



Honey's Guide to
**SOCIAL
MEDIA**

HOW TO CREATE **BUZZ** FOR YOUR BRAND

[Get Started...](#)



Welcome to the New World!

Nowadays it seems you can't go anywhere or do anything without coming face-to-face with a social media site. It's obvious they're powerful marketing and outreach tools on many different levels and it's tempting to just dive in and start using them right away—but what do you really know about them? That's where we come in. We've composed this guide to help you understand social media and how to incorporate it into your business once we've got you on your way.



What is Social Media?

The term “social media” is a convenient, all-encompassing way to describe vastly different forms of online social interaction—which often results in confusion. Social media today is comparable to the Internet circa 1997: exciting and full of possibilities--and unknowns.

Savvy businesses knew they needed to get in the game by owning the right URL and getting their brands front and center online. They also knew they had to start learning. They had to become educated about the technology, about the online community and its behaviors and, most of all, about the possibilities.

The world of social media consists of web-based venues, services and applications. These allow content sharing, collaboration, creation of user-generated content and social linking and interaction. Blogs, micro-blogs, wikis, message boards and networking sites are just a few examples of the social media at your disposal. While these can be written off as fun ways for people to spend their days, now more than ever they’re proving very versatile tools for businesses. From outreach to gathering market intelligence and burnishing brand reputation, social media can help build visibility for your website and other brand-related content.



Social Media Landscape



With so many different aspects and facets of social media, it's easy to be overwhelmed initially. It's hard to imagine your company will need—or utilize—all of the different opportunities social media offers. That's why we're here, to show you all the features and benefits of incorporating social media into your company's future.

Features & Benefits



Be Seen & Gain Credibility

On the simplest level, most forms of social media provide ways to get more presence for brands in media – a kind of presence that is self-replicating.

Additionally, when you use social media your brand gains credibility by securing a place in a cutting edge media environment.



Conquer Search

Activity in social media, and the frequent addition of content in social media, boosts search engine prominence. This is the key to Social Media Optimization (SMO) – the process of increasing the visibility of brands and websites online in order to produce more presence and relevance in web searches.



Be Smart: Get Access

Even if you're not interested in the world of social media, the world of social media is interested in you! Generally speaking, it's full of free-flowing discussion and opinions often stated in an entertaining fashion. As such, it provides a virtually free source of market intelligence with a population sample size that is often impressive.



Be Smarter: Be Accessible

Using social media can provide low-cost ways to reach out to your audience and learn what's on their minds. It can also provide opportunities for brand reputation management by informing the public, correcting misperceptions and responding to criticism in a "public" forum.

Specific Types of Social Media



Facebook

Boasting 400 million active users, Facebook is the busiest social networking site in the U.S. and one of the busiest in the world. It allows members to post profiles, links, personal updates and musings and upload photos and videos. Most importantly, it enables users to link to the profiles of 'friends', or other users who mutually agree to be part of each other's personal networks. Facebook members average 130 friends and typically spend nearly an hour on the site per day. More than 5 billion links, posts, images and other content items are shared each week on Facebook.

Keep It Short and Simple: Audience building, versatility.



Twitter

Sometimes called "micro-blogging," Twitter is a site on which users can post 140-character "tweets" that are accessible anywhere. While one analysis recently reported that 40% of the content on Twitter is "pointless babble," others use it to post news of accomplishments, succinct musings, links, promotions and tersely stated news a la' the Times Square news ticker. For the reader, Twitter is considered a convenient place to quickly scan headlines. This makes it a place for marketers to write great headlines and drive readers to more in-depth and engaging content.

Keep It Short and Simple: Quick, both to post and to read.



Linked-in

LinkedIn has often been referred to as "Facebook for grown-ups." Primarily designed for business networking, it has well over 50 million users. It's a place for individuals to have a web presence that pops up at the top of searches, and also a place for professionals to be recommended by credible peers. LinkedIn also provides a 'groups feature' that enhances networking by industry, professional interest or other associations.

Keep It Short and Simple: Visibility.

Specific Types of Social Media



YouTube

YouTube is a revolutionary web medium that allows users to post videos on the web to be streamed and viewed easily with a broadband connection. The site also provides space for comments by viewers who have signed in to the site. YouTube contains both amateur content and material created by major networks, and provides the ability for individual and corporate users to create their own branded channels within the site. TV commercials, news reports and other video content from television are frequently viewed on YouTube with frequency often outpacing the original broadcast.

Keep It Short and Simple: Relevant and Resonant Win the Day!



Flickr

Flickr is a site for sharing photos and videos. Users can create networks within the site and link images posted there to blogs and micro-blogs. Flickr also provides the ability to organize "collections" and "albums" thematically and provide textual information about the images. The site also provides image-editing tools for cropping, sizing and color correcting photos.

Keep It Short and Simple: Content handling and sharing



Wikipedia

Wikipedia is a continually updated online encyclopedia and is generally quite accurate. However, because anyone can edit and contribute to its content, it is vulnerable to errors, biases and, in some cases, the inclusion of malicious content. It is, nonetheless, widely seen and widely used. Wikipedia is the most known example of the Wiki, which provides easy collaboration and offers a variety of rules for editing and contributing content.

Keep It Short and Simple: Collaborative knowledge.

Specific Types of Social Media



Blogs.

"Blogs", short for "weblogs", are generally self-publishing media intended to be less formal than more traditional forms of publication. They can appear on the writer's personal website or be hosted by services such as Blogger, Wordpress, Typepad and LiveJournal. Of the top 100 blogs on the net, Wordpress is the most popular, followed by Typepad.

Most blogs are comprised of commentary and personal opinion, while the rest are simply online diaries. External corporate blogs, however, often function as platforms for broad-scale corporate communications outreach while providing a more personal touch, and allowing quick publication. A particularly effective characteristic of blogs is their utility in expressing the attitude of the author-- a potent brand differentiator.

Keep It Short and Simple: Versatility and speed to market.



How to Get Started



Create a Presence in Social Media—NOW!

Establish an initial presence for your brand using Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, Wikipedia, Flickr, blogs and so on in appropriate venues. Be polite--introduce yourself. Then pay close attention to what happens next and be ready to respond. Don't forget, your own website is often the best social media venue of all as a home for message boards, discussion groups and blogs.



Look Out for Your Brand

Social media venues, whatever they may be, are still 'media' in every sense of the word. Using social media is a bit like running an online publication, and it requires ongoing management of language, strategy, design and legal issues. When you use social media, you will still be "going public" when you establish yourself in them and start using them. That presents both risks and rewards and requires ongoing management, commitment, and quality control as well as the ability to improvise. It's easy to be seduced by the looseness and casual quality of social media, but you're still engaging in corporate communications that must be thoroughly developed and appropriately vetted.



Develop a Plan With a Clear Objective

Normally, in traditional marketing communications, you'd first figure out who you need to reach and who is worth your time and money to engage. Next, you'd decide which social media are appropriate by learning about who uses what medium, how and why. Then, you develop the right content for each audience.

How to Get Started *(cont.)*



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Practice Makes Perfect

Every piece of marketing communications is a hypothesis that must be tested. There is no absolute knowledge in marketing, or anywhere else for that matter. So experiment and learn. Take some calculated risks and do a lot of exploration. Sometimes, the most effective thing you can do in interactive media is to simply ask direct questions of your audience.

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The Operative Word in “Social Media” is “Social” . . .Embrace it!

Research can be expensive, time consuming and often far from definitive, but never underestimate its worth and usefulness. Don't shy away from relying on solid data pertinent to your demographics' attitude and behavior. Social network analysis will prove particularly useful as you explore your social media decisions more thoroughly.

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Set Your Networking Sights High

One of the best uses of social network analysis is the ability to seek out integral influences in the community you're interested in. These all-important members of online social groups are sources of expertise and advice people trust. Win over one influence and gain ten individuals who follow them by proxy.

How to Get Started *(cont.)*



Knowledge is Half the Battle

Simply monitoring what is going on in social media – the conversations taking place and opinions that appear in relevant places – can be the most valuable thing of all. Discussions, comments and ratings in social media allow you to learn directly from customers and identify opportunities. There's always the possibility of biases and questionable validity, but it's an increasingly broad window into markets and audiences. That's why it's really much more important to listen than it is to speak in social media, and why it's as important to ask questions as it is to make statements in these venues.



Be a Credible, Reliable Source—Not More Fluff

Relevance is key. Be targeted, be focused and be useful. Avoid speculation and highly subjective commentary in favor of hard facts and useful links. Empty words will soon be ignored words. As in any communication, what matters is quality, not quantity. And when readers see that you took the time to write something, they know it must be worthy of attention. Finally, try and keep things warm and personal — that's what these forms of media are really all about.



Play Nice With Others

Internet users are no longer passive consumers of content, they create content. Brands are no longer defined solely by marketers, but by the opposing forces of both consumers and marketers. So be prepared to engage in an interactive relationship with your consumers. Comments in blogs and other community media are valuable sources of market insight and a first step to engagement and acquisition.

Always remember to share! Be open with the ownership of your content as much as possible -- in particular, letting others use it in their content via links and RSS. It's how you get your brand DNA circulating and more recognition.



How to Get Started *(cont.)*



Be Omnipresent

Start promoting your presence in social media online and offline. Include your blog URL, Twitter URL and other web presences in emails and on your web page. Print them on your business cards, in brochures, on websites and in print ads. Sure, people do stumble their way onto blogs and Twitter pages, but that's not what you want to rely on.



How We Do It...

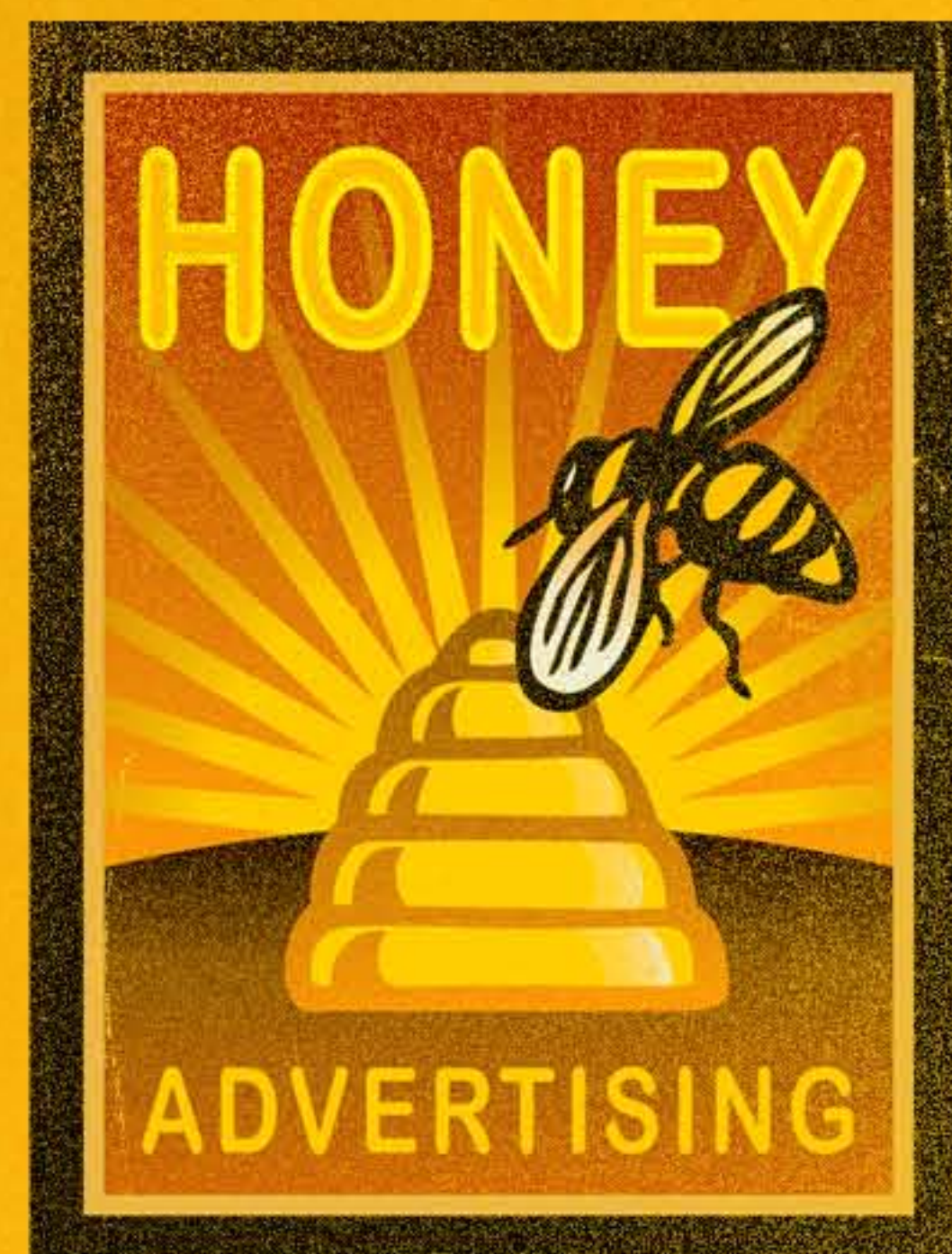
We introduce you in the right social media in the appropriate way.

This may include helping you start a blog on your site or a blog-hosting site like WordPress, Blogger, or TypePad, making initial entries on Facebook and Twitter or starting a Wikipedia page about your brand. We then assess the results of that introduction and plan for adjusting activity accordingly.

We develop and compose communications strategies based on knowledge of your audience that you have in hand and information we gather about specific social media venues.

We help you set up a process and an organization. Developing content for social media is a lot like running an online publication, you need a team of writers, editors, artists and producers. You also need a process for quality control and, in many cases, legal approvals or review by professionals in engineering, medicine and so on. We'll work with you to establish a "point person" (or people) for managing and producing content for social media and we'll assist you in putting the pieces in place -- with the help of our own writers, designers and technologists.

We keep learning too. We help you set up a process that helps us all learn from social media and how to make it work for your brand.



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