





re:think  
*your online strategy*

WWW.CHOOSERETHINK.COM

19 Spear Road, Suite 102  
Ramsey, New Jersey 07644  
Phone: 201.345.6042  
Fax: 201.773.4133  
info@chooserethink.com

# YOUR BUSINESS' GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?.....	4
THE VALUE OF SOCIAL MEDIA.....	5
PICK YOUR NETWORKS.....	7
GET STARTED,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	8
GET ACTIVE!.....	10
HOW TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT.....	12
HOW TO GET LIKED,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	14



# YOUR BUSINESS' GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA

## WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media has become such a huge part of modern life that it's almost impossible to overlook. It is defined as a way for people to connect, to communicate and interact in an online setting. It's called social media due to the way users engage with one another: in a social context. This can include conversation, commentary, and other forms of interactive engagement.

Most people now have some sort of personal presence online, with one or a few of the many different social media networks. But social media is quickly gaining value in the business sector to the point of becoming essential for success. Interacting online from a business stand point, however, is different than casually posting personal comments. In fact, it can seem a bit overwhelming. Taking time to get a lay of the land can give your

business a much better chance of success than simply jumping in head first and hoping for the best.

Creating an online presence for your business is getting easier than in the earlier days of the internet. With so many different platforms and easy-to-use content, any non-technical user could have a functioning and prospering online presence in no time.

Social media has also changed the way consumers procure goods and services. Not only has it made it easier for customers to get in touch with companies, but it now takes only a few clicks of a mouse for customers to have products or services delivered directly to them. This creates a great opportunity, but also a great responsibility for businesses. Not only are businesses now directly in touch with a wealth of data generated from consumers, but now they have the

# “Creating an **ONLINE PRESENCE** for your business is getting **EASIER** than in the earlier days of the **INTERNET.**”

chance to form personal relationships with their customers. This is where responsibility in online presence comes into play. Customers now have different expectations on how businesses should behave online. Consumers are having conversations about businesses and operations of these businesses, whether or not these companies are aware. So why not actually be a part of these conversations?

## **SOCIAL MEDIA IS GROWING STEADILY**

Social media is not a fad or a trend. Social media has become a way of life, and a way of business. It's become evident that consumers are using social media just as often as they use their phone or email.

## **THE VALUE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **BUILD A COMMUNITY**

One of social media's greatest values to business owners is the ability to create a worldwide community whose whole existence is centered around your

business. Businesses are no longer limited in their reach to those who hear radio commercials or television broadcasts. Customers now have the ability to interact with any business, worldwide, in real time, often with immediate responses. This is a great way to build up relationships with consumers that move beyond normal business hour transactions. Customers are more likely to become loyal return customers if they know the company they endorse is advancing with the times, and always present.

### **CREATE BUSINESS ADVOCATES**

After creating a bond with a customer, the next level is nurturing the relationship so that eventually the customer becomes willing to defend the brand of the company to the greater public. This level of relationship takes time and effort on both parts, but it can be a tremendously rewarding relationship. To have a customer who not only appreciates what you do, but is willing to advocate your work and stand up for you against detractors, is sheer bliss. Not every customer is going to end up at this stage. But don't give up on cultivating this type relationship.

# “With this type of NETWORK, you are in CONTROL of slightly less than with an owned NETWORK.”

## MARKET, DEVELOP PRODUCTS, PROVIDE CUSTOMER SERVICE

Having an online presence can be useful in fulfilling the needs of your customers because you have easy access to what people are thinking and feeling.

There are three types of content you can add to your social media accounts to ensure you are always meeting your customers' expectations.

One is 'learn and improve' content. This type is focused on educating customers so they may fully utilize your product.

The next is 'explore and discover' content, focused at finding new and different ways that your product can be useful.

Building relationships with customers in this demographic is key because these customers can help you build new and exciting ideas for your products.

Lastly is 'question and answer' content. This is support content focused on helping customers who may find difficulty in using the product or perhaps have found a problem with the product. The main objective is answers.

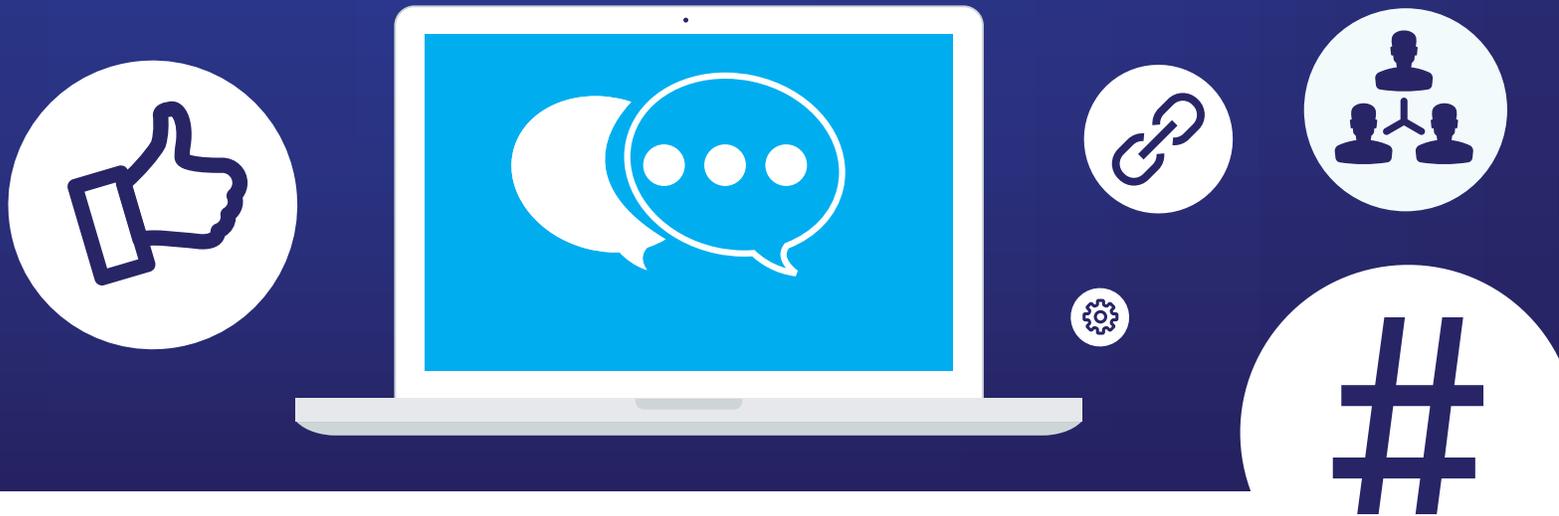
Unfortunately in the business world, not every customer is going to sing your praises. No business is perfect. And

using social media to complain about a product or service is also popular, again because of the urgency in responses.

While it may seem frightening when this happens, keep in mind that it doesn't have to be a negative situation. You can use the opportunity to create a positive experience and show customers you're accessible, always listening, and ready to help in any way you can. This means making it easy for customers to get in touch with you, perhaps by having your contact info posted somewhere on your account.

Some customers may choose to forgo direct communication. So be sure you are always listening to the chatter going on about your business. If you are always readily accessible, it could help prevent people going off the deep end on social media.

While businesses, and more specifically product development departments, seem to have everything to gain from the endless supply of feedback at such a large scale because of social media, always be cautious of how much advice you take from the general public. It's much easier to say you want change, than to actually figure out what needs changed and act



on it. So be gracious and thankful for the feedback you receive, but make sure you always come back to your expertise and experience in the area when deciding to make changes in your business. Also, don't get caught up in a small number of complaints, especially if your product is largely acclaimed. This small group may not and probably won't be a representation of the big picture.

## PICK YOUR NETWORKS

### UNDERSTAND THE 3 TYPES OF NETWORKS

When using social media, it's important to understand the differences between the three types of networks, so that when you engage with your community, you are properly equipped and prepared for the way your content will come across.

#### OWNED PROPERTIES

This network of social media is owned and operated by you, rather than you using a portion of a site owned by someone else. Whether the site is hosted by a server, owned by you, or hosted by someone else, you own and control the site entirely.

#### RENTED PROPERTIES

With this type of network, you are in control of slightly less than with an owned network. Certain sites like Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook would be listed in this category. You don't personally have control of the overall function of the website itself, but you do have options available to you to customize a part of this web site for yourself.

#### OCCUPIED PROPERTIES

With this style of network you are least involved. Reddit is a good example. You can participate in forums and belong to communities, even submit articles to be read by others, but you have no real control over the appearance and functioning of this site.

#### DECIDE WHICH ONES TO START WITH

It can be difficult to decide which network might be best for your business. Sometimes it honestly comes down to trial and error, or recognizing which networks that businesses which are similar to yours are using. But nothing is a guarantee, and you could find you get a good following on sites that are not being used by similar companies.



## DECIDE HOW MANY ACCOUNTS

How many accounts you decide to take presence in is totally up to you. It might be smart to start off small and see where it takes you. Some companies work well only having a smaller presence, while other larger companies can actually have different accounts within the same network because they each serve a different purpose. Each account can be used as a separate entity, but essentially they all serve the company as a whole.

## GET STARTED

### RESEARCH YOUR COMPETITION

Again, a good way to decide which type of network to use or which type of social media to use, is to take a look at your competition. See what sites they use. The experts in your field usually have a good idea what works and what doesn't. It never hurts to take a clue from them. And more importantly, take a look at customer feedback and see if you can infer any information that way. Remember, all the decisions you make regarding social media are, in the end, aimed at the same target: your customer base. It's important

to make sure you're reaching them in the best way.

**Identify Your Goals and Target Audience**  
Ask yourself questions when you move toward becoming present in social media like:

- ✓ What behavior am I looking for from my audience, and what am I hoping for in terms of my business?
- ✓ What social networks are most useful for the products or services I offer?
- ✓ Who are my target customers and what types of activities do they tend to take part in online?

If you can clarify exactly what you are hoping to achieve by gaining a presence online and what you'd like to see from your followers, it can make choosing the right network(s) much easier and communication with your audience more natural and mutually beneficial. Another idea to keep in mind is that, while your customers are certainly interested in your products and services, are there other things might they be interested that could relate to your business? For example, if you are a company that sells ski equipment,

# “Identify Your Goals and Target AUDIENCE Ask yourself questions when you MOVE toward becoming PRESENT in social media.”

there's a good chance that your followers would also be interested in other outdoor activities, extreme sports, or traveling. Carrying on conversations about these topics can often help build a rapport with your customers and gain the interest of new followers.

## CREATE A PUBLISHING SCHEDULE

Once you've decided to step into the social arena, it can get distracting quite quickly if you aren't careful. You can get caught up in the newness, wanting to check out all the features, to find new networks, searching endlessly for new people to follow. Before you know it, your day has been filled with lots of online activities, few of which actually served a purpose for your business and its online presence. At first, it's probably better to take things slow, be sure that what you are doing to propagate our online presence, you do well, rather than haphazardly running amuck online and getting nothing done. It's also important, no matter how many accounts you have, that you decide on a good publishing schedule. Make a calendar and try hard to stick to it. There's definitely such a thing as overkill when it comes to creating posts or sharing information, but a lack of online activity

can also be a bad thing. Posting once a day or so is probably a good start. Once you get a bigger following, you can adjust your postings according to your follower's feedback. But taking too long between posts or shares can make you seem less competent. Hand and hand with this is your planning for future events with your company, like promotions or even sales. Make sure you're always looking ahead.

## CREATE A PROFILE

Most social media networks have some sort of profile portion, where you have finite room to talk about yourself or your business. Some networks limit the amount you can say, other's will give you pages of space. Either way, take creating your profile very seriously. Try not to ramble on too long, but don't sell yourself short either. Exuding a humble confidence is a sure winner. And, if possible, include links to any actually web address you may have.

## UPLOAD A PROFILE PICTURE, HEADERS AND BACKGROUND IMAGES

Being creative is fun, but try to leave that for your personal sites. In this setting, people want to see your face, not your dogs. Keep the profile photo clean,

# “BRANDING is not just the name of your BUSINESS, or what your key OBJECTIVE is.”

make sure you're looking at the camera, and frame your face. Put thought into what you use for your headers and backgrounds. Opt for things that might be directly related to your business, just remember to stay on task. Photos of your city, your work place, or logos are all good ideas. But be sure to use your own photos. A generic image generated from the site will show that you don't care and give you a bad image.

## BRAND YOUR PAGE

Branding is not just the name of your business, or what your key objective is. It's more than a logo. It's an overall image that you present to the world. This includes not only keeping logos, fonts, colors, etc. similar or identical across all platforms, it's going beyond your products and services to tell the world what you care about and how your company makes a difference. If your company manufactures glass products made from recycled glass because the environment is important to you, mention these things. Maybe your company also plants trees every Earth Day or donates a portion of the profit to environmental causes. Social media is the perfect place to show this side of your business to the world.

## GET ACTIVE!

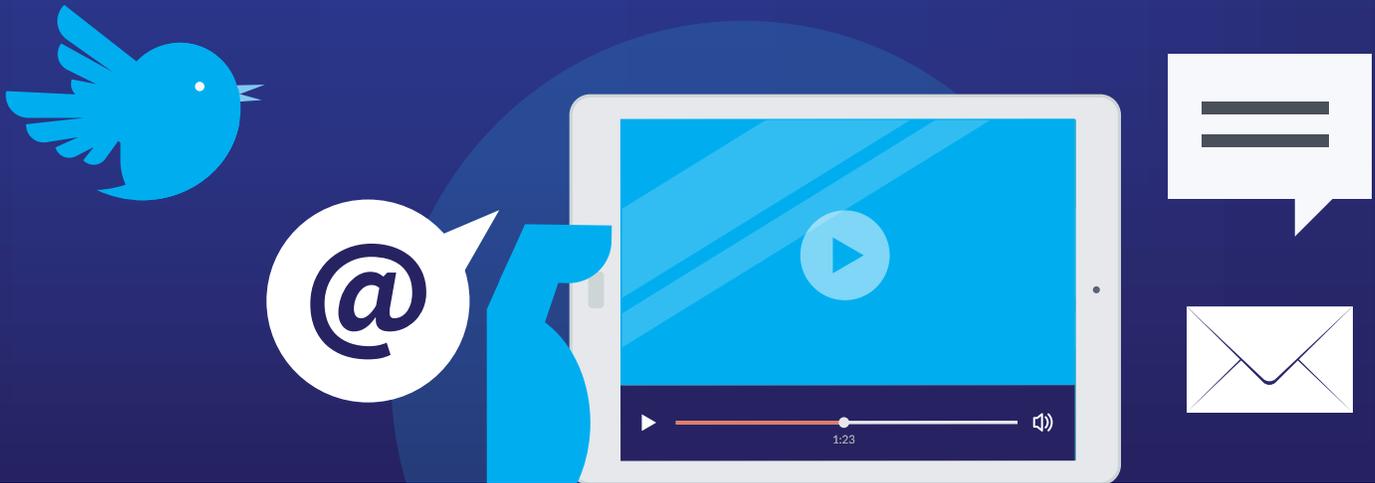
### POST CONTENT RIGHT AWAY

One of the most disappointing parts of social media is finding a business you like, going to their page and finding it empty. So before you actually start following people or directing traffic to your social media sites, be sure you have some posts and information there for people to look at. Your site can only gain followers if there is something there to follow.

### GET CONNECTED WITH INFLUENCERS

The first people you should seek out to follow when establishing yourself in social media are those who are already influential in your niche. You may already have a relationship with them. Use this to broaden your horizons in the social media front. Soon, their followers could also be your followers.

In this same regard, follow other people you know. Even if they don't really have a connection to your business. Maybe people they know will. Also, once you start gaining followers, follow them. You'll end up finding more people in other communities to get involved in conversations with.



## LISTEN

When it comes to conversations had online, it isn't really about physically listening, but paying attention. Observe conversations that happen and be aware of protocol.

## ENDORSE

"Liking" something someone says or "favoriting" a post may not be as influential as posting, but it won't go unnoticed and it doesn't take much time to do. But be careful not to just go along liking every single post. Like things when you mean it.

## SHARE

Sharing content is another way to gain traction. Again, posting original work is very positive, but sharing things that belong in the same niche are also helpful in reaching out to customers. It's just another opportunity to start a conversation. Thoughtful sharing is also appreciated by the people who posted the original work which in turn can help you get noticed.

## COMMENT

Social media is centered around conversation. So join in the conversations you come across if they mean something to you. You don't have to comment on every single post you find, but taking

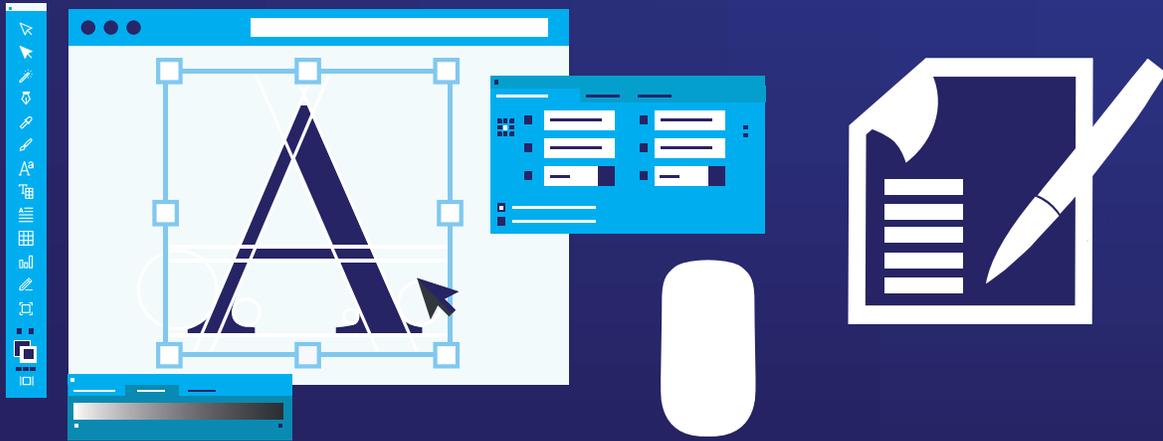
the time to add to the dialog on posts that speak to you is a plus. And don't be afraid to disagree, ask questions, or cite examples. All of this is good social media practice.

## JOIN GROUPS

In most social media networks, there are groups you can join where the discussion is more focused on the topic that the group is centered around. When you join these groups, you will find like-minded people who might not have known you existed beforehand. You may find more insightful conversations or people with whom you can mutually benefit from knowing.

## TYPES OF CONTENT TO SHARE

In traditional marketing, a business usually limited themselves to engagement with the general population that was strictly promotional material. But communication strategies are changing. With social media, the push is less promotional and more fundamental. Your customers want to know who you are and what you do, not just what you can sell them. They want to trust your business and feel close to you. There are still chances with social media to promote your business, but there are many other options for communication.



## TIPS

Share content that will make your product or service easier to use for the customer. Even just having general conversation that helps make their lives easier is appreciated.

## RESPONSES

Because social media relies so much on conversations, try posting responses to other people on your account. This is a great way to gain visibility.

## COMPANY INFO

As state above, keep promotional material at a minimum. But, instead, post about the culture and community within the business. Your social media networks are great places to show how you and your employees are involved in the community. Or perhaps you just had a wonderful company picnic. Share this information. Your followers will feel a deeper connection to you if they get to see you having real lives.

## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Believe it or not, posting open positions on social media is actually a great way to attract potential hires. Most college graduates have at least one, if not a few social media accounts. They also usually follow businesses they have interest in or education in.

## ADJACENT CONTENT

Posting content that is directly or indirectly related to the products or services you offer will also help you become more visible online. For example, if you sell cookware, post recipes that can be made using your products. This may indirectly gain you sales as well.

## HOW TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT

There are two different types of engagement you can become involved with in social media. The first is basically what has been discussed so far, commenting, answering questions, posting, etc. This is important material to cover in the beginning as you are practicing being present and active.

Later, though, once you begin to establish a following, you will need to start gathering data and then use this data to collect feedback. The feedback you receive can help you in the long run to know if what you are doing is helping your business.

## ASK FOR OPINIONS

If you've gained followers who like and trust you, asking for their help in return should be a fairly easy task. And it could

# “Make **SURE** fonts, colors, logo, tone, manner are all in **CHECK** any time you **POST**.”

be simple things such as filling out a short survey or giving product feedback.

## **STAY SIMPLE**

Giving customers too many options may be just as terrible as giving them zero. If you believe that your business might do poorly on a certain network, don't give your customers the option to share to that network.

## **PROMOTE ACROSS CHANNELS**

Cross-promotion is actually quite vital to your brand. If you have a web site and a blog and a Facebook page, be sure to cross link between them all so that anywhere a customer may find you, they can find links to any of the other places you might be as well.

## **LISTEN**

When you have an established following, listen to what your customers have to say about you. This doesn't mean take every word to heart, but it does mean to be open to suggestion, even if you later decide not to take it.

## **BE CONSISTENT**

Again, consistency with your brand is incredibly important. Not just in the physical world, but in the virtual as well. Make sure that wherever you post, your

look and habits all speak to the virtues of your company and what it stands for.

## **POSTING**

Posting regularly will give your followers a sense of accessibility and reliability. If you can, post daily. The more regular you are, the more likely you will be taken seriously.

## **BRAND**

Make sure fonts, colors, logo, tone, manner are all in check any time you post.

## **VOICE**

It may seem like a no brainer, but speak to others online the way you would speak to any person you meet. Be natural, normal. In other words, be yourself. This is just another way to be sure your brand will always have a cohesive voice.

## **SOFT SELL**

Try not to only pitch your products or services. Doing this all the time can be overkill. People want to be able to make their own decisions about products and services these days and if you are constantly throwing them sales pitches, they will more than likely reject you. The key is the soft sell. Keep your voice normal and your brand consistent and then simply be present. This will get you further than a

# “HASHTAGS and TAGGING are RAMPANT in social media.”

hard sell. The trick is to teach, advice, and help people. This will do a lot of the selling for you.

## HOW TO GET LIKED

Building relationships online is really not that different than building them in an offline setting. Be aware of the same things you should be aware of in real practice and it should be rather easy.

### BE PRESENT

Again, this goes back to posting and responding. If you are there, in some fashion, each day, your customers will quickly learn you are reliable.

### BE REAL

Kind, respectful, empathetic people are always going to be easy to like. Act the way you would want someone to act toward you if you were the customer.

### INCLUDE EVERYONE

Any time you cast people out you lose friends. And not just the people you excluded. There is no reason to shut anyone out who may be a potential asset you your company.

### COVER OTHER TOPICS

It's perfectly fine for conversations to veer from the straight and narrow from time to time. This again just shows you are human.

### INCLUDE VALUE

All of the things above are great for gaining followers. But it's always a special bonus to connect with someone over their product who is not only friendly and respectful, but incredibly knowledgeable and not just after the sell.

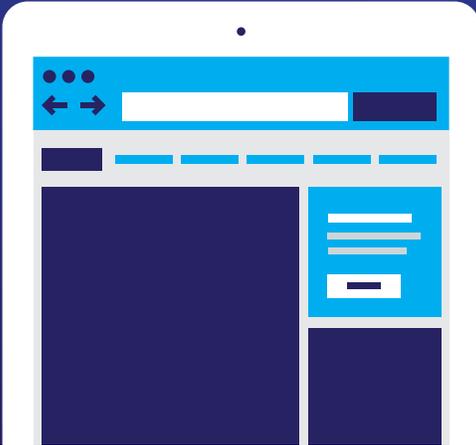
### PRACTICE GOOD MANNERS

Hashtags and tagging are rampant in social media. While it might be ok to use these every once in a while, don't go crazy. Be polite with others and use your manners. This will always be a winning virtue.

### MEASURE RESULTS

One of the beautiful things associated with online marketing, is the ability to take measurements of nearly every aspect. But this is only effective if you know what to measure, how to measure, and more importantly why.

The reason to measure data is to see if and how you are gaining your ROI, or Return on Investment. This, of course, must start with the investment.



#HASHTAG  
@TA  
#HASHTAG

In this case, your investment is social media traction. So what is the return? This is going to be different for different companies whom all have different goals. But the data you can view will come from two distinctive categories.

### Quantitative:

This is raw data, typically numbers. This is foot traffic in your store, followers online, how frequently people engage with you, how many times your posts are shared, how often you post, and when you most often post.

### Qualitative:

Qualitative information is formed from observations. This might be the influence you might have over your community or who might be more influential. This could be attempting to measure the tone of most of the conversations that take place on your account. This could also be what types of actions on your part generate the most positive and involved conversations.

## PLATFORM OVERVIEWS

### Facebook

- ✓ 1.9 billion users, as of June 2013
- ✓ 55% female, 45% male
- ✓ Average user is 41 years old
- ✓ Average user has 229 friends

- ✓ 4.5 billion likes each day
- ✓ Facebook is used primarily for Groups, Events, Business Pages, and Messenger.

**Tips:** Moderation is key, track the time of day your users are most active, images create 39% more engagement

### Twitter

- ✓ 55% female, 45% male
- ✓ 72% of users are between the ages of 17 and 49
- ✓ 400 million Tweets per day
- ✓ Used mostly for generating conversations and connecting people

**Tips:** Be aware of you branding and voice, be responsive in this fast-paced network

### Google Plus

- ✓ 300 million active monthly users
- ✓ 1.5 billion photos posted each week
- ✓ Similar to Facebook and Twitter, with the slight downside of Circles categorizing people you know

**Tips:** Promote, image share

### LinkedIn

- ✓ 238 million users
- ✓ In 200 countries
- 3 million companies have LinkedIn pages



- ✓ 5.7 billion professional searches conducted in 2012
- ✓ Used for business development and gaining customer advocates

**Tips:** Link your blog or web pages, search for similar brands or companies, participate in groups

#### YouTube

- ✓ Over 6 billion hours of video watched each month
- ✓ 100 hours of video are uploaded every minute
- ✓ 1,000's of YouTube channels making 6 figures annually
- ✓ Used for sharing content

**Tips:** Engage

#### Pinterest

- ✓ 20 million monthly active users
- ✓ 5 million pins per day
- ✓ Woman are 5X as likely to view as men
- ✓ Used for image sharing

**Tips:** Engage, increase discoverability

At the end of the day, social media can go a long way in boosting your business, not just by making your products and services more visible, but by making you,

the business owner, more accessible. You now have the ability to engage with your community and the capacity to expand that community worldwide. Social media is constantly expanding, exploring new ways of connecting people. The benefits for creating your presence online are just as boundless. Use the tips in this guide to build a successful and sustainable online social media presence for your business.



“ Use the **TIPS** in this guide to build a successful and sustainable **ONLINE** social media **PRESENCE** for your business. ”





[WWW.CHOOSERETHINK.COM](http://WWW.CHOOSERETHINK.COM)