

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BUSINESS

FOOLPROOF TIPS TO HELP YOU PROMOTE
YOUR BUSINESS OR YOUR BRAND



LINDA COLES

Best-selling author and LinkedIn Influencer

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Sometimes it's the fear of failure that stops you doing something you really want to do; the self-doubt rears its ugly head and you stall before you've even started. I wasn't sure if I could ever write a book, but now I'm working on my ninth and it's all down to the belief of one man—my hubby, Paul. I hope this book spurs *you* on to conquer what might seem like a minefield of digital overload, but really isn't when you understand just a little bit more.

To your success!

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Foreword

Marketing is a ‘state of mind’ that must exist in any organisation—public service or private sector—if that organisation is to identify and serve the needs of its various stakeholder groups, in any truly meaningful or effective way.

It is a common paradigm that marketing is a commercial tool designed simply to sell as many products or services as possible. One not uncommon definition is that ‘marketing is the art of arresting the human intelligence for long enough to extract money from it’. It’s not that. That’s mugging.

Period.

As I’ve often talked about, a business or organisation—public, private, profit or not-for-profit—is a ‘marketing organism’ that requires a marketing state of mind in everything that it does to meet its customers’ needs.

Period.

And that means that marketing is about so much more than advertising or promotion. It’s about understanding the needs and wants of existing and potential customers, and then making meaningful connections and developing relationships with each of those groups, time after time after time.

Marketing is the entire business of *doing* business looked at from the stakeholders' point of view (*all* stakeholders, including staff, customers, shareholders, suppliers, communities, etc.). In this environment, marketers should bring a dynamic, powerful and effective approach to the development and implementation of marketing and/or communication strategies.

So how do we do this? Once upon a time it was by advertising, PR and promotions. Today, the digital and online world has generated social media. Social media is not a new 'what' in marketing; it's a new 'how'. The core concept of marketing has not changed and will never change. Social media simply created a new environment in which relationships can be established and effective marketing communications can take place. Most of these social media platforms even have their own built-in data analytics tools, which enables companies to track the progress, success, and engagement of ad campaigns.

Social media is now at the core of effective marketing. Most marketing activity is a costly waste of money but if social media is fully understood and effectively implemented, it works.

There are an increasing number of social media channels and it is vital that marketers understand each one of them, how they are structured, who their participants are, what they are used for and how to penetrate those markets without seriously rattling their cages—a real risk with social media.

One of the best and most impressive social media brains that I know is marketer and author Linda Coles. And she has written this book in a powerful and effective way that will help all marketers understand the concept and the practice of social media. Highly valuable.

She also brings humour, warmth and a big brain to the book which increases its value enormously.

The single biggest thing that social media has brought to the world of marketing and marketing communications is people.

We now recognise and understand more than ever that people do business with people. Companies are no more than legal entities.

And in this environment, Linda is a star, connecting and communicating with people in a constantly impressive manner.

Read the book. Carefully consider what Linda has to say. Integrate it into your business's activities. Do those things and your business will become even more successful than it already has been.

Brian H. Meredith

CEO of The Marketing Bureau, New Zealand

Former Director of Saatchi & Saatchi, UK, and Acting Chief Executive of the company's \$50 million Manchester Agency

About the author

Hello! I'm Linda Coles, an international speaker and author.

I run a small company called Blue Banana and mainly work from my home office in New Zealand. Paul is the love of my life, Stella and Monkey are my two cats, and Daisy and Britney are my goats. In my spare time I write thrillers and I run—a writer needs to keep moving.

My background is mainly in retail management working for some of the UK's biggest retailers, but life in the slower lane beckoned and so Paul and I moved to pastures green south of Auckland. The slower life never really happened, and I continue to work with some really great brands, helping them to build relationships with their customers online.

I speak a great deal and write about building relationships—an important part of being successful in business. I wrote the books *Learn Marketing with Social Media in 7 Days* in 2011, *Start with Hello* in 2013 and *Marketing with Social Media* in 2015. I also write regularly as a LinkedIn Influencer, along with Richard Branson, Barack Obama and Arianna Huffington—which sounds very grand—and I am very honoured to have been asked.

I hated English lessons at school, and never became interested in writing until about eight years ago, when I started blogging and

working with social media. I wrote my first book to share my knowledge with thousands of others in order to make it simpler for them to understand. Had I known at my very first job at age 13, delivering milk early on weekend mornings, that I would become a writer, I would have paid more attention at school. Now, I write content for others, so they can pretend they are writing to their client bases, when really it's me.

The team at Wiley is affectionately known in my house as 'Team Wiley': people who are simply a pleasure to work with and who stretch my mind like an elastic band—sometimes to popping point! The whole editing process is my favourite part: our final chance to make the book as good as it possibly can be... otherwise there is no point in writing it.

Connect with me on:

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Acknowledgements

Writing a book is great fun and hard work so I would like to give thanks to all of those people who contributed their stories and opinions to this book.

I am continually inspired by the writings of other LinkedIn Influencers who give informative content as well as make people think about how they can do a great job with the tools at hand. Once you realise how simple something is, the fear goes—and I know that if you are feeling as if social media is another language, you will be pleasantly surprised. Enjoy.

Introduction

*It's not what you know,
It's not who you know,
It's who knows you ...*

Anonymous

Social media might have some scary connotations for you, but it really need not be like that. If you act online as you do in the flesh, and don't try to be something you are not, it's really very easy and you'll find success!

Who should read this book?

Using social media in business is something that all brands, both big and small, should be adding into their marketing mix to make sure they are communicating in the same places where their prospects and customers hang out. You may think that social media does not concern you, but you are wrong. If your customers expect you to use certain sites and you don't have a presence there, they may just look elsewhere—namely at your competition.

In this book, we will be working through Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, Google+, Pinterest and Instagram, as well as looking at email marketing, podcasting and making your website work.

One of the most common questions I am asked is, ‘How long is this going to take me?’ My answer to that is simple: when you have your pages all up and running, you have a plan and you have read this book, you need to spend about 30 minutes per day when you first start out. That’s just 30 minutes per day on marketing your business and communicating with your prospects and clients.

What will I learn?

By the end of the book not only will you have a greater understanding of Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and the other social media platforms, but you will know more about getting your website to work for you, how to behave online and how to promote your efforts. You will also have created a simple social media plan and a content plan to keep you on track. You will find heaps of easy-to-understand how-to’s in this book, as well as stories about how other companies, both large and small, are using social media and getting results.

Once you have read the book and completed the activities, you will be well on your way to creating your very own successful social media presence.

Enjoy the read! Then make it happen.

Opening story

On a very wet and rainy Friday morning in June—one of those torrential downpour types of days—the traffic on the motorway was at a standstill: we were going nowhere. I had been on the motorway for nearly two hours on what should have been a 60-minute journey, and it was obvious I was going to be late for my appointment.

I made a call to my first appointment and postponed it for another day, then got off the motorway. As I now had a little time to spare before my next appointment, I grabbed a coffee and picked up *Business Today* magazine from the bookshop. On the front cover was then-country manager for Microsoft New Zealand, Kevin Ackhurst, and I knew I had to act. I had had an idea a couple of weeks previously, but had not done anything about it; now, there he was looking at me from the magazine rack. It was an omen, surely.

I wondered if he was on LinkedIn so I could contact him that way.

Of course he was—most businesspeople are. And to my delight, I discovered he was in one of the groups I was in, which meant I could send him a message directly without knowing his email address. I wrote a quick note to him with my idea, and sent it off.

To my surprise, he responded within a couple of hours to say he liked my idea and was passing my details on to the team and they would be in touch.

True to their word, they did get in touch to organise a meeting. Woohoo! I'm talking to Microsoft!

Do you think if I had simply picked up the telephone, fought my way past the gatekeeper, introduced myself and hopefully managed to explain my idea to such a senior person, I would have gotten that far?

I don't think so.

By using LinkedIn to my advantage, I cleared any obstacles right out of the way and went straight to the person I needed. I made it easy for him to find out more about me simply by clicking on my name, and from there he was able to decide if I was worth seeing or not.

This is a simple use of a great business-networking site that has the ability to connect businesspeople with other businesspeople all across the world.

CHAPTER 1

Social media—policy, plan and profitability

Key areas we will cover in chapter 1:

- ✓ using social media, and why it's important
- ✓ explaining social influence
- ✓ growing your business with social media
- ✓ networking and making connections
- ✓ making effective social media and content plans
- ✓ monitoring your social media profitability.

If you think social media is for the young ones and that you are too old to even contemplate it—never mind finding the time or having the resources to do it—then you should read on.

Do I need social media?

I have heard people say, 'I have no time for social media', to which I respond, 'You have no time for marketing your business and building relationships with prospects and customers?'

Think about that for a moment.

Yes it takes effort, but so does every aspect of running a successful business, and there are tools available to help you pull it all

together. When we put your plan together later in this chapter, you will see how easy it is.

You may also think that your customers and prospects are not on social media, and so social media can't help your business. Did you know that the fastest-growing demographic on Facebook is females over 55, or that LinkedIn's most popular sector is 'service', with personal profiles for everyone from cheese-makers to the president of the United States? There is a group of people, however large or small, on these channels—or accounts—just waiting for you to put yourself or your brand on their radar.

How cool would it be to get your customers' feedback in real time, as it is happening? You'll get both good and not-so-good comments, but the not-so-good comments are as valuable to your business as the good. If the comments show you have an issue in your business that needs fixing, it's better that you know about it, isn't it? You can then apologise, react to the issue and make it good for everyone to see.

Sharing your life and finding new friends online is now the norm. But while I don't want to share my private life with the masses, I am okay about sharing my business life with anyone who is willing to listen. It's a great way to let interested people know your business exists.

Digital marketing and social influence

By using the online channels, more and more people will get to know that your business or brand exists. Do a great job at getting people talking and sharing, and you'll find others will happily follow their lead, also known as their social influence.

What is social influence?

The Wikipedia definition of social influence is quite simply:

Social influence occurs when a person's emotions, opinions, or behaviours are affected by others. Social influence takes many forms and can be seen in conformity, socialization, peer pressure, obedience, leadership, persuasion, sales and marketing.

If you've ever read Jonah Berger's book *Invisible Influence* you will know that, like his book *Contagious*, it's absolutely chock-full of real stories and light-bulb moments—and it is one of the few business books I didn't want to put down. It takes you down the path of 'invisible influence', something I hadn't thought too much about—until I read the book. Now I am fully aware of those things that do influence me in one way or another. There are plenty of ways you can influence your prospects to buy from you, such as clever marketing campaigns, effective branding, an attractive sales team or a well-known customer-service philosophy. But what about the things you can't control within your business—the things that influence but are not obviously seen?

Let me explain using some of Berger's examples and some of my own.

- ▶ You take your team out to a restaurant for lunch to celebrate a milestone. You have your eye on the apple pie for dessert but when the waitress collects the dessert orders and you realise you are the only one ordering, you don't want to eat alone so you immediately change your mind and go without. It was your co-workers who influenced you to change your mind—without you realising it.
- ▶ It's autumn, and the weather is up and down. You never know what to wear. You don't want to be too hot, or too cold. So you look out the window to see what others are wearing and make your decision from there. In this case, complete strangers are influencing you on what to wear.
- ▶ It's well known that you never eat at a restaurant that has no customers in it. You are influenced to move on because you figure the food mustn't be any good if no-one is eating there.
- ▶ You go to the gym on a particular day purely because your friend is going.

- ▶ You buy a book because of the cover design or the description of what's inside.
- ▶ You buy a new cereal when you can see what it looks like through the cellophane window in the box.
- ▶ You keep away from a person because they are unkempt.
- ▶ You don't like to open a bottle of wine if there's no-one to join you.

When did you last buy a book or book accommodation online without checking the review stars? Did the negative reviews stop you from your purchase or was it the five-star reviews that actually made you purchase?

All the time, people and things are influencing even the smallest decisions we make; our job now is to make them positive influences.

Some ways you can influence, starting today:

- ▶ Having great team photos on your website instead of stuffy corporate ones might influence visitors to contact you because you look more 'human'.
- ▶ Being seen doing something great for a customer could influence their return, or even influence others to buy from you.

A smartly presented team and environment is much more appealing to a customer than an unkempt one; they will want to stay around longer.

What outside influences are having an impact on your business? It could be something out of your control, such as the weather, or it could be something you can control. Work out what those unseen influences are and see if you can make them work positively for you.

How can influence help you online with digital marketing?

The five-star review system has been around for many decades—it is said that a movie reviewer started it with three stars back in 1928. Three stars meant ‘excellent’, two meant ‘good’ and one star meant ‘mediocre’. No stars at all meant the picture was no good. Restaurants use it, as do hotels. Who wants to stay or eat in a one- or two-star establishment? So the system has been around a long time, and we recognise it as a reasonably safe bet.

Take a post you see in your newsfeed on any given channel. You scan the image and it grabs your attention, or maybe the headline or description appeals to you. You decide to take a closer look and there at the bottom is the ‘social proof’ that something is worth your moment of time. The ad has 1000 likes and 500 shares, as well as 657 comments. Instantly, you realise something must be good about this post and you allow yourself to click on it for more information just to see what all the fuss is about.

Take that same post with no likes, comments or shares and you’d probably pass it by—you probably wouldn’t click on the link because your time is too precious.

It was the social proof of all the activity from others on the post that influenced you to check it out—nothing to do with the post’s design and content at all, but the influence of others.

When you create a post on social media that garners plenty of social interaction or proof, you need to make the most of it. These are the posts you need to promote, put some money behind and allow to run, gathering more and more social proof—social momentum, if you like—as they go. If it’s an ad that’s running well with social proof, keep it running by editing the content rather than stopping it and creating a new one, as social proof can’t be carried over from one ad to another. (More on ads later.)

Social proof is extremely valuable, as we’ve learned, so gather it as you go and keep it working hard for you. Other people’s views on