Social Media Blueprint

Build Your Million Dollar Internet Presence

This eBook teaches you the HOW, WHAT and WHEN
so that they never forget YOU!

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Why Build a Personal Brand?

The term "personal branding" is often over used and certainly over diluted but the fact remains that you need to know how to present yourself so that your customers never forget you. If you are not doing something to help them remember you forever and grow your business every single week, you are doing something wrong. So back to the original question; why build a personal brand? There are lots of answers, actually, depending on you, your needs and the way the world has shaped you. But for purposes of a direct answer let's consider

"Branding is the hottest concept in marketing today, and it's an idea that is not just for the deep-pocketed, highly glossed Coca-Colas and Nikes of the world. An increasing number of independent-business owners are embracing branding as the guiding philosophy for building their companies." Nation's Business

that you want to stand out so that your business, product or service gets noticed. You may have an offline business but need to transfer your real world reputation into the online marketplace. A strong personal brand is a mix of reputation, trust, attention, and execution. You might want to build a brand around being helpful or being a creative thinker or being a dealmaker or simply follow your passion and create a business around that. A personal brand gives you the ability to stand out in a sea of similar products. The intent is to market you as something different than the rest of the pack. Do you stand out from the herd or do you blend in?

Standing Out From the Herd

We all know there is safety in herds and if you are on the wild plains, blending in is a pretty smart way to stay safe. In the wilds of business online, though, blending in is not so smart; in fact it is a good bet you will eventually disappear if you are blending in.

So how do you stand out with your online business? It's all about building your brand. Once you have a brand, using it everywhere is the simplest part.

Think of branding like this. Let's say you get a phone call from a potential blind date that a mutual friend is trying to set up. The topic of looks pops up and maybe the question is asked "What do you look like?"

Describing oneself can be hard and uncomfortable for many so a simple, "I will text or email you a picture of myself" solves the problem. If that person is favorably impressed with your "visual" the conversation will continue and most likely, a date will be set to meet

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Sending a visual image of yourself and is the same as a brand. Humans are visual creatures and form opinions quickly out of self-preservation. If that person is someone you would like as a customer, it's smart to present your brand up front, saying all the important things they should know about your company. Don't leave it up to your competition to say nice things about you…say them yourself!

Branding goes a little deeper than a simple introduction. It's about presenting the right information in a visual way. In an online business, every first impression is visual, so don't leave this to chance. Branding is a way of saying you're professional and worthy of trust. It lets you convey subliminal information such as using color to announce, "I'm expensive, but worth it," or "My prices are cheap."

Let's take Holiday Inn, as an example. In the 70s and 80s, the hotel chain found most of the guests were families travelling on vacations or short trips over holidays. One of the reasons for this was the message they communicated with their marketing. They made strong use of a deep orange, which happens to be what is known as a declassifying color. It communicates "cheap" and "discount"; two factors which were important to traveling families. While this wasn't a bad market, it wasn't enough to build upon. They desired expansion into the business sector; businessmen who travelled and had short stays. They had deeper pockets; were generally low maintenance and often consumed their meals and alcohol in the hotel's restaurant.

The Holiday Inn marketing staff decided to take some very basic steps to remedy their public image. They began by changing their highly-recognized logo; not in design but in color. The orange lettering was changed to a deep green, but to not lose the families entirely, they left the asterisk which dotted their "i" in the former orange. They also changed out branding tools inside the properties; dark green carpets, reception counters, bedspreads and of course the logo on all the soap bars, napkins, menus, etc. What was the result? Business guests skyrocketed. Their move was successful and achieved the exact blend they hoped.

It's more or less the concept of attaching a unique word to an expectation; in this case the colors of Holiday Inn. Consumers will believe what you tell them to believe. If your image says "I'm everyone's friend and stop by for a cup of coffee," they will take you at that message. You will not be the first one they call when they need to make a high-pressure, sophisticated deal. They may, however, call you when their mom is looking to downsize to a cottage. Ask yourself how you want to be perceived. Do you want to be the best? Then walk with winners.

Or, take, for example, Campbell's Soup. They offer dozens of flavors and some have been introduced and promptly dropped when the public didn't buy. You don't identify Campbell's Chicken Noodle with the CEO of Campbell's, or the city where it's made. These are non-issues. You identify Campbell's with the decades of shelf presence, the fact that your mother or grandmother served it to you and those hundreds of commercials that showed feel-good scenes where Mother brought a steaming bowl with a smile and a thick grilled-cheese sandwich. Comfort.

What do people think of when they hear your company name? If the Holiday Inn story and the original Mr. Campbell teach you anything, it's that a brand need not reflect the personal lifestyle of the company CEO. Don't be afraid to take your company "public" or to be your own spokesman. Holiday Inn's entire business face could be changed by the strength of their brand.

So how do you begin marketing a brand? **The first key is consistency.**

Mixed messages is an unproductive mode of communication and in branding, it is very destructive. The brand is weakened when there is inconsistency.

Brands are relatively timeless. The Campbell's soup logo has stayed consistent throughout the years; only the images portrayed on their cans in the background have gently updated.

Our lesson here is to develop your brand image and carry it through. In online business, the image should remain consistent and tell your customers exactly who you are. Spend some time learning about the theory of color and consult with a graphics professional who can teach you how to wisely coordinate your "look." This isn't about flattery, it's about the message.

Choosing Your Brand Colors - The Theory of Color

Science has learned that colors can generate specific responses. This is much more than having a 'favorite color.' It's an instinctive response.

Business has applied these expected responses to promote their products. They use them in branding; in their signs, product packaging, stationery, print advertising, websites, employee uniforms, transportation, buildings, interior design and more. The responses are so predictable that not only can business plant a brand in their customers' minds, but they can actually 'hunt' for specific consumers.

Dark green is commonly used in banks, insurance companies, jewelry stores and investment companies. Its suggestion of money, prosperity, safety and success makes their customers feel prosperous and secure. In the meantime, customers probably believed the dark green in the jewelry cases simply made the diamonds and gold stand out.

By contrast, airlines and hospitals do not use any shade of light green in their decors. That color suggests nausea.

Light blues are passive and peaceful, suggesting stability and good health. Blue is linked to consciousness and intellect. Use blue to suggest precision when promoting high-tech products. Navy blue, on the other hand is the color of authority (think uniform). Do you wish to appear authoritative? Certain brands will demand an authoritative look.

Red suggests excitement and action, but that can also mean battle, blood and war so use this with caution. Purple is the royal color and should be used with constraint and only with certain businesses. You don't want to communicate superiority except in certain occasions.

Orange combines the energy of red and the happiness of yellow. It is associated with joy, sunshine, and the tropics. Orange represents enthusiasm, fascination, happiness, creativity, determination, attraction, success, encouragement, and stimulation. Orange increases oxygen supply to the brain, produces an invigorating effect, and stimulates mental activity.

Yellow is the color of the sun and light. It's open and cheery and while it says good health, you will find it seldom appeals to men, particularly in business.

Black can be the color of death, but also of supreme authority. The only people who should wear black are CEOs, religious figures and the local funeral director.

The theory of color is a science unto itself and is well worth a half hour study before designing your brand.

What color is your website?

Are You Up for a Personal Brand?

When it comes time to develop a brand, you will need to consider whether it should be based on your company, or on yourself. Here are some questions whose answers should help you decide.

Does the brand represent the company, independent of me, or am I the basis for the company?

Do I have more than one company or major product and will that confuse the brand? (For example, do I sell dog food at one site and vitamins at another?)

Am I a very public spokesman for the brand? (Will you feature yourself in videos, product literature, etc.?)

> *"Even individuals need to develop a brand for themselves ….
> Whatever your area of expertise, you can take steps to make people think of YOU when they think of your field."*
> Accelepoint Webzine

Am I building a company that I hope to someday sell and is it critical that I remain affiliated with the business for it to maintain that brand? (Colonel Sanders was a spokesman for Kentucky Fried Chicken for many years after selling it to John Y. Brown. He was definitely part of the brand. Can you picture him hawking designer shoes in his white suit? Likewise, could you picture Calvin Klein dishing up fried chicken?)

Will my personal reputation harm the brand in any way, and likewise, am I willing to be a public persona with all the lack of privacy that could entail?

Now, when you ARE the brand, such as selling your services as a consultant or educator, you have no choice. You must build yourself as the brand. But even that can be adjusted eventually; consider Lynda.com who began with making a few video tutorials and now is one of the largest online learning sites for technical people. She has hundreds of experts who prepare videos in her studio to maintain consistency of presentation. Her name, her brand, but the brand of quality superseded her own personal reputation.

Build It and They Will Come?

This statement definitely does not hold true in the online marketplace. You are just a byte in the electronic stream. There are millions of websites out there and how will you stand out among them? Remember the old conundrum that asked, "If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a noise?" Of course it does! The "noise" is defined by sound vibrations, regardless of whether anyone is processing those vibrations with their hearing. But in the case of the Internet, building a website is just so many bits of information and unless someone calls it up by typing in your URL, the site does not exist because it is never called onto the Internet stage.

That's where marketing your site comes in and social marketing is the hottest trend today. It is based on relationships with your customers, but on a very large scale. It works only when you do it correctly and consistently.

Here are some of the rules:

Again, be consistent. Don't read this book, get all motivated and send out a dozen Tweets today, tomorrow but peter out so that by next week you've forgotten all about it. Determine a sustainable commitment of time and remember that the more successful your marketing makes you, the less time you will have to continue it.

Listen. Selling yourself is a one-way conversation and really quite boring. Think of this as a customer walking into your offline store and before they can ask a question, you shove the

nearest product into their hands and send them toward the cashier. What makes you think that's what they want? Did you ask? Or did you just tell them? Interact with them to determine what they're looking for, whether your product or service fits or whether the best service you can give them is to direct them to your competition. You may lose this sale, but the goodwill and respect for your knowledge can gain a long-term customer down the road. Besides, if you're not offering the product or service the consumer is buying, wouldn't you like to know it?

Know your product or service thoroughly. Which of the following has the greater value to a customer: a) You should buy the ABC television because I'm offering it at a sale price or b) You should buy the ABC television because it will allow you to plug your computer in through the HDMI access and stream any available content from the Internet directly through the TV's monitor. This will save you buying a separate monitor and let you relax on the sofa while surfing or watching Netflix. This second reason is certainly more compelling because your customer sees multiple applications for the investment and your pricing is probably already very competitive so it's worth checking out. People know all about price, but they don't all know whether you can use a particular television as a monitor, so they need to rely on someone's expertise and this is where you come in.

Stay current with information. The Internet is all about information and if you surfed 24/7/365 you could not keep up with all that is published. So, as an expert, take it upon yourself to filter through the important information that pertains to your product or service and share this information with your social customers. They trust you, they trust your product, they buy your product – see where this goes?

Keep it pertinent. If you're tweeting under your business brand, customers don't care whether you had a date last night or whether your football team won. People only care about what they want or are interested in. They're reading your posts because *they're* getting something from it, not you.

Be authentic. This also means authenticity in your brand. If you're selling website design and you're 50-something, don't try to morph yourself into what you aren't just to please someone or try to hide who you are. People will pick up on it and nothing you say will "ring true." If you're 50-something, then use that as a selling point for your brand. Call yourself "Webmother" or use a tag phrase like "Site design with a mother's touch." Play it up! Be who you really are. After all, that's what separates you from the corporate faces and others who may be in your same situation will IDENTIFY with you building more trust within your relationship.

Give them something to remember. If a customer clicks through to your site, make sure you have enough content and value there that they come back. If your bounce rate is the highest number in your web stats, you are doing something wrong. This is about creating community and it is pretty hard to do that when everyone leaves as soon as they hit the

door.

Lead them by the hand. If you invited them to take a look at the televisions you're selling, when they arrive at the site, the first thing they should see is the image, the price and the buy button. Imagine reading a catalog where you had to sift through pages of product description before you were permitted to see what the item looked like or how much it cost. Consider having tailored landing pages. If price is your competitive edge, build one that puts the price out there in huge numbers above the fold. If you are hawking your guarantee, build another landing page for the same product that has a neon seal with your guarantee right at the top of the page. People expect a link to connect related content; they don't like to follow a link only to discover they've been dragged in under false pretenses. They'll leave. Wouldn't you?

Build that relationship. Pretend that you are living across the street from every customer you meet. Be accountable, be consistent, be honest and be helpful.

Monetize Your Traffic

Once you have begun to attract potential customers, you will need to find ways to monetize that traffic. Here are some options:

Advertising.   When you have significant traffic, there's no problem in attracting quality advertisers whose products are relevant to your topic. Remember, when a customer is interested in model trains and the advertising on your site is for model building kits, the customer views this not as advertising, but additional content they may be interested in. Be sure the advertising is relevant. Otherwise it's a distraction.

Speaking Engagements. Become the expert in your field. Your knowledge is a valuable commodity to others who want to learn about it. If seminars and personal appearances aren't your strong suit, develop an online learning environment where you teach via video, written tutorials and workbooks, e-learning courses or even personal counseling via Skype. Put a price on what you know.

Affiliate Programs. Become an affiliate for related products. Visit Commission Junction, Click Bank, Amazon or any number of a million or more available affiliate programs.

Retail.   Do you have a product to sell? If you don't manufacture one directly, become a middleman. Find a manufacturer of a product you think you could sell, and set up a relationship with them. In the offline world this is called being a manufacturer's representative. In the online world, it's called being an affiliate for a manufacturer.

Digital Products. If you know a lot on a topic, write an ebook or mBook™ about it. eBooks are outselling hardcover books and the great thing is this gives you entry into the world of publishing and book buyers. All the big chains have eReaders they supply and as the world

moves away from paper, you want to be one of the existing big names in the electronic library. The same opportunities are building in online broadcasting of radio and television. This is no longer the rich man's playground. You can create a podcast with your computer's built-in microphone and camera. It's all about the content.

Consulting. Someone out there will pay to know what you know. Teach it! Show them how to apply all that you have learned to their own business.

GETTING STARTED

Build Your Home Base – Your Website

While the mechanics of building a website could occupy several books, it's not a bad idea to use the simplest solution for the fastest results. Wordpress is one such source. If you can read, you can build a Wordpress site. It requires no special software and can be built entirely using only your favorite browser. Visit www.wordpress.org to see tutorials, read forums, get free templates and learn how to install Wordpress on your server. In some cases, your hosting company provides this opportunity with a single button click in the administration panel. The best thing is, Wordpress is free! Not only that but it has a *huge* community of people waiting to help you, share their sites and develop new widgets which they love to share with others. It's a wonderful community unto itself.

Search engines, like Google, love Wordpress because those sites are always content rich and topical. Wordpress sites are generally always very simple to index by the engines, making it easy for them to include all your content without running into mystery walls like Flash files. Wordpress sites are automated for notifying all the search engines every time new content is uploaded. This helps in building backlinks to your site and gives you better search engine position. This is known as SEO, or search engine optimization.

Remember all that talk about color branding? Wordpress has something for everyone. There are hundreds of free themed templates available through Wordpress.org and other sites, often as an incentive to purchase some of the more sophisticated paid versions. You can search your color scheme, theme, layout requirements and favorite designer and upload it to your Wordpress site with a single key click. The great thing is that your content stays consistent; you just change the "window dressing" – making your site visually fresh and inviting.

Keep up those posts. Wordpress is adored by search engines because of the constantly freshened content, but you will lie ignored if you never add more. People who visit your site will come again if they feel there is something new to be gained in doing so.

Posts (Blog Content)

Content that is presented as latest entry first, organized into archives automatically. This is the "blog" format, but businesses can use this to present latest news or product updates.

Pages (Static Content)

Pages allow you to manage non-blog content easily, so for example you could have a static "About" page that you manage through WordPress.

Plugins

There are literally **hundreds of plugins** that extend what WordPress does, so the actual functionality is nearly limitless.

Widgets

Blocks of content and mini interactive features that can be placed on the sides or bottom of your template. See the right column of our site for examples.

Comments

Visitors to your site can leave comments on individual entries, and through Trackback or Pingback can comment on their own site. You can enable or disable comments on a per-post basis.

Spam protection

Out of the box WordPress comes with very robust tools such as an integrated blacklist and open proxy checker to manage and eliminate comment spam on your blog, and there is also a rich array of plugins that can take this functionality a step further.

The Landing Page

There is no more important location in Internet marketing. This is where you will direct the focus of advertising, press releases, word-of-mouth, backlinks and whatever other marketing tools you will employ. For this reason, the page must be very powerful. It is essentially a one-man sales force.

We've covered some of the subliminal persuasions of the color wheel. This is where you will begin applying your decisions. Another consideration is the font you choose. Due to the limitations of browsers, you will be restricted to a small set of font choices. There are always the options of forcing your visitor to download and use an embedded font, but this is a really bad idea. You could choose to create much of your content in Photoshop and then display it as a graphic, but

this will slow your page loading and should be used sparingly. The best option is to work with the standard set of web fonts and insert graphics for logos or product names only.

In print media, Times Roman is the most readable font. Its serifs pull the eye comfortably along the line, is well-spaced and compact. Naturally there are medium and bold versions and it hosts an all caps presentation well.

On the computer monitor, however, Helvetica is the best choice (each of these choices are part of a font classification and your system may substitute; Arial for Helvetica, for example.) Helvetica is very clean, sans serif, sparse and italicizes well. While it may not be as warm as Times Roman, it is very recognizable and that alone makes it attractive to use. It also comes in a bold and italic version.

The Courier set is a fixed-space/width option and suggests formal business communication. It is the font most often displayed on office typewriters. Fixed-space/width fonts mean that the character "l" occupies the same width and space before and after as the character "m." This one displays well in all caps as well.

Comic Sans is one of the family of script fonts. These should be seldom used unless your product is a comic book, children's title or you absolutely want to suggest playful, humorous, home-spun or amateur image. Never use a script face in all caps as it is totally unreadable.

Here are some "don'ts" when it comes to font selections and typographics on your web page:

Avoid using all caps, except in headlines. They are impossible to read in script and you cannot always guarantee what your visitor's browser will translate a font to. All caps are hard to read and absorb and this may interrupt their viewing. It's better to use a contrasting color in a slightly larger, bold face.

Be careful when mixing fonts. You could use, for example, Helvetica in the body text and Times Roman for the picture cutlines, but stop there. Using too many fonts screams amateur.

Balance your color with type size. If you have selected a dark gray instead of black text, go up a point size. It's easier on the eyes.

Use external CSS to cut down on code clutter, keep your pages consistent, fine-tune typographical control and add interest to your pages.
Never run a sentence across the entire breadth of a site. The human eye cannot follow a single line that far without becoming strained and your visitor clicks away in frustration.

Avoid heavy borders on tables and to frame graphics. Instead, choose white space as a matte. It gives the eye resting places and light. Remember that your visitor *is* reading color over a lightbulb and when you make the background a dark solid, you have cut down the light source.

Dark backgrounds are only appropriate in high-tech sites like gaming or in a gallery presentation of art.

Unless you are trying to mimic a newspaper format, avoid justification of the text. This can cause excessive hyphenation that interrupts the flow for the eye.

Avoid flashing graphics and moving banners unless that's all you want your visitor to see. It creates a sense of havoc and your visitor will be unable to concentrate on your content.

While these are general descriptions, you will need to explore the best presentation and uses. It's always a good idea to use split-testing methods to determine the finer responses to variations on the theme. With split-testing, you will create duplicates of your landing page, changing only one component, such as font, type-size or color, from one version to the next. Direct your web traffic to each of these variations in a balanced method and then use conventional traffic analyzers to determine which worked best to achieve your goal.

Page design is important to building customers. Some of the solutions may be very obvious. For example, if your visitors coming to your site are expecting to read news, such as converts from newspaper subscribers, you will want to reproduce the narrow-column format their favorite papers would have used. You will also note that these columns should be justified, not ragged right. Using a black and white format with very little accent color will help with reader familiarity. This makes your visitor immediately comfortable.

Is your page too busy? Have you placed too much Flash, too many graphics or are you still using animated gifs hoping to draw your visitor's attention? You may suppose these have subliminal messages that prompt the visitor, when in fact, they can create chaos. The visitor is confronted with what amounts to several neon signs in close confine and the impulse is to turn away. Remember that while many of your visitors may be on netbooks or laptops, still others are working with 24" or larger flat screens. That is a lot of visual square inch impact.

The top half of your landing page is the highest value real estate. It is what visitors will first see when they land on your site. Don't give this away to a Flash intro, unless your Flash is the entire core of the site. Keep in mind that good SEO practices demand that you make good use of text links and keywords in the first 200 words of the page. You don't want to bog this code down with javascripting, PDFs or Flash. Search engines cannot spider these effectively and your site will drop in page rank accordingly.

Use care when composing your copy. Some words will do the work for you; "**learn** from home", "**save** today", "**discover** what the competition is doing." These are movement words and people are trained to act in response. You will have about six seconds to grab your visitor's attention and keep them engaged so be sure this area of your site is a direct reflection of what the visitor expects to find. If they are visiting via an AdWords or other PPC campaign, they expect to see the keywords they used prominently displayed within that six second's worth of reading.

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Keep your landing page clean of interfering messages. Use a single call to action that discourages them clicking away to another page. For example, if your product bears further explanation or you want to give the visitor general information, such as an FAQ, expanded contact info, general industry facts, etc., move these to secondary pages and connect them using text links. The search engines will spider those and present them as individual pages, but you won't draw attention to them and lose your visitor as you're moving them to the point of action.

Just as a good story has a beginning, middle and end, the landing page must tell the full story. The call to action, of course, is where you motivate them to commit to whatever you are "selling." We have all heard stories since we were small children and the copy you present should be well-written and free of spelling and punctuation errors. Use a "voice" that your visitor will identify with. Only use graphics that augment your persuasive argument, not just as random decoration. Graphics can slow down page loading and that, in and of itself, is a negative subliminal message. Whatever images you choose to use, be sure they are high quality. Using free clip art imparts "start-up" and "suspicious" to your visitor and you will lose them. If you don't have the software or graphic skills to produce top-flight art, hire someone to do it for you. Vector-based art is best for line drawings and type; pixel-based art, such as produced with Photoshop, is best for photos.

Avoid These

The following are considered interruptive and as such, should be avoided. You want your visitor to be fully engaged and not frustrated or they will click away.

- Flashing ads and banners
- Pop-ups
- Automatically triggered Flash or Quicktime Video
- Automatic music
- Misspelled words
- Neon
- Poor quality or too plentiful graphics for decoration
- Personal tastes of the web designer – concentrate on the visitor's expectation
- Too many ads, no matter how much money they represent
- Too little white space – the eye needs a rest
- Single-column, full-width sentences
- Links that lead nowhere, or worse yet, to another page in the site without navigation
- Using the competition's logo in any way – you've just given them a brand impression
- Sleazy tricks like windows that will not close

• Donate buttons located anywhere other than as the primary call to action

15 Rules to Remember

- However you decide to incorporate subliminals, here are some basic rules of thumb.
- Research your customer
- Research your competition
- Understand what motivates your customer
- Be non-offensive
- Be consistent
- Aim for the highest quality possible
- Do not send mixed messages
- Be positive, even when employing negativity
- Be solution-oriented
- Be aware of the differences in your visitors' computers
- Be respectful of your customer's time
- Follow up on all your efforts
- Build a mailing list
- Earn your customer's sense of trust
- Experiment until you find what works

FACEBOOK

Facebook-Connecting Businesses

Facebook is a social media stroke of genius. Because of the versatility, business owners, CEOs, social planners and marketing heads alike are able to use this social media platform for widely different reasons.

Why are so many people using it? Having a Facebook profile is free, and easy way to keep your finger on the pulse of the world, connecting with people and moving with the ever-changing times.

One account will serve a multitude of purposes from the comfort of your office, iPad, iPhone or Blackberry.

Whether you use Facebook for business or pleasure, you will need to:

• Set up your account

- Build your profile
- Choose people to populate your contacts list

Decide if you want to share your information with only a select few or use the viral nature of Facebook to move your business news faster than the word of mouth.

Accessing Facebook – Setting up a profile on Facebook is as easy as filling out a form with your name and any contact information you want to share. All you need is access to the Internet. Click here to begin: http://www.facebook.com

You will see the bars asking for your information. Fill them out and then click the green 'Sign Up' button.

You will be asked to type the Captcha words into a box. You will be transferred to the next page, which allows you to add friends, find friends, fill out your profile information, and add a picture. If you already have people you know, go ahead and add them. You can fill out your profile information at this time, as well.

Facebook will send you a confirmation email. Please use a valid email address; this is where you will be asked to verify your sign up request by clicking on the internal link Facebook will email to you. This action will then open a new page where you can complete the set up.

Your email confirmation will send you directly to the "My Account" page. You will need to click "Settings" in the upper right hand corner of the screen.

On the settings page, you need to choose your Privacy Settings, Networks, Notification, Mobile, Language preference and optional payments.

Settings will indicate which information you wish to share with friends and allow you to restrict the access people have to your account.

Networks are groups of people you can join, based on name of your employer, region, school, or city. You may need an email address that represents your employer, or you might not be able to join that particular network. Some groups can be private. For example, restrictions may be in place where only employees can join and participate or to specific people. The privacy settings on the group are a great way to have private collaboration sessions. Private or confidential information might be on the network and the general public has to be restricted from access.

NOTE: Facebook recently opened its information hose to Google for search so anything you, or a friend posts will appear in a search response. This includes any games or other activities you take part in. This includes anything that might show up on your friends' pages -- by including them as a friend, Google has access to your information as well. Remember that this is a public forum so do not post anything you don't want the entire world to be able to see.

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Notifications will give you the opportunity to subscribe to your own news, feeds, and those of your friends. Facebook will automatically update your feeds and place them on your Notifications box on the lower right corner of the Facebook toolbar.

Facebook Mobile is for the iPhone, Android, Windows Mobile and Blackberry users who want to extend their access to Facebook to these devices from their PC. Apple's iTunes store offers a free app for the iPhone and iPad that will let you access your Facebook page as well.

Facebook's language settings allow you to access any of the 45 different languages offered. Adding the translations application hooks you up with the chance to translate words into different languages as they appear on Facebook. After you allow the translations application, it is removed from the account Settings page and will appear as a blue globe icon on the left hand bottom blue toolbar and your Facebook pages.

Payments – is where you set up to cover any charges you occur while ordering gift cards or adding advertisements for your business. If you join some of the gaming opportunities, you may also purchase enhancements for those.

Finding friends and adding them to your contacts

If you did not fill out your profile on the first page, click on "Find Friends." You can import your contacts from Windows Live, Hotmail, or individually select your favorite email contacts and add them to the list. Facebook will not store your password, personal information or contact other people without your permission.

Only the "friends" you select will be able to see your profile (unless you establish settings otherwise), you will be prompted to fill out where you went to high school, any post –secondary institution you attended, and if you belong to a business.

You can skip any of these steps, but each one will affiliate you with a network or group, and skipping these steps can reduce your opportunities for new business contacts and friends.

When you are finished, click on "edit and view profile." This next screen will allow you to add any details you want to share with the people you selected on your friends list. You can add or delete any details at any time and save them by clicking on "Save Changes." Congratulations, you have created your first version of your profile page.

Add your name, city or network to your photo.

When you set up the account you have the opportunity to add a photo. You also get to add some information that will be listed on the photo display. Go to your profile page and look underneath your photo for a box that is labeled "Information."

Scroll your mouse to the right of it and you will notice a small gray box with a pencil outline in it. From the dropdown menu, check the items you want to see listed with your photo. If there is a check next to it, this information will be displayed with your photo.

Using the "my Account Settings"

On the top of the Facebook page is a blue banner with "Facebook" on the far left. To the far right is "your own name, Settings, and Log Out." There is a search bar beside the settings tab.

Protecting your privacy

Along the top banner beside your name, select Settings and then Privacy from the drop down menu. From this you can set who sees your profile, who can search for your profile, control what recent activity is visible on your profile and restrict what information is available to the applications you use on Facebook.

From the privacy page, you can block people from your list and prevent them from finding your name or any personal details on Facebook. You can allow "everyone" to see your profile page which is good if you are using Facebook to advertise a business. Consult the privacy help page for more information on privacy.

Sending your Facebook link to contacts on your list.

Facebook makes sharing as easy as one click of the mouse. Adding and allowing the "share" function will publish your content to your wall for sharing. All you have to do is click "Share" link from your home page, profile, or any other page where you see the blue button.

You can copy and paste a web address (URL) from an external site or copy and paste a link from one of your Facebook pages. Accepting the offer to use the preview option will allow you to correct any mistakes. If everything is what you intended, then click post.

When you post, it allows anyone on your contact list to see the link, your comments or photos that go with it and click on it to view the whole page. Anything you post is subject to security settings you picked when you loaded the wall application. If your profile is public then everyone can see your link.

You can post your photos to people who do not have a Facebook account Open your album, at the bottom you will see "share this album with anyone by sending them this public link. The link begins http://www.facebook.com it is followed by more characters that will complete the link

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allowing direct viewing of your album.

Sharing notes – you can either import your blog (see heading called posting your blog to your profile) or you can hand type them in the opening the notes tab from your profile page. If the note is a question or something you want seen by all your friends, you can tag anyone you want in your friends list and a notification will show on their wall. If you mention people in your post you are supposed to tag them.

Using the wall application on your Facebook page on the lower left corner. Click on the Applications button to open up the menu. Search for FunSpace; this will share with your contacts in one click , post links, comment on other peoples' information, follow news feed and keep up with any changes your contacts make to their status bar. In the FunSpace application you will be on the "video" tab, so click to "My FunSpace."

On the FunSpace page, look down and you will see "Settings" under your profile area. A popup will ask you if you want this application access to Facebook. Click allow. You then will get to decide how the wall will appear. Put your settings how you want and then save.

Finally go to "Settings" at the top of the screen on the Facebook header and then select applications setting from the dropdown. Find "Slide FunSpace" on your settings and click Edit Settings. On the "profile" tab, click 'add' for box and tab, then click 'Okay'. You will now be able to reach FunSpace from a tab on your profile page.

When you want to share information, type it in your status bar from your Home page, located beside your profile photo. Click on the share button to the right and you have feedback.

Sending a message to all friends with one click – Go to your 'inbox' tab on the top banner of the Facebook tool bar. Click on it to open three tabs: Inbox, sent messages, and Updates. You will see a compose tab with a plus sign (+), open it and compose your message.

Joining a Network, Group, or Community – Go to the banner and click "settings" and choose "networks" tab. You can type in a city name, group, high school, university, or other significant name into the bar. Hit enter to join a group. Some groups are public, which means anyone can join; others are by invitation only. You must find the "request to join" tab and click on it. Wait for a response from the group's administrator.

Finding people from your groups – From the toolbar select "application settings, and from the dropdown menu select 'Groups.' You can find groups which are centered on various topics. Try some that pertain to your business or customers' interest and get involved with regular contributions.

Updating your status bar- How often you do this depends on the amount of details you want to share, or keep your business clients up-to-date with new information, such as sales or discounts,

or new product announcements. Update if the information is that which people will find thought-provoking, of interest, or useful. People will associate your status updates with their vision of you. They are available for everyone to see on your wall so keep it clean, intelligent, and professional.

Creating a List – Making a list allows you to mass mail, links, messages, videos, photos. Make the list by clicking on the friends' tabs and choose "Lists" from the menu. It will prompt you to create a list of friends by highlighting one name at a time and hitting 'enter.' You can use this to create, modify, or delete lists you have. Use lists to organize your contacts, separating from family contacts from business contacts.

Using the Chat Option – From the bottom Facebook banner, in the lower right-hand corner you will see a black silhouette of a head and shoulders. Run your mouse over it until it highlights and then left-click it. Type what you want to say in the box beside the "x" and hit enter when you are finished. The dialogue will appear in the box above the line where you typed it, and so will your friends' responses to your query. It is a real-time chat; there is a slight delay, so be patient. A green circle beside their name means they are online, and open to talking. A grey circle means they want to appear off-line or do not want to talk.

Posting your blog to your wall or Facebook profile – Go to the applications tab at the bottom left of your Facebook page and open it. If you do not see "Social RSS", click on 'browse more' to find it (or click here while signed into Facebook). Click to "Go to Application" on the left side, under the orange icon, allow it to access your profile so you can ad it. This application allows you to add your blog to any RSS feeds to your wall, your 'boxes' tab, or to create a customized tab dedicated to your feeds. Your feeds will automatically update so that your latest articles are automatically posted to your wall and your friends and/or fans pages.

Translating Facebook into other languages – regardless of your languages, you can read and post Facebook. All you need is to scroll down to the bottom of any Facebook page. Look for the blue font that says, for example "English." Click on it to open the menu with all the languages offered by Facebook. Click on the language you prefer and it will instantly translate everything into that language. When you sign up you can choose, you can decide your display language preference when you open your account. This can be changed as many times as you like for instant translation. You can also add the 'Translations Applications,' which will highlight any words that can be translated.

How does Facebook Help to Improve a Business

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking tools of the day. Of the millions who use Facebook, over half of them check in daily. This makes your presence stronger than almost any other marketing tool you get free, or otherwise. Door-to-door marketing and hard sell tactics are time consuming, abrasive, and expensive. A Facebook profile is friendly, passive, and interactive in a nonthreatening, low pressure way. It also offers the same casual contact as face-to-face

without the hardcore approach. Do not be afraid to use its feeds and viral application procedures to build relationships so that you can share your business with others.

Advertising your business on Facebook

Scroll down to the bottom of any Facebook page and click on 'advertising.' There are three tabs: overview, prepare, and step-by-step. You can target specific regional, gender based, age group, or any other demographic marketing niche for your Facebook ads. Facebook will track the numbers of clicks on your ad and summarize your marketing tools for you. Adding ads are not free, but your payments can be made by setting up your payment method in the payment tab of your profile settings (click "settings on blue Facebook bar, then the 'payment' tab). You can use the connect tab to link your own business website with your Facebook tools and vice versa.

Building Transparent Communication

Using Facebook to advertise your business will target your potential contacts and keep your current clients up-to-date with your business developments using a "newsfeed" application. Choosing to make your profile public gives anyone who reads the news feed a chance to make comments enabling you to see how others see your business, giver advice and answer questions. Through the news feed, you can read the updated status of your competition. Every contact on your list and on theirs has a chance to share information in a positive and transparent style with others in their network. It is an electronic word-of-mouth transfer, only faster and cheaper.

Establishing Community Networks

You can join communities to promote your business. Locating common interest groups is as easy as typing your search terms into the Facebook search bar. It will suggest profiles of other businesses with whom you may have a common interest based on the characteristics you selected on your profile page. For example, if you have an energy drink business, you can join groups that share fitness and exercise as a common interest. You can make comments on fitness and exercise and share opinions on energy drinks. Adding a link to your comment will take people to your Facebook business profile page. This creates a non-aggressive new business opportunity. It brings interested people to you for advice, products, and furthers your networking relationships.

TWITTER

The world is changing. While this may seem a rather over-used phrase, perhaps in all of history it has never been a more true statement of fact. This is because never, in any period of history, have so many people

witnessed that change, nor have so many people ever taken part in making the change a reality.

Many lived the Viet Nam War through the camera eye of CBS newsmen in the field, shepherded by the solemn, yet comforting tones of Walter Cronkite. We have watched the events take place through the years on television screens and through grainy photos on page one.

The power of the media has migrated to that gargantuan network of communicating computers called the Internet. The new media kings are those who have mastered online technology and brought the many services of the Internet into our lives. The world adores what they do and what they have brought to the life of every man, woman and child who can get their hands on a keyboard.

Not long ago Iran saw a civil rebellion break out and the Iranian government immediately shut down the Internet connections coming in and going out of the country. Resourceful, citizens used their cell phones to tap into the Internet and their Twitter accounts, relaying with minute-by-minute report the horrors they were witnessing. The world tuned in to Twitter and former media giants such as CNN were left in the dust. Now even CNN has a Twitter account and urges viewers to follow them. That a 24/7 network should urge their viewers to turn to the Internet for the latest news says something about the deflation of television's rule.

You cannot discount the power of such a medium; one where the news is not a relay from a seasoned reporter who must abide by a sponsor's sensitivities; but where news is reported by the normal citizen who is living history; first-hand accounts broadcast within seconds to the world at large.

This is the power base that you have at your disposal. This is the world of social networking.

What is all the Twitter About?

It has become a Twitter world. They knew they had arrived when Twitter became a verb. Just how big is this world? Estimates have it over 18 million, or more than 3.8% of adult Internet users in the world.

That's considerable over-the-fence conversations – more than 10 billion in one year, to be exact. When it comes to public opinion, entrepreneurs, marketers and politicians can fully appreciate that potential.

In a world that has been campaign-oriented, the face of business and reaching customers has abruptly changed. Twitter is one of those Internet forces of nature—driving businesses everywhere to jump on the train of Twittering.

Twitter is all about the user experience. While there are several ways to interact with it, there are four primary ways to maximize its potential.

Increasing brand recognition

With the advent of the Internet, businesses of all sizes have an equal opportunity to court consumers. Joe's Bookstore can look every bit as prosperous as Barnes & Noble. Many companies utilize their sites for commerce, over and above its billboard presentation. This extends the opportunity for their branding to coordinate in a very visual sense. By incorporating that identity for your company, that visual carries over to the Twitter page.

Building relationships with current and potential customers

Imagine for a moment that you could hold a telephone conversation with all your current customers and they could hear what you were saying simultaneously. Now add in all their friends to whom they've mentioned your company. Imagine the networking opportunities this could represent, particularly when you realize that anything you say will be recorded for them on screen and within a fragment of a second from when you said it. Suppose there are 18 million of those potential customers; you will want to have some plan on what you intend to say. Have a sale on your hottest product? Announce it. Have a great idea for a way they can make money using your service? They're always ready to hear that sort of valued input.

The customer will begin to feel a favored status. They are dealing directly with the owner and hearing his philosophies...not reading a mission statement hung on a corporate wall. They feel a part of your company and your business and will take a special interest in seeing you succeed.

Creating Business Associations

Google now has a special search engine designed for Twitter. This presents search customers with even more information about products and services so don't be afraid to mention them frequently in your posts. The links are also presented and will follow straight back to your site. Look for Twitter groups that are based on a product or service you offer and join it. Even look at your competition and follow them as well. There's a great deal of information to be traded here; what better way than to see what the competition is saying, and then to establish your own authority on the topic. Be sure you know your facts before you post...they will live as long as the Internet.

Setting up Your Account

Setting up a Twitter account is a very easy task. Give some thought in advance to the screen name you would like to use. Some people post in their personal names, some in pen names and some in their business or web site name. You will be required to use a unique name, and recognize that anything you post will be around indefinitely.

Building a list of followers can take some time and it might be a good idea to use the name of a product so your followers will recognize the branding there. That way you can use the same

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account for a variety of messages. Let's say, for example, that you sell coats. You might create your account using "ABC_Coats" even though you represent multiple manufacturers. That way you can discuss any brand you like, sales at all times of the year and any other promotions you are running.

To establish your Twitter account, you would begin by going to the Twitter web site, http://www.twitter.com. Twitter recently underwent a facelift in design, so you will look for the "Get Started Now" yellow button.

There will be a screen where you are invited to "Join the Conversation" by completing some basic information about you or your business. Once you click on the "Create my account" button, you'll be asked to consider who you wish to follow. Here's your opportunity to use your various contact sources to see if those people already have accounts. You can skip this part and move through the following confirmation step.

Be sure to visit your settings to establish your time zone and privacy preferences. Your profile page will invite you to upload a photo or avatar for your account. For business reasons you can use your logo here if you prefer — again this depends on your role with the company and whether your personal image is going to enhance recognition by your customers.

You will find yourself finally on a landing page with one of the most recognizable questions on the Internet; "What's happening?" You'll always have this prompt inviting you to offer a response. This is also where you'll find probably the most important blank; the search box. Here you can begin your quest for finding other members and groups that are relative to your own business specialty.

Speaking the Tweet Language

As do most social media platforms, Twitter has its own language. Here are a few terms you'll need to know.

RT - A ReTweet, or RT, is the same as forwarding a tweet, meaning that you're repeating a received comment to your own followers. You copy/paste the tweet into your own box, add "RT" before it and send. It's a good idea to use this feature with caution, making sure that you have followed the included link. You don't want to be responsible for having forwarded pornographic or other inappropriate site recommendations to your customers.

DM - If you see a message with "DM" it means the sender is asking that you send them a direct message, or one that only they can see. To DM someone, click on their name, which will take you to their home page. On the right-hand side of the page, you will see "message" and that user's name. Click "message", say what you want to say and click "send." You can check your own direct messages from your home page, on the right side of that page.

@ - The "at" sign is followed by the user's name. With all the conversations going on, "@user" is how you know when someone is talking to you. You can see anything that's said about you on the right hand side of your home page, by clicking "@yourusername."

\# - The hash tag is set for specific topics. For example, if you enter "#SEO" in your search query, you'll see a list of comments that include "#SEO" and this lets you keep track of comments made about a certain subject or industry. Using our example product, "#coats" would be a good search to begin.

Who are you following?

There is a certain polite protocol which most newbies to Twitter will see immediately. If someone requests to follow you, it's only polite to follow them as well. Or so you would think. The problem is, the people who begin by wholesale following, hoping for reciprocal follows are all after the same thing; fast list building. These folks tend to be gathering names and everyone will end up sending tweets that no one reads since you're all there only to talk about yourself. You have to learn discretion and that it simply will take time to build customer relationships. Therefore, begin by looking for people who use the terminology related to your business. Using our example company, "coats" would be a good place to start. Look for relationships where you have something to contribute, where you're not just trading automated tweets.

Every time you post, you are permitted a message of no more than 140 characters. If your company URL is lengthy, you might not "get a word in edgewise" and need to find some way to use Twitter shorthand. A great solution for this is the use of one of several web sites which take your long URL and return a shorter link based on their site doing the translation. One such URL shortener site is www.bitly.com.

Which brings us to another topic — auto tweets. There are a number of programs out there that automate the tweeting process, generating posts from your account with programmed frequency and messages. Developing social relationships online simply takes time. Build it into your schedule, use auto services if you desire to save time, but still handle your normal duties. Twitter can become an addiction and you can see the evidence of this anywhere that teens hang out. Text messaging is everywhere.

YouTube and You

YouTube (www.youtube.com) is to video what Google is to search...in fact Google owns YouTube now so there is real power behind its search visibility. One of the first things you may notice is its casual nature. You've heard the stories of overnight fame by people who posted unusual or intriguing videos -- comedian Jeff Dunham's ventriloquism act is one such example.

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He began on YouTube and ended up with his own comedy show on the Comedy Channel.

You can search YouTube to find video on most any topic imaginable. Many computers, particularly laptops, have built-in cameras and there are inexpensive USB versions which work with the rest. If you don't have one, any electronics department and often even the corner drugstore, sell them.

You will need to open an account on YouTube so be sure you have a valid email account. It bears mentioning here that you may wish to create a unique email address for all your social networking, as these can attract a fair amount of unwanted email. It is not a bad idea to use an email such as Yahoo or Google so you don't overwhelm your business site with the additional traffic. Most social networking sites also allow you to choose whether you wish to receive emailed announcements of any traffic that involves your account, such as someone following you on Twitter. The tech world's beloved Leo LaPorte recently selected a Twitter user in New Zealand who innocently published one of her first tweets as "I hate technology" and asked his radio show listeners to follow the lady. LaPorte, who humorously refers to his vast audience as Twit Army was answered immediately and the New Zealand lady was pelted with over 16,000 sudden emails announcing she had new people following her tweets. "I thought I did something wrong," she said. If your product or service is a popular one, like vitamins or diets, you could find yourself in a similar situation. That's a great deal of traffic through your company site if you are not prepared for it. Your hosting company can also charge you a hefty premium for that bandwidth.

You can choose a private setting for your account if you wish or restrict your sharing to close friends only. You can also establish a public account to make your business presence known and allow anyone to access the videos you upload.

The law requires that you agree to upload only the material that is legally yours and to refrain from uploading anything that does not belong to you. Failure to comply with this will result in the termination of your account.

Once you log in to your account, you can search for videos, upload your own videos and share clips with your friends or invite contacts to view your favorites. You can express your opinion, select favorites, subscribe to the RSS feeds, and join networks or community groups.

While no one is sure exactly how many videos are uploaded daily, the rate is so tremendous that no one could possibly view them all. It's important to recognize that since Google owns YouTube, every video is a search response and that means excellent visibility for your site.

If you do not know which category covers your topic, you can use their subject menu on the left to narrow down your search. They have tools to assist you with uploading your videos and software that will convert your video files into a compatible format you can use to share your clips in your account.

If you are watching how well particular styles of videos are rated or keeping track of what is popular, you can browse through 'Most Linked', 'Recently Featured' and 'Most Linked.' YouTube has their staff picks; you may select from featured videos promoted by YouTube or you may select from lists of most viewed, most discussed and top favorites.

It Is All About Sharing

Naturally, when you've gone to all the trouble of preparing a marketing video, you are going to want to share it. You can accomplish this by clicking on the 'share' button beneath the video. You'll also have the option of email, posting to social media, or copying the embedding code to add it to your web site.

Ratings

You can express your opinion about any public videos by assigning it a rating with the YouTube star system. Give it five stars for the best rating and if you like, leave a comment that will start a conversation. This is all part of the social networking process. Remember to keep your comments positive and light.

Channels

Your YouTube account contains access to your own YouTube Channel that hosts all your personal videos. You can upload files from a digital camera, cell phone, DVD mini or anything that comes in a WMV, AVI, MOV or MPG format.

You may find that there are certain video creators whose work you particularly enjoy, and you would like to subscribe to that user's channel. To find a particular channel, click on the channels tab at the top of the menu. The channels tab has fourteen categories to select from that will gradually narrow your search or you can randomly select from the staff picks displayed on the page.

Alternatively, you can look to the lower right hand corner of the page you are watching during the video. You will see the user's name in blue and possibly some additional links to an outside web site beneath their name. Follow these links to see more of this person's work.

All you need to do to stream a selected subscriber into your account is click on the yellow 'Subscribe' button. YouTube automatically directs any videos you subscribe to into your account. You can access these by clicking on the 'Subscriptions' tab along the top menu or going directly to your account and choosing 'Subscriptions' from there. To unsubscribe, simply click the same button, which is now gray and reads, 'unsubscribe.'

Uploading Your Videos

From your YouTube home page, click on the 'upload' button and a completely user-friendly window will open. You can choose a title for your video and provide a brief description. If you

make your video 'Public', anyone has viewing access to it. Allocating your movie as 'Private' will restrict it from everyone except those you invite to see it.

Find the 'upload a video' button at the bottom of the page and click on it. You will need to click 'Browse' to actress your own computer files where your movie is stored. Click on your file to open it and then click on 'upload video'. It takes a few minutes to process and then you can view it by selecting it from your YouTube channel.

The last tab on the tool bar lets you join groups and discuss material. You'll find a group for almost any topic and feel free to join in ongoing conversations. Here is where you can begin to evangelize your company and product. If you like, you can also create your own group and including tags and keywords to accompany it. Tags are words you think people will put in the search bar when they are looking for specific information to view from YouTube. You can ensure that people will find your video by posting it to your blog or site. This is a great way to build links.

Tie it All Together

All of these social networking sites will only return results based on the efforts you invest. Try to set a schedule for reading and contributing that you can maintain throughout. Too many people jump right in with enthusiasm and set the bar too high for themselves. This takes time and discipline, but is well worth the effort.

The thought of ROI or Return on Investment has probably crossed your mind by now. However, Social Media should not be approached with the idea to profit in the form of dollars and cents. Instead you should be looking for the real reward within social media and that is customer reach, brand recognition and transparency with your customers.

Social Media and Business

Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube are just a few of the many social media platforms available. As you watch your business and web site traffic grow, remember you have to stay consistent - time, effort, and social media.

As with any business endeavor, if you decide to build a social media strategy, and start a campaign, it should be considered a long term campaign. For instance it does no good to build a five star customer service department, run it for a few weeks and then stop. The same can be said about social media.

Additionally, you will start thinking about ROI, especially in the terms of dollars and cents. However social media should not be approached with the idea of how much money you will get out of it. The true reward of social media is brand recognition, transparency, and customer reach.

I hope the previous pages have helped you to gain insight into how these social media platforms

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in particular, and social media in general, can help you expand your business.

YOUR FIVE-STEP PLAN

- Use Wordpress blog or site as the center of your personal branding strategy.
- Link your site with all the major social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.
- Register "your name" and create backlinks to as many 'second tier' social media sites as possible.
- Create and publish valuable content and syndicate this content via your blog and main social media platforms.
- Implement specific and targeted backlink strategies to continually add validity and authority to your name.

Want to stay in the know? Shorten your learning curve and find out what is working now? Join our communities to stay up on all the latest information!

Connect with me here...

Brand You Community

Social Media Branding

www.kimgarst.com

www.linkedin.com/kimgarst

www.twitter.com/kimgarst