



Incorporating Social Media into Your Marketing Plan

Farmers Market Federation of New York

For a small business, there are many ways to build consumer interest online. People love discounts, yes, but that is not the only way to engage consumers (although it might be a good start). Showing “behind the scenes” on how your products are made, or how your business runs may be interesting and enjoyable to those online. You may also want to find a way to engage your audience by getting them involved online. For example, you can tell your Twitter followers to tweet their favorite farmers market food with a specific hashtag, or create an incentive for customers that go online and “like” your Facebook page. You may also have promotions or marketing plans of your own that you want to incorporate onto your online accounts. All of these things are possible, and if executed correctly, can be very successful.

Ways to maximize your message on social media sites:

Publish, Share, Connect. Any book will tell you that these are the three main elements of social media. First, you must **publish** content. Make a name for yourself on the web by publishing information that is useful to people. **Share** your information with others through your social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Stumbleupon, and more. **Connect** with others by finding your friends and connections offline in the online world, and expand from there. Make sure to execute these three steps when creating an online campaign.

Link your sites to everything. In order to have a powerful message, it needs to be recognized on many different platforms. Using YouTube to broadcast videos is great, but take it a step further. Post the YouTube video on your Facebook page, on your twitter, and on your website. Get it on Stumbleupon. Put the links to all of your sites on every site, and on everything you do offline, as well. People will not know your sites exist if you don’t tell them! To manage all your sites effectively and to link your sites together, see the Hoot Suite picture tutorial.

Track and analyze your results. Use the analytics/insights on social media sites to get a better understanding of where you stand. You can also use other sites like [Website grader](#), [Twitter grader](#), and [Facebook grader](#) to see your ranking, and where improvements must be made.

Things to Remember When Marketing Online

Social Media is like a Cocktail Party. You’ll find that this analogy is used quite often, because, frankly, it’s true. Think about how you act at a cocktail party—you are expected to engage in conversation, not just throw your business card out to the crowd. If you ever question if your online behavior is acceptable, think of the social rules you’d give yourself at a cocktail party, and apply them to the situation.

Know your audience and your goals. If you don’t know why you’re on social media sites, you shouldn’t be on them. Write down a goal or mission your organization wishes to reach, and what audience your organization targets. Keep them in mind when doing anything with social media. If your activity isn’t targeted towards those goals or that audience, then you need to revise your plans.

The more you use it, the more you’ll get it. Reading fact sheets like these and books on social media can be helpful. However, the best way to get it is to use it. Keep trying new things, and see how the public responds. Observe what others are doing that seems to work. The more comfortable you get, the more efficient your social media skills will become.