



HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO GROW YOUR INTERIOR DESIGN BUSINESS

A solid social media strategy is no longer a “nice to have” but a “need to have” in an overcrowded and competitive marketplace. When I develop an online marketing plan for my clients, I begin with a solid and integrated strategy and end with a way to measure the value of the campaign. It’s important to remember that social marketing offers some powerful marketing and lead development tools but it is an ingredient in an overall online marketing strategy and not a magic bullet to cure all your marketing and sales woes.

When integrating social media marketing into your overall marketing mix, focus on two goals: increasing brand awareness and driving more targeted leads to your sales funnel. Here are some of the key elements needed to create an effective social media strategy that will deliver measurable results:

Website - Create a polished web presence and make sure your website is optimized for the search engines. Almost 88% of us begin research or a purchase decision using Google, Yahoo, Bing, or Ask. If your site isn’t showing up in local searches, you are handing leads to your competition. Hire a firm to do an audit of your site and check your search rank index. If budget won’t allow, sign your business up with Google Local, Yahoo Business, and DEMOZ. Add a “Share” button on your website, blog, newsletter, and all social media sites. This free feature will allow others to easily share your content and you can download at <http://tellafriend.socialtwist.com/index.jsp?fh>

Blog - A blog is the single most important element in a successful social media marketing program. Contributing valuable content each week will position you as a thought leader in your industry and can set you apart from your competition. Respect and trust are crucial to successful design projects, both from repeating clients and new ones. Sharing your know-how helps to develop your reputation as an expert in your field. It is also the first place the media will go if they are considering you for a story. It takes about an hour to post a blog each week and can be hosted on free blogging platforms like WordPress.com. Make sure there is design synergy between your website and your blog and streamline your time by repurposing posts into articles or content for newsletter.



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Use media sharing tools to showcase your work - Flickr, YouTube, Slideshare, and others are excellent vehicles to showcase your work to your network, prospects, current clients, and beyond. Flickr is a social photo sharing site that has an active user base. All image titles can be titled using keyword-rich text. This not only makes your work easy to find, it is great for search optimization. YouTube is another great way to showcase your expertise, upload customer testimonials, “before and after” images, walk-through’s etc. Slideshare is a free tool that will allow you to showcase a presentation, your portfolio, etc. These are efficient, free, and flexible platforms to showcase your work.

Create a fan page on Facebook - A fan page is really a business page and it is an excellent way to build a following and stay connected to clients, colleagues, and prospects. You can also supplement your Facebook presence by utilizing Facebook ads which is excellent for targeted and inexpensive ad placement. There are 400 million users on Facebook today - believe me, your clients and prospects are there too!

Start Tweeting - Twitter is a microblogging tool and is great at increasing awareness of your brand. Use this free and popular platform to talk up design problems solved, drive users to your blog or website, promote an event, or monitor what your competition is doing. Search.twitter.com is a very robust search engine and is a powerful lead development tool - start exploring the Twitter-sphere!

Expand your profile on LinkedIn - LinkedIn is a great way to get found by businesses looking for your services and it offers its own robust search engine that can open up a whole new world of business opportunities. Make sure to have a completed profile with a photo and a keyword-rich description of your background. You can also create a separate LinkedIn profile for your business. Another great tool to leverage is the the Slideshare app that will allow you to upload your portfolio an/or a presentation to your profile which is an excellent way to showcase your work and show up in search results.

Integrate all the moving parts - make sure you cross-promote your social presence on your website, in your email signature, on your newsletter, etc. It’s a good practice to add these links to other traditional marketing channels like direct mailers, trade ads, etc. You can also integrate all your social media on one platform such as HootSuite or Tweetdeck making posting to multiple channels a breeze!

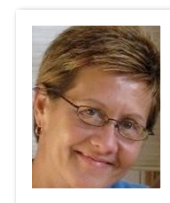


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Measure your results - Any marketing you do is worth measuring to make sure you are on course to reach the goals you set in your initial marketing strategy. Followers and Fans are nice but remember to measure what's meaningful like retweets, sharing of your content, web signups, and conversions. These metrics are the true measure of a successful campaign. There are many free applications and tools that will allow you to track the progress of your social media marketing. Google Analytics is one such tool that is easy to integrate and will track traffic to your web and social media sites. The reporting tool is very smart and can provide as much or as little information as you like.

>> ABOUT THE PRESENTER

Peg McDermott is a marketing communications expert. She is the founder of COGO, a leading-edge online marketing firm specializing in online marketing strategy, social media and search optimization. Peg is an Internet marketing strategist with a solid track record in web development and online marketing programs for clients in real estate, information technology, professional services and non-profit. Most recently, Peg served as Vice President for Ecdant Interactive where she played a key role in growing this start-up into one of the top 13 interactive marketing agencies in the Washington DC Metro. She has over 25 years of marketing, management, and sales experience and loves to put that experience to work for small businesses looking to grow their profits and develop a powerful marketing presence. All this and good manners too!



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