

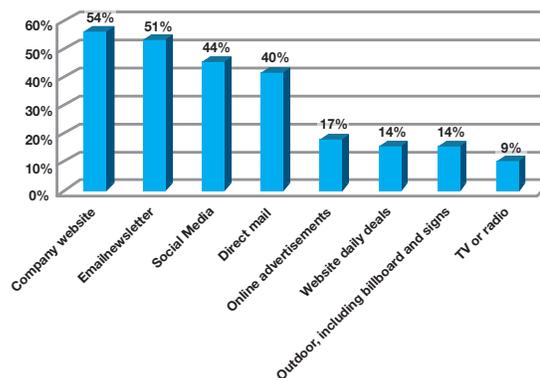
Your direct mail efforts and your social media efforts should not be separate and unrelated. They need to complement and support each other. Your direct mail program should be a key factor in leveraging your social media programs and improving your business. If you aren't using direct mail for social media success now, the good news is that you have incredible opportunity to integrate your direct mail and social media with little added cost. This whitepaper will tell you how.

Start with this truth: Direct mail is the most efficient way to reach targeted prospects (or current customers) with a specific and sometimes tailored message, a call to action and a deadline, all of which drives traffic and sales that can be measured.

On the other hand, social media is a vehicle that relies on unscripted (and therefore very trusted) chatter about your products and services. If the chatter is positive, people will be motivated to use your services. You can't ignore the chatter, and you should influence the content as much as you can. Nearly everybody is using social media, so you need to be at the table.

In fact, before we talk about the integration of direct mail and social media, let's take a fresh look at the power of social media today.

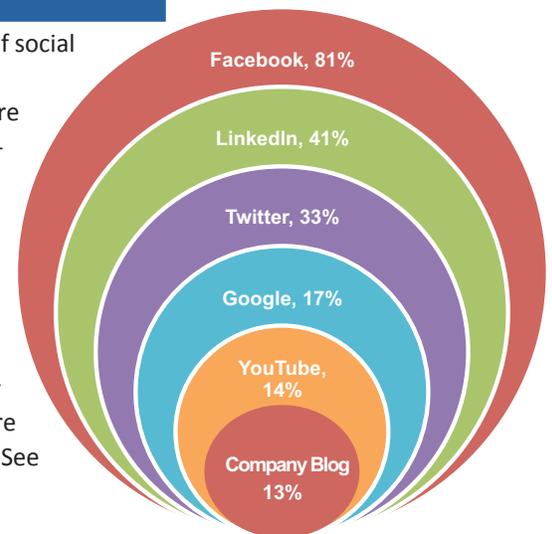
How does your company currently market to your clients/customers? Select all that apply.



Social media is becoming a tool you can't ignore

Here are a few facts that show the incredible presence, power and scope of social media:

- There are 800 million active Facebook members. They are 47% more likely to be heavy spenders on consumer goods and services than non-users
- Based on new research, the three most important reasons that small businesses use social media (and the three reasons why you should use social media) are: connecting with customers, visibility and self-promotion
- A recent Zoomerang survey of small businesses found that social media was equally as important as direct mail. (You can't do one or the other. You have to do both. The four big horses for promotion are the company website, email marketing, social media and direct mail. See the survey results, below:



Begin by focusing on—and understanding—the six most important social media outlets

Before we get into tips around linking direct mail to social media, let's decide which of the social media outlets matter. After all, there are thousands of major social media outlets, from chat rooms to geo-spacial integrators, and it is easy to get overwhelmed by the choices. Realistically, all businesses have limited time and money and want to get the most bang for their buck. So, let's look at the data to pick the most important social media for your business. That same Zoomerang survey we mentioned above helps determine where you should focus your resources around social media. Zoomerang said business use these top six social media outlets:

Now that we've narrowed down the focus on social media, let's look at each of these major social media players and suggest ways to integrate them into your direct mail program for maximum impact.

1. Facebook defined



If you don't already have a business Facebook page, you should create one NOW! It's easier than you may think. On this page, you can create status updates about what you're doing or thinking, share pictures, videos, messages, and links, play games, and run apps. Anyone, particularly customers and prospects, can post comments or pictures of themselves using your products or staying at your hotel or eating at your restaurant. It's a great way to find out what people think of your business or service, gather customer feedback and get new ideas.

Don't be afraid of critical comments. If people are critical of your business, it's better to know the criticism than not. Your Facebook page gives you a chance to address the issues.

An excellent example of a company Facebook page is the corporate page for Perkins Family Restaurants. The page, itself, has 44,000 "likes," and features photos of people eating at their restaurants, invitations to sign up for e-mail specials, new menu offerings, an easy way to purchase a gift card, and special topical conversations, such as on Valentine's Day or Thanksgiving. Individual Perkins Restaurants can establish their own Facebook page and link to the corporate page.

Now let's look at ways to augment your Facebook page through your direct mail program:

Integrating Facebook with direct mail

There are many ways to tie your direct marketing program to Facebook. Here are a few:

1. Create a Facebook page for your company, and put the Facebook logo in all of your direct mail pieces to drive traffic to your site. You can announce contests, special coupons or events in the mail piece, and drive targeted customers or prospects to Facebook where they can download specials, but also where they can post comments, starting a dialogue.
2. Create a Facebook page about one of your products or services or on an event (such as a fundraiser you are sponsoring), and send out a postcard announcing where mail recipients can sign-up (the address likely will be www.facebook.com/yourcompany/eventname). As people sign up, you'll be able to create community with them around other issues or products or services.
3. Conduct a poll on your Facebook page, and ask people to vote via a postcard to them.
4. Create a forum on Facebook on a topic related to your business, and encourage participation through references in outbound letters, emails and postcards. For example, if you are a car dealer that targets young families, start a forum on what people think are the safest infant car seats.

2. LinkedIn defined



LinkedIn is a social network based on your job title, professional standing and work history. People create profiles that include their resume, work history and references, keywords related to their skill set, and links to their own network of support people. Employers looking for particular skills can go to LinkedIn and call up prospective candidates by job title, location and keywords. Anyone applying for a job knows that the employer will be examining their LinkedIn profile.

Companies can run display ads on targeted LinkedIn profiles. For example, online universities can post display ads on any pages where the candidates only show a Bachelor's degree, assuming they might be interested in taking online courses for an advanced degree. Companies like Salesforce.Com advertise on profiles of sales managers and above.

As of the summer of 2011, there were 120 million registered users of LinkedIn. Some 34 million people check this directory each month! Besides hosting individual profiles, LinkedIn has professional groups (like one on "Social Media Marketing" and company profiles (Target, for example). A company profile gives brief information about the company, lists people at the company that are linked to you, and lists job openings.

Now let's look at ways to augment your LinkedIn page through your direct mail program:

Integrating LinkedIn with direct mail

There are many ways to tie your direct marketing program to LinkedIn. Here are a few:

1. As a business, you can create a LinkedIn profile and include the words "visit us at LinkedIn" and the LinkedIn logo in all of your direct mail pieces. This generates traffic from mail to your social site, where all of your employees who have LinkedIn pages can be listed, along with company information, company news and a map showing your location.
2. You can target advertisements on LinkedIn job profiles of people who you think might buy your services, with a link to a product page on your website or a special landing page, where the visitor can sign up for offers from your company.
3. You can start your own professional interest group on LinkedIn, and then refer people to that interest group via direct mail. For example, if you own a car dealership, you could start a LinkedIn social group on "Negotiating a best price when buying a car." You could promote the social group in your direct mailings. Those who go to the social group online could sign up to receive email offers from you.

These sorts of cross promotions enhance the value of your direct marketing piece and leverage your social network assets, all at the same time!

3. Twitter defined



Think of Twitter as a micro-blog space. You can post a message up to 140 characters, as many times as you want. You can "follow" anyone on Twitter you want, and anyone on Twitter can decide to follow your Tweets. No permission either way is required.

Twitter accounts can be a person, a company, a cause, a celebrity or a politician. Businesses can post updates (Tweets) about a service, a person, a related video, or any information that will draw attention to itself. Businesses also can advertise on Twitter pages they think represent potential customers. For example, Ecco

shoes may run a display add on pages of people who meet certain age and income profiles. Twitter is the wild, wild West of communication. It's a messy brew of self-promotion, opinions and updates, moving at the speed of light in all directions. As of this writing, there are about 250 million Tweets a day. It is growing exponentially.

Now let's look at ways to augment Twitter through your direct mail program:

Integrating Twitter with direct mail

There are many ways to tie you direct marketing program to Twitter. Here are a few:

1. You can create a Twitter destination that has conversations about an issue related to your products and services. For example, if you are a sports team, you can create a location on Twitter where all Tweets related to your team are housed. It's called a "hashtag" and looks like this: #yourteam. Post that hashtag on all of your direct mail to encourage conversations and community.
2. You can monitor conversations on your products, services or company, and address them in a direct mail piece. For example, if you own a motel or a motel chain, and see a lot of Tweets about bed bug infestations, this suggests that you address the safety and cleanliness of your rooms as a "bullet point" in your direct mail copy.
3. You can post a tweet on some aspect of your product, with a link to content on your website or a landing page, with an offer to join a loyalty club. Members of that club can be contacted more frequently with direct mail.

4. Google defined



Google started as an internet search engine, but along the way the company transformed the way that the web is organized and how websites are built. Search listings are based on a complex and secret algorithm that considers the richness of the content, its popularity and other factors. Google adjusts the algorithm often. Even so, the main way a company gains a top listing is to have a lot of content on the internet related to key search words that define the company's services or products and differentiated value.

For example, a company that sells learning programs for high schoolers, would want its website, online ads and posted articles to repeat certain keywords that prospects would use to search for those services: test improvement, test scores, SAT, ACT, testing, grades, learning success, learning disabilities, and so on. Obviously, if your company comes up near the top of a search, the searcher is more likely to consider your company for the product or service they are looking for.

Companies also advertise on Google so that their advertisements and links appear on searches that might be relevant. You can bid on keywords. You only pay the bid price if someone clicks on your advertisement, and the cost of that click is determined by an auction. Usually a click on the ad will take a person to your website or an online offer you have created.

Google has since branched out into many related businesses: mapping software, mobile phone software (the Android system) and browsing platforms, among others. There are other search engines besides Google, but Google dominates, with an estimated 1 billion searches a day. Yes, ONE BILLION.

Now let's look at ways to augment Google standings through your direct mail program:

Integrating Google with direct mail

There are many ways to tie you direct marketing program to Google. Here are a few:

1. Leverage your direct mail copy by re-using it on your website. Direct mail copy is hard-hitting, full of key words and will be noticed by search engines like Google. The more your website uses key words, the higher your website will rank in a Google search using one of the key words.
2. Re-use your direct mail offer as a display ad on Google linked to the search terms that get you the most business.

3. Create a landing page that has the same offer that you have in a current direct mail piece, and purchase keywords on Google or other search engines. The purchase includes a link to your landing page when a prospect uses that keyword to search for your service.

5. YouTube defined



YouTube is a video sharing website, owned by Google, with user-generated video content, including movie clips, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogging and short original videos.

The site is huge. More video content is uploaded to YouTube in a 60-day period than the three major U.S. television networks created in 60 years. As of February 2011, YouTube had 490 million unique users worldwide per month, who rack up an estimated 92 billion page views each month.

What all of this means is that we spend way too much time on YouTube. We spend around 2.9 billion hours on YouTube in a month — over 325,000 years. And those stats are just for the main YouTube website — they don't incorporate embedded videos or video watched on mobile devices. In fact, it is now standard practice for a business wanting to link to video content to use YouTube as the host of that content.

According to YouTube, on average there are more than 400 tweets per minute containing a YouTube link. Meanwhile, over 150 years' worth of YouTube videos (in terms of minutes) are watched every single day on Facebook.

Now let's look at ways to leverage YouTube through your direct mail program:

Integrating YouTube with direct mail

There are many ways to tie your direct marketing program to YouTube. Here are a few:

1. Post videos on YouTube that show your product in action or show customers using your product, and add the link to your direct mail. For example, if you sell furnaces and air conditioning units, post a video about how they are better than the competition, perhaps showing manufacturing advantages or energy efficiency. Refer to it in your direct mail.
2. Offer a company tour video on YouTube and include the link in your direct mail and email marketing. If you've expanded or added new equipment, show them off. Seeing is believing.
3. Have one of your company executives take a position in a YouTube video, and share the link in your direct mail and email marketing. If your restaurant uses fresher ingredients, show in a video where they come from and how they benefit diners.
4. Post a video about one of your products or services, created by the source of that product or service if it was not you. For example, if you are a wine merchant, send a postcard to your trade area with a discount for a certain type of wine and a link to a video from the wine's creator, posted on YouTube about how that wine was made.

6. Company blog defined



A company blog is a "weblog," or series of postings by company experts on topics related to the company's expertise. Most large companies have a blog, and it is accessible from their website. (PrimeNet's blog is at <http://www.primenet.com/category/blog/>)

The reasons that a company sets up a blog are many:

- A blog can elevate your search ranking (see Google, above), because search engines favor fresh content.

Companies with blogs get 55% more traffic than companies that don't have blogs, even if nobody reads the blog!

- Blog content endures. The search engines will catalogue your entries for years, so people can find you based on a post made a long time ago.
- Blog content can be re-purposed. A company can take blog content and re-use it in email blasts, newsletters and sales material. Think of a blog as a free sales contact.
- Engage customers. The best blogs draw reactions and ideas from customers, who react to a blog post. A good blog can act as a barometer for your customer's needs and concerns.

Integrating a company blog with direct mail

There are many ways to tie your direct mail program to your company blog. Here are a few:

1. Send a postcard to your customers, inviting them to send product ideas to you by posting them on your company blog. Make this a contest with an announced winner and prize.
2. If you are a restaurant, you can collect recipes from customers, post them on your blog, and pick a winner that gets incorporated into your menu, with a direct mail coupon for anyone ordering that item.
3. You can use your blog for postings related to your company's community giving focus, and invite volunteers to share their stories on your blog. Mention this in a year-end letter to customers, who will appreciate your community contribution.

Conclusion: Join the conversation

If you take anything from this discussion, we hope it will be a growing respect for social media. The way we feel about it, either a company or business should jump into social media, or it will be left behind. There are millions and millions of conversations going on each day. In some cases, many of them either concern your business or represent potential customers.

If you jump in, you can help control the conversation and start relationships. If you don't, your competitors will try to control the conversation (or already have) and you can bet they will try to drive your customers away from you. Plus, as you can see, there are great targeted advertising opportunities in social media outlets. In almost all social media instances, you only pay if a person clicks on your display ad or link, so the ads can be very efficient.

The other key message we hope you take from this whitepaper is that your direct mail program can be a huge contributor to your social network standing.

That said, we still think direct mail, in and of itself, is your most important option for sales. If you want to increase spending on social media, we recommend NOT doing this at the expense of your direct mail program, but in addition to your direct mail program.

Remember, ONLY DIRECT MAIL:

- **Gets you outbound to your customers** and prospects. You don't have to wait for them to take an action to find you, as they must in social media.
- Lets you **control your entire message** in direct mail, whereas in social media, anything can be said by anybody, and it doesn't have to be true.
- **Enables you to compete** with just a small number of pieces in the mailbox, so you'll get considered. You are not competing with a million messages at once when you use direct mail.

But, that said, if you haven't also used your direct mail program to leverage social media, join the conversation. We hope our ideas here will help you make that happen.

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