



Social media marketing:
A 5-step strategy to attract more social users and increase your ROI

Executive Summary

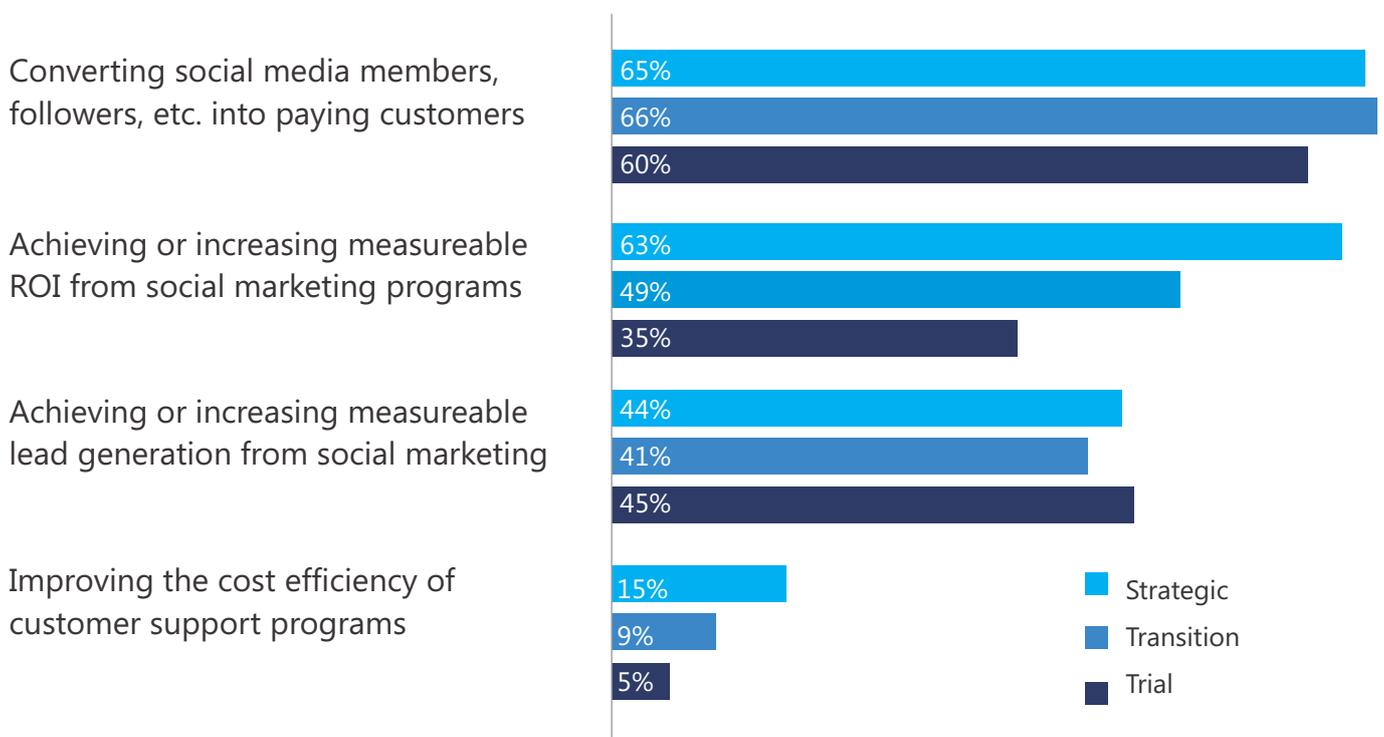
Social Media has become an integral part of today's marketing mix and few marketers would dispute the benefits of managing their brand presence in real time and at no cost across many social media networks.

Through blog posts, YouTube, Facebook fan pages, Twitter or other properties, organizations constantly increase the scope of their social media campaigns.

The share of social media spending of the overall marketing budget is expected to reach 10,1% in 1 year's time.

The CMO Survey,
cmosurvey.org, August 2011

However, the natural growth of this channel is followed by an incremental increase in marketing time and cost. In today's economic climate many organizations are forced to scrutinize these investments compared to other forms of customer acquisition. As a result, marketers must establish clear goals for their social media efforts and these goals can no longer be tied to vague metrics (for example, "followers" or "likes"). In fact, MarketingSherpa's 2011 report demonstrates that social media savvy CMO's are emphasizing business outcomes based on their social efforts.¹



The chart shows CMO's social media priorities by social marketing maturity phase.

¹MarketingSherpa 2011 Social Marketing Benchmark Report, 2011.

What is the conversion potential of social media and to what extent can this channel be monetized?

The RoI potential of social media

Social media has significant conversion potential. Recent studies reveal that shoppers who purchase after interacting with a brand on social media websites spend more money on its products than those who reached the website through a search engine: ²

Channel	Conversion rate	Average order value
Twitter	0.5%	\$121.33
Yahoo	2.6%	\$105.13
Bing	2.4%	\$104.62
Facebook	1.2%	\$102.59
Google	1.9%	\$100.16

Naturally, B2C brands tend to profit more than B2B brands due to the comparatively shorter sales cycles and lower prices. However, the latter can still be monetized through a careful social media strategy that brings the brand closer to their targeted audience and awakens the genuine interest of their active online community.

The following five steps will help organizations of any size build a social media strategy that is focused on driving customer engagement and increasing sales revenue.

Step 1: Identify the most active social media users in your industry

A strong community of hyper-active social media users can be found in any industry. These users frequently have strong industry and product knowledge, and a huge army of social followers. Given their professional expertise and mature social networks, these users have the highest potential to set market trends and influence opinions. If you manage to spark their interest and turn them into advocates, they will bring credibility to your brand and positively impact your social media sales revenue.

²MarketingProfs, „Shoppers via Social Sites Buy Less Often, but Spend More“, 23 September 2011

To identify these users, search for relevant conversations across all social media platforms. A number of free tools can help you scan the web:

- [Google Alerts](#) - finds mentions of your brand or related terms across the entire web;
- [TweetScan](#) - conducts searches across all Twitter posts;
- [Addictomatic](#) - produces a custom page summarizing the buzz around your brand or relevant keywords across all social media networks;
- [SocialMention](#) – provides an aggregated view of your brand across many social channels.

Conducting a personal research on the web for mentions of relevant websites, products and companies is another method to find active supporters of your brand. It is recommended that you join the biggest industry forums, participate in the most commented threads, and engage in conversations with their authors. Another effective tactic is to locate blogs that relate to your organization's industry, and subscribe to their RSS feeds.

This is the approach which for example Microsoft Corporation used to understand and manage customer expectations on their marketplace. They scanned the web for conversations about their products, services, pricing models and programs, and identified the leaders who influenced the prevailing opinions. Microsoft then invited these users to become part of a special program which provided them with lots of information and internal benefits, thus, positioning them as insiders. As a result of converting these users into special brand advocates, Microsoft gained access to over 2000 active online communities discussing their products, and effectively managed their expectations.³

Step 2: Instill an emotional attachment to your brand

Once you know who your targeted social media users are, try to attract and keep their attention to your company and brand. Take your time to follow up on their social conversations and understand their needs. Listen to what they expect from a brand similar to your own and what they personally value.

³MarketingProfs, „Case Study: Tips From Microsoft on Cultivating Customer Satisfaction & Loyalty on a Global Scale“, 9 June 2009

Use what you have learnt to initiate social communication. It is important that you do not blend with the crowd when building your social media presence. Try to „humanize“ your brand message: build a unique story around your corporate values, and reveal a human face and soul behind the brand name and slogan. Create a personal setting: one which is simultaneously positive, memorable, emotional, and has the highest potential to appeal to the current needs expressed across the social media platforms. Involve the customer in this experience and you will leave a lasting memory. Social media contests, community games, and surveys are but a few of the most popular ways to wake up your audience's genuine interest, and bring your brand message closer to them and their followers.

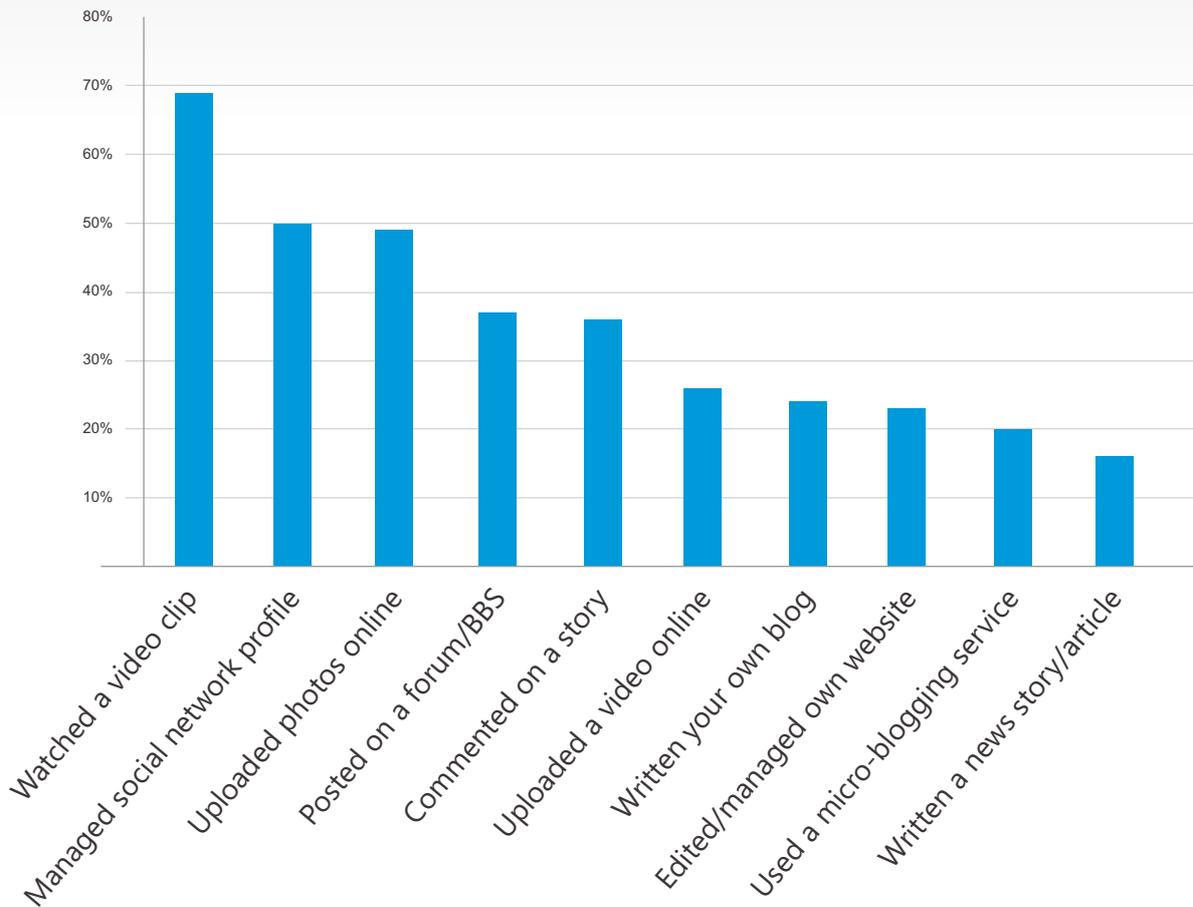
For example, this is the strategy which helped Kodak increase customer interaction, website traffic, and ultimately, sales. Kodak designed an online campaign called „Make Me Super“ which appealed to the superhero side of their users. The campaign was popularized through Facebook and multiple blogs. It prompted users to upload photos of themselves, friends or family members, and shortly after this they could watch a video in which the person on the photo starred as a superhero doing everyday tasks. On the page below the video users could see a catalog and purchase a product (mugs, playing cards, etc.) with their image on it. As a result of this campaign, Kodak doubled their website traffic to over 3 million visitors, and increased sales substantially.⁴

Step 3: Engage your social audience across multiple channels

With the proliferation of more and more social platforms, the path from brand awareness to sales is not linear. Upon hearing about your brand, the typical social consumer would not be in a hurry to proceed to a purchase. Instead, they are likely to read through relevant forums looking for opinions about your products, click on your Facebook fan page, search for a branded channel of yours on YouTube, or scan the web for company related news. Thus, by creating and leveraging multiple social media touchpoints, you will increase the possibility to engage with your potential customers wherever they congregate.

⁴MarketingProfs, „Case Study: How Kodak Generated Marvelous Results by Turning Users Into Superheroes“, 10 March 2009

Where is your targeted social audience? The below chart shows the typical user's social media activity⁵:



The chart displays the diversification of online activities of Internet users globally

As clearly evident, most online users tend to watch video clips, maintain a social network profile, comment on a story, or post in a forum. These are some of the most popular online activities, and they need to be reproduced in your multi-channel strategy.

IBM is one of the companies which have successfully implemented such strategy. Due to the financial crisis the registrations for their annual „IMPACT“ conference were severely threatened, so IBM decided to leverage multiple social media channels to promote the conference and boost registration rates. To that end they:

⁵GlobalWebIndex, Wave 5, August 2011

- Created an IMPACT LinkedIn group;
- Posted on Twitter with the #ibmimpact hashtag;
- Created a Facebook page devoted on the event, and linking to their Twitter account;
- Established a „Friends of IMPACT“ branded channel on YouTube, where their partners and customers uploaded videos with testimonials about the conference;
- Developed their own social network where users could exchange customized content and interact with peers from the same professional field.

Through this scalable campaign IBM raised the awareness about the conference, and achieved 10% increase in the registration rates.⁶

Step 4: Organize your social media strategy around your corporate website

No social media strategy is complete if it relies solely on external websites. To be really successful, it has to incorporate one more major property: your corporate website.

On the one hand, your website is the company hub where you develop your desired brand message and public image. Organizing your social strategy around it ensures that the secondary user-generated content will be in line with your corporate values. Try to create dynamic, engaging and quality content: social users love to spread the word for it, and it will stimulate them to come back to your website over and over again. You can also add social sharing buttons, so that only with a single click users can access any of your social media properties.

On the other hand, your website is the focal point where users congregate after their interaction with your brand on social media. You can harness the positive momentum and create continuity of experience in order to convert them into paying customers. Listen to their expectations on the social media platforms, and respond to their needs on your website. For instance, if Facebook users tend to “like” your brand and engage with your fan page as they expect a special discount⁷, then you can design a sales promo limited only to your loyal followers. In this, make sure to build a navigable and

⁶MarketingProfs, „Case Study: How IBM Offset the Impact of a Down Economy on Event Attendance“, 8 September 2009;

⁷The Meaning of „Like“, ExactTarget & CoTweet, September 2011

transparent conversion funnel channelling social leads seamlessly. It is important that on their way to purchase they do not get lost or confused across your website pages.

One of the most successful implementations of this approach is [Lady Gaga's online store](#). It allows you to sign in using directly your Facebook, Twitter or Google account, in which you are already logged. No additional registration is necessary and you can start your shopping experience immediately. At the same time, social sharing buttons across the homepage invite you to become Lady Gaga's social media fan. What is more, a second online store is waiting for you on Facebook, and according to the number of "likes" it is ranked as the most successful Facebook store.⁸

Social media consumers' expectations from your brand vary significantly. For example, among your Facebook followers:

- 58% expect to receive discounts and special promos;
- 58% expect to gain access to exclusive content;
- 47% expect to receive regular updates about your company, brand and products.

The Meaning of „Like“, ExactTarget & CoTweet, September 2011

Step 5: Measure the results and optimize for RoI

At the end of your campaign, take some time to evaluate the return on investment from each social media channel. This will help you identify the most profitable properties, and the ones which will need to be optimized for future campaigns.

Set benchmarks to compare the results and see which social media websites had the most significant impact on your sales and revenue. In the simplest scenario, you can use your website analytics for insights into the number of conversions and average purchase value of each social media channel.

Often, however, the decision for purchase comes after a user has interacted with your brand on multiple social media platforms. Most web analytics tools support multi-channel funnel reports which will help you analyze the goal conversion path, and will provide insights into the relative importance of each property for the final purchase.

⁸ Social Commerce Today, "Top 50 Facebook Stores, Top 20 Facebook Store Solutions", retrieved on 12 Dec 2011 from: <http://socialcommercetoday.com/top-50-facebook-stores-top-20-facebook-store-solutions/>

In addition to web analytics, you can also tie the social media data with your internal CRM system. This will enable you to monitor in a mid to longer run the activity of the social media leads. You can track customer retention and frequency of purchase, thus ensuring correct and complete evaluation of the performance of each social media channel.

Conclusion

Following the growing importance of social media, marketers need to come up with a clear strategy for maximizing their revenue and return on investment from this channel. Five steps can guide you through to this objective:

Step #1: Identify the social media users who are actively involved and engaged in all industry and brand-related social conversations. They are the ones who can sway market trends and bring you an army of loyal brand followers to convert into paying customers.

Step #2: Engage with these social users, rekindle their genuine interest, and give them the natural stimulus to spread your brand message across the social web.

Step #3: Leverage multi-channel touchpoints to attract users wherever they might be looking for your brand.

Step#4: Harness the power of your corporate website by placing it at the heart of your social media strategy. Design special sales and promos for your social audience, and make sure that every step of the conversion funnel is instrumental for the completion of the purchase.

Step #5: Measure the results and quantify the performance of each social media channel. This will give you detailed insights into the properties which bring the highest RoI, and will help you set the right priorities for the future campaigns.

Next steps: Manage your social media strategy with Sitefinity

With Sitefinity you can create a consistent, relevant experience across different marketing channels – your website, corporate blogs, email campaigns and social media properties.

Through the built-in tools you can:

- Manage multi-channel campaigns;
- Add social sharing buttons to your web pages;
- Manage the content and layout of existing social media properties;
- Automate the publishing process;
- Mash up content from multiple sources including external websites and blogs;
- Track conversions directly from the Sitefinity interface.

“The fact that we can post to Facebook, Twitter and YouTube directly from the CMS has made Sitefinity an amazingly easy system to use. Feedback on the website is mainly based on the design, which has been exceptionally positive, but only possible due the speed content can be generated, shared and deployed via the CMS.”

Rehan Butt, Director,
[Spin Box Media](#)

Read more at: <http://www.sitefinity.com/social-networking.aspx>

Get in touch with us to discuss your specific social media needs, and how Sitefinity can support your strategy: sales@sitefinity.com

About the Author

Petya Popova-Chilikova works as a Brand Manager in the Web Content Management division at Telerik, and has more than 5 years of experience. During her online marketing and advertising career she has worked with organizations from different industries, helping them develop successful strategies and maximize their return on investment on the Web. She is now sharing her lessons with others.

About Sitefinity

Sitefinity is a modern CMS platform designed to help organizations pursue their online goals. Today the system powers over 10,000 websites worldwide across various industries- from Financial and Government Services, to Communications, Retail, and Entertainment. Thanks to Sitefinity's flexible architecture and scalability, you can create successful commercial websites, community portals or intranets. Sitefinity offers a revolutionary easy-to-use interface, simplicity, scalability and unmatched performance – everything you need, beautifully crafted in one product.

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