

COMMON SOCIAL MEDIA OBJECTIVES AND REBUTTLES

The goal of this piece is to share with you common objectives you may encounter when working with a business and how to overcome them.

There's no return on investment in social media.

What is the ROI for your phone? If you don't have a phone or a website or a social media profile, you do not exist on the business landscape of your customer. That doesn't mean that you just throw money at social media and hope it delivers results. Use sound business principles. Set business goals and start comparing the investment you currently have in getting and keeping customers with new social media tools.

We don't have the money or the time to waste on this new thing.

This is another ROI question. If you currently make cold calls, send sales reps into the field, go to networking events, travel to trade shows, gather business cards, make sales calls, make appointments, drive to appointments and make more appointment to generate a new sale, then you might actually be saving time and money by using social media tools. I still have face-to-face meetings, but these often come AFTER a lengthy relationship building series over LinkedIn, Facebook and even Skype. I've just calculated my mileage for taxes and have seen a 50 percent decrease in travel miles over the last three years. The same is true for my "meals" category!

We can't control our message.

Yes. Tony Hayward from BP had this same objection and we see how much good it did him. The way you control your message with social media is by putting it out there in the form of blog articles, guest articles, Twitter posts, Facebook updates, LinkedIn updates, answering questions and simply being present online. Think of Google as your homepage. When people search on your name or your company name—the content that you created should overwhelm the page. On a personal note, when I searched my name back in 2005, there was a soap opera star ahead of me and (of all things) a blow up doll! I certainly didn't want my customers to see THAT! Now when I search on my name—it's only my content.

We'll lose privacy and expose ourselves to the competition.

You will lose as much privacy as you would by sharing information at a networking event or a customer presentation. In fact, social media is a sales and marketing tool—the last thing you want is privacy! Worrying about privacy is like sending your sales rep to a trade show and saying, "Don't tell anyone we're there." You wouldn't do that at a trade show, why do it online? Maybe you're stuck on the Twitter idea that people share what they're having for breakfast. That might have been true in the early days, but overwhelmingly Twitter is a place where conversations happen about brand. There are marketing research tools out there designed to pull and analyze what products and services people are talking about. They wouldn't do that if it wasn't there and important.

We Don't Have Time

Does the business in question have people within it that take care of customer service? Perhaps they take phone calls, respond to emails or even snail mail letters.

Is their time as efficient as possible? Many companies train their customer service staff in the use of Twitter so those staff respond to queries and issues in-between calls and email responses. This approach ensures the business is using staff who live and breath customer service and are at the heart of social media efforts, but it also alleviates the need to have dedicated social staff.

In an ideal world a business would have people with the sole purpose of delivering service via the social media platforms, however that is an understandable step too far for many businesses.

We Dont Have Any Money

This objection may be the easiest to overcome. Social media offers an attractive low-cost alternative to media advertising buys. Social media is *not* a free alternative as some suggest. Related to the no time objection, it may be necessary to hire a part-time employee to manage your business's social media presence. And, you may incur modest expense to produce content to share on your sites. But again, we can turn the no money objection around- Are you saying you cannot afford to market your business? If no, there are bigger issues that need to be addressed to fight for survival.

We won't make any money/no ROI potential; it will take too long to pay off

I'll be the first to say, from personal experience, that social media will not have an immediate financial impact, but it will have an immediate impact on brand recognition. Social media takes time and energy, but what successful venture doesn't require time and energy? Don't just think about the revenue that is generated, but also the cost savings involved. Look at the traffic your website is getting due to your social media efforts. Are you noticing more positive mentions? It's all part of the benefits of social media.

We can't control the message

Social media is the voice of the customer and a channel that is influenced by the customer. By taking part in social media, you can start to monitor conversations about your brand and competitors. People will say whatever they want about your company whether you like it or not, but isn't it better to know what they are saying rather than standing on the sidelines and not knowing? It feels like a common sense business practice to monitor, engage, and understand the situation. In reality, social media actually gives you MORE control over the message. An example: a customer starts badmouthing your company because of outdated pricing information on a website. [Scenario 1]-not participating in social media results in you never knowing so this bad testimonial spreads (which you don't know about). [Scenario 2]-by participating in social media, you can reach out to the dissatisfied customer, ask where they got the information, correct the issue with IT due to this customer's feedback, and explain the situation to the customer. More likely than not, that customer will thank you for the correction, correcting any negative misconceptions about the company.

Our customers are not on social networks/don't use social media; Not our target market

This is just a bad excuse. You will be surprised to see how many of your customers and potential customers are using social media. You know what they say about assumptions right? The most useful social networking sites are meant for the general audience.

Don't want to acknowledge negatives

With the global acceptance of social media across all types of businesses and industries, negative comments will happen whether you want it to or not. The power of social media is in the public, i.e., the users. It gives your customers and potential customers a voice they didn't have before. Negative comments is inevitable so instead of ignoring it, embrace this opportunity to reach out as needed.

The missed opportunity is to let it happen behind your back. You will be surprised to find out that many negative comments are based on inaccurate information. In addition this type of feedback can lead to improved business processes or product/service enhancements. The power to influence is extremely powerful. You don't have to respond to every negative mention, but at least follow the conversation.

We tried it and it didn't work.

Trying is good until I ask these type of questions: how long did you "try" social media? Did you have a strategy in place? What did the strategy consist of? How did you measure success? What were your goals and objectives? What gave you the conclusion that social media did not work? What results from social media would you have considered a success? What process did you go through when participating in social media?

It doesn't fit the company's brand.

The most useful social networking sites are meant for the general public with no preference to any type of brand or industry. Social media is not a fad and is starting to become a best practice for PR, marketing, customer service, business development etc. What is important to consider is your company culture. I truly believe that your company culture is reflected in whatever social media participation you do. Whether you're in a bland industry or not, your brand will come out shining.

My industry is different

No it isn't, and thank goodness. When social media first became a fixture, companies tried to start their own social networks. They were unsuccessful, because they missed a key point: people don't want to hang out on your web site all day, hovering around your particular product or service – they want to hang around where other people already are and choose and follow their own interests. The upside is that the social web has become a primary referral source for companies selling products or services, who have a non-salesy presence in the social web. This means, too, that your industry is NOT different – not if it caters to people who are not only about one thing, who only do one thing, and spend all their time on web sites about one thing. If they're real people, who have a variety of interests, they're pursuing those, and that's good news, because you can go where they are with confidence. Companies that participate in the social web have increased by 75%. Businesses that are integrated with social media get the leads, while businesses that are isolated don't, and repeat Clients (fans) will often refer others by social sharing. The social web has every kind of person and, if you're not active there, you're never even finding out who else is.