

marketing

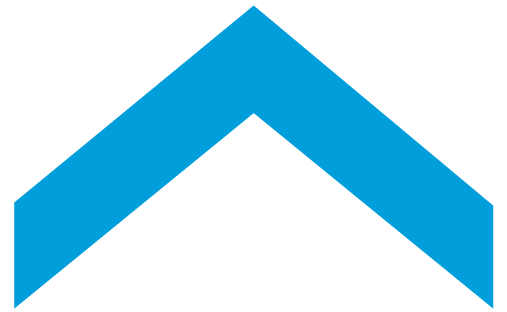
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**SOCIAL MEDIA:**  
Facts and  
figures worth  
sharing

April 2011



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has become a part of everyday life, and whether you're connected to the conversation or not, you can be sure that someone out there is talking about what you're doing. From business to pleasure the tweets are flying, friends are being made, and networks are forming.

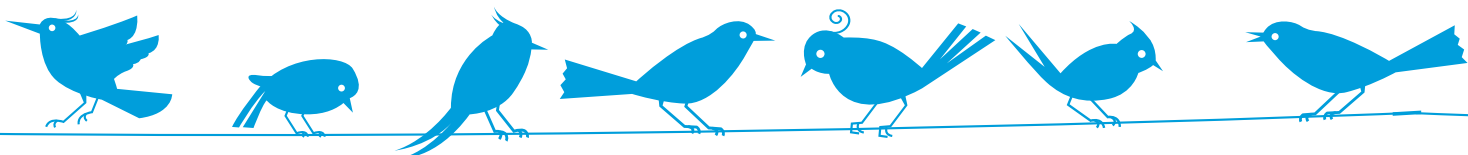
Are you part of the conversation?

Statistics and studies have confirmed the benefits of using social media. Both business to consumer and business to business companies are starting to reap the benefits of an online presence. Still, many organizations don't understand the benefits these online tools offer.

The answers are out there. Business to business organizations have achieved higher levels of **brand exposure, increased traffic to their websites, and new business partnerships**, all by strategically leveraging their online presence.

*"Without monitoring conversations on the Web, you won't know who's talking about your brand and your products or services, and what the positive and negative sentiments are about them"*

-Tom Davenport, Leading Author and Analytics Expert  
Harvard Business Review





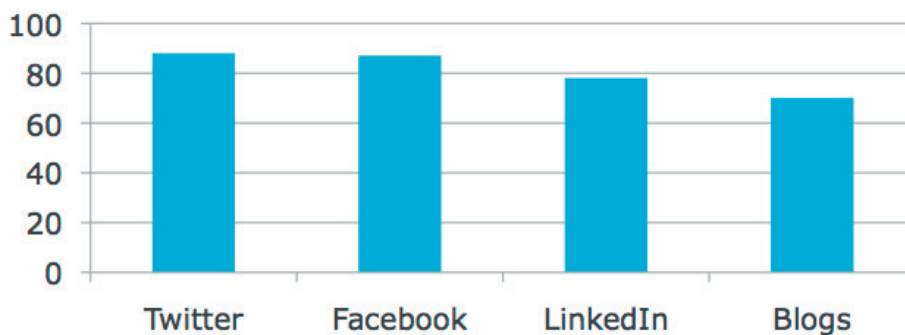
## THE BIG FOUR

Social media is being used by **91%** (Stelzner, 2010) of marketers to promote their businesses. In 2010 the four biggest players on the Social Media field were **Twitter (88%)**, **Facebook (87%)**, **LinkedIn (78%)**, and **Blogs (70%)**. Beyond these giants, the rest of social media's players lag behind.

Each of these "big four" social tools provides the user with a unique experience. The ability to extend your professional network on LinkedIn is unrivaled. The opportunity to join in on topical conversations on Twitter is simple and intuitive. Facebook provides users with the chance to proliferate their brand through their fans networks. Blogs offer organizations a soapbox to provide added value to their stakeholders, all while reinforcing their brand.

**The Big Four might dominate today, but they haven't always, nor will they continue to.** The online landscape is constantly changing. For example, while MySpace was once an extraordinary tool for self promotion, its usefulness has faded away. It's important to know where your audience is today, but knowing where they're going to be tomorrow is just as important. Like in business, you can prevent yourself from being left behind by keeping your eyes on the horizon.

### % Using Social Media



Source: Michael Stelzner 2010  
(Social Media Marketing Report)



## WHAT HAS THE WEB DONE FOR YOU LATELY?

In a report by the Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, **50% agreed that the increased awareness of their organization, products, or services among their targeted customers, was a primary benefit of their social media use.** This means one of every two organizations using social media for their business was able to get more eyes on their brand as a direct result of their social media strategy.

This number jumped to **61% for users who consider themselves “effective” users of social media.** With a clear and effective strategy, your audience will not only find you, they’ll follow and engage. It’s important to note that this added exposure isn’t just untargeted messaging into the vast expanse of the internet. We’re talking about awareness among targeted customers – your ideal users.

- The results from the 2010 Social Media Marketing Industry Report (Stelzner, 2010) had even more impressive results. Their polls indicated that **85% of respondents increased exposure for their business by using social media.**
- Social media, as part of an integrated marketing strategy, has had confirmed success in exposing brand, products, and services to a wider audience of target consumers. The exposure generated from social media has been measurable in website traffic. The Social Media Examiner’s report showed that **63% of users saw an increase in website traffic, subscribers, and opt-in lists as a result of social media initiatives.**

A boost in website traffic can be generated by any of the top four social media tools listed above, when used correctly. By producing valuable content through your online tools, and then driving that traffic to your homepage, you’ll see that jump in traffic that you’re looking for.



## A B2B WONDERLAND

*“At the C-suite level, they don't want to talk about social media because they don't understand it,” said the vice president for strategy at a multinational construction company. “If we don't get education out about the benefits of social media and get business people to adopt it, it could put us at a serious disadvantage.”*

Harvard Business Review

**Business to business companies need to form relationships to succeed,** and as networks grow and people become more accustomed to life on the Web, those relationships will be formed increasingly online.

While large business to consumer companies like Starbucks may crowd the social media spotlight, a larger percent of business to business companies are using social media, and they've been doing it for longer.

- It's true that social media is still new across the board – **65%** of marketers have either just started, or have only been using social media for a few months – but **79.5%** of business to business companies reported that they've been using social media for months or longer. For business to consumer companies, this number drops to **68.7%**.
- Business to business organizations weren't just there first, they're also seeing results. Aside from enhanced exposure and increased traffic to the website, social media has been responsible for creating new business partnerships. The Social Media Examiner's report found that **53.1%** of all businesses who had invested as little as a few months into social media had gained new business partnerships, **60.8%** of that number was made up of business to business companies.



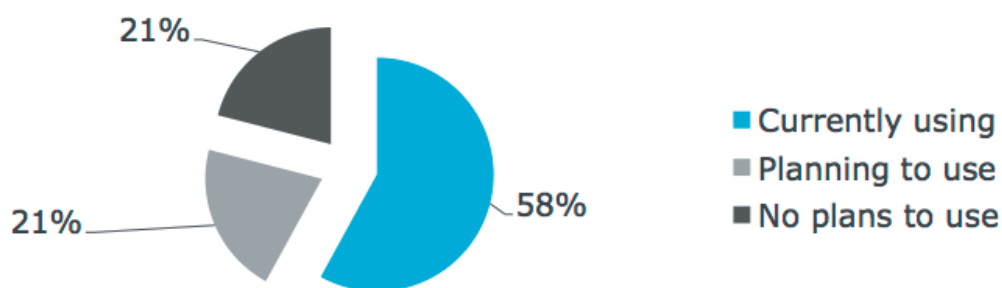
## STIMULATE YOUR BUSINESS

> Of businesses that consider themselves “effective” users of social media, **22%** have seen an increase in new business. While many companies are actively working towards new and unexplored ways to use the medium others simply recognize it as an opportunity to make their benefits more visible to their target audience.

*“Marketing brochures are not the language customers use. Social media lets the experts escape the prim and proper marketing talk.”*

Harvard Business Review

## Use of Social Media



Source: Harvard Business Review 2010  
(The New Conversation: Taking Social Media from Talk to Action)



## MAKE THE MEDIUM WORK FOR YOU

When you hear the benefits that social media can offer, it's easy to get excited. Even better, it's easy to get started. Signing up on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn is dangerously simple, and the applications available on the Web today makes blogging just as easy.

Before you head out to create your accounts and start building your network, there are some things you should keep in mind.

### Know Your Audience

You wouldn't run a beer ad during Saturday morning cartoons. Social media is no different, you need to know your audience and communicate to them directly.

Know who you want to talk to before you start sending out your messages. Is your target audience more likely to be on Twitter or LinkedIn? Can you better engage your stakeholders with a Facebook page or a company blog? These are important, strategic questions that need to be answered before any social media activities begin.


When you know who you want to talk to, and where those people can be found, you can target your communications so that the people who see your messages are the ones who will find value in them.

Social media makes it easy to mass communicate, but it will only hurt your brand if the people you're talking to find no value in what you're saying.

### Two Way Communications

Web 2.0 has given the user the chance to talk back. The benefit is that you can engage in meaningful dialogues with your audience. The danger is that not everyone is going to like your brand, and they'll tell you about it.

When you accept social media as part of your overall communications strategy, it's important to understand that you're entering into a conversation. This isn't like the media release or advertisement you've sent out in the past.



Social media is not a place for you to talk at your audience; it's a place for you to talk with them. Get used to that and you're already ahead of the game.

*“If we reach out and respond to someone who makes a comment about us in a social media channel, it makes a huge impact,”*

Harvard Business Review

## Set Protocols

If you're going to have people communicating online for you, you'll want to set some guidelines to ensure a consistent message comes across. If, by being on social media, potential clients only realize that your company has no clear, focused voice, then you haven't done your job.

Protocols and guidelines can ensure that the company blog or Twitter account sends out a consistent message that is on brand and adds value.

## Be Authentic

The beauty of social media is its ability to connect people. If you can't be authentic with the people who are trying to connect with you, your efforts won't pay off. By using an authentic voice (people expect a human being, it's okay to be one) your followers and readers will be much more willing to engage with you, and see your brand as tangible and inviting.

Authenticity has its limits. If you're having an awful day, you don't need to share those nasty thoughts with the infinite memory of the internet. Be human, but stick with the guidelines and protocols you've decided on.

## Listen

You have a business and you've got a lot to say, that's great, but most people online don't want to be told what to think. Like all of us, social media users are looking for a company that will work with them. When you start engaging in social media, take the time to listen more than you talk. Always respond when someone engages you in a conversation and take the opportunity to find out what your stakeholders are thinking.

If you spend more time listening and less time talking, you'll find your social media strategy will start paying off.



## DON'T MISS THE CALL

**There's a conversation that's happening on the internet.** People are talking on Facebook and Twitter; there are connections being made on LinkedIn; bloggers are filling the Web with content, and social bookmarking sites are ushering millions toward user vetted content. People are talking, and **you're either helping direct that conversation or you're oblivious to it.**

It doesn't take much time to get informed, and it takes even less to get started. The benefits are there for business to business companies, and the relationships are just waiting to happen.

*"I think when it comes to really groundbreaking ways of reaching people, social media has so many more legs still to go. We are just at the beginning of this."*

- Charlene Li, author of Groundswell and Open Leadership  
Harvard Business Review





**WORKS CITED**

Harvard Business Review. The New Conversation: Taking Social Media from Talk to Action. <http://www.sas.com/reg/gen/corp/1207823-pr>, 2010.

Stelzner, Michael A., "2010 Social Media Marketing Industry Report: How Marketers Are Using Social Media to Grow Their Businesses." <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/social-media-marketing-industry-report-2010/>, 2010.