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**Six Social Media
Case Studies Your
Business Can
Imitate, Learn
From & Use...
Today!**

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EVERYONE TALKS A BIG SOCIAL MEDIA GAME...

But is anyone actually doing it and having success? We are constantly hearing about social media this and social media that. Yeah, we get it, it's neat and fun and cool and all that stuff.

But is it worth my time to pursue it as a business or marketing function? Can it be used to help my brand? Can it be used to grow sales, or get more leads, or get publicity?

The answer is yes it can. Look, we're all in business to generate a profit. And if you're like me, you're going to use every tool you can to do just that, even social marketing... assuming you know how.

So let's figure out how together...

Social media by its nature is not really supposed to be used for "business or marketing", or at least that's what some say. But that's just plain wrong. Everything is marketing when you're in business.

When you go to the Dentist and give her your card, you're marketing yourself. When you talk to your neighbor and refer him to a mechanic you know, you're marketing.

What's the difference if you're doing it offline, or online, socially? None. Here's a collection of case studies I've found online that showcase how businesses and brands have used social media marketing effectively.

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CASE STUDY #1 – BLOGGER OUTREACH INCREASES HP LAPTOP SALES 85%

Over at Andy Beal's MarketingPilgrim.com blog, Janet Meiners posted a great case study about how HP used bloggers to increase awareness and sales of a new laptop.

The challenge: HP sales were flat of a new laptop they were calling Dragon. Traditional marketing wasn't working.

What they did: HP decided to engage bloggers. They hired a social media marketing firm called BuzzCorps to help them strategize the plan. Here's what they did.

- They created a campaign and called it 31 Days of the Dragon.
- They contacted 31 tech bloggers with influence (based on number of links, Google ranking, and recommendations from other bloggers) to give away 31 laptops in 31 days.
- Each blogger made up their own rules about the contest but each agreed to promote the contests of everyone else in the group.

The results: The result was that the first five pages of Google results for searches on HP and HP Dragon were blog posts about the contest. According to HP they had over 380,000 links to the 31 sites discussing the contest. Bloggers got over 25,000 contest entries and an average 150% increase in traffic. Here's the kicker though - almost 85% increase in sales of a computer that was released nine months ago!

Lessons learned: Bloggers can spread a message quickly, if you hit them with the right message, in the right way.



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CASE STUDY #2 – WILLITBLEND.COM INCREASES SALES BY 700% WITH VIRAL VIDEOS

By now hopefully you've seen a series of videos over at Willitblend.com where a company called Blendtec (that makes blenders) proceeds to blend all kinds of different and unique items to showcase the power of their blenders.

Pretty brilliant actually. Go watch some videos and come back to this.

The challenge: Increase branding of Blendtec through viral marketing.

What they did: George Wright, the VP of Global Marketing noticed that the CEO Tom Dickson would test out his blenders by putting large pieces of wood in them to see if he could break them. So George came up with the idea of creating videos of Tom blending unusual things and putting on video. He bought a domain name and organized a camera crew and the rest is history.

The results: The result is a 700% increase in sales for the Blendtec product line. Yes, 700%. Not to mention the countless appearances on the Jay Leno Show, The Today Show and every other large media outlet. Oh yeah, and there's also the matter of the millions and millions of videos that are watched online as well though places like YouTube and Rever.

AND THE BEAUTY OF IT ALL REALLY IS... THEY DIDN'T SPEND ONE DIME ON ADVERTISING OR MARKETING.

Lesson learned: Sometimes the wackiest ideas are the best. Try them. And remember that you don't have to spend millions of dollars on advertising if you do it right and use social media tools to help it spread.





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CASE STUDY #3 – THE WINE GUY CONNECTS WITH HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE

One of the easiest things to accomplish using social media is to build a brand, and that's what Gary Vaynerchuk did for himself... fast. Gary is the owner of a successful wine retailer called the Winelibrary.com. He took the business from \$3 million to close to \$50 million in just over 5-years.

The challenge: Increase brand awareness of the Winelibrary and Gary Vaynerchuk.

What they did: Gary decided he wanted to help promote his business using social media tools. He created an online video show at Winelibrary.tv and began to participate on social channels. To spread the word, Gary actively uses Twitter and live video sessions using Ustream.tv to communicate his brand to his fans.

The results: The result is that this daily wine show is currently watched by over 80,000 people each day. Gary has built close to 20,000 followers on Twitter and now a highly-paid and sought after speaker and guest.

GARY HAS APPEARED ON SHOWS LIKE ELLEN, MAD MONEY AND CONAN O'BRIEN.

Lesson learned: Before social media tools, it would have taken someone like Gary years and hundreds of thousands of dollars in advertising to build his brand. Not anymore. Anyone can do it.





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CASE STUDY #4 – A STEAKHOUSE CREATES OVER 5,000 BACKLINKS TO THEIR WEBSITE/BLOG

Caminito Steakhouse is run by a gentleman named Justin Levy. Justin understood that there was an opportunity to grow his business using social media tools, and that's just what he did.

"Since we are a small restaurant in Northampton, MA we don't have the ability to spend a lot on traditional print marketing. We allocate some funds to newspaper ads, travel books/guides, etc but I tend to focus my energy on internet-based advertising, social media, etc." - Justin Levy, Co-Owner of Caminito Steakhouse.

The challenge: Increase brand awareness of the restaurant and build community with patrons.

What they did: Created the "Prime Cuts" blog as a source on cooking, grilling, cooking techniques, product reviews, etc. Created "Prime Cuts TV" on YouTube where they post weekly/bi-weekly videos describing some of the techniques/how-to posts, etc. Created a MySpace page as a way of reaching the college-age residents as they have several colleges in the area. Created a Caminito page on Facebook where they upload all videos, photos, events, etc. to. Used LinkedIn to connect with people and to have our restaurant listed on their. Use of a Flickr account where they have posted pictures of the restaurant.

The results: Successes include excellent results in Google when searching several different prime keywords. As well as the addition of over 5,000 backlinks for the restaurant. Not to mention, the jump in restaurant customers.

Lesson learned: Just because your business is "offline", doesn't mean you can't use online methods to build a community and attract customers and create online benefits for your website or brand.





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CASE STUDY #5 – SELLING BIKES THROUGH MYSPACE!

MySpace offers a lot of potential for small businesses according to Carlon Haas, Austin-based Internet marketing expert and president of Brave New Marketing:

"Marketing through MySpace is becoming one of the best ways to guerrilla market these days..." Using the search tool on MySpace, you can get demographic information by ZIP code. It has all the targeting of an expensive direct mail campaign at zero the cost."

The challenge: Increase brand awareness and retail sales at the Island Bicycle Co.

What they did: According to the Galveston Daily News, Jeff Neilson, who is the owner of Island Bicycle Co. first thought of using MySpace just as a guerrilla marketing tool. But after a MySpace search and found that 22,000 people that used MySpace lived within 10 miles of his store, Jeff realized that he had a great marketing opportunity.

The Island Bicycle Co. MySpace strategy is simple according to Jeff: "Every day I send out 20 friend requests. With the kids' market, because of our logo, they tend to grab it quick. They like it, they want a bike and (the logo) looks good on their front page. Once a week I'll send out a blurb announcing a bike special or telling people that new bikes have come in. That goes out to all my friends."

The results: The success of the marketing campaign can be seen in the bottom line. Last week Island Bicycle Co. sold three bikes to people who said they found the shop through MySpace. For a small business, that is a lot of sales.

Lesson learned: Even small businesses can do this. Look on MySpace for people near your business. Start friending them and building relationships with them... your potential customers.



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CASE STUDY #6 – BUILD COMMUNITIES FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS

Graco targets parents, so participating and listening in the parenting landscape was something they needed to do. So they did.

The challenge: Humanize the Graco brand into the online parenting conversation. Also, to build lasting relationships with customers and engaged parents.

What they did: First, they listened. For over a year, they tapped into what people were saying about them all over the web. This conversation mining found out that active parents were largely resistant to being “advertised” to. So instead of selling to them, Graco decided to create events and foster environments that their customers could participate in, and then let those customers invite Graco in.

“The core components of that campaign included a series of Graco blogger “Get-Together” events across the country to lay the groundwork for the launch of a corporate Graco parenting blog authored by a team of Graco employees. The blog was designed to focus on “parent first” issues, stories, advice. The blogging effort was supported with the complementary use of other social media tools, including Flickr, YouTube and Twitter.”

The results: As a result of these efforts, online chatter about Graco nearly doubled and positive sentiment increased 15%–68% positive in 2007 to 83% positive in 2008. Also, the blog now regularly attracts thousands of unique visitors.

Lesson learned: Consumers don’t want to be interrupted. That’s what advertising does. Sometimes it makes sense to instead help enable your customers into forming their own community. This can make you the hero and facilitator in a positive light.



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