



Using **Social Media** to Extend Your Email Marketing Campaign Effectiveness

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Great Together

Social media networks such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *LinkedIn* are generating a lot of hype in the marketing world as new ways of reaching and communicating with customers, members, donors, and anyone else you come in contact with. While this might sound a lot like the goal of email marketing, social media is not a wholesale replacement for email; rather, social media can be used to complement an email strategy by reaching out to customers wherever they happen to be and opening more avenues of communication with them.

A September 2009 report by the Nielsen Company shows that people who are heavy users of sites like Facebook and Twitter actually use email more than casual social network users do.

Why is this? Social media networks like Facebook allow you to set your preferences so an email is sent whenever someone comments on something you post, or on a friend's post that you may have commented on. You can also get notified when someone sends you a private message within the confines of Facebook. Similarly, Twitter sends an email update every time someone new decides to "follow" you, and when you receive a direct (private) message from another user.

For you, as an email marketer, this presents some good news: All of this activity drives people into their email inbox. The more email people get, the more they're going to be checking their inboxes. And the more they check their inboxes, the more chances they have to see your email messages.

This is just one way in which social media helps and increases email use. In this guide, we'll explain some of the basics of social media, and show you how you can use these tools in tandem with email to create a more effective marketing mix.



Getting Started with Social Media

If you're having trouble getting your head around what "social media" is, how to "friend" people on Facebook, and "follow" people on Twitter, let's first take a step back from the email marketing/social media integration path for a brief primer on what social media is.

Social media networks are essentially semi-closed communities that require an account to post information to them. We say these networks are "semi-closed" because some information and pages posted in the communities, such as a Facebook Fan Page or postings to Twitter, can be viewed by non-account holders.

While there are hundreds of social media networks out there, the big three people focus on are Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. For the purposes of this guide, we'll focus on them too.

Facebook

Facebook is the largest of the social networks, with more than 400 million users — more than the population of the entire United States. It is also the most multimedia-friendly of the big three; members can post text, pictures, audio, and video.

Users sign up for an account, then can make connections with other users on the site by "friending" them: When you find someone you know on Facebook, you request to be their friend. If the request is accepted, you can see that person's profile information, status updates, photos, and more (which is why you wouldn't want to be "friends" with someone you don't actually know). Your friends in turn can see your profile, status updates, and photos, as well. If you don't want to share all your information with all your friends (for example, if you connect with coworkers or family members), there are more granular privacy settings available to limit who can see what information you post.

More important for business users of Facebook are Groups and Fan Pages. Groups allow like-minded people to join and share information through public message boards. Fan Pages allow a business to set up an information hub that other users can become "fans" of. Anyone can build a Fan Page. You don't have to be an actor, musician, or politician to have fans on Facebook, and you don't have to be accepted to be a fan. These pages are the preferred method for most businesses and organizations to reach Facebook users because a business owner or nonprofit manager can use them to share information with fans, and the pages are public-facing (though only Facebook members can become fans).



Constant Contact's Fan Page is at <http://www.facebook.com/constantcontact>.

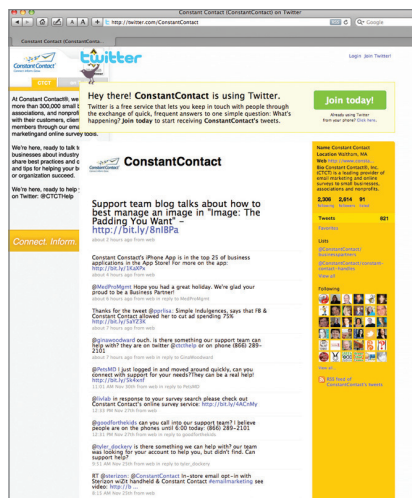
Getting Started with Social Media

Twitter

Twitter is one of the fastest growing social media networks, with an estimated 70 million users as of November 2009. Twitter's philosophy is simple: Users can post 140-character status updates that are viewable by anyone "following" their Twitter stream. On Twitter, the follower relationship is not two-way; you don't have to wait for someone to approve your follow request and vice versa.

Your Twitter updates are public as well, meaning non-Twitter users can still view them. For instance, the Constant Contact Twitter feed is at <http://twitter.com/constantcontact> (@constantcontact is our Twitter "handle"). Even without an account, you can use that link to see all our updates.

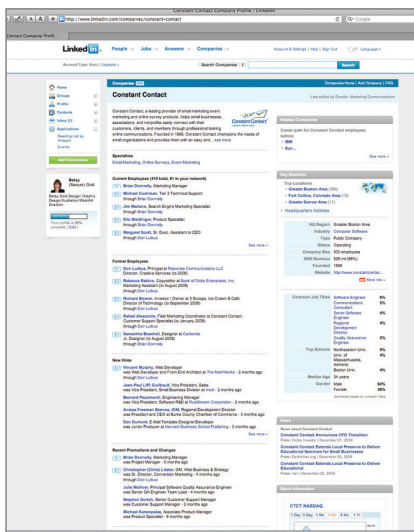
When you follow someone on Twitter, you'll see his or her status updates in real time on your private Twitter home page, along with updates from everyone else you follow. If you follow many people, this can create a bit of "noise," especially if those people are heavy users of the site. That said, the beauty of Twitter from a business perspective is the ability to search all updates for a certain term or phrase as the search spans the entire public Twittersphere and not just your followers. (This is especially useful when looking to keep tabs on customer service issues.)



twitter

Constant Contact's corporate Twitter handle is @constantcontact, at <http://www.twitter.com/constantcontact>

Getting Started with Social Media



Constant Contact's LinkedIn page is at <http://www.linkedin.com/companies/constant-contact>.

LinkedIn

The third of the big three, LinkedIn is one of the more professional of the social networks. Individual users' profiles are tantamount to an online resume (complete with recommendations and endorsements) and, like Facebook, connections between users must be confirmed by both parties. Businesses and organizations can have profile pages as well that outline the who, what, and where of their operations.

Two of the biggest benefits of LinkedIn are the community and question areas, which tend to be more professional in nature than those found on Facebook or Twitter. Answering questions in your area of expertise can help establish you and your business or organization as experts.

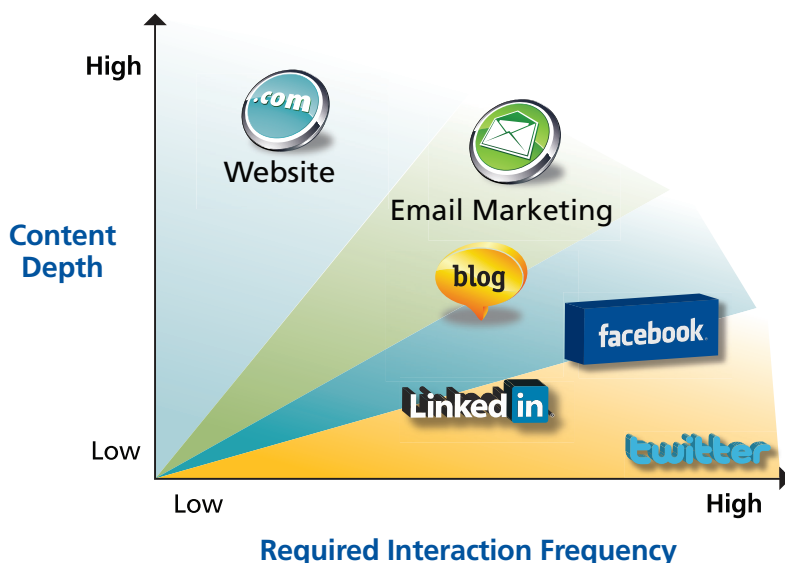
Get Signed up

If you don't already have accounts on these three major social media networks, you should sign up. Even if you don't plan to use any or all of the networks right away, they're free, so there's no financial barrier to entry. Additionally, signing up will make sure you reserve your company's name in case you decide to use the sites in the future.

It's recommended that you keep your professional and personal online personas separate, so you have the freedom to share family photos and other personal things just with people you know, and your customers can only see things that relate to your business or organization. To do this, you may want to create separate business and personal accounts on the networks you plan to use. Facebook users should also set up a Fan Page as soon as possible, if only to keep your company's name reserved for later purposes.

Integrating Email and Social Media

Now that you have a better understanding of how the various social networks operate, let's take a look at them in another way.



This chart illustrates how the various social networks that we've covered here and your email marketing program relate. As you can see, sites like Facebook and Twitter do require more frequent updating than your blog or email marketing do, but they also often have less compelling content. At the same time, Facebook and Twitter are more viral than a blog or email marketing, but a blog or email marketing creates a deeper customer relationship.

To most effectively strengthen your relationships, it's best to use social media in tandem with your email marketing efforts. Here are eight ways to extend the reach of your content and act as a

source of new information for your email recipients.

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Let the world know: "We're on Facebook and Twitter!"

Once your accounts are established and you're comfortable using the social media networks, begin telling the world about your new online presence. Add links to your social media accounts to your email newsletter and in your regular email signature. Put the same links on your website and, if you have one, your blog, as well.

Users of social media networks are always looking for like-minded people and companies to "friend" and follow. If you're participating in the same networks, there's a good chance people will become a fan or follow you. The more places you link from, the more likely people will find you on your social networks of choice.

To learn more about social media, visit us at:
www.ConstantContact.com/SocialMediaResources

Integrating Email and Social Media

Grow your email contact list

Just as you can use your outgoing emails as a way to advertise your social network accounts, you can use social media to add subscribers to your email contact list.

A few easy ways to do this:

- Occasionally, ask your Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn followers if they want to be on your email list, and provide them with a link to your newsletter signup page. Keeping with good marketing practices, you'll want to keep straight pleas to join your list to a minimum. If all your updates to Facebook and Twitter say "Sign up for my list," then you won't have many followers. Keep the pitches to a bare minimum, and let the content you post be your sales pitch.
- A good way to entice new signups is to tease an upcoming issue of your newsletter a few days before it's sent. For example, if your monthly newsletter goes out on a Thursday, post a quick headline or synopsis of that month's main article on Monday or Tuesday, and tell people that if they want the information, they'll have to sign up by Wednesday night to get this hot content.
- Similarly, you can post a snippet from one of your newsletter articles and tell your fans and followers that if they want to read the rest, they will have to sign up for your newsletter.
- You can embed a Join My Mailing List signup box on your Facebook Fan page, blog, or just about any other site that allows embeddable HTML code.

Integrating Email and Social Media

Extend the life of your content

A lot of thought, effort, and time go into creating and publishing the content for each issue of your newsletter, so why limit distribution to one method? If your newsletter content is permanently accessible via a URL (either through an email archive or posted on your website), post that URL to your Facebook pages, Twitter, LinkedIn, and any other network where your company has a presence.

Posting your content to your social networks provides a couple key benefits. First, the links back to your website help boost traffic and your search engine rankings (the more links from outside sources, the better), meaning that your business or organization's website will show up higher in the results when someone goes to look for you on Google or another search site. Second, it puts your content in a place where it can be easily shared and passed along. That gets it in front of people who are not already on your email list, and can help drive new subscribers.

For those who are worried about cannibalizing their email list by posting content elsewhere, know that you can always delay your social media posts until a few days after the email has gone out — providing a window of exclusivity to newsletter subscribers.

Use social networks as a source for new content

Social media networks can be a way for you to answer customer questions. For example, we here at Constant Contact are always monitoring Twitter for what customers are saying about us or where they may need our assistance. Your own customers might be saying or asking similar things about your business, service, or product. After all, one of the most common uses of social media is asking common customer service-type questions.

Obviously, when a customer asks a question through one of these social media sites (whether directly or indirectly), you should answer them as promptly and directly as possible. For example, on Twitter, you should use the person's Twitter handle in your reply so it shows up on the person's Twitter home page. But don't end the "conversation" there. Use the question and your original answer as a newsletter topic to share with the rest of your email newsletter recipients. Chances are good the answer will be relevant to more than just the one customer who asked the question.

Integrating Email and Social Media

Use social networks as a source for new content (cont.)

One thing you can do in addition is repost the question to your social networks and direct people to your newsletter for the answer (for example, “A customer recently asked when we’re getting new merchandise. Check out the next issue of our newsletter for the answer” and then include a link to your website where they can sign up). A single question from a social media fan then becomes content for your newsletter and a lure for new subscribers.

As you’re building your network, maybe the number of customers asking questions or specifically commenting about your business or organization is limited. That doesn’t mean the social media content well is dry. Watch the networks for hot topics and trends in your industry. Use that information as a source for article content. Talk about the trend, how it affects your customer base, and what you can do to help.

Mention in your article that you saw people talking about this on Twitter or Facebook, and be sure to put a plug for your own accounts on the services as another means of making your customers aware of your presence on these networks.

Get feedback from your social network circles

When trying to decide between a couple of good article ideas for your next newsletter, if you are not sure which will appeal more to your customers, you can ask your social networking circle for quick feedback.

Post the question to your Facebook News Feed or Fan Page. Ask your Twitter followers which of the articles they’d like to see. (Remember to do so in 140 characters or less). Use the response generated to make the final decision on which article to use. You may even get a few other ideas for future articles along the way.

Integrating Email and Social Media

Continue the cycle

Chances are good your newsletter content will elicit some comments and feedback from your Facebook and Twitter networks. Why not feature them in the next issue of your newsletter?

In your issue, let readers know that they can share their thoughts on Facebook or Twitter (or wherever you want them to), and that you'll share the "best" comments in the next issue. That will encourage reader participation and give you content for the next issue that you won't even have to write.

Blogging for content

Blogs may not be the first thing you think of when the term social media is mentioned, but they can play an important part of your overall content strategy. It's important to remember that a blog is merely a publishing platform that makes it easy to get content onto the Web. A blog's content does not have to be just opinion or just news. It can be used to easily share just about any type of content with your audience.

How does this help you in your email marketing efforts? For newsletter authors who find they have a lot of content ideas through the month, but come up blank when it comes time to produce the newsletter, writing a regularly updated blog can be of help. As an idea strikes, capture your thoughts in a blog post. When it comes time to put together your email, the blog becomes a well of usable content that can be copied, pasted, and linked to from your newsletter.

Alternatively, your blog can act as an archive for your newsletter content. Paste your articles into your blog platform as a means of saving and linking from your social media networks.

With either use case, a regularly updated blog will help with search engine optimization efforts as it provides fresh content for web crawlers and more potential links to your site.

Integrating Email and Social Media

Get your followers to refer you

Word of mouth mentions of your business is a main tenet of referral marketing. As a customer, when someone you deem trustworthy posts a link to something on a social network, chances are good you will click on that link and maybe even share it with your own network of friends and followers. Having your loyal customers and members serve as evangelists for your business or organization via social networking is the ultimate in referral marketing.

Obviously, putting out good content is key if you want people to forward and share your posts and links with their circle of friends. But sometimes, people need to be told to forward or share your content. Say you own a restaurant that's offering half-priced appetizers tonight. In your Tweet or Facebook post announcing the special, tell people to spread the word by "Retweeting" (or RT) through Twitter and sharing it on Facebook.

Of course, just like it's a good idea to keep the "sign up for my email list" pleas to a few posts, it's also good social network etiquette to keep the "please Retweet/share" requests to a minimum. Following the 80/20 Rule is a good baseline, with 80% of your messaging educational in nature and only 20% a sales pitch.

Email and Social Media: **Interact With Customers on Their Terms**

With the explosion of social networks, blogs, and other Internet technologies, the number of ways we can meaningfully interact with our customers is growing exponentially. Customers who use social media networks expect the companies they do business with to have a presence and be active in the same networks. And each method — email marketing, social media, blogs, websites, etc. — feeds the others.



As a devotee of email marketing, you're already interacting with customers via their inbox. Using the steps outlined in this guide, you can leverage your existing content to interact with customers in social networks and beyond.

To learn more about social media, visit us at:
www.ConstantContact.com/SocialMediaResources

