIn suggests that you share links to event listings, such as those on Facebook or EventBrite, and start discussions in groups.

Groups may be the best way to promote your tradeshow appearance. First, search for a group that is specific to the tradeshow you'll be attending. Many shows create groups on LinkedIn, so by joining the group you have the ability to start and join in discussions and find out who is attending the show, along with other networking opportunities.

By browsing group members and discussions, you can connect with future attendees. If you target them specifically, you can learn much about them from through their profile. Go to the group front page, click on 'members' and you'll see a listing of group members and their connection to you, whether first or second level. Here you can easily click the 'connect' button to ask them to join your professional network.

Once you've connected, you can reach out to those select folks with a personal email through LinkedIn. In that email, keep it short and non-selling; something like this:

"Hi Paul, I see that you're a member of the Expo West group. Just wanted to let you know that our company, Best Sugar Cookies, will be exhibiting in booth #784. Lots of goodies there to sample, and we have a regular schedule of cooking demonstrations all three days of the show.

"I'm happy to give you more information if you're invited, or if you are interested in meeting with one of our management team.

"Best regards, Etc..."

This is a direct but non-threatening approach that gives them some details, but isn't an 'information dump' that is likely a big turn off. It offers a bare outline of what your company is

doing at the exhibit, and if they're intrigued enough to want to learn more, they're invited to respond.

Another way to get involved in the group is to pose a question or topic in the group discussion area. One topic that seems to get a lot of discussion is asking the question "what's new in the industry?" Another is "what booth number are you at and what are you promoting this year?" Both give an opportunity for group members to pitch in and promote their products. Depending on what you're promoting or what your show objectives are, this can be a great place to gather valuable information as all exhibitors are looking for ways to promote their new products.

If you've set up a company profile on LinkedIn, this is also a place you can insert information on events that the company appears at regularly.

As you browse your contacts, you can tag them into segments and then filter them when you're doing outreach. Naturally, if you haven't done this and you have a thousand or more contacts, it'll be time-consuming, so try and tag them as you add them.

Use LinkedIn's news stream to post links to blog posts, articles and other valuable information you want to get in front of your audience. While Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others encourage the use of photos or videos that is not currently an option when you post on LinkedIn. You can't just click 'upload photo' because that button doesn't exist today. However, since photos are eye-magnets, you can usually insert a photo when you upload a link. If it's a link to your blog, just make sure you have a photo in the post and that should become part of the post.

Continue to build your network and profile over time. Don't feel you have to do it all at once and then leave it as if it's 'done.' It's never completely done!

Whenever you send out a connection request, don't use the default "I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn." Instead, add a person's name to it and perhaps a short note as to why you'd like to connect. If possible include a comment on how they know you, or what group you have in common.

Ask for endorsements from people you actually know. Unfortunately, it's easy to click the button that allows you to endorse people when LinkedIn throws that page up at you, and while that adds to the number of endorsements, it dilutes their validity.

A heartfelt written recommendation packs a punch. Gather them up while you can, and don't be afraid to ask for more. And if you desire endorsements, be sure to reciprocate when appropriate with your endorsement of them.

Chapter 9: Goin' Mobile

The mobile platform has exploded in the past few years since the introduction of the iPhone in 2007. And to say it's been a boon to events would be to understate it just a smidge! Mobile and events go hand in hand. In fact, using social media on mobile platforms is one of the best ways to network and finally connect face-to-face at tradeshow, events and conferences.

By identifying people that are going to be at a particular event ahead of time, you can learn about them, reach out using social media or email when appropriate and even go so far as to connect via telephone before meeting in person. Let's face it; social media is the great lubricator of connections. Whether it's finding someone on Twitter, LinkedIn or Facebook, making that connection simply wouldn't have happened 15 or 20 years ago without a lot of digging and hard work.

Is it a given that going mobile is a real thing? Yes, without a doubt. And what are the biggest trends and usages of social media in the next year or two?

Think Visual.

Simply put, people love video on their phones. That's why Samsung made a bunch of money and a big impression with their large screen mobile phones. That's why iPhone is finally going to introduce a larger screen iPhone (and may have by the time you read this). That's why social media posts on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn get more views and responses with photographs than without them.

Snapchat and Instagram are huge and they're going to get bigger. Snapchat was roundly chided for turning down about a billion bucks to sell out. Instagram did sell out for about a billion. Both will continue to get bigger. Small players and big stars are having fun on Instagram. Follow a few NBA players, for example, and get a lot of behind the scenes looks you wouldn't get elsewhere. Tools like these give the average follower access which personalizes and humanizes the person behind their public persona in a way that's never before been available.

Vine – the six-second video app launched in 2013 by Twitter – is creating new stars; people who are able to create dynamic, crazy, watchable and eminently sharable 'vines' are gathering followers by the thousands, simply because they can.

Companies that want to stay viable with an ever-changing market trying to track what consumers (especially younger ones) are spending a lot of money on mobile strategies. They've got to figure out how their website looks on a mobile phone or table. They've got to understand that 7 out of 8 Smartphone shoppers use their mobile devices in stores to compare prices, check out product reviews, use coupons and more.

According to a collection of mobile social media statistics published in Forbes in 2013, SMS (text) and mobile usage is exploding. Not only is most of your competition out there trying to reach your customers on their Smartphone, but they're also working hard to come up with new ways of engagement. They're involved in everything from product development to customer service to new product and service releases and promotions. Much thought (and time and energy and money) goes into developing a social media strategy that encompasses everyone in the company, from management on down to production, marketing, sales and human resources.

Connecting at Events

It wasn't long ago that you registered for an event, showed up for a couple of workshops, drank a beer with some guy or gal that you randomly met at the event and then went home, thinking "that was kind of, well, empty."

No longer. Social media enlarges events in many ways.

You can connect with more people. You can connect via the various things you have in common. You can engage people in ways you couldn't do previously.

Register your event at Eventify.com, Facebook and Google+ to help the event become easier to find and share.

Twitter contests offering free registration can get people involved in the weeks leading up to the show.

Invite people to check-in at show venues (and at your company booth) on Foursquare. Consider putting up a prize for most check-ins over the length of the show to encourage more of them.

Tease event speakers by using videos shared on all of your social media outlets. In fact, ask attendees to vote on potential speakers. There were over 4000 people that submitted to be speakers at SXSW 2013. Online surveys helped pick the speakers and create buzz.

Ask attendees to chime in on some surveys, which help you gather valuable information on a product or service that you plan to launch at the show.

Do a TweetUp. Do people still do tweet-ups? I wonder. They seemed to be as popular as Angry Birds in 2010 but I haven't seen the word mentioned a lot lately. That doesn't mean

that you can't invite people to a gathering via Twitter or other outlets.

Use the event hashtag for all tweets and posts on Google+, Twitter and Facebook. If there isn't a hashtag, come up with one (keep it short), and promote it heavily before and during the event.

Consider using SMS or texts to gather feedback, instead of using paper and killing more trees. Add QR codes to registration badges or to steer people to gather more information or to have them participate in a survey. More on the correct use of QR Codes in a later chapter.

How about putting the main speakers at your event online? Live? For Free? UStream has that capability and you should be using it.

Post photos via any number of online repositories, including Flickr, Pinterest, Google or Facebook. Invite attendees to share and post their own photos. Ask them to put them on Twitter using the event hashtag.

Set up a Pinterest account or board focused exclusively on the show and promote it on other social media outlets as well as on-site. With everyone carrying around a HD phone and video camera with them, encourage them to upload photos/videos by making the board a group board. If you and another Pinner are following each other, you can invite them to a group board. Go the board, click 'edit' and then in the "who can pin?" section enter the first and last name of the invitee or email address and invite them. Ask followers to join the board by letting you know and then simply add them when they respond positively.

Once the event is done, gather speakers' content, photos, slide decks, downloads and more and make them available online. Compile a downloadable PDF of all of the hashtag tweets and Facebook and Google+ posts and share it.

Chapter 10:

Blogging – Your Home Base

You're so vain; you probably think your blog is about you. But it's not.

The most effective blogs are those that identify problems and offer solutions; those that listen to the wants and needs of their readers and do the best to serve those needs. Some 57% of companies have acquired a customer through their blog. Companies that blog have 55% more web traffic than those that don't blog. Hubspot reported in 2013 that companies that blog only 1-2 times a month almost double their leads.

A blog is YOUR HOME. You control the look and feel; you control what's said. Think of your company blog as a mini-town square. Ask and answer questions. Engage in conversation and debate. Try out ideas before they become products. Without a doubt, a blog is one of the most important tools at your disposal. However, making the commitment to a blog is no small thing. Know what to expect when starting a blog.

There are hundreds of books on blogging, so let's not go too deep here. That's not the point. Instead, let's focus on a few pertinent items as to why blogging is important and how to make sure you're not spinning your wheels or doing it wrong.

Why blog?

If you can't get the '*why*' right, you won't be fully committed and your blog will probably die a slow and silent death. But if you get the why right and understand the potential benefits to blogging, you're on your way. So let's look at some of the *whys*.

You create value by being who you are. There's no one else exactly like you. So don't assume that your blog will be like anyone else's blog. You have your own voice and your own way of thinking. Learn how to refine and share that voice and you'll start to attract readers (and potential clients).

Share your perspective. Chances are you'll see things differently than a lot of people in your industry, even though you'll often read the same news reports and talk to the same people as others. Still, no one has your specific life experience and your outlook on things. As time goes on (see previous paragraph), you'll gain in both voice and respect as you share your perspective.

Tell your story. Admittedly, telling your own story is only a small part of your blog (more later on what goes into your blog). But your story is unique, and parts of it may be inspiring to readers. What difficulties have you overcome? What challenges do you still face? What got you to where you are today? What would you do differently?

Contribute your knowledge. Your unique path contains knowledge combinations that no one else can lay claim to. Chances are you've learned something along the way that's worth sharing. As they say, an expert is someone who knows a little more than the next guy who is still thirsty for knowledge. Someone could be thirsty for your knowledge.

Gain visibility. If you continue to blog and share your perspective and the bits and pieces of your knowledge and story, you'll slowly gain visibility among those in your industry. This can lead to recognition, which can lead to blogging and speaking opportunities, and that can lead to increased business.

Collect useful information. The very act of writing about something forces you to learn more about it, in the interest of offering a full view of the topic. This means you're reading online, asking questions, talking to other people and keeping your

radar up for those trivial bits of information and anecdotes that can be inserted into a future blog post.

When you regularly, you get better at it. Writing often means improved writing. Depending on how you write, you can learn quickly or slow, but you will become better at it. Some of us are better editors than we are writers. But that means if we can learn how to ruthlessly edit our own writing we will become better at it. Ernest Hemingway once said he re-wrote the end of one of his famous novels 35 times. He was asked why? “Because I had to get it right.”

Platform. You own the blog, and the look and feel. It doesn't belong to anyone else. It's yours. So do with it as you please. More importantly, you control the content, whether it's exclusively you, or your company participants, or outside guest bloggers.

Networking. People will find your blog. As they do, be open to meeting them, whether online, on the phone, or in person.

Show a human face of your company. So many companies are faceless entities. Social media is changing that, and your blog should be a big part of that. Smaller and mid-sized companies have a bit of an advantage over larger companies with this.

Build community. Yes, you can do this on Google+ and Facebook, but if you use those platforms to keep driving those community members to your blog, it's quite likely that your blog will more than hold its own against those other platforms.

Challenges

Blogging has its challenges, so consider a blog carefully. It takes time and commitment. Creating content is not everyone's passion and can often be hard. Count on your blog traffic to rise slowly. And unlike other marketing efforts, there is no 'end date'

on this marketing outreach. Blogging is open-ended and can last for months or years before you really see an external benefit.

For many bloggers, conversational writing is unnatural and difficult. If you're not adept at banging out 500 words in half an hour or less and struggle to come up with more than a few ideas a month, you'll have a hard time making the blog successful. In this case it may be advised to gather a handful of writers and assign them each a regular article of a specific length every few weeks or months. This way, content shows up regularly in the blog, with several company employees having a part in it.

It can often be difficult to understand exactly who your audience is – and writing to that audience. Certainly you probably have a pretty good idea, but no doubt you'll learn more as you go forward what really makes them tick.

Blog promotion tips

Make sure you're doing all the basics to get your blog in front of as many people as possible. One easy way is to make the name of the blog memorable and searchable. For instance, if you search Google for 'tradeshowguy blog' you'll easily find my blog.

Be sure to include links to your blog from the main company website, and perhaps linking back from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and other sites you may be involved in.

Send out email reminders to clients and prospects or whoever else is on your email list when you post something new.

When exhibiting at tradeshow, make sure visitors know about the blog. You might do that by handing out postcards or having a QR Code that links directly to the blog. Put the blog URL in email signature files and on business cards.

Other ideas: ask similar blogs to exchange links. Promote the blog when you speak to groups. Submit the blog to search

engines and directories. And it doesn't hurt to send emails directly to a few people that you'd like to read the blog.

Using blogs for events

As you post on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other sites, your blog remains the main depository of information – official and anecdotal – of your appearance at the tradeshow, event or conference. Make sure all information is up-to-date, and that your blog posts can contain specific information on booth guests, new product launches at the show and contest information. Blogs are a great place for photos and video, and even the occasional podcast or two if you have that talent and minimally required recording equipment!

Chapter 11:

QR Codes at Tradeshows

What is a QR Code?

Yes, no doubt you've seen those square scannable codes on products, flyers and advertisements. But what are they really, and where did they come from?

Invented in 1994 by Toyota subsidiary Denso-Wave, the QR (Quick Response) Code has graduated from a simple two-dimensional code used to track parts in vehicle manufacturing to larger use.

More and more companies are finding ways to use them in tradeshow marketing by including codes on booth graphics and handouts, along with brochures, flyers, banner stands and business cards. One main use of the QR code is to direct the viewer to a website where they are introduced to company-related information – more than can be easily included in a brochure, banner stand or business card.

So how do you “DO” a QR Code and do it right? First, determine what you want the QR Code to do: redirect to a URL, or contain text information. Search online for ‘free QR Code’ and you’ll find dozens of sites where you can set up a code. During the process you will either link a URL to the code, or text, such as contact or product information.

Ways to Use a QR Code:

Tradeshow rugs or flooring: easy to put a graphic on a custom piece of flooring. Putting it on a rug will inspire people to pull out their smart phones and capture the QR Code to see where it leads.

Business cards: have too much information to put on your business card, like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or YouTube links? Create a Smartphone optimized landing page on your blog or website that has all of that, along with a bio, photo, or whatever else you deem appropriate.

Offer a freebie to people that scan the QR Code.

T-shirts: print your QR Code on a t-shirt and include an invitation such as “Scan me to win!” and wear it proudly while people stop to scan you!

Marketing materials: You can insert a QR Code in virtually any piece of marketing. The trick is to offer an incentive to scan: free download, limited-time product discount, exclusive offer, etc.

Direct people to a ‘secret’ site where visitors can find such things as streaming video of the show, a virtual tradeshow website, special offers, photos, and more. Make sure your site is optimized for viewing on a Smartphone.

A few more ideas: business advertising, clues for a treasure hunt, an artist manifesto, link to a non-profit’s donation page, and a bunch more on this cool collection of QR

Sponsor marketing: link a booth map or other pertinent information

Individual products or services could each have their own QR Code and unique landing page with information specific to that product.

Pre-show marketing: send out mailers with a QR Code. Once scanned the URL directs the visitor to a landing page where they

enter personal interests and information, create their own individual QR Code which they then bring back to the booth. A staff member then scans the code and the visitor is directed to a specific individual for a special demo or other personal attention.

Networking: event organizers can put together a program where the attendees are encouraged to scan all the QR Codes in site. The people who rack up the most scans take home some cool swag.

As a speaker at an event: put a large QR Code on your last slide and encourage people to sign up for your newsletter, download the presentation or grab other freebies.

Hand out QR Codes to attendees and tell them that one other person at the networking event has an identical QR Code. Their job is to find their match.

Offer other downloads such as brochures or longer-form items instead of handing out papers.

Scanning and Presentation Tips

A QR Code is not always the easiest thing in the world to scan. Different smart phone apps approach QR Codes in different ways. For some, it's an easy matter – for others, it's more difficult to capture the code and decipher it.

If you're scanning at an angle, such as trying to scan a QR Code that's up high, it's going to be more difficult than one that's right in front of you. Trying to scan a large floor QR Code will present the same type of problem – if it's too big it's going to be at an angle and the phone app will have a harder time capturing the code.

If you want the QR Code to function the way it should – give pertinent information to the person who scans it – make sure that it's easily accessible and scannable:

Put the QR Code in an easily accessible location: a code approximately 12” x 12” at eye level works great.

Include a Call to Action

Spell out the specific benefit of scanning next to the code, such as “Scan me to Win,” “Scan to subscribe to our newsletter” or “Download info on our new product” so it lets people know exactly what to expect when they spend the time to scan the code.

Optimize the web landing for viewing on a Smartphone: remember that QR Codes are going to be scanned by someone with a smart phone. If the landing page is not optimized for viewing on a smart phone, your QR Code just failed the ‘ease of use’ test. If you have a WordPress blog, it’s easy to install a plug-in that displays the entire site optimized for a smart phone. If not, check with your Webmaster about getting a page optimized for smart phones.

TEST everything BEFORE the show: double and triple-check that everything works as it should and looks right as it will be most likely be seen by your end user – the person who’s scanning the QR Code.

Don’t assume everyone has a QR Code reader on his or her smart phone. Give directions on how to download the app or post website URL’s for those that don’t have a one.

Don’t include large graphics or flash videos on your landing page.

Set up your landing page so that you can track metrics/analytics. For instance, a Wordpress blog with plug-in Google analytics will let you track and optimize your campaign or promotion.

Finally, remember that not everyone cares to scan a QR Code. Give them an alternative to accessing the information available at the end of the scan and let them know another easy way to reach the information.

Chapter 12: (Almost) Everything Else

To say that Pinterest, Instagram, Google+, SnapChat, Vine and other growing social media outlets would be miffed by being included in a chapter entitled ‘the remainder...’ is probably a bit of an understatement. Perhaps in the revised version those entities will earn an entire chapter each!

Instagram sold for a billion bucks to Facebook in early 2012. Even though some wags jokingly refer to Instagram as ‘that company that makes crappy pictures look cool by simply applying a filter’ it still is worth taking a look at for branding and interacting with customers and potential clients..

So how do you use Instagram for business? First, be aware that Instagram would love you to use their platform for business and have created a blog that focuses on that topic: **business.instagram.com/blog**. Next, after you’ve committed to Instagram, let all of your followers on other networks know about you. Reconnect your Facebook account to Twitter so photos and videos are shared on more than a single platform.

Post photos that are relevant to your brand, and build followers by posting photos that are a balance of fun and business-related. And be sure to follow back anyone who follows you. Since Facebook owns Instagram, you can set up a photo contest on Instagram and promote it through your Facebook page.

Beyond that, keep it smart and simple: use hashtags regularly, optimize your profile, promote the business on both Instagram and Facebook, reward followers with discount codes

and coupons and find the people in your company that are great at thinking visually – and urge them to share photos on the account. When it comes to videos, make sure you have your Instagram app pulled up at those vivid moments: tradeshow, product unveilings, company parties, interactions with customers and others.

Finally, have FUN. Running a business isn't a walk in the park, but by sharing fun moments, you unveil the human aspect of your business and let those followers under the veil just a bit more. Work to humanize your company – it'll pay off.

Pinterest has exploded since its inception to become one of the top visual social media platforms. From 5000 users in August 2010, Pinterest has grown to nearly 100 million worldwide at the close of 2013. Pinterest is a personalized media platform which allows users to organize, upload and share photographs, videos and gifs – known as 'pins' – by pinning them to themed boards.

Pinterest would seem to be a natural fit for promoting and engaging in events, tradeshow and conferences. You can create a board specifically for a single show, or even for a single booth. That board then becomes the focal point for all things visual, whether it's a product demo, a visitor testimonial (video), a special or famous guest, booth staffers, cool tech or whatever.

Pinterest offers as much flexibility of any of the 'newer' social media platforms, if not more. You can post videos from your blog, YouTube or Vimeo. You can 'pin' a photo from your blog, a news article on any site, or upload a photo from your hard drive. Add tags and comments as you wish. Plus the images are easy to like or share with a simple click.

While overtly promoting yourself on a blog or social media platform is generally seen as tactless, if you have good visuals of a product that your company created, get 'em out there with little comment. The visuals will do a great job of promotion without you having to say a thing, other than 'here's Phyllis and

Jeremy at XYZ show in March 2014!’ Post photos that are big and bold, have a great saying or quote, or communicate a message simply.

SnapChat turned down a billion dollar offer from Google in 2013, and the blogosphere seemed to collectively agree that Stanford University students Evan Spiegel and Robert Murphy were pretty nuts to decline the offer. Probably more like crazy like a fox.

SnapChat is a photo-messaging app that allows users to share photos, videos and drawings with friends. The catch is that there is a limited viewing time – less than ten seconds! At that point the photo disappears and is also deleted from SnapChat’s servers. This, of course, is the exact opposite of all other social media applications, which archive everything. Forever. This may be where the appeal for the app lies.

If your target audience is between 13 and 25, you may find some good uses for SnapChat, since that demographic seems to be the biggest users of the app. Businesses are experimenting with engaging with followers by offering coupons, contests, giveaways and other ideas. Others are using SnapChat to take followers behind the scenes, such as backstage at a concert, or warm-ups to a pro football game. SnapChat is also a great way to tease a product to build buzz. If you have a product that lends itself to demos at tradeshow, consider using SnapChat to share some of the steps of the demo with followers. The younger audience is often fickle (well, more fickle than the rest of us!), so if you can cleverly engage them with their favorite apps, you can help push them into action with a coupon, teaser or other enticement.

Vine was introduced by Twitter in February 2013 and immediately became a sensation. It allows users to film six-and-a-half-second videos and upload and share them via Vine, as well as other social media outlets. You’re thinking the same thing I did:

6.5 seconds? What can you do with six seconds? Apparently, a lot. Some users have taken that creative challenge to heart and crank out dozens, of not hundreds, of 6-second 'vines' (as they're called) and get hundreds of thousands of views. They're goofy, fun, creative and illuminating. And if you can figure out the challenge of putting a worthwhile message into a six-second video, you can certainly find ways to use this app. Not to be outdone, within a few months, Instagram announced an upgrade that allowed users to create a 15-second video.

I love Social Media Examiner's recent list of ways to use Vine for business:

1. Engage your followers in a conversation by asking them to share what they're doing with your product
2. Highlight your brand advocates by letting customers submit videos
3. Display work for a client with video instead of a static portfolio
4. Offer up relevant historical trivia
5. Celebrate the holidays with a cute and clever video
6. Get people excited about a new product
7. Take people inside your office
8. Attract customers to your booth at a conference or tradeshow
9. Educate and amaze
10. Bring people inside your store
11. Tell your brand's story
12. Promote a contest
13. Bring presentations to life
14. Show off your products
15. Give fans what they want, such as a view from inside a football stadium
16. Randomly amuse your audience

With just 6.5 seconds, you've got to let those creative juices flow. But don't worry if you don't hit a home run with each one. Just try again in a few minutes.

Google+ in late 2012 and early 2013, Google+ was still a slumbering giant. Heading into 2014 and beyond, Google+ is reaching a tipping point that will put them into the top two or three social media networks. Businesses are jumping on board, influential bloggers and other prominent figures have been on since early on, and they're continuing to gather large followings and increased influence.

The tools available to Google+ users include Google Hangouts (video chats with one or many) and Google Communities (where you can start a community on virtually any topic). Google+ also offers free hard-drive space for documents and photos, free recording of hangouts for sharing on YouTube. During a hangout, if you want to bring someone in via telephone, it's a click away. Hashtags are also supported on Google+. In fact, try putting your favorite hashtag into the main Google search page and see what comes up. If you create your own hashtag and include it with every tweet, Google+ post and Facebook post, those items are now searchable on Google.

You can share content from any of your Google properties to your Google+ page. You can use Google Author to push out blog posts. Set up an RSS feed of your Google+ posts using Yahoo pipes. Circlecourt offers Google+ statistics that helps you analyze and use Google+ in more effective ways. Hootsuite now allows you to add a Google+ page to manage posts from there. Add a Google+ widget to your blog or website using WidgetsPlus. Also check out other apps for Google+ from AllMyPlus.com, SimplyMeasured.com, PlusClout.com, FindPeopleOnPlus.com and RecommendedUsers.com.

And since Google is the world's largest search engine, all of the tools added together can give you a bigger presence when people are searching for your content. It'll show up higher in searches and it'll be easier to find and connect to your profile because of your content. All of which adds to the evidence that you really, really, really should be on Google+!

In short, Google is trying to take over the social networking world, and if they keep offering free, effective tools they may eventually succeed.

Chapter 13: Dos and Don'ts

Do: listen carefully, respond quickly, share good information, be a resource, take a stand.

Don't: be inappropriate, disrespectful, self-centered, childish.

Do: be aware of the metrics.

Don't: get bogged down in the metrics!

Do: Google yourself regularly to see what comes up

Don't: Get fired by posting something idiotic.

Do: Watch what you tweet.

Don't: forget those Facebook privacy settings

Do: Make networking one of your main reasons for continuing to engage in social media.

Don't: spend all of your social media time sharing cat videos and food photos.

Do: Give

Don't: be a Taker

Do: be thoughtful about your engagement

Don't: spend time online on your boss's dime.

Do: organize your contacts into categories if you can

Don't: upload anything you wouldn't mind your mother seeing!

Do: ask to connect to people in your circles.

Don't: just blindly accept any friend or connection request.

Do: Add value

Don't: take shortcuts

Do: give credit

Don't: Steal images

Do: Be authentic

Don't: let your social media automation run wild

Do: test, re-test and confirm before launching a big plan

Don't: Assume everything will work the first time with that big creative launch.

Do: Learn about your audience by asking questions

Don't: think you know everything about them or your community

Do: think about that audience when you release new content

Don't: assume that all content is going to mean the same to your audience on different platforms.

Do: take advantage of your best branding opportunity: your employees

Don't: Assume that your employees will engage properly on behalf of the company unless you set some guidelines

Do: Keep calm in a crisis by having a plan

Don't: Ignore the crisis thinking it will go away

Do: have a plan for your interaction

Don't: just throw content out there willy-nilly and think that's the way to interact

Do: listen intently to what's being said about your brand and products

Don't: delete or try and stop negative comments on your blog

Do: think before you click

Don't: forget it's impossible to take things back once they're out there in cyberspace

Do: recognize there are lots of opportunities to get your brand out there on many different platforms.

Don't: sign up for a new platform unless you are committed to using that platform on a regular basis

Do: be human – share snapshots and personal notes with followers

Don't: remain nameless and faceless

Do: create measurable goals

Don't: try and sell people; instead show them what you do

Do: be engaging – communicate regularly with your network

Don't: spam social sites

Add your own:

Do: _____

Don't: _____

Chapter 14: Congratulations, You're at the Beginning

So you're now off the ground! You've taken a solo flight; you've left the hanger for good – no going back now! Social media is the ultimate connectivity exploration and ongoing experiment. Keep reaching out. Keep connecting and sharing. It won't be long before you'll be telling people how to do it.

If you've read this far – thank you! I hope you got something out of this book on using social media for connecting and promoting your business on social media.

Here are some things you might keep in mind.

First, the landscape for social media changes rapidly. There's no way everyone can keep up with all of those rapid change.. Chances are your competition in the same boat as you: figuring out how best to use their available skills, knowledge and manpower to tackle this new digital world. Those few that leap out ahead and are on every platform are just that – the few. Most companies will find a handful of suitable platforms and work those until they know how they can best utilize them to connect with their specific audience.

Second, the more things change, the more things stay the same. Trade shows, events and conferences continue to thrive because people like to connect face-to-face. Social media just helps foster that desire in a fantastical, almost futuristic way. In fact, if you imagine yourself living in the future – if only a short distance into the future – it's easier to picture yourself diving headlong into many of these new tools without the hesitation and trepidation that lots of people feel.

The future may be a slightly different landscape, but if you think about how far we've come in the past ten years, and then project another ten years into the future, it's not hard to see how fast we'll continue to progress. A decade ago there was no podcasting, no blogs, no Facebook (except for a young college-only version just a few weeks old), no Smartphones with Internet access, no handy carry-along GPS, no Twitter, no Instagram, and no Foursquare. Yet we were an incredibly connected society. Mobile phones were common. The Internet was no longer new. There was talk of the new 'web 2.0,' whatever that might mean.

So here we are in a continuing digital revolution. As individuals, we have to adapt or be left behind. Without going too deep into statistics, it's safe to say that more people than not are connected via the Internet, smart phones and social media. You no longer hear the term 'web 2.0' although you can hear things like 'marketing 3.0' (whatever that means!).

If you have managed to read this far, I might ask: Why? Why are you so interested in what's happening with digital media, and connecting with people via social media? Why are you so invested in creating great experiences with your event or tradeshow appearance that you'll read a book such as this? I'll wager you are doing your best to soak up the various bits and pieces of social media event marketing – the how and why, the where and when, the who and what.

So here's my challenge: take what you've learned here and put it into action. Use it as a springboard to trying new things. Don't worry about making a wrong move, because we all do at one time or another. Work on tracking your tribe and responding in real time when questions, comments and concerns come up. Be out in front as much as your time, energy and resources allow you. Remember that your colleagues and competitors are working as much as you to make this digital revolution work in their favor, and they're bound to make mistakes as frequently as the rest of us.

Keep your mind open to all possibilities. Bounce ideas off of colleagues. Try new things. Adapt successful ideas to your company and products.

Let the work – and fun – begin!

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