

How To Use Social Networks To Build A List

Easy Networking

Social networks have made building and widening your social contacts extremely easy. In the past, you might have had to attend numerous functions and paying for gas, food, and clothing just to show up and hand out a few business cards that later got tossed. With online social networking, the costs of networking are zero, but the rewards are immeasurable. Creating a list of social contacts online can lead to opportunities worldwide, something that local networking could never do for you.

LET PEOPLE COME TO YOU

Instead of trying to push people into getting acquainted with you or your company, wouldn't it be great if you could get up each morning and find seven to ten new people wanting to befriend or follow you? This is completely doable with social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Once you establish a profile and a following, just your everyday activities online can draw people to you without you having to go out and find them. Even if you do choose to find people first, it's still far easier to connect with them online and far less intrusive than trying to schedule a

meeting, a phone date, or any other old-fashioned method of networking.

WHICH SOCIAL NETWORK SHOULD YOU JOIN?

You've heard of MySpace, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, but which is the best to join? The answer to that is that you can and should join at least three of these networks, depending on your demographic. The more you join, the better and the wider your exposure; however, not every social network will match up to your business profile. MySpace, for instance, tends to be visited by a younger crowd than Facebook and Twitter. If you're marketing to teenagers, then it's a great place to network, but if you're more into college-age professionals, then Facebook will be a better match for you. LinkedIn is for any working professional, although some people use it to locate jobs when they're in the market for that too because of the number of working professionals on it.

Twitter is in a class all by itself. It can appeal to many different groups of people, and it is also the easiest platform to generate a large following on. It may take a little while to get used to it, but getting on Twitter can help you create a large social network in as little as one month if you do it right. Imagine having close to 1000 followers in little more

than a month? If only 1/10th of those people look at your services or offerings when you post, you will have 100 new eyeballs to market to. Let's be clear, however, that marketing or building a list on social networking has to follow some guidelines that we will discuss in the next section.

The Rules Of The Game

Social networks have special rules that you must follow to keep your account active. Administrators frown on spamming people with unsolicited emails and other types of commercial activities. If your goal is to build a list for commercial purposes, it's still doable; it just has to be done more casually than you would on your own website. Self-promotion is allowed, but any time you take an email off of someone's social networking site and add it to your email autoresponder campaigns, you are spamming them, unless they offer you permission to market to them first.

Harvesting emails from these sites is thus very difficult, and this is done deliberately.

BUILD YOUR LISTS WITHIN THE NETWORK FIRST

That doesn't mean that you don't want people to befriend or follow you on these sites. It means that you have to take care as to how you end up harvesting their email addresses. Just because someone befriends or follows you doesn't mean that they are open to your marketing campaign and want to receive commercial solicitations. In fact, if you do send them that information, they're likely to report you as a spammer, and you can have your account revoked. Thus, the best thing to do is to start by building your lists within the network without harvesting the emails provided there directly. You can still post status updates that promote your business or offerings, but direct emails of this variety will have to wait until later.

MOVE THEM OFF TO AN INTERMEDIARY SITE

You should have an intermediary site ready to capture their email address later. It can be a blog that allows them to subscribe. It can be a website that isn't that commercial. It can even be some article marketing site where they can land, read some more of your content, and then follow the resource box links back to your website. As long as the final destination offers them a chance to subscribe to your email marketing lists via some free offer, then you will have permission to market to them off of the social networking sites, where you can be a little more straightforward.

HOW TO MARKET TO SOCIAL NETWORKING CONNECTIONS

Before then, you will want to create a highly targeted list of friends and followers who have the potential to follow you back from the social networking sites to your other websites. You can do this by carefully crafting profiles that appeal to your demographics and updating your status updates with information that draws attention from that demographic. As you continue to do these two activities, more and more people will find you, and you will have a wider exposure.

Getting Targeted Lists

You don't just want to build a large list of people who have nothing to do with your market niche; you want to have a list of people whose interests mean that they might want to buy your products and services later on. Social networks are excellent mediums for creating targeted lists because it's easy to see what people's interests are via their searchable profiles, and they can see yours too!

USING YOUR PROFILE TO ATTRACT THE RIGHT DEMOGRAPHIC

The first step to getting a targeted list together is to clearly project the right image and interests in your own profile. To do that, you want to fill out the profile as completely as possible. You also want to use your real name, as this profile should be as authentic as possible. For Facebook, for instance, you would want to add as many details of books or movies relevant to your market niche to attract the right demographic. In Twitter, you would want to give as many keywords that are relevant to the niche you are marketing as possible in the 140-character description of your profile. In LinkedIn, you would also want to give a good, accurate description of your interests and accomplishments as they relate to the market niche that you are marketing to.

FINDING OTHERS WHO HAVE SIMILAR INTERESTS

Once you've got your own profile filled out, you can start searching via the keywords you've used to find others who are in your market niche and invite them to follow or befriend you back. In Facebook, they track everyone with similar interests, so all you have to do is to click on the link in any of the categories in your Info tab, and you'll get a listing of people who have similar interests.

On Twitter, it's just as easy to find people who have similar interests by using the Twitter search engine and looking up keywords. The Twitter search engine is separate from Twitter and can be found at <http://search.twitter.com>. You won't just be able to locate people via their profile keywords, but also via their tweets.

Facebook and LinkedIn also have groups that you can join that can lead you to people with similar interests. You can even create your own group if that's something you want to do. By networking with people who are in the same group as you are, you will be able to build your list fairly quickly. People like to network with people of similar interests, and this works well when you are trying to market to a specific niche.

The Bigger, The Better

You will want to build as big a list as possible within each network. The reason for this is that the bigger your list, the more possibilities to market to later on. Also, a big list has a magnetic effect on other people who will join just to find out what all of the fuss is about. It is easier to build a big list on

Twitter than on any other social networking site, but it's possible to do it on all of the social networking sites. Here, we'll discuss a few ways to get a jumpstart on building a big list quickly and easily.

START BEFRIENDING AND FOLLOWING PEOPLE

You jumpstart every social network list by befriending or following people you know, whether they're in your niche or not. This way, you aren't the person with only a few people on your list. That's never attractive. Start with people who you already know who are online. They can be work colleagues, neighbors, friends, and family. As long as you can get them to befriend or follow you back, you have the basis of a good start. Once you have a few of those, you will start to target people better so that your list can be used for marketing purposes later.

SEARCH FOR PEOPLE TO BEFRIEND

To build your list quickly, you should expect to add a couple of hundred followers a day on Twitter and 20 or so on Facebook. You will find these people by searching for your similar interests, as stated in the previous section. Facebook is much more stringent with the number of mass befriendings you can do before they peg you as a spammer

and throw you out, so be careful. With LinkedIn, you should also seek to add numerous contacts each day. They won't immediately befriend or follow you back, but eventually, about 30% will do so out of pure courtesy. That's a quick way to build a list.

BEFRIEND YOUR FRIEND'S FRIENDS

Here's a quick and easy trick to get a targeted list almost instantly: Befriend your friend's friends on Facebook. You can go to any friend who is within your market niche and look into his/her friends list if he/she hasn't made it private. From there, you can befriend those friends and see if they return the favor. You can also do this on Twitter by following someone within your market niche who has many followers and just going down the list of their followers and befriending them too. As suggested earlier, this method will get you about 30% to follow back. If you follow 200 people on Twitter and 60 follow you back each day, within a month, you can expect about 1800 people to be on your list! That's a real accomplishment and can really zoom your business to heightened levels of exposure!

Trim Your List Frequently

The funny thing about befriending or following someone is that not everyone befriends or follows you back. Some people will even befriend or follow you and then later choose to unfriend or unfollow you. Other times, they simply don't befriend you to start with. Of either of these situations, you have to keep track of both so that it doesn't affect how large you can grow your list. There are some limits placed on list building within networks, and when you bump into them, you may wonder why you can't follow any more people after reaching a certain level. The key is to trim your list frequently.

FACEBOOK IS NOT AN ISSUE

This is not an issue on Facebook, since you won't even see a person's profile unless they befriend you too. You can send out invitations, but if they don't befriend you, it doesn't affect your ability to send out another invitation to befriend someone. It's not very common to unfriend someone on Facebook, although it does happen, but that doesn't affect you much because all it means is that you can't see his/her profile anymore and he/she won't see your status updates, as if the connection never happened. In that respect, Facebook assumes that if either party decides to unfriend

the other, then the connection is not even a one-way; it's non-existent. It means that the two of you haven't connected at all. On Twitter, it's much different, and you have to keep track of the people you are following and who is not following you back.

THE TWITTER MAGIC 2000

In Twitter, you can be happily following people, 200 a day, and within 10 days, hit 2000 people. Right about that time, you find that you can no longer follow anyone else. What happened? This is a safeguard put in place by Twitter to keep robots from coming in and doing exactly what you're doing for the sake of building large lists. It's a spam protection device. The key to getting around this little safeguard is to make sure that people who aren't following you back are trimmed from your list after a few days. So, if you invite 200 and only 60 follow back, be sure to unfollow the others. That's because you will be approaching 2000 followings too quickly, with insufficient followers who reply back. In Twitter, if you follow 20% more people that follow you back while approaching 2000 people who you follow, the entire system grinds to a halt. What a drag, right? Just unfollow the people who aren't following you back, and you'll be able to breeze right through that impenetrable barrier. Keep the number of people you follow either much lower or

nearly equal to the people who follow you back. To tell who is not following you back and to do bulk unfollows, it's best to visit <http://www.friendorfollow.com>. This site makes it easy to keep track of who is not following you back, and let's you unfollow multiple people at one time.

Start To Automate Your Activities

Is this starting to sound like a lot of work? Well, it is, but we have a few ways to make it easy to not only automate your list building, but also to cross-post between different platforms, cutting your work in half. You want to stay active on all of the social networks so that people will feel your presence there and be more inclined to contact you. In addition, frequent status updates allow you to post more about your business activities or links that will inform and entertain your friends and followers. You can use any link in your status updates to bring people back to the intermediate areas that will allow you to harvest their email addresses for use outside of the social networking sites too.

SOCIALLOOMPH.COM

This has a paid service and a free service. The free service has some nice features that can automate the unfollowing of people who unfollow you after following you, as well as sending out a welcome message when people decide to follow you. You can even schedule tweets throughout the day so you don't have to spend all of your time sitting in front of a PC screen. Join this site and take a look at what might work for you to automate your tweets on Twitter.

SELECTIVE TWITTER

This sounds like another Twitter application, but it's actually a Facebook application. It is called "Selective Twitter" because it allows you to have any selective tweet that you post on Twitter also updated on your status update on Facebook. This is very useful because, if you simply tied in Twitter updates to Facebook updates, your followers on Facebook would get annoyed. It's a much different platform, and multiple status updates all day long is considered spamming on Facebook and will get you quickly unfriended or hidden. However, on Twitter, which is a microblogging platform, this is actually pretty common and expected. Use the Selective Twitter application in Facebook to allow you to post to Facebook by simply adding a hashtag at the end of your tweet like this, "#fb" (without the quotes).

PING.FM

What if you also have profiles on Stumbleupon, Digg, and other social networking sites? You can use Ping.fm to put postings on all of them from a central source. This is a very effective tool for someone who has many different profiles all over the Web and wants to update them all from a central location. It can make you appear much more active than you really are.

Facebook Strategies For Building Lists

As of now, we've been pretty general about different ways to build your list quickly. However, each social networking platform has its own idiosyncrasies that can be exploited to get you up and running faster. In this section, we'll go over a simple way to get going on Facebook and how to use the features available on it to build your list.

STATUS UPDATES

Your profile on Facebook has a place called the Wall. There, you will have a box with the question "What's on your mind?" printed inside it. This is the status update part of

Facebook, and it allows you to post links and comments so that your friends can see what's going on in your life and business. The neat thing about the status update is that people can comment, rate it as "like," and share it with their friends too. When another person does any of these actions on your status update, their circle of friends who aren't on your friends list also see your status update. That means, when you send out a status update, it has the potential to reach many more people than just the people who are in your circle of friends. That's why you should post status updates throughout the day and should stay active so people see more of you online. When they see something they like, many people will try to befriend you based on what you've said to one of your friends who is a mutual friend. Every time someone comments on your status update, reply with your own comment. This way, it will keep it up and active on more people's news feeds than if you didn't reply to them.

JOIN AS MANY GROUPS AS YOU CAN

Try to find groups within your market niche and join as many as you can. Then, you want to befriend the people in the groups too. Contribute to the conversation, but find out who these people are who are in your group and get to know them better. When someone joins you on Facebook, post a brief message on his/her wall or send a link to a welcome

video. If he/she likes it, he/she might share it with his/her friends too, and you'll have an automatic wider audience.

CREATE YOUR OWN GROUP

If you choose to create your own group on a topic about your niche, you will be able to attract people from all over Facebook, not just from your immediate circle of friends. That's because Facebook will list it as its own entity, and people will join based on the topic and not on your personal profile.

Twitter Strategies For Building Lists

Twitter is a bit easier for list building because it is more transparent, and there are many third-party sites devoted just to helping you build your Twitter following. The very easiest strategy is just to start following people within your market niche. However, there's even a better way to identify the people who have a large influence on Twitter; by following those people and they finding you interesting enough to follow back, you'll get a lot of good press this way.

HOW TO GET RETWEETED

Once you're following them, you can try to get noticed by simply retweeting something they've said that appeals to you. A retweet is a device that copies a tweet of someone's and adds it to the other person's status update as a new tweet in his/her stream. If enough people do that, it has the potential to spread across the network like a virus, thus the naming of a "viral tweet." If that happens, the person can reach millions in very little time and get massive exposure for himself/herself and his/her business. The way to start all this is to either tweet something interesting or to retweet something someone else said that was interesting. Often, as

a matter of courtesy, people will thank other people for retweeting their tweets, and it will include the person's Twitter username in the stream.

FOLLOW FRIDAYS

Another way to build a bigger list on Twitter is to participate on Follow Fridays. That's where you post recommendations of Tweeples on your status update so that others will follow them. Many people will thank you for the recommendation and will add you to their list of Follow Friday recommendations too. It's easy to do. Just add the hash tag #FollowFriday at the end of a list of recommended Twitter usernames, and everyone will know that you are asking them to follow these people too.

Should You Hire A Social Media Expert?

Some people just don't want to spend any time learning social networking platforms or posting their offerings on the status updates. They would prefer if someone else did all that, while they just sit back and get the emails that result from these activities. While that's a perfectly reasonable scenario, you do have to be aware that just about anyone

can call himself/herself a social media expert, and you should take pains to hire someone who can produce results and not just hire pretty looking profiles that waste your time and money.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AN EXPERT

You want some proof that the person who is claiming expertise on social media actually has some. This can mean that you want to see high follower counts on Twitter and Facebook. You want to get a good idea of how he/she will target the people who will end up on your list. You want some idea of his/her credentials and his/her accomplishments in his/her field. If he/she can prove to you that he/she has what it takes to do the same thing for you, by all means, hire him/her.

PAYING FOR FOLLOWERS

You can also post a job on a freelance board to pay for the building of a list based on follower count. This is not a good way to go, as it doesn't really target the right people, and it's not an organic way to grow your list. There are, however, numerous outsourcing companies that specialize in just this thing, and since you'll no doubt stumble upon them, it's something that should be mentioned as being out there.

Whether you actually want to do this or not, that is up to you.

PAY FOR RESULTS, NOT HYPE

Make sure they understand what it is that you are paying for, not just counts of people who are being added to your list. It should be highly targeted people who are interested in your products and services. You don't want to pay someone to build fake profiles so they can all link to you and have you pay them. That's useless to you. You also don't want to use robots to follow people automatically, unless it's highly targeted and well managed. This is another way to "hire a social media expert in a box" by getting software that lets you target and add followers in your niche without too much extra effort on your part. Hummingbird is one such package that Internet marketers use to create large, targeted lists.

Harvesting Emails To A Central List

Once you start getting a large number of followers, and you are using your status updates to market them back to intermediary areas, you will start to get a steady flow of

people who are going to sign up for your free offers and giving permission to market to them. You have to be ready for that eventuality by having some service set up where you can harvest emails and create a central list for all of these people who are coming from different social networks and websites around the Internet. As long as they're all in the same niche, they should all be on one central list. Later, you can start to separate them out into category lists for whether they are low-income, mid-income, or high-income customers.

AWEBER.COM

One such service is called AWeber.com. It is popular because it isn't too expensive, and it has a lot of good features for email marketing. What's the point of collecting all of these emails and not marketing to them, right? AWeber will help you to develop email campaigns so that you can track and fine-tune to create income from all of the list-building activities you've implemented.

FEATURES THAT HELP YOU

Great features included in AWeber.com are the ability to track open and click-through rates. You will not only be able to find out who is opening your emails, but how many of

those people clicked on the links within your emails. They also have the ability to do split testing, so that half of the people on your email list get one version of an email and the other half get a different version. That way, you can see if there is any improvement in the open and click-through rates, and which version appealed more to your mailing list.

CREATE MULTIPLE LISTS AND CAMPAIGNS

After you get the hang of email marketing, you'll want to create multiple lists and campaigns for different segments of your demographics. Maybe you want to market lower-priced products to your low-income group and more expensive products to your higher-income group. You can do this with AWeber and keep the central all-inclusive list for informational emails alone. The more you work with an email campaign manager, the more you start to see profits from the activities of list building and marketing. It can help you to plan your sales months ahead of time and to keep money flowing in so that you can pay others to do your social networking for you, while you hang around and collect the checks.