

Get started building your Social Media Presence

An introduction to Facebook, Twitter,
Foursquare, and other popular social
media marketing sites



Time-Savers, Inc.
heather@timesavingstrategies.com

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The buzz around social media marketing has been growing to a near crescendo. People are blogging, connecting with friends on Facebook, posting updates to Twitter, pinning pictures on Pinterest, and getting LinkedIn.

Businesses have been getting in on the action as well—building lively social communities and discovering a powerful new tool for engaging with customers online. And, by combining social media with email marketing, have found yet another way to stay top-of-mind and well connected with their target audience.

Is your business or organization still on the social media sidelines, looking to get into the game? In this guide, we will introduce you to some of the most notable social media marketing sites: what they are, why you'd want to use them, and how to use them effectively.

With this information in hand, you'll be well-prepared to start to build your social media presence.

Social Media Marketing allows you to engage with your social networks using relevant and interesting content. As people interact with and share this content it creates a word-of-mouth effect allowing you to reach and engage more people and drive more business.

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Facebook

Facebook is the largest of the social networks with more than 1 billion active users. (For perspective, if Facebook was a country, it would rank third in population, just behind the People's Republic of China and India. That's roughly 680 million more people than the population of the United States!) Facebook's easy-to-use interface and extensive potential for user engagement has made it a staple in the marketing efforts of businesses and organizations. In fact, the Fall 2011 Constant Contact Attitudes & Outlook survey of 2,000 small businesses found that 96% were using Facebook to market their brand.

Here's how Facebook works for individuals:

Users sign up for a free account and then make connections with other users on the service by sending a "friend request." If the request is accepted, you can see that person's profile information, status updates, photos, and more (which is why you may not want to be friends with someone you don't actually know). Users who you accept as a Friend can, in turn, see your profile, status updates, and photos. If you don't want to share all your information with the public or all your friends (for example, if you connect with coworkers or family members), there are privacy settings available to limit who can see what information you post or is posted about you on your Timeline, Facebook's name for your personal profile.

Facebook is a great place to connect with your own friends, family, and colleagues, but it has also become an incredibly powerful platform for businesses and organizations to build community, engage with prospects, and encourage customers and members to spread its message to a larger network.

Here's how Facebook works for businesses and organizations:

Small businesses and nonprofits must create a Facebook Page rather than a personal profile. A Facebook Page, like a personal profile, provides an information hub that users can choose to "Like." Facebook users will Like a Page to stay updated on events, promotions, or to simply show their appreciation or endorsement. Anyone can build a Page—businesses, associations, actors, musicians, nonprofit organizations, politicians, etc. Some businesses have even created Pages for specific products.

A big advantage to creating a Facebook Page is that you do not have to accept requests for connections: any Facebook user can choose to Like your Page. After a user Likes your Page, many of your posts will show up in their News Feed and any interaction that they have with you, will show up in their friends' News Feed. This increases social visibility.

Connecting with the friends of your current customers is key to growing your social community. They will be more likely to engage with you on Facebook, and most importantly, more likely to become new customers.

Finally, Facebook Pages are public-facing, meaning they can get picked up in search engines and give you and your organization and its website even more exposure.

Want more information about getting started on Facebook? Check out SocialQuickstarter.com.



Tip for Success

People who Like your Page are interested in what you have to say and appreciate what you do for them. Use that to your advantage by posting exclusive updates, photos, sales/promotions, and other content to form an even closer bond with your customers and members. Encourage your fans to share, like, or comment on your posts... This can create an incredible networking effect to drive more followers, engagement, and ultimately business.

What's good about Facebook?

- The user base is huge, and that means many of your customers and constituents are already there.
- It's easy to use.
- You can post any type of multimedia content, including videos, photos, and links to external content.
- You can separate your personal and professional use.

What's not so good about Facebook?

- You have limited ability to customize your Page.
- It can be difficult to get your content seen by fans. It's estimated that only 16% of fans will see your updates.
- It's a closed environment—although anyone can find your Page, only Facebook users can Like your business or organization to receive your updates.



Twitter

Twitter is one of the largest and most active social networks, with over 140 million active users sending more than 340 million tweets per day. Twitter is a real-time information network that empowers its users to share and discover interesting content through status updates (or “tweets”). Twitter is often referred to as a microblogging service because it limits your status updates to 140 characters. But the brilliance is in its simplicity and brevity. For businesses and organizations, Twitter is one of the quickest ways to get a message out to people who may be interested in your activities, ideas, products, services, or events. You can also use Twitter to get real-time feedback from customers, members, and event attendees. Like Facebook posts, users can share your tweet with the simple click of a button. This is called a “retweet” and it is the feature that makes Twitter such a great word-of-mouth platform that can help your message reach an entirely new group of prospective customers.

(Hint: You should pay attention to people who retweet your message as that is a good indication that they are listening to what you say, and may help you attract new followers and prospects.)

Twitter is a public site, which means anyone can view your tweets. However, users can choose to “follow” you on Twitter to keep track of your tweets. The follower relationship is not two-way; you don’t have to follow someone for them to follow you and vice versa. However when you follow someone on Twitter, you’ll see his or her tweets in real time in your Twitter feed, including updates from everyone else you follow. (If you follow many people, this can create a bit of “noise” especially if those people are heavy users of the site.) While you can only send private “direct messages” to people who follow you,

you do not need to follow a user to send a public message to them; just include the handle (@username) in your tweet and it will show up in that user’s “Connect” feed. This is called a mention.

Twitter is a great way to get real-time feedback from your customers and to discover what people are saying about you, your competition, industry, or any keyword that is relevant to you. You can see what people are saying about any topic in real time using Twitter’s search tools.

Want more information about getting started on Twitter? Check out SocialQuickstarter.com.

Tip for Success

Twitter’s greatest strength is its vast reach. The more engaging and relevant your content is—whether it’s an article you’re sharing, a link to your newsletter, or words of support for the local high school football team—the greater the chance it will be passed on and retweeted to a whole new audience.



What's good about Twitter?

- [Twitter](#) works for small businesses; 60% of businesses surveyed in the Spring 2011 Constant Contact Attitudes and Outlook survey said that Twitter was an effective tool for marketing their brand.
- The Twitter feed is public, which can help give your business or organization greater exposure in web search results.
- The site is like a public forum, so it's easy to build a community of potential customers you don't personally know.
- Customers and members can "follow" you without you having to reciprocate.
- There is a quick way to share links to content to help spread your message to a wide audience.
- Users are very vocal, so if they are happy with your business or organization, they'll say so.

What's not so good about it?

- It's sometimes challenging to create a meaningful post in only 140 characters.
- Building an active following takes time and requires a daily commitment to sharing content.
- Lots of "noise." With so many identical-looking tweets, it's hard to make a single one stand out in the crowd.
- Spammers are increasingly targeting the service.
- Users are very vocal, so if they have a problem with something, they'll say so.

Pinterest

Unlike other photo sharing sites, the emphasis here is on the discovery and curation of other people's content, not just storing your own.

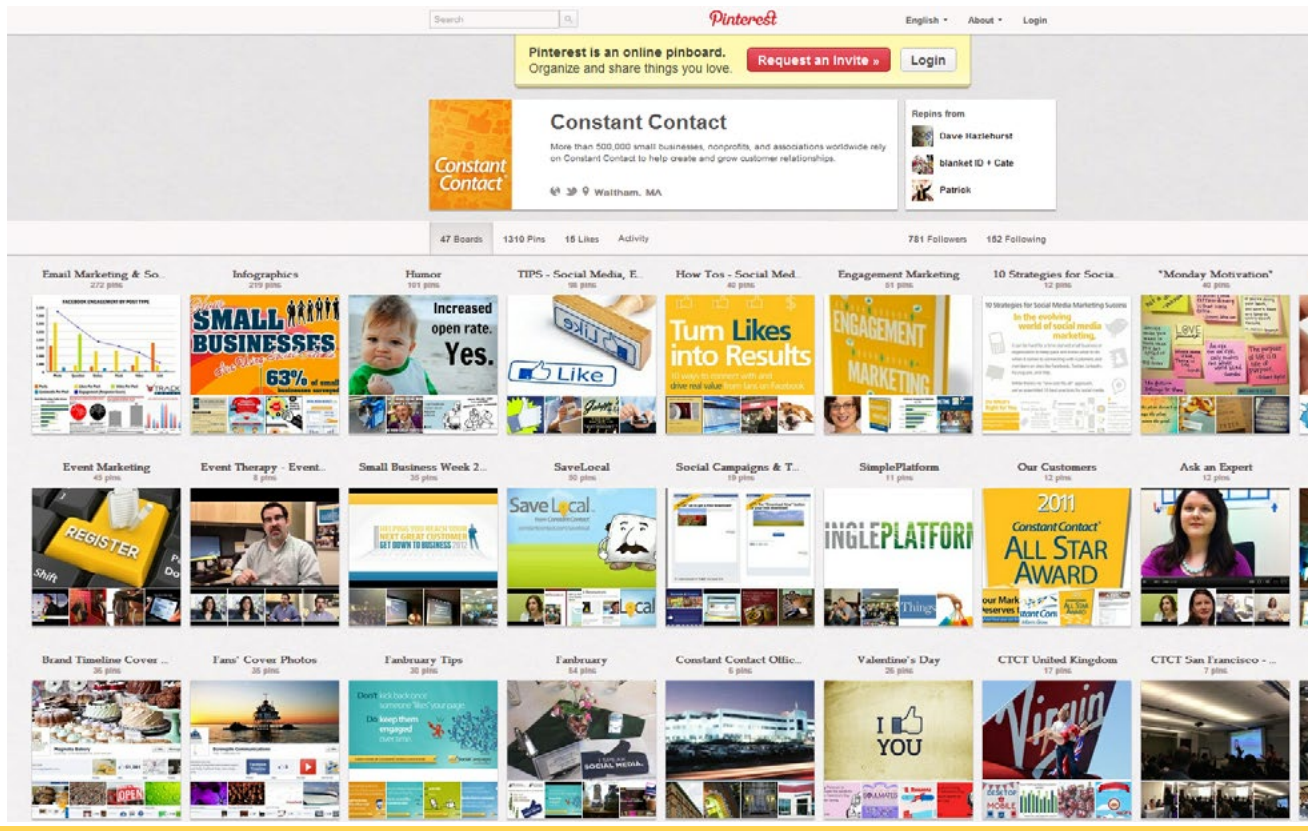
Pinterest allows you to use visual assets like photos, videos, or infographics to garner likes and "repins," which are the equivalent of shares on Facebook, or retweets on Twitter. You can easily post images from other websites to your Pinterest account using the "Pin it" task bar button, or you can just browse the Pinterest platform to discover, like, or "repin" content others have already posted. Each pin includes a link back to the originating source.

With over 20 million active users, Pinterest is one of the fastest growing social networks. This visual aspect of the site is one reason why it's captured the interest of so many businesses, from retailers to photographers and designers, who are using it as a portfolio or product catalog. Customers and clients can say which products they love and want to buy for themselves, and their friends can further the endorsement by pinning the pictures to their own boards.

Want more information about getting started on Pinterest? Check out SocialQuickstarter.com.

Tip for Success

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The content that you share will link back to its source on your website or blog, so your Pinterest board serves as a source of web traffic for your business.



What is good about Pinterest?

- Pinterest is the most visual social network, and lets businesses showcase their products and services through pictures.
- While Pinterest has seen incredible growth, it is still in the early stages and there are opportunities to catch the attention of new users.
- Users want to grow their presence on Pinterest and in doing so they act as marketers on your behalf.

What is not so good about Pinterest?

- The visual appeal of Pinterest may limit the sites usefulness for certain industries.
- The demographics are a bit lopsided, as of March 2012 – 70% of users are female.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the most “professional” of the top social networks, and is most popular with business-to-business users and those looking for jobs. Individual users’ profiles are tantamount to an online resume (complete with recommendations and endorsements) and, like Facebook; connections between users must be confirmed by both parties. Businesses and organizations can create pages that outline the who, what, and where of their operations, and in fact, many businesses use it to recruit (and check references) for new hires.

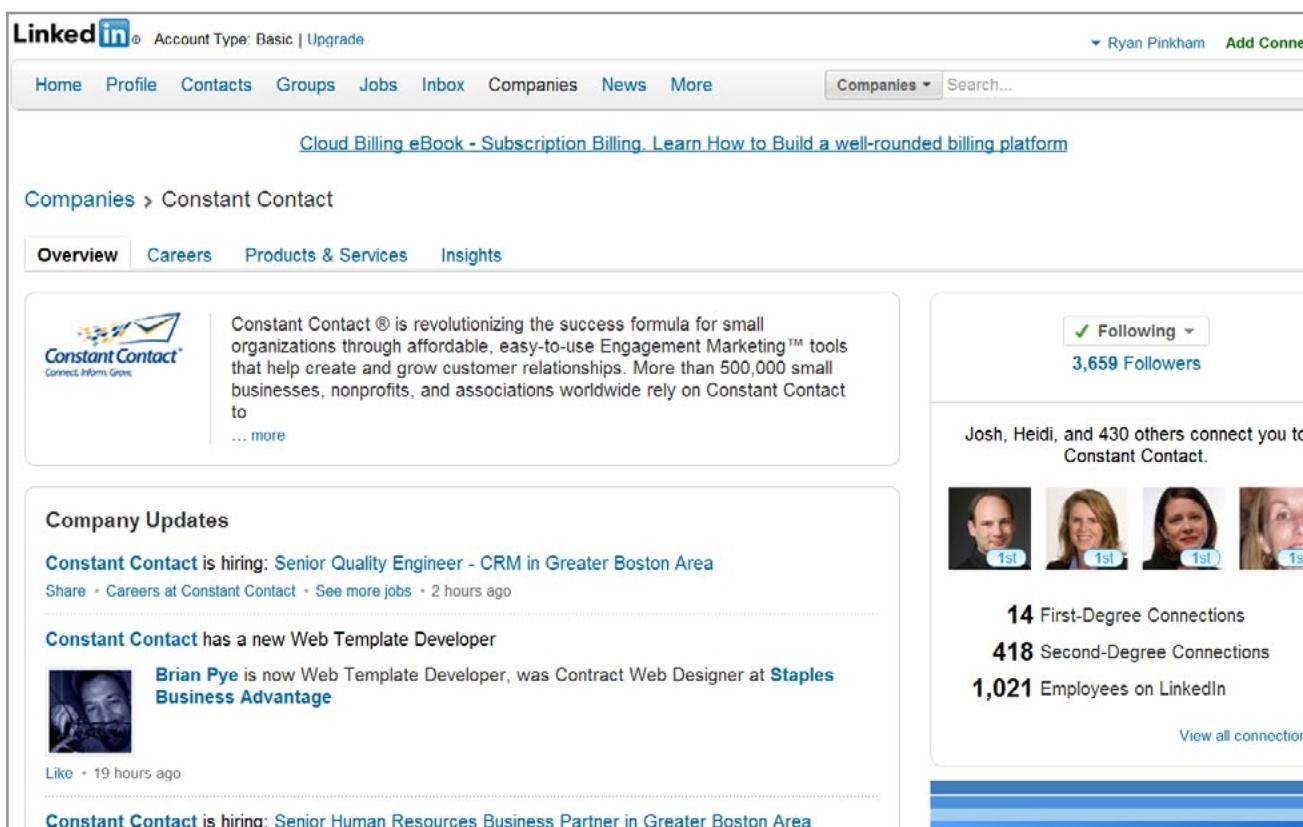
Two of the biggest benefits of LinkedIn are the community (“Groups”) and question areas, which tend to be more professional in nature than those found on Facebook or Twitter. (It’s one reason why LinkedIn is most popular with a business-to-business audience, rather than a business-to-consumer audience.) Answering questions in your area of expertise is a great way to establish you and your business or organization as an expert. LinkedIn is highly recommended for promoting a business-to-business event or communication since it is a professionally-oriented network.

Want more information about getting started on LinkedIn? Check out SocialQuickstarter.com.

Tip for Success

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Participants in LinkedIn’s Group forums are an active bunch who are looking for information and insight. Find the groups and discussion threads that are most relevant to your line of business or organization and add your expertise to the mix.




LinkedIn Account Type: Basic | Upgrade ▼ Ryan Pinkham Add Connection

Home Profile Contacts Groups Jobs Inbox Companies News More Companies Search...

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Josh, Heidi, and 430 others connect you to Constant Contact.

 1st
  1st
  1st
  1st


14 First-Degree Connections
418 Second-Degree Connections
1,021 Employees on LinkedIn

[View all connections](#)

Company Updates

Constant Contact is hiring: Senior Quality Engineer - CRM in Greater Boston Area
Share • Careers at Constant Contact • See more jobs • 2 hours ago

Constant Contact has a new Web Template Developer



Brian Pye is now Web Template Developer, was Contract Web Designer at **Staples Business Advantage**

Like • 19 hours ago

Constant Contact is hiring: Senior Human Resources Business Partner in Greater Boston Area

What's good about LinkedIn?

- The "six degrees" nature of the site allows you to reach out to new people through your existing connections.
- Profiles are straightforward and connections are easy to make.
- It's a place where requests for endorsements are both welcome and expected.
- It allows for questions and answer inquiries with a professional slant.
- It's a great place to look up background information on people before a meeting or phone call.

What's not so good about it?

- Job seekers tend to be more active on the site than those already employed.
- People use the site for purely professional purposes, so marketing messages are not always welcome.
- While other sites like Facebook and Twitter are common "hangouts" for people, LinkedIn is typically used for business purposes and thus doesn't play as active a role in people's daily lives.

Google+

Google+ provides users with an experience that is similar to that of Facebook (a news “Stream” based on status updates and shared content, recommended friends, etc.), with some unique features for organization and interaction. Your connections on Google+ are organized by “Circles”—where users can share content with specific groups, without it being seen by all of their connections. Google+ also offers “Hangouts,” where a number of users can connect through a live video feed.

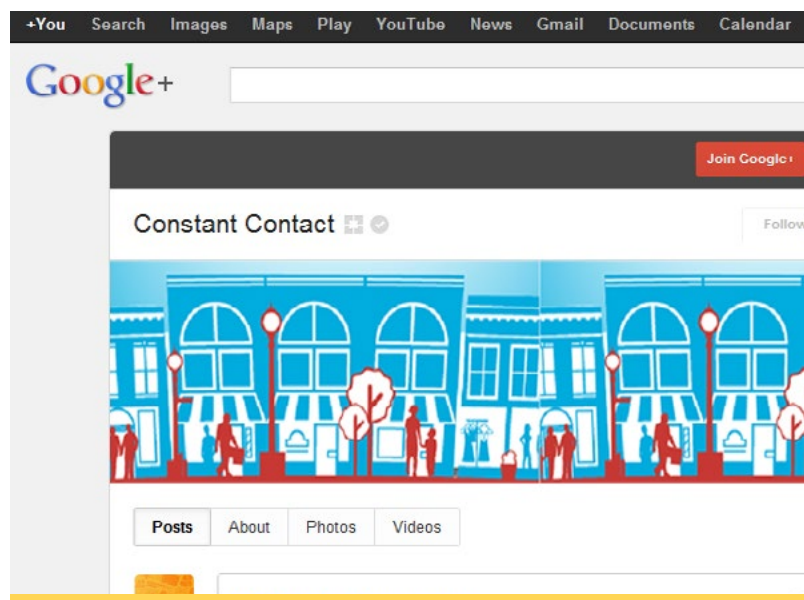
Google+ Pages are similar to Pages on Facebook, in that they separate your professional social activity from your personal, and give users a place where they can connect with your business online. Pages can also be added to “Circles” and can even host their own “Hangouts.”

With over 100 million users on Google+, Google is now a search engine with a self-fulfilling engagement platform. Those who actively participate on Google+ have a better chance of getting in front of their target audience via search results. As consumers begin to adopt and favor personalized search results via Google+, those brands and businesses that engage on Google+ will have an advantage over those who don’t.

Want more information about getting started on Google+? Check out SocialQuickstarter.com.

Tip for Success

Setting up a Page on Google+ is easy. Even if you’re not sold on the quality of engagement on Google+, there is still value in having a Page set up for the search value.



What’s good about Google+?

- Google has integrated Google+ search results into their search engine and only businesses on the social network will get picked up in these results.
- Even if your customers are not on Google+, they probably already search with Google and being on the social network will give you a better chance of being seen.
- Hangouts provide a unique opportunity to engage with customers face-to-face.
- Google+ is not yet “main stream” so you will have a better chance of standing out than on sites like Facebook or Twitter.

What’s not so good about Google+?

- Despite having 100 million users, Google+ still hasn’t seen the active engagement that sites like Facebook and Twitter have seen.

Blogs

A blog, by definition, is a web log, where you can post anything you want. It is usually set up as a separate website or an extension of your website. It is often used as a platform to update the world with content that you may not want to display on your website's homepage, such as your opinions, news, events, product reviews, your email newsletter archive, or anything you want to share with your customers and prospects. There are a lot of blogging platforms that make it easy for you to write, categorize, and publish posts.

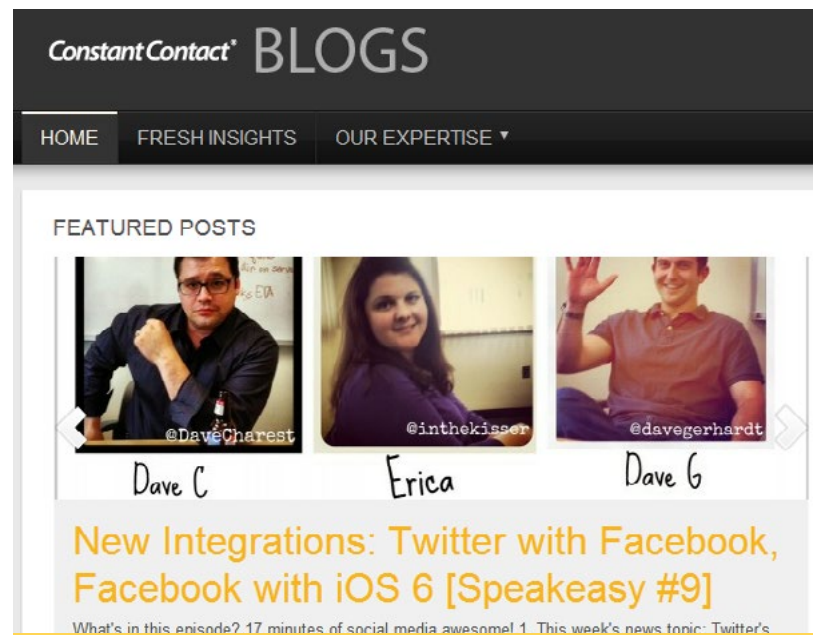
Want more information about getting started with blogs? Check out SocialQuickstarter.com.

What's good about blogs?

- They provide an easy way to post and manage content.
- They are inexpensive to set up and maintain.
- They are search engine friendly and can give you a nice search engine optimization (SEO) boost.
- They are a great place to show that you are accessible and authoritative.
- Like other forms of social media, they are great for building relationships, expanding brand awareness, and gaining insight from your customers and community.
- They are a great source of content to share on your social media networks and for your customers to share on theirs.

What's not so good about them?

- Blogs must be updated somewhat regularly to get real value.
- They take more time than Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. to keep current.
- Templates through free services can be limiting.
- Employing an advanced design requires some knowledge of HTML and CSS.



Tip for Success

Free blog platforms like WordPress also allow you to include share buttons for all of the major social media networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and Pinterest). This makes it easy for your readers to pass along your blog posts.

YouTube

YouTube is the most popular video hosting and sharing platform. Anyone with an account can upload a video to the site, from their computer or smartphone, and share it with the world for free. YouTube makes it easy for your video to go viral through its categorization, search engine, and external sharing tools. You can embed the YouTube video player on your website or blog, and can easily share your video on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media networks.

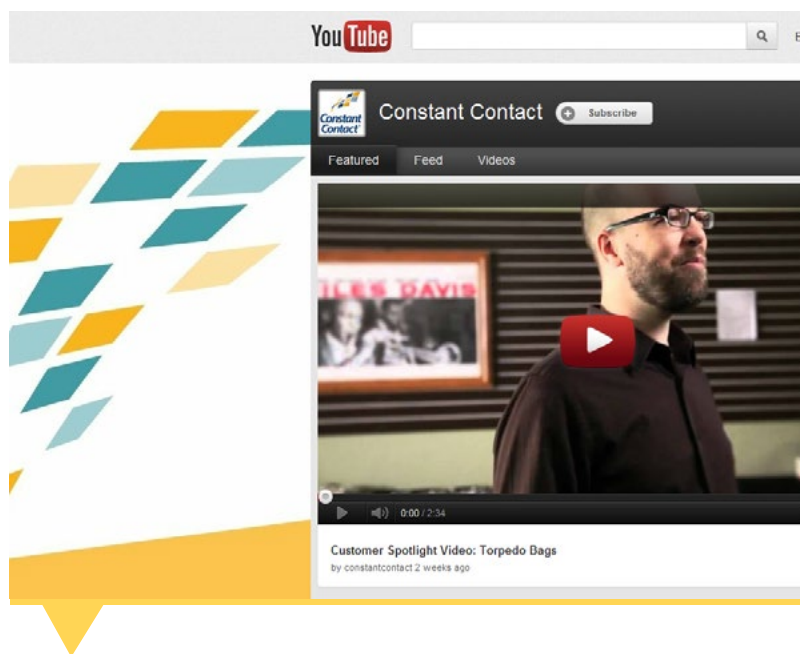
YouTube also offers a number of editing and enhancement features to help users to create more professional looking and sounding videos.

Note: While you don't need a YouTube account to watch and share videos, you do need an account to publish them. All users have the ability to post videos that are up to 15 minutes long, and certain verified users can post even longer videos.

Video is a way to drive more engagement on your other social media sites. On Facebook, video posts have the second-highest engagement rate (behind photos). Like photos, people must click on something to get a closer look at a video. They also take up more real estate in a News Feed, making them easier to notice.

(Other popular video hosting and sharing sites include Vimeo and Blip.tv. There are also a number of niche video sharing sites where you can host and share your videos with other users who share a common interest.)

Want more information about getting started on YouTube? Check out SocialQuickstarter.com.



Tip for Success

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Avoid “cute” video names. Instead, optimize your title by using keywords that your customers and potential customers might be using to find you. And don't forget to link your video to your website to get a nice boost on your search engine rankings.



SlideShare

SlideShare makes it easy for you to share and discover presentations, documents, and even videos. It's free for most users but offers advanced features for those willing to pay for a pro account. SlideShare is a great platform, for sharing your expertise and getting feedback on your presentations. Like photo and video sharing sites, you can tag your presentations with keywords to make it easy for users to find your content by category. You can also link your presentations to your website or blog, which will help customers find you and give your website a nice SEO boost. You can also easily share content on other social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to expand your audience beyond the 60 million monthly visitors, which SlideShare already offers.



Tip for Success

Be sure to tag your presentation so users can more easily find your content when researching a specific topic.



Yelp

Yelp allows consumers to share the experiences they've had with local businesses, and lets business owners share information about their business with their customers. Over 27 million local reviews have been posted on Yelp, as of April 2012, with an average of 71 million people visiting Yelp each month to find, review, and learn what others think about businesses in their area. Yelp's mobile application is very powerful, enabling users to find nearby businesses and even to "check in" to a business and tell friends where they are. (Approximately 40% of all Yelp searches come from its mobile app.)

If your business has a physical location, chances are good that people have already reviewed you. You should make sure that you "claim" your business on Yelp to make sure all the information is correct such as your hours of operation, address, and phone number. Claiming your business on Yelp has many other benefits as well. You'll be able to communicate with customers who have reviewed you (publicly or privately), track how many people have viewed your business on Yelp, promote special offers, events, add photos, share a history of the business, specialties or featured items/services, web links, and more. This way, when a user goes to search for your particular business, or is choosing between you and someplace else, you have put your best foot forward to set you apart.

(Other popular ratings/review sites that are similar to Yelp include CitySearch, YahooLocal, and Merchant Circle. You may have also noticed that Google Maps and Google Search offer ratings and reviews for businesses through Google+ Local Pages. Given the popularity of Google search and maps, it's very important that all your information is correct across all ratings/review sites.)

Want more information about getting started on Yelp? Check out SocialQuickstarter.com.

What's good about Yelp?

- The site's motto says it all: "Real people, real reviews." Users know they're getting unvarnished commentary from people just like them.
- A business' profile page can be claimed and customized with photos and other details.
- Owners can see who is commenting about their business thanks to the site's free monitoring tools.
- Yelp allows business owners the choice of replying privately or publicly to anyone who has left a comment, positive or negative.

What's not so good about it?

- The order in which reviews are displayed cannot be changed, which means if a negative review is the most recent one written, it will be the first one a new visitor sees.



Yelp Real people. Real reviews.®

Search for (e.g. taco, cheap dinner, Max's) **Near** (Address, Neighborhood, City, State or Zip) **Boston, MA**

Welcome About Me Write a Review Find Reviews Find Friends Messaging Talk Events

Yelp Boston San Francisco New York San Jose Los Angeles Chicago Palo Alto M

★ Yelp is the fun and easy way to find and talk about great (and not so great) local businesses [Sign Up Now](#)

Best of yelp [More "Best Of" »](#)

Restaurants 4418 reviewed

1. Casa Razdora
2. Tutto Italiano
3. Roast Beast
4. RJ Gourmet
5. Meridian Food Market

[see more »](#)

Shopping 3309 reviewed

1. Leo Carroll Jewelers
2. Sarra
3. Hub Bicycle Company
4. Eureka Puzzles
5. MIT Press Bookstore

[see more »](#)

Browse by Category

- Restaurants
- Nightlife
- Food
- Shopping
- Beauty and Spas
- Arts & Entertainment
- Event Planning & Services
- Active Life
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- Health and Medical
- Local Services
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Get the Yelp your mobile It's free and helps you find great, local businesses on the go! [Get it for Free!](#)

Review of the Day Voted by our members!

★★★★★ **Strip T's** where do i even begin..

Tip for Success

To claim or create a page for your business, visit <https://biz.yelp.com/signup>. Once you claim your page, Yelp enables you to monitor the monthly and daily traffic to their site and to learn more about the people who are checking-in, commenting, and rating your business (everyone who does so has a profile on the site). Business owners can also respond privately and publicly to anyone who has commented on the page. Best of all: this information is free.

angie's list



Angie's List

Angie's List is a private ratings/review site, founded by Angie Hicks (yes, there really is an Angie), that is focused on contractors, doctors, mechanics, and other service businesses. It's different than other ratings/review sites because customers pay to use it for its certified data collection process, help if a project goes bad, and live customer support.

On the other hand, businesses can't pay to be on the site and are only listed if a paying member submits a report. You may register your company for free on Angie's List, but only Angie's List members can give your company grades. Grades from members control your company's placement on the List.

Businesses rated on Angie's List are graded by members on an A–F scale, just like a school report card. These grades, as well as full reviews, are available for other local members to view, in addition to company information such as contact information, hours of operation, accepted forms of payment, and special offers. Businesses can monitor their Angie's List reviews and the company encourages you to respond to any and all reports, because Angie's List members will often look at a business' response before they make their hiring decision.



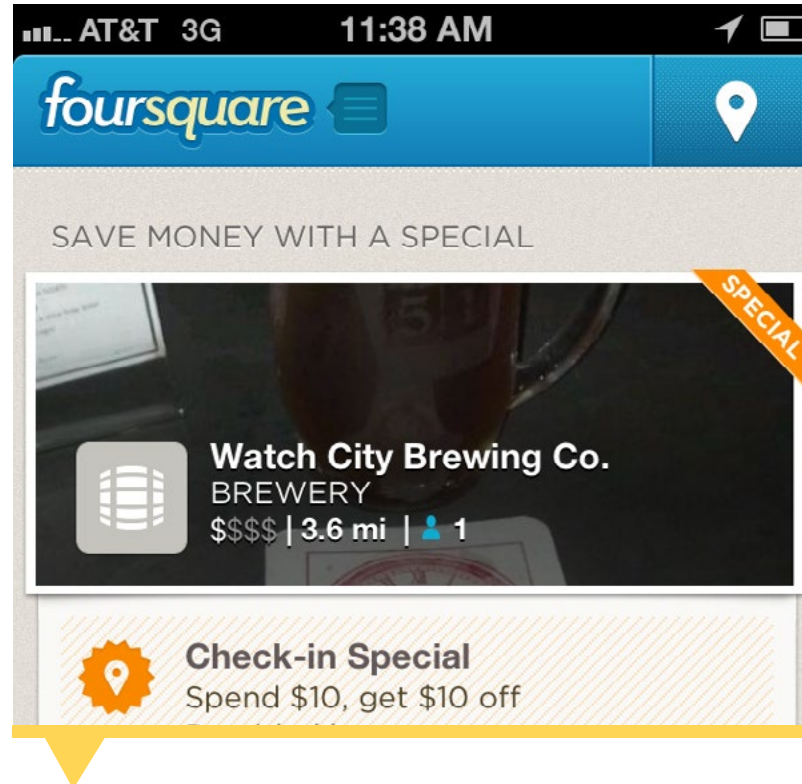
Foursquare

Foursquare allows your customers and visitors to “check in” when they’re at your place of business or event and to share that update with their friends on Foursquare, Facebook, and/or Twitter. When a user checks in to a location, he earns points, virtual “badges,” and sometimes even sponsored deals and offers. Users often compete to be the “mayor” of a given location, a title awarded to the user who has the most check-ins there, and some businesses offer special incentives for mayors. These gaming mechanics have made Foursquare the most popular of all of the geo-location services with more than 20 million active users world-wide and over 2 billion check ins, as of April 2012.

Like Yelp, businesses are encouraged to “claim” their business so that they can monitor who is checking in, offer special promotions, or advertise to people nearby using geo-location technology. Foursquare has tremendous potential for hyper-local advertising of businesses. Users within a business’ immediate area can be sent targeted deals, encouraging them to stop by because they are already nearby. For example, many businesses take advantage of Foursquare by offering specials to the mayor, such as free drinks or desserts, or a percentage off a purchase. Others give a special to everyone who checks in at their place of business.

Foursquare also allows users to search for businesses in their area with an “Explore” feature. Users can search a given keyword (pizza, coffee, etc.) or browse within a category (restaurant, nightlife, etc.) to find exactly what they are looking for. Even if you don’t “claim” your business, it’s important to make sure your business is at least on the radar and that users are able to find you when exploring their surroundings.

Want more information about getting started on Foursquare? Check out SocialQuickstarter.com.



What’s good about foursquare?

- By competing to be the “mayor,” your customers are visiting your business more often.
- Offering specials to the mayor or to anyone who checks in gives extra incentive for customers to patronize your business.
- Publicly broadcasting users’ check-in locations alerts those in the area and in a users’ network where popular business and events are.

What’s not so good about it?

- Many people stay away from Foursquare because they don’t want to publicly broadcast their location.
- Users can forget to check in.
- Not every location is listed in Foursquare’s database; it’s up to users and businesses to add them manually.

If you haven't already signed up for an account on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or claimed your business on Yelp, Foursquare, or other sites, you should do so now. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Even if you don't plan to use any or all of the sites right away, they're free and a great place to experiment with different marketing tactics.



Time-Savers, Inc.

info@timesavingstrategies.com

www.timesavingstrategies.com