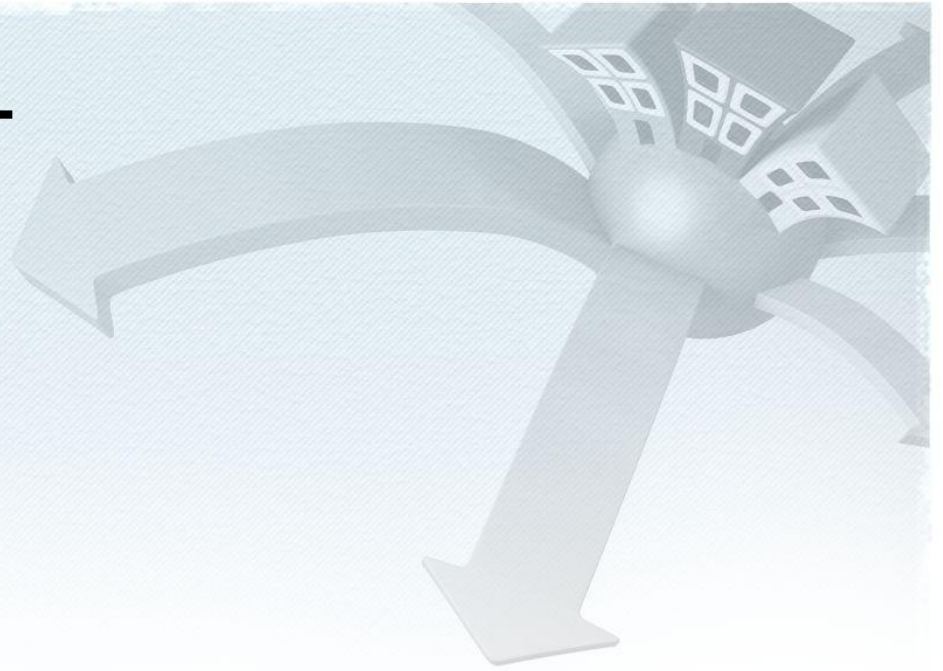


SmartForceNL



your social media marketing plan

part 2: planning and implementing

your social media

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	How should you use this document?	1
2	Planning Your Social Media.....	2
2.1	Developing a clear direction for your social media activity	2
2.2	Defining your message.	7
2.3	Selecting the best platform for your business	10
3	Getting Your Social Media Up and Running.....	17
3.1	Step in, but... ..	17
3.2	Be secure!	17
3.3	Optimize your profile.....	18
4	Making It Happen!	19
4.1	Budget.....	19
4.2	Monitor.....	20
4.3	Stick with it.....	20

Checklists and Tables

Checklist 1: Prioritize your objectives.....	2
Checklist 2: Select your target audiences	3
Checklist 3: Pinpoint your targets in social media.....	5
Checklist 4: Name your potential resources for your social media efforts	6
Table 1: Define your social media message	7
Table 2: Main features of leading social media platforms	11
Table 3: Pinpoint your best social media platform.....	15

1 Introduction

1.1 How should you use this document?

There are literally millions of organizations either entering or already active in social media. Every one of them is at a different level of comfort and expertise. Because of this diversity, any document trying to help people get started in social media will seem too simple to some, and too advanced to others. Rather than trying to be all things to all people, this document focuses on the absolute beginner to social media, but assumes a basic level of comfort with computers and with commonly used browsers such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, Google Chrome, Safari, or Opera. It is also assumed that your focus is on using social media to assist your business or organization in its marketing, customer service, public relations, or employee recruitment activities.

This document is Part 2 in a three part series that will help you come up with a social media marketing plan that works for you and your business.

As the flow chart below demonstrates, Part 1 focuses on helping you get to know and understand social media. **This document, Part 2, delves into planning and implementing your social media**, and finally Part 3 provides some valuable social media marketing tactics.

Flowchart: Breakdown of 3 parts of series



2 Planning Your Social Media

2.1 Developing a clear direction for your social media activity

2.1.1 What is your purpose in social media?

Social media can accomplish a great deal for virtually any business. The more clearly you understand exactly what you want it to do for you, the more focused your time and efforts will be. So let's start by prioritizing your objectives, very generally at first. Rate the following from highest to lowest priority, with "1" most important, "2" second most, and so on. If any of them do not apply at all, simply label them "N/A" or scratch them from the list.

Checklist 1: Prioritize your objectives

- Generate new sales leads
- Close sales
- Encourage people to visit your business
- Maintain loyalty among existing customers
- Handle customer-service inquiries
- Identify new products or services to help grow your business
- Find new suppliers
- Attract new business partners or investors
- Attract new employees or members of your management team
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Done? Congratulations! You're already ahead of most companies' social media campaigns.

Now it's time to dig a bit deeper and assign some targets to these broad objectives. Think hard about what you are trying to do. What types of new customers do you want to secure? How many do you want, or what dollar value will they have? By when will you get them, or how many per week or month or quarter? What skill sets in particular would you want from your new employees? The more precise you are up front, the more precise social media will be in delivering results for you.

SmartForceNL**2.1.2 Identifying your Audience.**

You may have already been thinking that just saying you need more customers or more employees still leaves a lot of questions unanswered. It is time to identify the kinds of people who are good matches for your social media program. Will they be...

- Existing customers?
- Your competitors' customers?
- High income or low?
- Business people?
- Old friends from high school?
- From your own neighbourhood? Within a two hour drive? Across Canada? Around the world?
- What age?
- Male or female?
- Tech savvy?
- Traditional or cutting-edge early adopter?

Consider these criteria and any others that you feel are important, to create up to three main markets or types of people you want to reach through social media. You can certainly have more, but to keep this initial strategy down to a manageable size, we will limit it to that. If you feel you can handle more groups without getting overwhelmed by the level of planning required, you can of course do so.

Checklist 2: Select your target audiences

1.) _____

2.) _____

3.) _____

SmartForceNL

All this planning can seem like a bit of a pain, but the more detail you provide at this point, the easier you make it for yourself for every point after. So put real effort into *truly* understanding exactly what your targets are and whom you want to reach. The results will be well worth the effort.

As you better understand who your audiences are, also investigate where they are. Have you ever asked your current customers what they do when they are online? On what sites or types of sites do they spend their time? If not, make sure your staff start doing so now as part of every conversation or interaction. Keep a written record of what people tell you; you'll soon start to see some clear patterns emerge.

If your target audiences are different from your current audiences, or if you are starting out in a new direction, consider surveys or ongoing discussions whenever and wherever you can to help you better understand the people you someday hope to have as your customers.

2.1.3 Refining your Targets.

You now know whom you want to reach. What exactly do you want them to do? How many of them? By what date?

Everyone's social media experience is unique, so what works for one company in social media will not necessarily work well at all for another. You need to understand your own business, messages, resources, and customers in order to determine what will work best for you.

One reason a lot of companies avoid doing this work up front is that they simply have no idea what a realistic target would be. That is a challenge for any marketing campaign, but especially so when moving into completely unknown territory, with tools you have hardly even heard of before. However, as understandable as this dilemma may be, it is important to start somewhere, and over time you will become better and better at setting useful and realistic goals for your social media efforts.

To help get you thinking, consider these as guidelines for potential social media objectives:

- For a nonprofit, your goals might be to bring in \$5,000 per year in donations from a specific area or group, or to recruit 5 new volunteers each year.
- For a clothing store, you may want to increase sales by 4% per month, and increase your market base from the local region to the entire province, or all Atlantic Canada.

SmartForceNL

- For a manufacturing business, you might wish to bring in two new line workers within the next year, and hire a new manager with experience in marketing and a specific new production technology.
- For a company ready to start exporting, you may need to identify the most promising new markets, spread awareness of your product in those markets, and identify a new broker to help you become established there.

Take time to write down your goals, and be precise. Use actual dollar amounts or the number of customers from each group or region. Give dates for reaching those targets.

Checklist 3: Pinpoint your targets in social media

- 1.) _____

- 2.) _____

- 3.) _____

If you're feeling stuck, it can sometimes help to do much of this planning in conjunction with other businesses, and social media can be very helpful here as well. Building a network of other companies that are exploring social media may help you connect with likeminded companies that can become valuable travel partners along the road ahead. This will be explored in more detail in a later section.

2.1.4 Identifying your Resources.

You're doing great! Now, as mentioned earlier, social media requires the same communications skills, tact, sensitivity, and marketing or sales skills as any interactions that you have with your customers. In fact, it might be argued that those skills are even more important in social media. After all, not only will you be dealing with customers and prospects, but thousands, or even millions, of people could be watching as you do it.

SmartForceNL

If you don't have the skill sets or hours available to handle the new work, bring in someone else on your team to handle it, or even someone from outside the team if you don't have the resources in house. In fact, even if you do have the time and skill sets to handle this yourself, it is usually best to have a second-in-command in case you get pulled away for awhile or simply want to share the workload.

For any help with your social media though, don't make the mistake of handing this work off to "the new kid" or some relative or friend who is "good with computers." *Social media is a whole lot more about sensitive communication and market insight than it is about technology or computers.* Remember that as you determine who has the time to dedicate to social media at least several times a week.

Always remember that the closer your resources are to the heart and brains of your company, the better they will serve you in your social media activities. So... who are *your* resources?

Note: *As you develop your strategy throughout this document, you will gain a much better understanding of what you'll be doing in social media, and exactly when and where you'll be most active. As that happens, you may find it helpful to come back and revisit all these sections, but this one in particular. You may realize you'll need certain skills or insights that are not apparent as you start out. So for now, give the best answer you can, and make a note to revisit everything as you tie up your strategy.*

Checklist 4: Name your potential resources for your social media efforts

1.) For communications skills? _____

2.) For expertise with your product or market knowledge? _____

3.) To engage or respond when you're not available? _____

4.) Other? _____

SmartForceNL**2.2 Defining your message.**

You have now identified *whom* it is that you're trying to reach, *what* you want them to do and by *when*, and the resources you'll need to help you get there. That's an excellent start!

Now it's time to consider *how* you'll make all that happen. If you have a poorly defined message you can lose the value of everything you've done so far. So, it is time to think very precisely about your actual messages:

Table 1: Define your social media message

If you want to increase your sales...	What are the three things your audiences most need to know about your product?	1. _____ _____ 2. _____ _____ 3. _____ _____
	What precise action do you ultimately want them to take, after engaging with you in social media?	_____ _____
	What quick-and-easy next step would help move them toward that ultimate action?	_____ _____
If you want someone to visit your physical location...	Is the location clearly given on your Facebook profile or Website?	<div>Yes</div> <div>No</div>
	Should you offer driving directions?	<div>Yes</div> <div>No</div>
	Do you clearly state the benefits to them of going there?	<div>Yes</div> <div>No</div>

SmartForceNL

If you will use social media to provide customer service...	What levels of service will you provide? For what products?	<hr/> <hr/>
	Is your social media team trained to handle the range of issues they'll confront in social media?	<div>Yes</div> <div>No</div>
	Do you have the capacity to quickly handle the number of inquiries or issues that you'll get through social media?	<div>Yes</div> <div>No</div>
If your goal is to attract new workers...	What are three things they most need to know about your company?	<div>1. <hr/></div> <div><hr/></div> <div>2. <hr/></div> <div><hr/></div> <div>3. <hr/></div> <div><hr/></div>
	Why would they be happy or fulfilled working for you?	<div>1. <hr/></div> <div><hr/></div> <div>2. <hr/></div> <div><hr/></div> <div>3. <hr/></div> <div><hr/></div>

SmartForceNL

If your goal is to... <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	1. <hr/> <hr/> 2. <hr/> <hr/> 3. <hr/> <hr/>
------------------------------------	--------------------	---

It is critically important that you make every step of the process incredibly easy and even irresistible if you want people to follow your directions. Yet a surprisingly large number of organizations have one, or several, serious gaps in their online presentation that makes it difficult for even the most interested customer to complete the transaction. Watch the details! Ask someone not familiar with your company to go through your presentation step-by-step. Look for anything at all that might prove to be a distraction, or hindrance. The slight adjustment here or there can pay huge dividends in the long run.

Also, remember that what *you* want is nowhere near as important as what your audience wants. In other words, you will only win someone's interest or approval if you give them what *they* are interested in. This is why it is so incredibly vital to understand your customers extremely well. The more you completely realize what they want, the better you'll be able to provide it... and win their support.

So again, spend extra time to know your intended audiences or markets well, what it is you want them to do, and why *they* would want to do it. Ultimately, social media, like all marketing — or all relationships for that matter — is most rewarding when you focus on helping *them* rather than helping *yourself*.

SmartForceNL**2.3 Selecting the best platform for your business**

One of the things that get mentioned most about social media is how easy it is to set up. However, starting *strategically*, so that you generate a measurable return on your investment, takes quite a bit more thought, time and effort.

One of the biggest challenges in social media marketing is selecting the platform that will best help you meet your objectives. Will it be Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, some combination of those, or one of the hundreds of other platforms that are out there vying for your attention? You can best answer that by moving through four steps:

1. Pinpoint what you want to achieve through social media.
2. Identify your target audiences, and where they are in social media.
3. Identify the main features of each social media platform.
4. Select the platforms most likely to be of value to you.

You will need to find your own unique answers as you move through these steps. If your organization serves a range of audiences, then you may find value in going through these steps for each. To help you get the best answers possible, we'll cover the main points here.¹

2.3.1 What do you want to achieve through social media?

This one should be already done if you've been completing your plan as we've progressed through this document. Just refer back to your answers in the previous section, and you're all set to move on to the next question. Also, remember that the key is to be very specific. The better you grasp the exact action you want your audience to take, the better you will be able to direct them toward that decision.

2.3.2 Who are your target audiences?

Again, this should be largely already answered if you've worked through the steps in this document. It can be tempting to simply say everyone is your target market, but focusing on one or two particular types can be tremendously helpful in determining which social media channels will yield the best results for your business. Consider the age, gender, general income range, interests, and various other factors related to your target audiences.

¹ This strategy focuses on the core elements of strategic social media for small organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador. In keeping things simple it is inevitable that some elements will be oversimplified or not explained fully. Every effort has been made to give sound advice without overcomplicating the process or bogging down the reader. In light of how rapidly social media is changing, you are encouraged to explore further on your own, so that you can make the best possible decision to suit your circumstances and objectives.

SmartForceNL

If you're having trouble with this, ask yourself what types of people do you usually see most quickly warming up to your particular products or services. Also ask yourself if there are any types of customers that you would especially like to bring in, but for some reason have not yet been able to reach.

2.3.3 Identify the main features of each social media platform.

The social media landscape can seem utterly overwhelming as you try to decide which platform to call home. There are hundreds of options out there, each with their own strengths and weaknesses, and built-in audiences. Fortunately, there are a few that are especially well established, and these present some easier ways to add social media to your marketing mix. You can then explore other options as you gain deeper understanding and confidence. We take a look now at these leading platforms, to help you determine which might be best for you and your organization.

Table 2: Main features of leading social media platforms

	Users Globally as of June 2012	Users in NL as of March 2012	Key Points	A Few Ways It May Matter to You...
Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 950 million monthly active users. > 550 million daily active users. > 540 million monthly active users on mobile. 	> 272,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a profile for personal use, business page for ongoing connections, or group for intense, constant contact. Post status updates, photos, videos, and links. Receive comments and Likes and offer same to others' posts. Connect with "fans," potential customers, and others in your industry. You must be "liked" or "friended" to appear in someone's stream or news feed, although friends of people who like or comment on your page will sometimes see that activity in their news feeds. Almost 60% of users are female. Users typically range in age from teens to 60s. Users typically have mid-high income. Offers very targeted advertising placement, but very low response rates. Is the most widely used social media platform. Comfortable for many people not otherwise active in social media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build friendly relationships. Promote special events. Answer questions and gather opinions. People are more likely to trust and like you if they see their friends doing so. Invite users to and promote special events through Facebook Events.

SmartForceNL

Twitter	<p>> 165 million monthly active users.</p> <p>500 million accounts in total.</p>	<p>~10–40,000? Twitter has not yet caught on widely in Newfoundland and Labrador, compared to many other areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited to 140 characters per message or “tweet.” • Much more open than Facebook. Everyone can follow anyone they want, and the whole world can see everything you tweet. • Great for very quickly spreading ideas or news. • Over 60% of users are female, but like all stats, this may vary by location. • Users are often younger than Facebook users, but do come from a wide range of ages. • Users typically are well educated and high income. • For business use, is most effectively used through apps such as HootSuite and TweetDeck. • Has a very powerful and instant search engine, allowing you to quickly find and track relevant conversations and people. • Has not caught on in NL anywhere near as much as it has in many other places, but does have pockets of very loyal users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly and publicly respond to inquiries or complaints. • Engage in public conversations with customers and others. • Track what people are saying about your brand, competitors, & new trends. • Pass along links or graphics of interest to the public. • Position yourself as “savvy” and tech friendly. • Businesses can host “tweet-ups” or arrange Flash mobs to bring people to your business, but should be careful to keep things under control. • Some lunch trucks or pickup vehicles tweet customers to let them know where they’re heading next.
LinkedIn	<p>175 million</p>	<p>> 31,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A business platform for networking, marketing, employee recruitment and job seeking. • Most closed of all platforms, you need to be approved by another user in order to follow, and even just asking can get you banned from LinkedIn if enough people report they don’t know you. • Groups and Answers give you chance to make connections and build reputation. You can answer other users’ questions, and join or form groups built around common interests, such as small business owners in NL, or looking for IT work in NL. • Offers very targeted advertising placement, but very low response rates. • Users typically are most educated and highest income of all platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use LinkedIn’s search to find and connect with targeted contacts around the world. • Groups allow you to build relationships over the long-term with potential recruits. • It is estimated that 80–90% of companies use LinkedIn for recruitment.

SmartForceNL

<u>Google+</u>	110 million	Unknown, but likely no more than 5,000.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to Facebook but more open; you do not need someone's permission to follow him or her. • Users divide their contacts into "circles" and then decide which circles will be able to see each post they create. • Users are over 60% male, often with interest in technology. • Users are generally younger than on most other platforms, but still include all age groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar advantages to Facebook, but with ability to focus more easily on specific audiences. • Unlikely to generate anywhere near the number of contacts that Facebook offers, but may generate higher engagement levels.
<u>YouTube</u>	800 million unique visitors per month	Unknown, but quite possibly 200,000 or even more viewers per month, given all the embedded views on Facebook, Twitter, emails, Websites, blogs, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and businesses can upload their own videos. • Quality ranges from very basic to TV quality. • Companies or individuals can create channels, and people can subscribe more easily to find new content as it is released. • YouTube has the world's second most heavily used search engine. • YouTube videos can be easily embedded directly into people's Facebook and Google+ feeds. • Because of how easily they're shared, YouTube videos are seen across all ages and income levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great place to upload how-to videos, tutorials, announcements, video blogs (vlogs), video chats, and more. • Can build huge audiences and loyalty if you have a good "hook." • Great for companies with a unique personality or visual appeal.
<u>FourSquare</u>	<p>> 20 million users.</p> <p>> 1 million business have profiles on FourSquare.</p>	Unknown, but likely no more than hundreds or a very few thousand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users use a phone application to earn points by checking in at various locations. • Similar to checking in on Facebook. • The most frequent visitor in each location is called the Mayor. Users can also earn "badges" after repeatedly visiting different types of businesses. • Users can add a photo or comment about each check-in. • Users are generally younger • Some users will visit a location more frequently just to be named Mayor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some stores offer discounts or free treats to the Mayor of their location. • Stores can promote other branches or partners to people when they check in.

SmartForceNL

Flickr	<p>> 51 million members and > 80 million viewers/mth in 2011.</p> <p>Flickr's user base has declined and some say it is now only abt 17 million unique visitors/mth.</p>	Unknown, but probably a few thousand viewers per month.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members store photos and videos on their Flickr accounts. • Images can be stored in albums and are tagged with descriptions and in categories to make them easier for others to find by searching. • Viewers visit the site regularly to see the content, plus many bloggers use the images in their blog posts. • Users can join Flickr groups to share content or ideas or support each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product shots, scenic photos or videos, and other images likely to be of interest could be uploaded and tagged to be easily found by your target audiences. • If relevant Flickr groups exist, they give you a chance to connect directly with people interested in your type of products or service.
Pinterest	> 20 million unique visitors/mth.	Unknown, but possibly 5,000–10,000 and growing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the newest social media platforms, but growing extremely quickly. • Users can “pin” photos, videos, or links they like onto a “board” that continually unfolds as the user scrolls down. • Other users can then like or comment on them or re-pin them. • There is growing concern over possible copyright issues, and despite the strong growth, it is unknown whether or not these issues will become major problems. • Great care should be taken to not violate others' copyrighted materials. • Users are said to be 70–90% female, and generally mid-high income. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to Flickr, product shots, scenic photos or videos, and other images likely to be of interest could be uploaded and tagged to be easily found by your target audiences.
Blogging	Most people browsing the Internet are likely to read a blog post on a fairly regular basis, although they may not recognize it as a blog or ever subscribe to one.	Unknown, but possibly well over 100,000 who read at least one blog post per month, and quite possibly many more than that, although many may not realize they're reading a blog.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often identifiable as sites that publish new content on a regular basis, are usually arranged chronologically, and usually encourage comments from readers. • Can be text, video, audio, or any combination of these. • Readers may read a blog post by visiting the blog itself, but will often find it while on social media, as a post on a Facebook or Google+ profile, or a link on Twitter or Pinterest. • Readers can often subscribe to receive blog posts by email or Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great for demonstrating expertise, explaining a company's personality, and building rapport with readers. • Excellent at increasing a Website's rankings in search engine result pages such as for Google and Bing.
Others	There are literally hundreds of other social media platforms, with new ones emerging constantly. It is beyond the ability of this or any document to cover them all, or even all the “main” ones, since what might be very useful to one company would be of no use at all to another. Keep an eye on social media blogs to stay on top of new marketing ideas and trends.			

SmartForceNL**2.3.4 Select the platforms most likely to be of value to you.**

By now, you will have identified several vital bits of information, including:

- What is your purpose on social media?
- Who are your audiences?
- What are your targets?
- What are your resources?
- What is your message?
- What are the main features of each social media platform?

Together, these findings will now help you to not only select which social media platform will become home to your company,² but on an ongoing basis also guide the messages you will post and the ways you will interact. So be sure to continue collecting and refining your information. It can make all the difference in determining how well your social media efforts will grow into an effective marketing or communications vehicle.

So which platform? Well, one of the simplest but best bits of advice is to go where your audience is. If they are overwhelmingly on one platform, then that's where you want to be. Sometimes the answer is immediately obvious; other times you'll find a mix of platforms mentioned. If you're faced with no obvious winner, consider other factors. To name just a few...

Table 3: Pinpoint your best social media platform

If...	Then...
A strong visual presentation is important to your message...	Facebook might be your best choice, although photo platforms like Pinterest and Flickr should also be considered.
Speed and the ability to easily connect with new people are essential...	Twitter is definitely a strong possibility.
You want to connect with executives or make business connections...	LinkedIn allows you to search for and connect with contacts in specific companies or that meet the criteria that matter to you.
Your audience is tech-savvy...	Google+ and Twitter both tend to be popular spots for people comfortable with technology.
You want to improve search engine result rankings for your Website...	A blog, promoted through your social media activities, may have a lot to offer.

² We will do all that we can to help you choose the best social media platform, but again, this is only a generic strategy, and you will need to adapt everything here to match your reality. The more you research and understand your options, the better you'll be able to make an informed decision that will serve you well.

SmartForceNL

Again, if you feel lost by all the choices and just want to start, a business page on Facebook may be your best bet. It is where you will find the most people, and it has a relatively easy learning curve. However, it will take time and effort to make it grow, and countless companies have started a Facebook page without ever seeing any return on their efforts. So don't be discouraged if you don't see much happening. We'll cover some social media tactics in the next section.

Some of your competitors are almost certain to be already active in social media. Evaluate how well it seems to be working for them. What can you learn from their successes and mistakes? Again, ask current and potential customers what they think, since what may look like a brilliant social media idea to a businessperson will often be seen quite differently by the targeted audiences. Continually look for input from others, and then combine those insights with your own experience and instincts to make the most informed decisions possible.

Finally, remember that while your setup will technically cost little or nothing, the time required to do so and keep growing your presence can be substantial. It is best to choose your platform carefully, and restrict yourself to the one that seems most promising, at least at first. You can always move to or add other platforms later, but it's always best to be great at one than only half present on a few.

3 Getting Your Social Media Up and Running

All the social media platforms have done a good job of making it as easy as possible to set up an account with them. You'll be guided step-by-step through the process, and will usually be able to be up and running in less than five minutes. That can also create a problem though. The easiest way to do things is often not the best. Be sure to follow the steps outlined in this section as you set up your social media presence, to ensure you're not only online, but you're there with an effective presentation.

3.1 Step in, but...

Be sensitive. Watch and learn the culture of your platform and group.

Be wise. Your time and resources are limited, so focus on doing one thing well at first. If it does prove wise to be active in more than one platform, you can always add more once you've established your first.

Be supportive. It's often better to support an existing group in social media than start your own and be seen as a competitor or potential adversary.

Be nice. Be nice. Be nice. Be nice.

3.2 Be secure!

Use a secure password that cannot be easily guessed. It should ideally contain at least one uppercase letter and one numeral, and should never be an identifiable word or a number sequence or date. Do *not* use the same password for different platforms or accounts!

Be very cautious about giving anyone the access info to your accounts. If you arrange for others to help you, make sure you have an extremely high level of trust in them, and that they have a secure computer and access procedures.

Facebook, Twitter, and several other social media platforms have an option in their settings to allow you to use "secure browsing" or "HTTPS only." You'll be able to turn on these enhanced-security levels through the settings that can usually be found in the upper right corner when using these platforms. Make sure you keep them enabled. To be even more secure, also enable Facebook's *Login Notifications* and *Login Approvals* options.

You would probably be shocked to discover how much of the information you receive or send — even on your computer and yes, even including passwords — can be easily picked up by anyone if you are not using a secure system. Therefore, only access your accounts from a computer you trust, over a network that is secure. A free wifi system somewhere that does not require you to sign in with a username and password is *not* a secure system.

SmartForceNL**3.3 Optimize your profile**

One of the most common mistakes made by people starting out in social media is not optimizing their profiles. It may not seem overly important, but your profile lets other users on that platform see who you are, how to learn more about you on your Website, and how to contact you once you have won their interest. At least as important is the fact that your business profile in virtually any social media platform is visible to search engines. Even better, social media platforms generally show up very well on search engine result pages. As a result, many companies find that a well-written social media profile can rank even higher in a search result than their own Websites will. Not filling out your profile means you are missing out on one of the key benefits that social media has to offer.

Be sure to include the keywords or search terms that people are most likely to use when search for your services or products. Avoid any temptation to “stuff” your profile with too many keywords, but do be sure to use the ones that will make you easy to find. And be sure to include whatever geographical terms people are likely to use when searching.

While keywords for search engines are important, your ultimate target is always people. So make sure you state your key benefits in a friendly, appealing, and professional manner. Tell your audiences why they would want to connect with you, in a manner that builds trust and reflects your organization’s personality.

Be sure to select a profile image that will help people identify you quickly and easily. If you do end up creating a presence on more than one platform, use the same image to help people recognize you.

4 Making It Happen!

This strategy has covered many different topics across several of the leading social media platforms. It is now up to you to get started and see how your organization can benefit from these new initiatives. As you get started, there are two more important elements for you to consider on an ongoing basis.

4.1 Budget

Social media is, for the most part, free. When you consider the range of opportunities that it opens up and the visibility it brings, that fact is truly amazing. There are some costs associated with it that should be carefully considered in order to really get the most from your efforts.

The first costs are the professional accounts on LinkedIn or in tools such as HootSuite that enhance your capabilities. The good news is, that they all have free levels that do give you considerable capabilities, so that you can assess whether or not those platforms or tools are right for you. If you decide that they truly are a good fit for your organization's objectives, then don't shy away from spending the few extra dollars per month that these tools will typically cost. The time saved and extra reach gained are typically worth far more than the amount you spend.

Next are the costs to advertise on Facebook, LinkedIn, or other platforms, or to engage in pay-per-click ads on Google or other sites. These activities can significantly increase your visibility, despite the low click-through rates that are often seen. We certainly encourage you to explore these more, to determine which of them might hold the most potential for your social media activities.

The biggest cost of social media — and one that is often overlooked when initially planning — is the considerable time and expertise that it takes to maintain an effective presence online. Social media should not be casually handed over to a new worker or someone without very strong communication skills and in-depth knowledge of your organization, its products or services, and your overall philosophy. That means the person who handles your social media will almost always be someone who is very valuable to the company, and whose time is not cheap.

Finally, some organizations either find it necessary or prefer to outsource their social media activity. This could bring in skills or connections that are not available in house, but will of course increase the costs. If the resulting benefits are likely to be worth more than the costs, this can certainly prove to be a smart move. Again, it is vital for that person to have strong communication skills and in-depth knowledge of your organization.

SmartForceNL

One of the biggest challenges in budgeting is the fact that most organizations are unlikely to see considerable revenue coming directly from their social media activities. You may benefit through improved customer service, enhanced relationships, and a heightened sense of familiarity that should improve the effectiveness of other marketing efforts, but you will not often see a lot of sales being driven solely through your social media investment. That can make it harder to justify the time and money needed to do things well. The benefits are indeed there, and the better you can see the interplay between all your marketing initiatives, the more easily you will be able to set aside an adequate budget, and generate positive results on an ongoing basis.

4.2 Monitor

Similar to budgeting, monitoring is also often overlooked as a worthwhile component of a social media program, or underestimated in terms of the work required to do it well. Without a clear understanding of what results you are getting from your various activities, it is hard to make informed decisions on how to improve on an ongoing basis.

A wide range of tools exists to help you monitor and see precisely what is happening through your various platforms. [Google Analytics](#) can help you see which platforms are driving traffic to your Website, and which initiatives work better than others. HootSuite, TweetDeck, and other dashboards also have tools to help you monitor your programs.

For more advanced monitoring capabilities, [Radian6](#), [Sprout Social](#), and other tools are available, with prices ranging from free to several hundred or even thousands of dollars per month. While most small businesses do get started in social media without a formal monitoring program in place, it is important to not ignore this element for too long as you seek to improve both the quality and returns from your social media investment.

4.3 Stick with it

We are almost done. No, actually, we are almost started! You have covered a lot of information as you've used this strategy to prepare your organization's social media programs. It is now time for you to get out there and make it happen. Keep in mind that any strategy needs to be checked and refined on an ongoing basis. It allows you to get started, but should also guide the many growth decisions you will make each day.

Remember that it is a field that will change each time you sign in. Grow with it, build some mutually beneficial relationships, and enjoy the journey. You will be continually surprised by all that social media has to offer you and your organization!

What's next? In *Part 3: Social Media Marketing Tactics*, you will be given some practical guidance on how to use social media.