

## Building Social Media Support



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You've started the Facebook page and like manna from heaven, thousands of social media users are flocking to your corporate page desperate to become your fan. Think this is how it will work with social media? Then think again.

Let's take the example of a well-known high-street discounting department store. According to results released in July 2009, there are over 19m Facebook users in the UK alone. As of January 2009, there were just 1,358 people who were 'fans' of this store on Facebook. Why? Because the retail chain under discussion is making the same mistake that so many other companies are making when it comes to creating a social media profile – they are giving little to no added value.

You have to put yourself in the shoes of the consumer. Back in the days of junk mail, the consumer would often toss out ads before they even opened the envelope. You were lucky if they looked at the leaflet and luckier still if they acted on it. Then came fax, email and SMS campaigns. At first, they were successful but over time spamming infiltrated each of these formats and messages were deleted or erased before you could say 'block sender'.

A social media site should be the equivalent of the last episode of Friends or a ticket to Michael Jackson's memorial – it should be something people are desperate to be a part of and considered unmissable by users. This can be achieved in a number of ways:

1. Content

Create content that makes people want to be your fan so they can access it. Don't release it anywhere else to ensure that only fans and followers can get their hands on it...no matter how tempting it might be to leak it to traditional media targets. And make sure to deliver the content in a variety of formats. Your users have iPhones, iPods and portable computers – so static typed messages aren't going to cut it. Conduct podcast interviews with knowledgeable staff and respected outsiders. If you have a celebrity endorser, leverage the relationship by having them create a vlog. To see how it's done right, take a look at [Very.co.uk](http://Very.co.uk). Fearne Cotton and Holly Willoughby are interviewed and provide their picks exclusively for users of Very's social network. You can only get the content if you join the network. The result? A batch of consumers who you can target messaging to.

2. Exclusives

Reward your fans with exclusive offers and information. Have you got a new batch of widgets coming to the shop? Tell fans a week ahead to give them first crack at purchasing. Offer an exclusive discount to them and measure the success by using specific voucher codes.

Consumers will be sure to join and keep checking back to see if that next hot deal has been posted...and they'll also tell all their friends to join too so that their social network doesn't miss out on opportunities.

### 3. Interaction

The key word in the term social media is 'social'. People use social media sites to network, chat and as a leisure pastime. If your fans aren't commenting on your posts then you aren't saying anything of interest to them and you'll need to adjust your tone. Additionally, if they are commenting and you aren't saying anything in return, then your fans will quickly assume that you don't care about them. Social media is all about the personal experience. Take advantage of this opportunity to get to know your consumer. You may be surprised by what they have to say.

For Facebook, all of the three factors listed above are weighted about equally. In the case of Twitter; however, interaction flies to the top in terms of importance.

Companies that tweet news feeds and strands should be instantly deleted and banished from the Twitosphere. What is the point of them? Essentially they are just placing an RSS feed on Twitter and expecting the masses to whoop with joy. Sure, they may get followers but with the stream of Twitter moving at a fast pace – do they really think anyone is reading their stories? And in most cases, they aren't following anyone....Big mistake number two. Any regular Twitter user will either assume you're a spammer or decide you don't care about them. Where's the social in that?

Follow people of influence and see what they have to say. Interact with them and talk about your brand in a conversational tone. Get involved when they're discussing a topic – even if it has nothing to do with you. They'll then follow you and (hopefully) bring their network of followers along for the ride. The result? Increased SEO, a network of influencers interested in what you and your brand have to say and inbuilt support for your product.