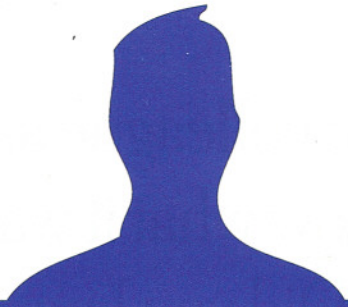


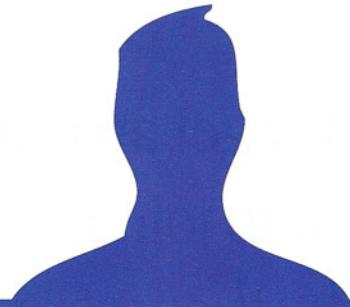
MYTH 1: SOCIAL SITES ARE
JUST FOR TEENAGERS



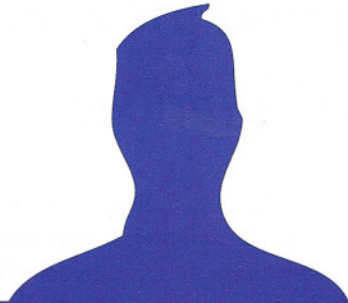
MYTH 2: SOCIAL MEDIA
IS JUST A FAD



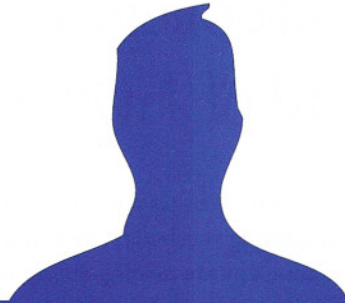
MYTH 3: SOCIAL STRATEGIES
ARE JUST FOR BIG COMPANIES



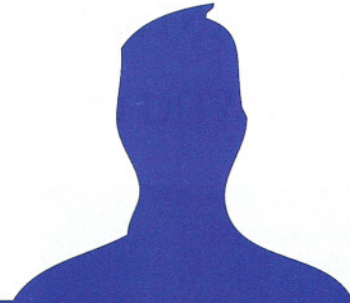
MYTH 4: SOCIAL MEDIA
MARKETING WILL COST LOADS
OF MONEY TO IMPLEMENT



MYTH 5: SOCIAL MEDIA
MARKETING IS PRIMARILY USED
FOR FINDING FRIENDS AND
SHARING VIDEOS AND PHOTOS



MYTH 6: YOU HAVE TO BE
A MARKETING WHIZ OR
COMPUTER GEEK TO EFFECTIVELY
USE SOCIAL MEDIA



Six Myths of *Social Media Marketing*

IT'S TIME TO PUT ASIDE YOUR PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS
ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA AND BEGIN TO UTILIZE THIS
LOW-COST, HIGH-IMPACT FORM OF MARKETING.

BY DAVID CARLETON

Ever get an e-mail from a friend or colleague asking you to join *LinkedIn*, but didn't know what it was or why they were asking you to join? Did you know that *Facebook* and *MySpace* are more than just websites that high school and college kids spend their time on? Have you ever heard of *Twitter* and *Squidoo*?

ABOUT DAVID CARLETON

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If these words or websites are not in your current marketing vocabulary, then you and your company are missing out on one of the most important Internet phenomena since e-mail.

Social media marketing is a method of promoting your brand, product, service or company by making your presence known through a variety of social media networks. It is much more viral than traditional forms of marketing because users now become content producers by posting blogs, writing articles, leaving short comments and messages. This relatively new marketing allows you to enter the minds of your consumers and prospects and have a real conversation and/or tell them a story about your company, products or services.

Marketing is no longer a one-way conversation. Consumers are talking back in record numbers and giving their opinions on everything from politics to music, to what they buy and who they buy it from. Now, almost anyone can produce and publish articles, pictures and videos and send them out to a global audience within a matter of seconds with the push of a button and for zero cost!

The bottom line is that consumers trust referrals from friends more than they trust advertising. In this case, friends are those they've met and built a relationship with within their specific community or network. And even if they've never met, a bond and level of trust has been established over time with multiple interactions and online conversations.

Social media websites are changing where consumers are getting their information before, during and after they buy products and services. According to a 2008 Harris Interactive Poll, 54 percent of Americans do not trust the media. In a different study conducted by Nielsen, 78 percent of survey respondents said they trusted, either completely or somewhat, the recommendations of other consumers.

There are now more ways than ever to build your brand, reach out and "touch" customers and prospects, drive traffic to your business and, of course, increase sales.

The problem? Many companies have preconceived notions about social networking that is preventing them from taking advantage of what could make a huge difference to their bottom line. It's time to demystify social media marketing.



SOCIAL MEDIA MYTH 1:
Social Sites Are Just For Teenagers

Nothing could be further from the truth. While there are some sites like MySpace and others that originally were created to cater exclusively to teenagers, many of them are now attracting older participants.

And although there are literally thousands of social sites out there today, once you determine the goals and objectives of your social media efforts, you'll be able to narrow down the list to a select few that might cater to your target market.



SOCIAL MEDIA MYTH 2:
Social Media is Just a Fad

When the Internet first arrived on the scene, it was all about providing information and selling "stuff." And while that is still a large part, Web 2.0 is all about users interacting with each other and consumer generated content.

When six out of the top 10 websites in the world are social sites and they are getting one billion visitors a month and growing, I guarantee this is not a fad. This is Web 2.0, the future! And the best part is you have the opportunity to learn about it and get involved in it while it is still relatively new.



SOCIAL MEDIA MYTH 3:
Social Strategies Are Just for Big Companies

The Internet is the great equalizer. You are what your customers and prospects see, hear and read online. If you make great products or provide great services and you can reach the right audience through a compelling social media strategy, then your company will benefit from more exposure, higher brand awareness and, of course, increased sales.

My advice is not to worry about what the big boys are doing; do what you need to do to grow your business and believe me, you need to be doing social media marketing. Social media is a great "guerilla marketing" tool that you can take advantage of and start reaping the benefits from very quickly.



SOCIAL MEDIA MYTH 4:
Social Media Marketing will Cost Loads of Money to Implement

The good news is that creating and implementing a social media marketing plan does not have to cost a lot of money. As a matter of fact, most social media websites cost nothing to join.

Now don't get me wrong, as with anything, you'll certainly have to devote an adequate amount of time and resources to be effective, but in actual hard dollars and cents, your investment can be quite minimal.



SOCIAL MEDIA MYTH 5:
Social Media Marketing is Primarily Used for Finding Friends and Sharing Videos and Photos

While YouTube, Flickr, Facebook and other similar sites are indeed used to find friends and share experiences, photos and videos, many savvy marketers also are finding that they can connect with groups, users, fans and enthusiasts.

How? By providing free information that members might find useful or enhance their experiences. These types of sites should not be overlooked as a way to open two-way dialogs with your target market.



SOCIAL MEDIA MYTH 6:
You Have to be a Marketing Whiz or Computer Geek to Effectively Use Social Media

Once again, not true. If you can surf the Internet, buy a book on AMAZON.COM and read blogs, you have the skills needed to benefit from social media. Frankly, the most important thing you need to help your company get involved in social media marketing is the desire to learn and the time to implement some very basic ideas and strategies.

Now, are there more advanced features on some of these sites? Sure, but even those can be applied by just asking current users or reading instructions that many of the sites themselves provide. I'm telling you, this is not rocket science!

The bottom line? It's time to develop and implement your own social media marketing plan before your competitors do. ■

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This quote was taken from a series of responses for Why I Read SpaRetailer.



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