



Lesson 8: Social Media For The Individual

By the end of this lesson you should:

- Be aware of the major social media networks;
- Understand how to set up an individual profile on the major social media networks;
- Understand how to establish and make friends/connections/followers in the major social media networks;
- Understand the benefits of using social media networks on an individual basis;
- Be aware of the scope of the social media industry and predicted growth;
- Be aware of the tools that can assist you to measure the impact of your social media activities

Introduction

It's vitally important that you learn to effectively separate your personal and business uses of social media and to secure your privacy and safety online. In this lesson we will focus on getting you using the social media sites as an individual, safely and confidently, with a focus on interacting with family, friends and, where appropriate, professional contacts.

This topic is quite extensive, as there is a lot to do to get setup in social media. In case you are starting at ground zero i.e. no existing accounts and no idea how to get going, we'll start with the very basics.

If you are already established on the social networks, please simply work your way through the following lessons ensuring you have each step in place as we have outlined, until you identify tools, tips and strategies you are not currently aware of, or have not played with, then start there.

There are a lot of tips contained within this lesson, and it is likely it will take some time to work your way through it all. Simply complete what you can, and revisit it and pick up where you left off over a period of time.

So, just how 'big' is social media?

Social media is one of the biggest growth areas of online marketing. In short, it is technology that allows you to socialise for personal or business reasons, or any other purposes you may wish, online. You may choose to connect and view other people's content, and/or add your own content, graphics, articles, videos, articles etc. The power of social media lies in the two way flow of information.

Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube are considered the 'Big 4' social networks on the internet, especially in Australia, and all are offering to promote your business online free, with some paid opportunities too. There has been much buzz around Google+ (Google's social networking site), while the fastest growing social media site in Australia right now is Pinterest an image bookmarking site.

[See this blog post](#) for statistics on the number of global users of some of these popular networks, and how global use compares to use by Australians, and even regional Queenslanders! You'll find complete demographic breakdowns of social media sites (global) usage in this post: <http://www.business2community.com/social-media/new-demographics-social-media-stats-0791068#!A4ume>

As a result of Australia's massive uptake on social media many companies are generating great results from social media activities. However whilst social media is huge and growing at a rapid rate, many business owners continue to bury their head in the sand with cries of 'I just don't have the time!' or, 'I just can't get my head around it!' or 'I just don't understand how it can provide me with commercial returns!' These are natural concerns but the largest hurdle to most businesses using social media is a fear of the technology and encroachment on their personal life and privacy.

The best way to minimise the risk associated with these common concerns is to first establish your social media strategy and policies.

Below is a one hour webinar developed and delivered by The Creative Collective on behalf of the Queensland Government called 'Introduction To Social Media' which is a good place to start and will assist you to consider your social media objectives, target markets and therefore social media strategy and policies before you get started in the social networks and further lessons.

<http://youtu.be/Li79SoUaq5k>

The Language Of Social Media

It's important to note that social networks feature language that you may not be familiar with.

Take some time to learn the correct terms and you will enjoy greater confidence in using each network.

EXERCISE:

Download these handy PDFs from the Online Resources Portal to have on-hand as required (don't be surprised by their titles, as these are from the popular "For Dummies" series and valuable references):

- Twitter Cheat Sheet - <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/twitter-for-dummies-cheat-sheet.html>
- Facebook Cheat Sheet - <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/facebook-for-dummies-cheat-sheet.html>

Secure Your Username

Now that we understand the benefits, let's get started with using social media....

STEP 1 – Identify a suitable social media name

Before you do anything, you need a username for your social media accounts. Even if you are not yet ready to start on social media for your business, it is a good idea to secure the usernames you want for when you do choose to enter this space (and to stop others securing them!)

This week we will focus on setting up personal accounts in your own name. Next week we will discuss how to secure the correct usernames for business.

In some cases, you will need to consider whether it is in your best interests to use your own name (if you are very much the 'face' of the business and always will be), your company name, or choosing keywords that identify your core product or service offering. If you intend branding your business on your personal name, then you should use a variation for your personal accounts.

EXERCISE:

a) Find out if your desired username for personal use is available across the social media universe at <http://knowem.com/> or <http://www.namechk.com> by searching your full name

i.e. 'zoewyatt'. Note down which social networks display the green tick and will allow you to secure this name.

b) Find out if your desired usernames for business use are available on the same site by searching your business name i.e. 'thecreativecollective'. Note down which social networks display the green tick and will allow you to secure this name.

c) Find out if your desired usernames for any keywords are available on the same site by searching desired keywords i.e. 'website design'.

This may allow you to choose names that reflect your key products or services if your business name is taken.

Note down which social networks display the green tick and will allow you to secure this name.

This will however only show you if the name is not taken by anybody else. You will still need to fit the length restrictions for usernames on each site.

We recommend starting with Twitter as it's limited to 15 characters (as is Pinterest) and working your other site names off what you can secure on Twitter.

Watch this short video about how to search for our username - <http://youtu.be/yGkuhzXqUQk>

Creating a Profile

There are some excellent 'how to' videos and 'getting started' guides provided by the various social networks themselves. Click on the links and follow the instructions below to get started on the social networks.

Please note: Most networks now offer different options for personal profiles and business/company pages - there is information about setting up business pages in next week's lesson. In this lesson, we are solely concerned with the profiles you wish to establish for you, the individual.

For now just set up the personal profile if you don't already have one as you will need this to become an administrator of your business page (next week).

Twitter and Instagram do not offer different account options - so your twitter name will be the main way to show whether your profile is personal or business. You can have an unlimited number of twitter profiles but each will need a separate email address. So use your personal email for your personal account and your business email address for your business profile on twitter.

EXERCISE:

- a) Find out how to create a Facebook Profile – (it is necessary to have a Facebook Profile as an individual, before you create a Facebook Business page, which we will learn about in future lessons) <https://www.facebook.com/help/sign-up>. Also see this great guide: http://www.ehow.com/how_2081063_set-up-facebook-account.html
- b) Find out how to create a LinkedIn Profile (it is necessary to have a LinkedIn Profile as an individual, before you create a LinkedIn Business page, which we will learn about in future lessons) – <http://learn.linkedin.com/what-is-linkedin>
- c) Find out how to create a Twitter Profile (if you wish to use Twitter on an individual, rather than business basis, otherwise wait for the next lesson) <https://support.twitter.com/articles/100990-how-to-sign-up-on-twitter>
- d) Find out how to create a YouTube Channel (if you wish to use YouTube on an individual, rather than business basis, otherwise wait for the next lesson) http://www.youtube.com/t/about_youtube
- e) Find out how to create a Google+ Profile (if you wish to use Google+ as an individual, rather than business basis, otherwise wait for the next lesson) <http://www.google.com/+learnmore/profile/>
- f) Find out how to create a Pinterest Profile (if you wish to use Pinterest as an individual, rather than business basis, otherwise wait for the next lesson) <https://en.help.pinterest.com/entries/22997373-Join-Pinterest>
- g) Find out how to create an Instagram Profile (if you wish to use Instagram as an individual, rather than business basis, otherwise wait for the next lesson) – note you do need a mobile device to install the Instagram app on to register: <http://help.instagram.com/182492381886913>

Get Social On Your Mobile

It can be easy to worry about how much time social media may consume. One solution here is to integrate it as part of your overall business communication by downloading social media apps to your smart phone or other internet enabled device i.e. tablet. In this way, you can keep up to date on incoming social media messages, and send social media messages in a similar way to you would a text message.

EXERCISE:

Download the relevant apps to your phone or other internet enabled device depending on which social networks you have chosen to focus on, and which type of mobile phone or other internet enabled device you use.

Download social media apps:

On your iPhone:

Clicking on the App Store icon on your phone and searching 'social media'

On your Android:

Clicking on the Google Play icon on your phone and searching 'social media'

On your Blackberry:

Clicking on the App World icon on your phone and searching 'social media'

Flesh Out Your Profile

Once you have created your social media accounts you need to bring them to life by adding information to them. You may already have set your accounts up, if not, then some top tips are listed below for each network:

Facebook Profiles...

a) Watch this one-hour webinar developed and delivered by The Creative Collective on behalf of the Queensland Government below called 'An introduction to using Facebook' which explains how you can flesh out your Facebook Profile. - <http://youtu.be/L5sX2g4tjY>

b) Mashable.com has a great step by step guide to setting up on Facebook here that you should read through and implement as you set up your Profile: <http://mashable.com/2012/05/16/facebook-for-beginners/>

Linkedin Profiles...

a) Watch this one-hour webinar developed and delivered by The Creative Collective on behalf of the Queensland Government called 'Linkedin - The Social Network for Professionals' which explains how you can flesh out your Linkedin Profile. <http://youtu.be/CGfdKa6ONv4>

b) Click Improve Your Profile in the top section of your Linkedin profile for a personalised walkthrough for improving your profile. Also see: http://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/15493

Twitter profiles...

a) Watch this one hour webinar developed and delivered by The Creative Collective on behalf of the Queensland Government, called 'Twitter your Way to Business Success' which explains how you can flesh out your Twitter Profile. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5-2jr4dNu8&feature=plcp>

YouTube profiles...

a) If you have ever used a google service, your Google 'account' will already have a youtube channel associated with it. It is up to you how much customisation you give this channel. For your business this is very important so that you are 'on brand', but you can also give your personal channel a custom look and feel (if you want to) by selecting some Channel art. Your channel art will be used on all platforms where viewers can see your channel (TV, mobile, tablets, etc.). Read more here: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2972003?hl=en>

Pinterest profiles...

You can't customise your Pinterest profile at the current time to the same level you can some of the other social networks. Here are some tips on getting started however: <http://uk.about.pinterest.com/basics/>

Here are some more generic top tips to fleshing out all of your social media profiles:

- **Add a suitable photo to your profile**- some people add a highly corporate image, while others prefer to use something more fun and personable. It really comes down to personal choice & your objectives. Remember we are dealing with personal profiles here though.
- **Add as much information as you are prepared to divulge publically** - Remember what goes online, stays online, and the more information you can provide, the easier it will be for people to get a sense of you.
- **Use the 'real estate' to personalise the space** - Facebook's timeline layout allows you to place a large cover photo and profile picture to show off your personality but remember people connect with people – so your smiling face is usually the best image to use. Similarly Twitter allows you to add a background image as explained in the webinar below. LinkedIn does not allow this level of customisation but your profile picture is valuable.
- **Include as much as you're comfortable sharing**– about your personal and professional life. Leaving questions blank can make you appear uninterested but only enter information that you want people to know about. The more you add, the better these tools can help you connect and the more memorable you'll be to your connections.
- **If you are uncomfortable sharing very much on your personal profile**, that's ok but make sure you know what others can see and how this is shared.
- **Filter yourself** - There are some things colleagues and clients don't need to know so don't go overboard.
- **Include keywords** - but don't get spammy. Particularly in LinkedIn this is important as it will help you rank very well in the search engines.
- **Keep it current** - Revisit your profile from time to time to add to and update. Got a new job? Tell people!

Make Friends – Facebook

It's easy to develop your social media network just by connecting with people you already know.

You might be surprised at how many people you know are already in the social media world once you start this process! Each site has a different terminology for 'friends' and the levels to which you can (and should) filter these. In this lesson we explore your options for connecting to people on Facebook

Here are some tips on connecting to people on Facebook:

a) Go to Facebook and search for your friends, family and work contacts (if appropriate) by typing their full name into the search tab. Send them friend requests. They have the choice to confirm or ignore these.

b) Join Facebook groups: Search for groups and associations that you support offline and voice your online interest too. It could be business networks you are involved with, charities, interests (such as sport), location based groups and more!

c) Search, friend, connect with and follow other participants who are completing the Get Up to Speed program (note they will have to accept your request to officially become connected and this is of course up to their discretion). Make sure you have connected to the Get Up To Speed Members Group here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/273260242753758/>

Not sure who to accept? [Read this blog post](#) which discusses this issue in more detail, and includes some handy templates to politely decline or persuade unwanted connections to join you in more relevant settings.

If you do want to actively find more 'friends' on Facebook, here are some ideas:

- **People you may know** – Once logged into Facebook find the very top blue navigation bar next to the Facebook 'f' logo. To the right of this, there is a small icon, that looks like two people's heads – this is the friends icon (which sits next to the messages and notification icons). Click this 'friends icon' and a drop down box will appear with suggested friends. At the top right hand corner of the drop down box click the 'Find Friends' button. Here you will first see 'current friend requests' (that are waiting for your approval) and if you scroll down you will then see people you may know. Start connecting to those who you would like to be connected with.

- **Invite your email contacts to join you on Facebook** - As per instructions above. On the right hand side you will see 'Add Personal Contacts' right hand column. You can import your

contacts from yahoo, aol, hotmail, gmail (by clicking on the icons). Note, if you do not have an account in one of these programs, you can set up a free account in one of these programs, export your outlook or outlook express account and import it into one of these accounts. You will then be able to invite people from your address book to be your Facebook friends.

BE VERY CAREFUL WITH THIS FEATURE – if you connect your email address, every person in your contacts list will be invited to connect with you as a friend on Facebook. I recommend you are more selective than this in your friends invitations.

- **Search for and find companies you like in Facebook** – by entering the business name in the search bar at top of Facebook (to the right of the 'f' logo). Once you find them, click on the 'like' thumbs up button. Remember this is you liking that business as an individual though not your company liking their company (that comes next week).

- **Search for Facebook Groups** - Search for the name of a group you wish to find - for example type in 'Flowers' and press the search button. On the left hand side you can filter the types of results you get. For groups, press the 'groups' filter. A list of different groups that have the word 'flowers' in the title will appear. Once you find them, click on the 'join' button. Don't forget to join the dedicated Get Up To Speed program group (known as the Members Lounge) available at: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/273260242753758/>.

To do this simply copy and paste this URL whilst logged into Facebook and request to join. Your name will be checked against the participant list and provided you have paid in full, you will then be granted access. You may also like to search for groups by your location i.e. type into the search bar once in the groups area 'Ipswich', your gender i.e. search 'business women', industry names & more.

Make Connections – LinkedIn

It is important to keep a high level of quality on LinkedIn, and we would recommend only connecting to people on LinkedIn that you have an immediate or potential business synergy with. After all it is a social network for professionals!

EXERCISE:

a) Go to LinkedIn and in the top right search field, search for your friends, family and work contacts by typing their full name into the search tab. Note that the tab must have 'people' selected if you want to search for individuals, and 'companies' if you want to search for companies. Send them invitations to connect.

b) Invite your email contacts to join you on LinkedIn - Once logged into LinkedIn, hover over the 'Networks' tab then hit 'Add Contacts' tab.

You can import your contacts from yahoo, aol, hotmail, gmail and many more email providers including Outlook, Apple Mail and others. Once they import, you tick those you wish to invite to

connect, which could be those of your contacts already on LinkedIn, or those who you feel would be the most relevant to you only. You can also type in any email addresses of people you wish to invite. Once again, some caution with this method – be selective and deliberate with your connection requests on LinkedIn.

c) Search for and invite to connect other participants who are completing the Get Up To Speed program (note they will have to accept your request), or other people you are confident would be LinkedIn users

d) Once you have friends (connections), click on their profiles and request to connect with anyone within their network you may know.

If you do want to actively find more 'friends' on LinkedIn: here are some ideas:

- **Connect to LinkedIn Groups** - Go to the top right search field, change the drop down to 'groups' and search for groups you may want to join by typing keywords in. Keywords may relate to your industry, location and more.

- **People you may know** - When you first log in, a list of 'people you may know' will appear. As you make more contacts on LinkedIn, this list will become more refined and useful.

- **Search** - Click on the 'Advanced Search' link next to the search field option and look for people to connect to by location, industry, keywords and a whole lot more!

As you make quality connections on LinkedIn, you may prefer to keep these private. You can amend your settings on LinkedIn to ensure no one can access your connections by following the instructions on the video. http://youtu.be/_YDixwfTM0k

Getting Followers – Twitter

Twitter is one of the most open networks and is therefore the easiest to get a large amount of followers in a relatively short space of time. People generally 'follow' your on Twitter if you follow them first. They can also stop 'following' you and therefore receiving your status updates or 'tweets' at any time.

EXERCISE:

a) When you first sign up to Twitter it will give you the option of connecting to your online email system i.e. gmail, yahoo, gmail etc. Again caution with this import method.

b) Sign into Twitter and click on the "#Discover" option in top left hand corner of the navigation bar. There you can use the menu options (who to follow and find friends) to find people, organisations, or companies you know that already have a Twitter account. Once you find them, follow them. They will generally follow you back and you will start to grow your network.

b) Finally, search for companies and colleagues to follow on Twitter. You can look within Twitter (in the white search bar towards top right hand corner of page), on www.Twellow.com the Twitter yellow pages site, or the WeFollow directory at: <http://wefollow.com/>

c) Create an account at www.wefollow.com (it takes no time at all) and tag yourself with at least three interests. It's easy – simply enter three or more topics you're likely to tweet about to help other people find and follow you. While you're at it, search the directory for five or ten others you'd like to follow, based on the topics they've listed.

Watch the following video to learn more about wefollow.com. http://youtu.be/5IWNNEhsx_E

Monitoring

Before you start getting too active on the social networks, or learn to promote your business on social media (detailed in next week's lesson), it is important that you set up some measures to monitor what's being said about you, your company, your clients and the industries you serve, so over time you'll be able to participate in the conversation.

It is not time-effective to have to log into multiple social media accounts and regularly check on the conversations in that space. There are many tools available to help you monitor your online brand and reputation without the need to spend a lot of time searching on the internet. Naturally, these tools require some work to really make the most of what they offer.

Presuming you are a small business owner and keen to experiment with the **free** ones first, here is a list to get you started:

1. Google Alerts

Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results based on your queries. Go to the Google Alerts setup page at <http://www.google.com/alerts>, where you can select your preferences to set up an alert.

To do this go to the link above and enter a query that you're interested in, such as your name or brand. As you enter your query, you will notice that Google will show you a live example of the results. Once you're happy with the search results preview, fill in the four Google Alert preferences:

- **Result Type:** It is recommended that you choose 'everything'. This will provide results from news, blogs, video, discussions and books.
- **How Often:** Choose from 'as it happens', 'once a day' or 'once a week'. Please note that if you choose 'as it happens' you will receive all related notifications as they happen from various sources.

- **How many:** Choose from 'only the best results' or 'all results'. If you choose 'all results' it will show you everything including what may not be useful. If this sends you too many alerts, choose 'only the best result' and Google will send only results that Google deems to have some value/quality.
- **Your email:** Make sure it's an email address you check regularly or it defeats the purpose.

2. HootSuite

Hootsuite is arguably the most popular social media management application with a range of options, settings and dynamic features to back its reputation. You can monitor and post to several popular networks including Facebook personal profiles and business Pages, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Foursquare, MySpace and others. We'll go into Hootsuite's functions more in next week's lesson, but for now know that this tool offers options for monitoring conversations, setting up different streams of feeds, tracking of performance and scheduling of tweets.

For information and pricing go to <http://hootsuite.com>.

3. Social Mention

Social Mention is a social media search and analysis platform that provides a quick snapshot of what is being talked about regarding a particular topic. The platform allows you to track and measure what people are saying about you, your business, a new product, or a topic in real-time. Social Mention monitors 100+ social media platforms directly including: Twitter, Facebook, FriendFeed, YouTube, Digg, Google etc.

Social mention provides a range of useful information, including the latest social media mentions about a chosen topic and the platform used. It also provides data on comment sentiment, keywords and reach.

For more information visit <http://www.socialmention.com>.

4. SocialBro

Once you are well established with Twitter, we recommend <http://www.socialbro.com> to help manage your followers/following, and find out when your audience is most responsive. Please be aware however that this is a more advanced tool. It has a 14 day free trial but then is a subscription based tool.

Here are nine items we recommend you monitor on the social media networks. Remember: just because you are monitoring some information it does not mean that you need to participate in the conversation. It is a valid social media practice to listen and learn!

1. Company name - Obviously your company name is one of the most important things that you need to monitor. Any time your company or products are mentioned, you should know.

2. Company URL - It is also important to track your company URL for those times when someone links to your company but doesn't mention it by name. This happens a lot and is just another way to make sure you are covering all your bases.
3. Public facing figures - Track the names of any key employees in your company that are public facing figures. What is said about these people also reflects on your company and usually when these people are talked about your company is tied in with that. e.g. Eric Schmidt, Sergey Brin, Larry Page.
4. Product names - Track any of your company's product or service names as well. What are people saying about your products and services? Ex. Gmail, Picasa, Dodgeball.
5. Product URLs - For the same reasons that you need to specifically track your company's URL you should (if applicable) also be tracking your product URLs as well.
6. The industry "hang outs" - This includes blogs, message boards, important players, consumer review sites and anything else that's related to your industry. Many times the industry feedback that you can discover from the conversations at these "hang outs" can really help you improve your product or service. It is also a way for you to interact with your potential and existing customers.
7. Employee activity/blogs - Things your employees do online can affect your brand image. If you have employees that blog, it is smart to at least know about their Facebook accounts, LinkedIn Profile, Flickr accounts and personal blogs. I am not saying that you should spy on your employees but you do need to monitor these things just in case. It is not considered spying if they already make this information public. It is advisable to let your employees know that you monitor these things - in fact a Social Media Policy is crucial. The more well known your employees are, the more important this is, many times these employee bloggers turn into company ambassadors. I've heard stories before where employers know an employee is quitting before he or she tells them because they blogged about it or put it on Facebook.
8. Personal Interests - Anything at all! This week is all about your personal use of social media after all.
9. Competitors - Track everything from 1-8 related to your competitors including: company name, URLs, products, key employees, etc. Everything. You need to be ready to move when any opportunity comes up.

Want more?

Want to learn more about monitoring your name and brand on social networks? [Download this workbook](#) created in consultation with the Queensland Government.

FAQs

Now that you've worked your way through quite a few exercises (or will over the coming weeks) let's finish with a few of the most common questions we receive regarding social media.

How much time should you spend on social media?

Like anything, the more you put in, the more you get back and it is likely you will have to invest more time in the outset and that, as you start to find a rhythm, the amount of time you will need to spend each day will reduce. Of course the amount of time you should spend will vary depending on what your objectives are. But a rough guide may be to spend 4 hours a week at the outset which reduces to 15 minutes to an hour a day once you have found your rhythm.

For example you could aim to spend 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes late afternoon/evening, and review each week.

It will likely take at least a month before you see any tangible results for your efforts. The good news is that if you keep at it (and you must) your online exposure increases exponentially. Before you know it people who are interested in your product or service who may never otherwise have heard of you before, are following your Twitter posts, have liked your Facebook page and are viewing your YouTube videos.

The key to being effective with your time on social media is:

#1: Tackle One Platform a Bite at a Time

Don't try and become a pro on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook all at once. Choose one that suits your objectives and personality the most and get that platform up and running before you jump to the next.

#2: Use social media tools to be time effective

Hootsuite, SocialBro and Others! You'll learn more about these in future lessons.

#3: Respond to Your Network

Many companies feel the need to talk first and respond later. This isn't going to work when it comes to social media. Firstly, most people aren't listening to you. They're waiting for you to respond. Even though this might seem like a drag, the reality is that it's an opportunity for you to create an excellent experience and add to your company's profile and credibility. If you can make a difference with just one reply, then it's worth making the effort.

Spend the most significant portion of your time responding to @'s (mentions/replies on twitter), messages, wall posts, and most importantly... putting out any fires which may arise in relation to negative comments or feedback. This boils down to being an effective listener and having done a good job of setting up your online alert system, while simultaneously being ready and willing to respond appropriately and in a timely fashion.

#4: Reach Out and Help People - Reach out and lend a hand to people who don't expect it.

Many times, this can be a random person in a Facebook group, or even someone tweeting a question about your particular industry or niche. Don't ask them to follow you and don't link a product. Simply seek out those who need help using searches and your networking skills, and give them what they need.

The goal is to get on people's radar, and get them talking about you. It's highly possible that the people needing your help the most don't actually know who you are, and just as you wouldn't shove a business card in someone's face at a conference (you wouldn't, right?), you shouldn't shove a link down a Twitter or Facebook user's throat. Just extend a helping hand so that they know who you are and how to find you. That's it.

A golden rule of social media is, for any action that you would like other's to do for you, do exactly that for others first. Want more re-tweets on Twitter – give them first, want more comments on your Facebook posts, give them first, want more recommendations on LinkedIn, give them first you get the picture.

Social Media Links

Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Google Plus – are all types of social media websites where you can post and share links. If the social media page is “public” (which generally company pages are, and which generally individual profiles are not) then the search engines can read the information and the links.

At the end of 2010, amidst a lot of rumours, Matt Cutts from Google, posted a video on YouTube saying that Google was starting to use ‘social media signals’ in their search engine results and Bing followed.

Since then, many companies have become ‘more social’, with some aiming to appease the search engines, while others simply aware that a strong social strategy can pay other dividends too.

So how much does ‘social’ affect ‘search’?

In one example we are aware of, a company created several websites, in similar markets, and established different social media accounts per website property, with varying levels of social media integrations with the website i.e. icons and feeds, to better understand how much of an impact social can have.

Google +1 button

Probably not many surprises that Google's own networks i.e. a website that was linked to a Google+ business page helped its search position, as did websites that had Google +1 share buttons embedded. So there's tip number 1. If you haven't got a Google+ business page, and weren't so keen on it from a social networking perspective, consider the search perspective too.

YouTube video on front page

We've also had good word direct from Google itself that they LOVE websites which have a YouTube video embedded on their front page. Some kind of a 'show reel' video of who you are and what you do is obviously good for the user to better understand your business and services, but Google owns YouTube, so more views means more advertising dollars to it. By enabling this on your site, Google may well be compelled to bring you more traffic to see that very video.

But apart from its own properties, who else does Google favour? Well this is purely opinion based, and like a lot of things when it comes to Google, even by making the next few statements, they could change the goal posts on us overnight.

Facebook

For the time being, we do notice correlations between those clients who are active on Facebook and have a high level of engagement attracting increasing numbers of users to their website, which in turn, also boosts their rankings. Out of the 200 factors that Google uses to rank, one is the volume of traffic going through your website. Having the link to the second most trafficked website in the World cannot be ignored.

Pinterest

Pinterest is also performing exceptionally well when it comes to providing 'Google Juice'. Ever since Pinterest launched its business pages at the end of 2012, and savvy businesses have found ways to promote their various business initiatives on this image driven network, we've established our own Pinterest business accounts and carefully monitored our Google Analytics to see how it's performed. We've been surprised to see Pinterest outperforming Twitter as a key source of visitors in a very short time frame and with minimal effort invested.

The bottom line is getting active in social networks can help you search engine results as for the time being, your social graph seems to be playing an important role. We explore social media search optimisation in more depth in our social media for business module.

Staying Safe

We have covered online safety earlier in the course but you should pay special attention to this great guide on: "[Social Media Security](#)" and go through the "How to Protect Yourself" checklist at the end.

We also recommend you review the Internet Browser you are using. There is a reason Internet Explorer use is rapidly diminishing: <http://gs.statcounter.com/#browser-ww-monthly-201104-201204>

On a PC we recommend using Firefox or Chrome, in fact anything other than Internet Explorer (IE). On a Mac you have Safari or can opt for Chrome, but that doesn't mean you will never get a virus or malware – you still need to be vigilant.

The internet browsers all work essentially the same way but Internet Explorer has the least amount of plugins/apps available to make use easier and is more open to security breaches. Plus many of the newer social media tools (eg Hootsuite) will not work correctly on Internet Explorer.

If you have not already done so (as prompted in previous lessons) download and start using an alternative browser to Internet Explorer!

1. You can download Firefox here: <http://www.mozilla.org/en-US>
2. OR Chrome here: <https://www.google.com/chrome>

Another good resource is the 'Staying Safe Online' webinar we delivered on behalf of Queensland Government. See the clip <http://youtu.be/ySRBnJ2MxVI>. It has tips on staying safe on social media, and also general online safety.

THAT'S ALL FOR NOW!