

# Social Media: Join the conversation

An introduction to Social Media and helpful hints for small businesses.

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# What is social media?

Social media is really a **conversation** supported by online tools.

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, MySpace, Digg, Reddit, Del.icio.us, Flickr, Yelp, Foursquare, StumbleUpon, WordPress blogs – the list goes on.

It's not a fad. Social media is a fundamental shift in the way we communicate. Almost everyone (80% of U.S.) uses it now.

The important thing in social media is the **real people** who use it and their **interactions**. The best part? It's all measurable.

# Why use social media?

**Relationships** are more powerful than traditional marketing.

People are not just demographics anymore, especially to small businesses. Everyone has their own **circle of trust** -- people whose opinion they listen to and respect. Traditional marketing can't break this bond, but social media embraces it.

People want to know **who a company really is**, not just see some slick advertisements.

Referrals from friends and direct interaction trump all else.

# Tip 1: Build it.

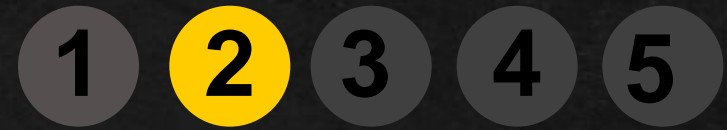


If you build it, they will come. Seriously. Conversations will happen without you initiating them and they can't happen unless there's a place for them. Create custom profiles on every platform that suits your business and allow your brand to be discovered, shared, and talked about.



# Tip 2: Keep it real.

The conversation must feel genuine in order for it to work. Have a real person who is familiar with your business' mission and brand come up with your content. Make sure it all sounds real and personal. You want people to feel like your brand is their friend. Social media is NOT an advertising platform. It is meant to start up a conversation. Fun ideas are mini contests or trivia. Photos, videos, and links from around the web work too.



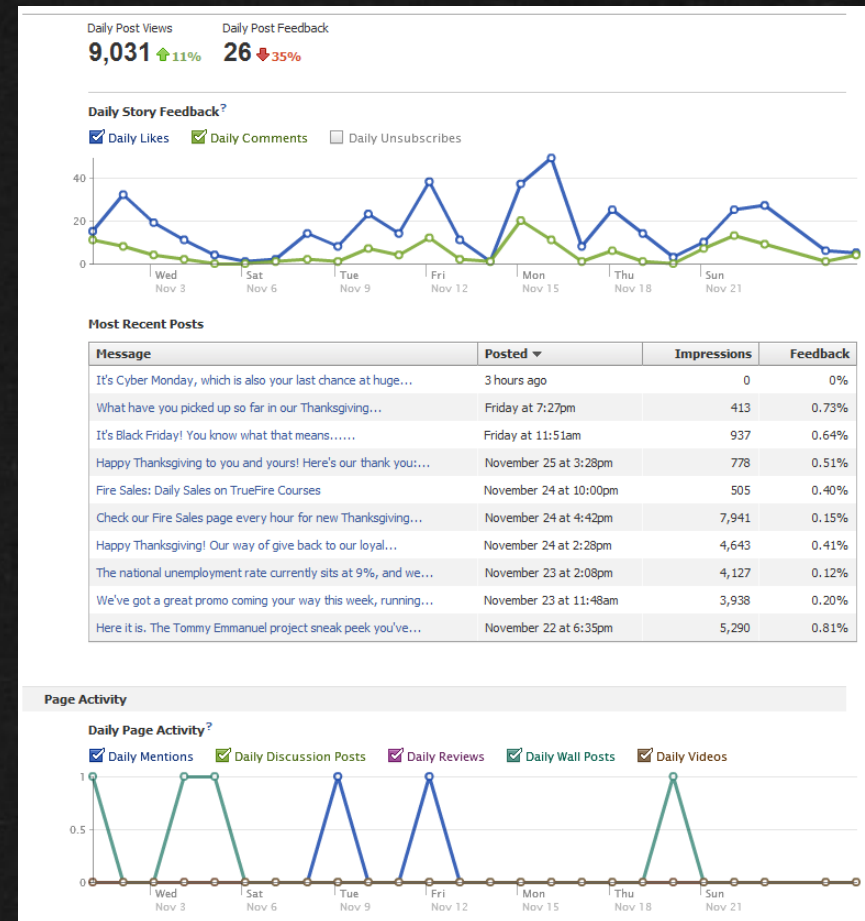
A screenshot of a social media post. At the top left is the TrueFire.com logo (a sun with a spiral). The main text of the post reads: "TrueFire.com Show us someone who can play Heartbreak Hotel better than this! Tommy Emmanuel never ceases to amaze us. Did we mention we're working on a big project with him? Stay tuned...". Below the text is a video player showing Tommy Emmanuel playing guitar. To the right of the video is the text: "Tommy Emmanuel - Heartbreak Hotel www.youtube.com Tommy Emmanuel in Berlin. 12.08.2007 Jazz in Town Festival." Below the video player are statistics: "4,728 Impressions · 0.78% Feedback" and a timestamp: "November 15 at 12:22pm · Unlike · Comment · Share · Promote". Below the post are several comments from users like Macon Kennedy, Diane Miller, Ron Holcomb, and Howard Dahlberg, all praising Tommy Emmanuel's talent. At the bottom is a text input field with the placeholder "Write a comment...".

# Tip 3: Keep it fresh.



It is important that your content is consistently updated. Most people use social media on a daily basis, so you want them to be able to discover or talk about something new. However, you also want to be careful not to overwhelm. Find the happy medium – every platform is different. Good benchmarks:

- Facebook: 2 – 3 times a day
- Twitter: 10 – 15 times a day
- YouTube: 1 per week



# Tip 4: Engage.



It's a two-way street. People will interact amongst themselves, but you want to make sure you are part of the conversation. Social media is a great customer service and PR platform. Answer their questions. Respond to their feedback. Thank them and recognize them. Make them feel special.



# Tip 5: Offer rewards.



Everyone loves coupons, discounts, and gifts. By rewarding people via social media, you are encouraging them to spread the word. Offering exclusive deals or creating fun contests are great motivational tools. You can also utilize location-based deals via foursquare, Yelp, and Facebook Places in order to drive real foot traffic to your brick and mortar business.



# Case study: TrueFire

The screenshot shows the TrueFire website homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the TrueFire logo, a search bar, and a 'JOIN TRUEFIRE NOW' button. Below the navigation bar, there's a large banner for 'TRUEFIRE'S 19TH ANNIVERSARY THANKSGIVING GIVEAWAY!' with a 'GO' button. The banner text says 'Giveaway begins Wednesday, November 24th and ends Monday, November 29th at 11:59 pm EST' and 'Get 20% - 50% OFF everything! Sales rotate every hour...'. To the right of the banner, there are links to 'CATALOG', 'TRUEFIRE TV', and 'FORUM'. Below the banner, there's a section for '20% - 50% OFF EVERYTHING! It's our 2010 Thanksgiving Giveaway. How it works...' and a 'FEATURED VIDEO GUITAR LESSONS' section with four video thumbnails. To the right of the featured lessons is a 'THE LATEST' section with a list of recent posts. On the left side of the page, there are several navigation links: 'BROWSE BY STYLE' (Blues, Jazz, Rock, Country, Acoustic, Techniques, Bass), 'BROWSE BY SKILL' (Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced), 'BROWSE MORE' (Full Catalog, TrueFire TV, Educators, Fire Sales), 'JOIN TRUEFIRE' (Enroll Now, Upgrade), and 'CONNECT' (TrueFire Insider, Our Blog, Student Forum, iPhone & iPad App, Like Us on Facebook, Follow Us on Twitter).

**150% boost in traffic, 80% boost in sales**

No joke. About a year ago, TrueFire implemented a full-on social media strategy including a presence on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Here are some more results after just 1 year:

- Over 4,000 followers on Facebook
- Voted as one of the most influential guitar-related accounts on Twitter
- Over 20,000 subscribers on YouTube
- 3 out of every 5 new members comes via social media
- Tens of thousands of impressions and engagements every single day

# Mail Dog

## social media solutions

Mail Dog is more than just an e-mail marketing tool. We have several social media tools:

- Social media & send to a friend sharing tools
- Facebook “Like” buttons
- Social media profile creation services
- Social media contest creation services
- Custom solutions: just ask!

# Thank you!

If you are interested in learning more about how Mail Dog can help you improve your Social Media presence, please contact us:

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