

9 Creative Women Share Secrets to Succeeding With Social Media

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Introduction

Written by: April from Blacksburg Belle

I don't have time for social media. Twitter is a waste of time. Facebook is for college kids. These are statements I see repeatedly on forums populated by artists, crafters, and creative entrepreneurs.

Every time I see these posts, I cringe. One, I see myself in those rebels against social media, because I used to think the same things. Two, I've realized how powerful social media can be for your business, and that it's NOT going anywhere. Either jump on board or get left behind.

Let me be clear: you can waste time on social media {I'm guilty of this!}. You could waste an entire day on Twitter if you really wanted to. But, you can also build long-lasting, solid relationships with other creatives and, more importantly, your customers.

Whether you're trying to sell products or services, it usually comes down to two things: (1) either the customer picks your product because she knows, likes, and trusts you OR (2) she picks your product based on price.

The Secret to Selling

Whether you're trying to sell products or services, it usually comes down to two things: (1) either the customer picks your product because she knows, likes, and trusts you OR (2) she picks your product based on price.

Think about how you choose what to buy. Let's say you're looking for a necklace to get your mother for her birthday. If you already know, like, and trust someone who sells jewelry, you'll probably go straight to that person's shop to make your purchase. If you don't know someone who sells jewelry, you might ask your friends if they have any suggestions. If you get a referral from a trusted friend, you probably trust the person she recommended and purchase from that jeweler. If these

scenarios don't work for you, you might find yourself on Etsy with a million different options. What will it come down to if you find two similar necklaces that both come from sellers with high ratings? Probably, the price.

And you don't want to compete on price, **because you'll never win.** There will always be someone willing to sell theirs for less—plus, if it's really about price and not about quality, handmade goods, the person might just buy from Walmart.

So, here's the secret: get potential customers to know, like, and trust you. If you focus all of your marketing efforts on building relationships, then you'll be successful. Seriously. You do this by using social media platforms authentically. Why don't a lot of people do this? Because, it's a lot of work. It's much easier to spam people and hope it turns out for the best. But, the true success—and hard work—lies in building authentic relationships with other creative people in and out of your niche and with your customers. If you can do this, you'll get repeat customers and referrals.

Introduction to the Blog Series that Led to This Ebook

I haven't been building a presence on Twitter and Facebook for very long, because I was one of the people fighting the inevitable. Even though I understand the power of blogging, because I've been doing it for years, I thought it would be kinda silly for me to give you tons of information about social media when I'm not an expert.

That's why I hosted a blog series that included a lineup of amazingly talented, and creative women to help you learn a few things about social media. Over the course of two weeks, this group of women blogged about how social media has helped them and their businesses, and how you can put these ideas into action. Instead of making you hunt for each of these posts, I've compiled them into this super sassy ebook. Enjoy!

Using Social Media to Build Relationships with Your Target Markets Written by: Meredith from Smaller Box

As small business owners, we sometimes get in the habit of using our social media accounts just to broadcast news about our brands. While social media can be useful for keeping interested parties in the loop, keeping the conversation entirely one-sided means you're missing out on other ways to interact with your target markets. So who should you be talking to on social media and how should you engage them:

1. Customers

People who might or have purchased your products are an important audience and you don't want them to feel like all you do is sell to them. You can use social media to let customers see what goes on behind the scenes, share content both you and your customers might find interesting, engage customers in shaping your product line. Here are a few examples of how you might do some of this:

- A clothing designer shares an inspiration board from a recent product design on her blog. She then posts a note on Twitter and Facebook letting customers know about this new entry and invites them to give feedback. She also shares her inspiration board on Flickr, so Flickr users can provide feedback there.
- A jewelry designer, who focuses on bridal jewelry, blogs about an article discussing the merits of big and small weddings from an online wedding magazine, and then asks her customers which they plan to have and why.
- A skincare company is working on coming up with new fall fragrances, the company owner asks fans on Twitter to tell her what scents remind them of fall.

All of these actions invite the customers to get to know the creators behind the brands and even let the customers take part in shaping the brands.

2. Peers

Although peers are not a primary audience for your social media efforts, there can be some advantages to networking with peers via social media. You might want to engage fellow artisans or small business owners to engage in some <u>cross-promotion</u> or <u>collaborations</u>. Here are some examples of how this could be done:

- An illustrator who knows a t-shirt maker via a message board, contacts the tshirt maker via private message to ask if the printer would like to print some of her drawings on her t-shirts.
- A handbag designer follows and is followed by artisans that design jewelry and shoes on Twitter. She sends a message using the @ symbol to these fellow business owners to ask them if they'd like to share the cost of an ad in a magazine.
- An invitation designer who sells wedding invitations asks a wedding
 photographer, a florist and a jewelry designer to take part in a blogging meme
 about winter wedding ideas. As each company posts their articles, they link to
 each others' websites.

Another audience to consider in social media is professionals who might in some way help your business. This could be press, well-connected sales reps, a buyer for a retail chain you'd like to get a wholesale account from. Social media is a great way to get on their radar.

3. Media, Sales Reps, Etc.

Another audience to consider in social media is professionals who might in some way help your business. This could be press,

well-connected sales reps, a buyer for a retail chain you'd like to get a wholesale account from. Social media is a great way to get on their radar. Some examples of how this might work:

- A catnip toy designer Googles the names of some writers who work for Cat Fancy. She sees that a few of them have Twitter accounts and follows them and sends a hello saying "I liked your article in Cat Fancy. I look forward to reading about your upcoming articles." Now they're aware of her and will hopefully follow her back. Even if they do not, she can use Twitter to see if they mention what articles they have coming up so she can pitch them her products.
- A home decor maker meets a sales rep at a trade show. She decides to look her up on Linked In after the show and chat with her about possibly representing her line.

Choosing Social Media Platforms Written by: Angela from The Artists' House

I have some really good news for you! Do you remember when you were just a kid, and often when receiving a gift from a care taker you were told, "Go ahead, but take just one." **Take just one?!**

As a child, this use to kill me. Even as an adult I can't take just one of anything. Cookie? Why yes please! May I have ten?



The good news about social media platforms is that you don't have to pick just one. In fact, my

recommendation is the exact opposite. I recommend that you try a few out —not too many, but definitely a few, and especially the popular ones. Give them a spin, like dating, and see which you prefer. And because this isn't a marriage, if a certain social media platform isn't complementing your style, you're not committed to it. That being said, I also don't recommend giving up on a specific social media application too soon. Let me explain.

Social media, like a shy person, sometimes take a few conversations to get to know. Currently, I'm not completely acquainted with Facebook. We're still getting to know one another. I have a feeling that in the future we might become better friends. On the other hand, and quite to my surprise, I adore twitter. We hit it off right from the beginning.

When choosing social media platforms, my recommendations are this:

The good news about social media platforms is that you don't have to pick just one. In fact, my recommendation is the exact opposite.

- 1. **Get on board!** Yes, it will take extra time out of your day, but the reality is that this is where we are and where we will continue to gather in greater numbers. The goal of your business should be to get your products and/or services out there. **You need to go where the people are.** And believe it or not, the "If you build it, they will come" motto doesn't work on the internet. The competition is fierce and even if you are stumbled upon, without a link to the "person" behind the product, or a recommendation from a friend, most likely people won't buy from you. Social media builds both a presence and a reputation, so get on board!
- 2. **Use your technological devises.** Smart phones, ipads, and other portable gadgets are great when it comes to creating a face online when you literally have just a minute here or a minute there. **I carry my iphone with me at all times and just chime in online when I can.** It's natural, enjoyable, and genuinely doesn't seem like work. Rather, it's fun, like texting a friend.
- 3. **Find a system.** It has taken me a little while to find a system that works for me. And honestly, I'm still tweaking this system, keeping both my personality and the needs of my company in mind. My iphone apps are an example of one "system" that has helped my situation. Since I'm also a stay at home mother, my twitter app allows me to "be present" online while I'm also at the park with my daughter. It's easy, quick, and over time has big results with little effort. Another system that works well for me is that **I participate in the social media scene during the day when my energy and productivity level is low**. I try to keep my most alert hours for more important tasks, which brings me to my last point.
- 4. **Know when to turn it off!** Another practice that I've put into place is that when my daughter goes down for her nap, all my electronic devises are OFF. Instead, I use this time for more focused tasks like sewing and product development. **Social medial, just like dating, shouldn't take up all of your time.** Those type of relationships just aren't healthy.

What's my recommendation? **Just try it!** Start "dating" and over time you'll know what's right, the good news being that you don't have to pick just one.

How to Create Useful Content for Social Media Written by: April from Blacksburg Belle

How many times have you clicked on a blog or website and been disappointed with the content? How many times have you followed someone on Twitter or "liked" someone on Facebook to find that they don't share valuable content? Don't you just love people who send out automated tweets and never reply to anyone? Hmmm, I didn't think so—me neither.

You usually get one shot to make an impression—and that shot usually doesn't last more than 15 seconds. If the reader doesn't find anything entertaining or informative on your site, you've got major problems. They'll click away, and you've lost someone who you could've made a fan.



You shouldn't be out to impress everyone that stumbles across your blog or website—but you do want to impress your target market and potential customers. You want them to find content that wows them, leaving them wanting more and more. You want them to subscribe to your RSS feed and your newsletter.

There's a lot of noise in social media. "There are over 200 million internet blogs, and that number is rapidly increasing." {From: Success Secrets of the Social Media Marketing Superstars by Mitch Meyerson} That means you have to stand out, and you do this by writing useful content that your target market cares about.

5 Questions to Ask to Create Useful Content Your Readers Will Devour

- **1. Who am I doing this for?** Whether you're writing a blog post, making a new video, tweeting, or posting a new Facebook status, you should know who you're doing it for. To do this, you must know your target market, and more specifically, your target customer.
- 2. How can I help my target audience solve their problems? Brainstorm a list of problems that your target audience struggles with, and figure out how you can help them solve those problems. Build your content around these solutions. I came up with the idea for this social media blog series after realizing that many people in my target audience struggle with social media. They want to know what platforms to use, how to use social media effectively, and how it can help their business success. Well, I'm not a social media expert, so I gathered a group of creative women that also had similar audiences with similar problems to put together content that offered solutions. That makes this useful content.
- **3.** What goal do I want to reach with my content? This isn't a question you need to ponder with every tweet you send, but you should consider this question for each blog post. Are you out to sell your new ebook? Are you trying to connect with your customers? Is your goal to get readers to sign up for your newsletter? Keep this goal in mind when you develop your content.
- **4. Am I building trust with this content?** When you constantly push your product at me, you're annoying and untrustworthy. But, when you provide me with content that teaches me something or makes me relate to you, you're building trust. I'm much more likely to buy your product if you provide me with useful content before trying to sell me something. This is one reason that so many successful entrepreneurs offer free ebooks—to build trust and show their customers that they know what they're talking about.
- **5. Does this content engage my audience?** If you really want to create compelling content that will be spread across social media platforms, you should try to engage your audience. You can do this by ending the post with a question or call to action.

When you leave your reader with a question or motivate them to do something, you keep them thinking about your post after they're done reading it.

7 More Tips to Creating Useful Content that Wins You Fans

and adds something valuable.

1. Be authentic. This doesn't mean you need to tell me your thoughts on
Obama's healthcare plan and the amount of times your child threw up last week
on your jewelry blog. Just be yourself—but always think about the personal
information that you share. Scott Stratten recommends that you "never put
something on a social media site (or anywhere online) that you do not want seen
on a billboard with your name, your picture, your company logo, and your phone
number on it, with your mom driving by while sitting shotgun." (From Unmarketing: Stop Marketing. Start Engaging)

Many people get wrapped up in the idea that they have to post on their blogs every day, so they post half-assed content. If you have to choose between writing three amazing posts and five so-so posts, ALWAYS choose the three amazing posts.

2. Don't repeat yourself and remove unnecessary words. Your customers are busy, so make sure every word counts

- **3. Check for spelling and grammatical errors before publishing.** I know this is obvious, and kinda goes against what I said in tip #2, but it's important. If your post has multiple errors, it takes away from your credibility. Everybody makes mistakes—I know I do—but you can prevent a lot of them by double checking before posting.
- **4. Stop publishing content just to publish it.** Many people get wrapped up in the idea that they have to post on their blogs every day, so they post half-assed content. If you have to choose between writing three amazing posts and five so-so posts, ALWAYS choose the three amazing posts. But try to stay consistent. This means you should decide your posting schedule, and

stick to it. Be realistic when you decide how often you should post, and remember that there are extremely successful bloggers who only post two or three times per week...think <u>Chris Guillebeau from The Art of Nonconformity</u>.

- **5. Ask your readers what they want more of and what they want you to keep doing.** You can gain so much knowledge on what your readers want by asking those two simple questions. If you're brave, consider asking your audience what you should stop doing.
- **6. Reread your content out loud before you hit post**. When you read something out loud, you'll notice the awkward sentences and catch mistakes that you didn't the first time.
- **7. Reward your existing readers.** Don't always aim your content at getting new readers, because your current readers are going to be your biggest fans. This is extremely important to consider when you send out your newsletter. Give those readers a reason to open your newsletter when it's sitting among 50 other unread messages.

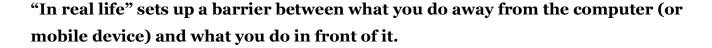
Show off your best content. Once you've developed content that your readers respond to, make sure it doesn't get buried in your blog's archives. One simple way to do this is to add a feature to your sidebar that shows your most popular posts. You can see I've done this on the sidebar of this blog where it lists, "Reader Favorites." When a new reader stumbles onto your site, you'll have a better chance at wowing her if you point her to your best work.

Don't be one those bloggers that just adds white noise to the internet. Don't be one of those people who send spam to her customers, peers, and friends on twitter and Facebook. Give your audience a reason to listen to you—provide them with useful, compelling content.

Time to Forget about "Real Life" Written by: Tara from Big Thinking for Small Businesses and Scoutie Girl

The phrase "in real life" (IRL) drives me a bit batty. It's the phrase that social media addicts, bloggers, and otherwise connected folks use to describe the interactions they have outside the internet space.

"In real life" suggests that online life is fake.





This is a false dichotomy.

If you're looking to create influence online and a larger following of engaged "fans," it's time to forget about IRL. You only have one life to live – and if you're building a business, a good part of it will be spent online. Your life is a whole and should be represented that way, as clearly & passionately as possible.

Getting really real.

April asked me to write about building a following in social media because I've done a fairly good job of it, relatively speaking. I have 4200+ followers on Twitter, almost 1900 fans on Facebook, a growing email list, and a respectable subscribership for both of my blogs. There are a lot of people who choose to connect to me and consume what I have to offer.

Since beginning my online business in January 2009, I have never felt more "real." Online, I connect with people who truly care about the real me: what I have to offer, what my interests are, who my family is, how much ice I like in my lattes. Online, I have the freedom to be who I really am, without question, without shame. If you don't like who I really am, you quit following me – no offense, but there will be someone else to take your place.

My life online is just as real as my life offline – if not more so. I don't hold much back online, I don't craft strategies for getting more followers, I am who I am. *Being real is the key to my success*.

So how do you connect with real people in a real way?

- Talk back. Everyone wants a conversation. Initiate one. Answer questions, respond to ideas.
- Ask questions. Just as important as providing answers is asking real questions and expecting real answers.
- **Share your mission.** Yes, real conversation is great but, at some point, you've got to get real about your mission. You wouldn't have a face to face conversation without telling each other what you're all about. Attracting people to you requires communicating your message.

Finally, keep you barriers low. The least "real" part of social media is just how easy it is to connect with real (cool) people. Outside the web, I'm a pretty hard person to connect with – I'm so darn shy. Online, we can connect with one keystroke.

Growing your online network isn't about tips, tricks, or strategy. It's about getting real and forgetting the false barriers we put up between our real lives and our online lives. If you're looking to make friends, build a following, and grow your audience, make sure its ridiculously easy to connect with you.

Growing your online network isn't about tips, tricks, or strategy. It's about getting real and forgetting the false barriers we put up between our real lives and our online lives. Growing your online network is about being real enough that people want to share you with their friends.

Why We Blog Written by Mayi from Heartmade

Why are so many artist + designers + crafters doing the blogging thing now? It's not because everyone else is doing it + they feel the pressure to keep up with the crowd. People blog because it's so freaking fun + it's really good for business too!

Sure I can be the first to admit it; blogging is not easy, especially when you are trying to keep up regularly + post original content (not just copy + pasting or echoing what the entire indie blog galaxy has already said). Those of you who have blogs know exactly what I mean. But here's the deal ladies + gentlemen (just in case you are here too) the benefits of blogging completely overshadow its drawbacks. And this my friends, you have to consider.

You're thinking: Oh! boy, but I'm already too busy running my indie shop + cooking cupcakes + doing the laundry + perfecting my skills + inventing my new product line + preparing for a craft show + buying supplies, **do I really need to have a blog?** I gotta be 100% honest with you here: **Yes you should! And here's why:**

1. **Blogging helps you build relationships with clients + fans.** Through your blog you let your personality + charisma + passion shine + this helps your customers relate + connect with you on a personal level. And a customer that relates + connects with you is a customer that trusts you + befriends you + this is a very



But here's the deal ladies + gentlemen (just in case you are here too) the benefits of blogging completely overshadow its drawbacks. And this my friends, you have to consider. special thing indeed.

- 2. **Blogging lets you show you're a pro.** Having a blog can help you show off (in a good way, not in an arrogant I'm- a-God kinda way) your abilities + brand your skills. If you rock at making the best chocolate brownies in the planet, give your clients backstage passes to see how you prepare the dough (without giving away your secret ingredient obviously) + cut the brownies + package them. It will show customers that you sure know an awful lot about brownies + chocolate + bakery + homemade cooking. And people love to buy from shops that they trust + feel confident about.
- 3. **Blogging helps you document your creative life.** I love looking at my blog archives to see where my mind + heart were at 2 weeks ago or even 3 months ago. It's like having my own little personal e-journal or e-diary that helps me navigate through my creative stages + learn from them + grow.
- 4. **Blogging lets you share information about your shop.** You just released an awesome new product + you're having a sale + you were featured in the Martha Stewart show + you might even be giving away free cupcakes. All this is great, but if you don't make that information readily accessible + easily visible for your clients to see (via social network channels like rrs feed, blog subscriptions + newsletters, twitter + facebook), your awesome news will be missed + gone to waste. And that's just no good for your business. Use your blog as a tool to inform your clients about all the wonderful things that are happening with your shop. But, be classy about it! You're an artist not a sleazy sales rep.
- 5. **Blogging connects you with the indie community.** When you start blogging, you become part of the vast community of artist + designers + crafters + bloggers + they can really help you grow your business, more than what you think. See how:

- a. When you start featuring work + products from your favorite indie shops, some of those artist + designers + crafters you feature will start following your blog. A couple of months back, for example, I was featured on Splendora, an awesome fashion + lifestyle blog + I became a loyal reader ever since. This goes to show how you can make fans simply by featuring talent.
- b. When you befriend other artists + designers + crafters you can exchange shop buttons + promote each other's work + host giveaways with each other's products.
- c. When you start commenting on posts from blogs you fancy, some of those bloggers will start commenting on yours. I personally follow many commenters (if not all) to their blog after reading a great comment they have shared with me on **heartmade** (or even at another blog I was visiting). So I know from experience that this simple method can have great results.
- d. When you make blog pals, you can also trade blog badges + host guest posts + link to each other often.

 See where this is going? It's a domino effect. Building genuine relationships in the indie community can mean a lot more exposure for your business. For more on **The Power of Connecting**, click here.
- 6. **Blogging gives you VIP access to Google.** Blogs are built for search engines. They are indexed faster + more frequently than your shop is. They also have this cool optimization feature that reads your keywords like "eco-friendly", "handmade", "biz tips", "headband" + connects potential readers to your site via those tags. This helps tremendously to bring more targeted traffic from people who are searching for exactly what your shop is all about. Pretty neat right?
- 7. **Blogging is so freaking awesome.** When you get in the habit of blogging + write about the things you are truly passionate about, blogging can become an obsession. It's just so much fun to connect with readers all over the globe + get instant feedback. It's just so exciting to share your ideas + talk about the things you love + actually start a conversation with people who share

similar interests. Our career choice as creators can sometimes be a bit solitary, can't it? But with blogging you feel you're not alone + it's the most comforting + uplifting + energizing feeling.

What do you say? Convinced already about the power of blogging? Does it get you excited about starting your own blog or about really taking your current blog to the next level?

How to Use Twitter and Social Media to Build Local Connections Written by: Mallory from Miss Malaprop

The internet and social media in particular, have made the world smaller than ever before. You can share your thoughts and stories with people on the other side of the planet in an instant, but you can also use these tools to build a strong local network and create a brand that is well-known and respected in your local community.



When I started my blog in 2006, I already had the long-term goal in mind of eventually owning a brick-and-mortar retail boutique for handmade goods here in New Orleans. I knew from the start that I wanted to connect with local people who would be interested in what I had to offer, as well as readers from all over the world. I'm a strong believer in the value of supporting your local economy and keeping plenty of your hard-earned dollars close to home, where they can bring the greatest benefit to the people and places you love. I've always put an emphasis on spotlighting local artists, businesses, and events on my blog whenever possible, and through the use of social media tools like <u>Facebook</u> and <u>Twitter</u> I've connected with so many amazing people in my city whom I never would have met otherwise.

My friend Leslie is a great example of how social media can be used to build powerful local connections. She started a group called <u>NOLAeats</u> back in the days before Facebook and Twitter even existed. She used earlier social networks like Tribe.net and Livejournal to organize local dining events. Many people who lived in the same city but who had never met in person before became friends through these events.

To me, social media is best used in a local context when it can help facilitate face-toface networking. Leslie now uses <u>Facebook</u> and <u>Twitter</u> to her advantage, and she recently won a "best social networker" award from our local weekly news magazine, The Gambit. She is now turning these same skills into a new event planning business endeavor called <u>Eatventful</u>.

To me, social media is best used in a local context when it can help facilitate face-to-face networking. Use it to plan and promote local events and meet-ups. Twitter and Facebook are also great tools for connecting with local media, including tv personalities, journalists and bloggers who might be more inclined to feature local businesses and creative types whom they've chatted with online in the past.

Here are a few tips on how to use Twitter to foster a strong local network:

- Be genuine and let your personality shine through. Show your appreciation for local Twitter friends with re-tweets and feature your local favorites on a <u>Follow Friday</u>(#FF) list.
- Think of Twitter almost like a chat room respond and add your own input to what your friends have to say.
- Use the Twitter lists feature to organize your favorite local "tweeps". You can break down your lists even further if you'd like, with separate lists for local friends, media and businesses to collaborate with.
- Use applications like <u>Hootsuite</u> or <u>Tweetdeck</u> to organize your lists and search for keywords relevant to your area. I have Twitter streams set up in Hootsuite for key terms like "NOLA" and "New Orleans" to alert me to tweets by new people who I might be interested in following and connecting with.

Facebook: The Missing Link... Written by: Maegan from Madeline Bea

I was reluctant to join Facebook...like, really reluctant. I felt as if I had too many online networking avenues and I was having a hard time keeping up with all the correspondence and checking in with my friends as it was. I had no interest in hooking up with high school acquaintances and really didn't know what I would do there. Finally, after my brother's 80th plea that I join, I did. And it has become {almost} my favorite networking tool!

I had been blogging, posting on Flickr, and building online relationships for two years. I had developed a lot of online relationships and a respectable online following. However, when I decided to open the doors of my portrait photography business this past summer, all of my online messages weren't making it to my prospective clients...they weren't hitting my local markets. Facebook has been the missing link for me to connect my online and local worlds.



Facebook allows me to connect in a different capacity with both my online friends and

connections as well as family members and people in my community. My online connections get a more personal glimpse into my life, while my family and local connections can get a glimpse of what I'm doing online. Many of my friends and family had no idea that I had a blog {or that I took pictures, for that matter}. Having a Facebook page and providing direct links to the posts and projects that I'm affiliated with makes it really easy to communicate with both online and local people.

Facebook is golden for word of mouth marketing! Friends and family can link to me and then their friends and family can check out my work as well. And in one, easy, fluid step, those people can check out me, my work, my websites, and my projects. If they like what I'm doing, then I gain another follower and potential client. There's no "oh, I'll have to give you her number" or "I

think I have one of her cards...I'll look for it." Facebook easily and efficiently allows for the type of networking that a) is the most valuable and b) is often the hardest to achieve! I try to be sure to add my clients as friends and tag them in posts and pictures...again, making the connections and bridging the gaps between online and local worlds.

Finding the right mix of personal and business related messages is key to being successful on Facebook.

Finding the right mix of personal and business related messages is key to being successful on Facebook. You neither want to inundate your followers with updates regarding your hourly level of happiness or bombard them with sales pitches. I like to keep my followers adequately aware of what is going on business wise, the projects I'm working on, mixed in with bits and pieces of my everyday life.

That being said, it's always important to offer a little something to those that support you...wherever that may be: a head's about a sale or promotion, an inspirational link or quote, a reminder about an upcoming project, etc. Knowing about you and your business is all well and good, but when it comes right down to it, your followers are going to need a little incentive to keep reading your stuff...especially in a world that is chock-full of stuff.

And, by far, {something I shouldn't even need to say...but do} BE YOURSELF! Be authentic in each and everything you post and your followers will get to know you...the person behind the business...which will always lead to more and longer lasting relationships with clients and potential clients. Being that Facebook is filled with the people who know me best {my brother, for example} and the people who hardly know me at all, I couldn't pretend to be someone else if I tried! But, in the end, that is what makes Facebook so great. Introducing your clients to the other {authentic} parts of yourself is a really valuable tool.

Using Newsletters to Increase Creative Business Success Written by: Irene from Imaginative Bloom

I don't define myself as an expert but since I started with the Imaginative Bloom blog, I'm sure to have learned a few things that really helped me a lot (and that are still helping me to improve).

I'm going to write here about some suggestions and tips that I think can be useful to you too.

"Don't wait until everything is just right. It will never be perfect. There will always be challenges, obstacles and less than perfect conditions. So what. Get started now. With each step you take, you will grow stronger and stronger, more and more skilled, more and more self-confident and more and more successful." --Mark Victor Hansen



Who are you writing your newsletter for?

Ask yourself about the age of your audience, their sex, job, passions; if they are just starting with their own business, what they sell, what they're looking for, in what you can be helpful, what are your common interests and goals, etc. Knowing your target audience is the key to creating the right content.

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Define your objectives

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newsletter. Once you have defined these, write them down somewhere and read them repeatedly while you are creating your newsletter.

Determine the frequency of your newsletter and stick to it

Professionals send their newsletters on a regular basis. This will help readers to know when to expect your updates (and to not forget about who you are!), yourself to better organize all content in relation with what you have scheduled for your blog as your daily posts, the upcoming events, the launch of a product, giveaways and all things that have a deadline.

Draw up a table of contents for each issue

Keep in mind what you have defined above and create your content.

Thinking about a theme and developing content around it will also help you to find a catchy "subject line" for each one of your newsletters.

Including different types of articles is good: the main ones (news, promotions, features, reviews, events' calendar, giveaways, etc) and some additional (funny and light-hearted, behind the scenes, useful external links, little personal stories, etc), remembering that most of the emails must be about the first ones.

Include a Call to Action

A call to action in your newsletters is essential to have readers take a specific action. Ask them to think about something, to contact you for more information, to book a promotion, to....

Whatever your action is, make it as simple and clear as possible (adding a direct link to click, a form to fill, etc).

Other important tips:

- Keep articles brief and language simple
- Be yourself and be honest in what you're writing
- Write a headline for every article using a bigger size
- Use no more than three typefaces, and max 2 colors
- Avoid spam filters (I posted a link below that helped me a lot)
- Content must "resonate" with your readers. Logically, intellectually and most of all, emotionally. (by Sara Gilbert)
- Stick to a similar format that remind readers of your site/blog aesthetics and style (this also ensures proper branding and recognition)
- Double-check your spelling and grammar to remove all mistakes
- Let your personality shine through
- Encourage feedback

Essentials elements to include:

- * subscribe/unsubscribe link/instructions
- * links/icons for your twitter, facebook, flickr etc
- * permission or invitation to forward the newsletter
- * contact info

Useful Links:

How To Build a Successful Email Newsletter

Creating Newsletter Content

15 tips on writing, editing

5 Reasons Why No One Is Reading Your Email Newsletter

How to avoid spam filters

Using Flickr to Increase Creative Business Success Written by: Jessica from Jessica Swift

I joined <u>flickr</u> back in August 2006. I had just entered the blogging world, and everyone was uploading their images to this site called flickr, so I figured I better be doing that to if I wanted my business to succeed online. It's amazing to look back and see how much my work has changed since then!



I've gotten clients through flickr. I've been invited to participate in art shows. I've received countless questions from other artists and creatives asking for advice. Flickr is, without a doubt, a great networking tool.

So, here are the ways that I've used flickr to increase my own creative business success, and I'm sure they'll work for you, too, if you're diligent and consistent about it.

1. **Join flickr groups.** Actively participate in them by uploading images. For example, I'm a surface pattern designer, so I joined several pattern design groups, and I regularly add new images to those groups. I've had a number of people contact me for projects who found my patterns in these groups. There are groups for everything under the sun! You can search the groups and join as many as you please. It's a great way to get your images in front of eyes that may not have found them on your individual page.

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2. **Add people as contacts.** People will start adding you as a contact, and your link will start showing up on other people's pages. You never know where someone will find you and click on your little avatar.

- 3. **Comment on other people's images.** People love to receive comments, of course! But make sure they're thoughtful. In addition to building relationships with other creatives, your comment will be linkable, directly back to your page. One more chance for someone to click over to you!
- 4. **Upload new images regularly.** The more often you upload new images, the wider you're spreading your web through the flickr universe. I upload new images as often as I can. Sometimes I get lazy about it, or too busy, but I do notice more people coming my way if I'm actively putting my images out there for people to find.
- 5. **Tag your images for easy searchability.** People can search flickr for anything and everything under the sun, so you want to make sure your tags are specific. If you were searching for your image, would you search for those words? Choose the obvious ones, but also get a little creative. Can you give the colors a different name? For example, instead of just using the word "pink", what *kind* of pink is it? Rose? Magenta? Hot pink? You get the idea. Specifics and details will get you far!

One thing that I always tell people who ask me how I created my successful online business is that I got my images out there in as many ways as possible (and continue to do so), and flickr has been a key part of that strategy. Start working that flickr page, and I just know you'll see an increase in your business!

We'll leave you with 10 reasons you need to get involved with social media:

- 1. It is estimated that over 50% of new business will come from social media and internet marketing efforts over the next five years. That base number could triple by 2020, according to the Microsoft Small Business Summit 2008. (from Success Secrets of the Social Media Marketing Superstars)
- 2. 78% of consumers trust peer recommendations and only 14% trust advertisements. (from http://socialnomics.net)
- 3. In less than 9 months, Facebook added 100 million users. If it were a country, it would be the third largest in the world. (from *Success Secrets of the Social Media Marketing Superstars*)
- 4. You can build relationships with your customers.
- 5. You give your customers a way to get to know, like, and trust you.
- 6. You can join in conversations that your customers are already having about you on Twitter and Facebook.
- 7. You can use social proof to increase sales.
- 8. You can establish yourself as an expert in your niche.
- 9. You can network with other creative women in and out of your niche.
- 10. Some of your competitors are using it and most of them will be soon.

Author Bios and Contact Information

Meredith Keller

Meredith Keller is the author of <u>Smaller Box</u>, a blog that covers marketing, PR, ecommerce and other issues of interest to creative online business owners.

Connect with Meredith on Twitter @smallerbox and on Facebook.

April Bowles-Olin

April Bowles-Olin works with creative women to lead more fulfilling lives while they make money doing it. She also attempts to add a little prettiness to the world with her art and jewelry. You can learn more about her at <u>Blacksburg Belle</u> or connect with her on twitter <u>@blacksburgbelle</u>.

Angela Flicker

I'm Angela Flicker, owner of <u>The Artists' House</u>. The Artists House started one happy day when I married a boy who was an artist. I too loved to create things, and so side-by-side we created beautiful things together.

Soon I was pregnant, and before my daughter was born I wanted the very best for her. When looking for that perfect baby blanket, I found myself disappointed with what was out there. When it came to something as precious as her baby blanket, something she would wrap up in every night, and drag around every day, well, only the best would do.

Nothing was quite right though and so I designed and made her blanket, my very first quilt. One quilt turned into two, and two to three, and soon I realized that I too was an artist, not just an artist's wife.

And so now I create truly unique quilts, sewn together one piece at a time —quilts that are "only the best". Along with quilts, I also make other things —I make things that make a house not just a house, but a home. I make things that add character, warmth, and charm to a space, without the extravagance that might otherwise make beautiful things inaccessible to those with children.

Connect with Angela on Twitter <u>@TheArtistsHouse</u> and on <u>Facebook</u>.

Tara Gentile

I'm Tara Gentile. **I think big.** I set lofty goals, execute ambitious projects, and get sizable returns. I'm not satisfied to stop at good-enough or moderately successful. I'm in the process of building a web empire. True tale. I can help you build yours too.

Connect with Tara on Twitter @scoutiegirlblog and on Facebook.

Mayi Carles

Hi there! My name is **Mayi Carles** + I'm a full time multi-passionate Panamanian artist + eco-designer + crafter + blogger + indie coach. In a nutshell: I own a little**eco-friendly design boutique** on Etsy + I coach indie makers all around the world how to be more effective + successful at what they love to do + I curate a wonderful blog called **heartmade**. Needless to say, I keep myself pretty busy around here, but I'm absolutely passionate about what I do + I love it!

Connect with Mayi on Twitter @mayicarles and on Facebook.

Mallory Whitfield

Mallory Whitfield is the founder and owner of <u>Miss Malaprop</u>, an online store and blog for handmade and eco-friendly goods. Mallory designs recycled clothing and accessories, including reconstructed denim skirts, fabric hair barrettes and cozy neckwarmers, as well as outfits made from recycled FEMA blue tarp.

Connect with Mallory on Twitter @MissMalaprop and on Facebook.

Maegan

I'm a wife, mother, and an artist...three roles that will be forever intertwined. I find beauty and understanding through the lens of my camera. I use my blog, <u>Madeline Bea</u>, to share my life, my journey, and my inspiration.

Connect with Maegan on Twitter @MadelineBea and Facebook.

Irene Zuccarello

Irene Zuccarello is an independent artist, designer and blogger based in Italy. She has always loved art and her main goals are to continue to grow the <u>Imaginative Bloom</u> site/blog supporting artists in all possible ways and work hard on her handmade projects to develop her own brand. Irene's dream is that one day these passions become one with her job."

Connect with Irene on Twitter @ImaginativeB and on Facebook.

Jessica Swift

Jessica Swift is an artist and pattern designer who believes that our childhood dreams and obsessions are the key to knowing the work we are supposed to do as adults. She remembers creating posters as a wee girl, filling large bubble letters with vibrant, hand-drawn patterns and decorating every surface she could get her hands on.

Twenty some years later, Jessica's childhood fascination with color and pattern continues. She works as an artist and freelance designer, and her bright, quirky style is enjoyed in a variety of ways and places, from paintings in galleries and illustrations adorning people's walls to pajamas, fabric, and beyond.

Jessica grew up in Boulder, Colorado, earned a BFA from Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY, and currently lives in Atlanta, Georgia with her husband and 2 cats. Her work can be seen on her website: http://www.jessicaswift.com, in her etsy shop:

http://www.jessgonacha.etsy.com, and on her blog: http://www.jessicaswift.com/treasuring/.

Connect with Jessica on Twitter @jessicagswift and on Facebook.