

**"MARKETING"**

## **SOCIAL MEDIA - AN OVERVIEW**

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## "MARKETING" SOCIAL MEDIA : AN OVERVIEW

**S**ocial media is a relatively new term that used to describe many different (primarily online), forums and technologies. With this document, I hope to clarify some of the mystery and help you, the reader, ascertain where this new medium might be of help.

First, let begin with a couple of definitions:

**SOCIAL** : Seeking the company of others. There are other definitions, but this pretty much describes the word as we're discussing it.

**MEDIA** : A communication method or medium. Though often used to describe "the press" in generation, a media is also the term used to describe a vehicle for the storage and/or dissemination of data.

You may hear, especially in relation to "social media" a term, "web 2.0". The advent of social media technology has been hailed by some as the "new Internet". What does this mean?

### **WEB "1.0"**

The current web, or Internet, many use the term interchangeably, is quite old. Originally developed as a communications network between educational and then military institutions, the Internet really came into it's own during the 1990s. The "web", meaning the "World Wide Web" is part of the Internet. It's the part you



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use when you visit most sites using the prefix www.

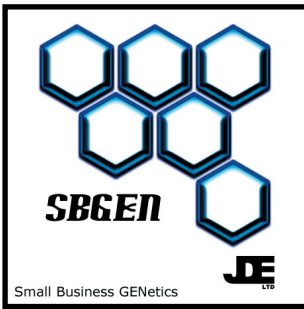
The web, in it's current form is changing as technology gives us greater freedoms and makes it easier for non-technical people to gain access to resources that used to be confined to a very computer-savvy community. However, when one thinks of "web 1.0", think of "traditional" websites:

- Very static
- "One-way" communication (think of TV viewing - not very interactive)
- Mostly complicated supporting technology requiring programmers and web masters to support
- Limited interaction between sites and users
- Slower technology (though some would debate this)
- Expensive to maintain, access and support
- Browser technology very "basic" and "stuck in the 90's"

### **WEB 2.0**

The "new" Internet, or "web 2.0" has grown from the lessons learned over the past couple of decades. Coupled with a huge reduction in the cost of availability and computer prices, over 2 billion people access the Internet around the world.

Web 2.0 is more than this, however, it's a "leaner, meaner" vehicle, much less static than before:



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- New technologies are embraced
- Content is more dynamic
- Technology is more “user-driven”
- Online communities evolving with technology
- More interaction (social media)
- Compare to “town hall” meeting – open forums where people can say (and do) much more and affect a far wider audience than before.

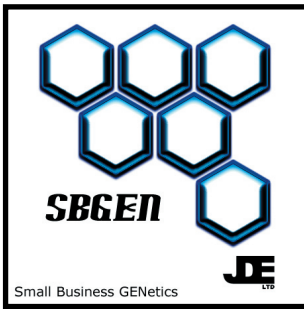
Web 2.0 has, to some degree, leveled the playing field. An individual can affect as much as a major corporation. Interacting with thousands or millions of users is much easier than it used to be.

This “new world” has brought its own problems. There is more “junk” on the web than ever before. Identity theft is on the rise, as is a prevalence of spam, popups and a myriad of “advertising” technologies, but such is the price of progress.

### **WELCOME TO SOCIAL MEDIA**

With this dynamic new web comes interaction on a scale previously undreamed of. As mentioned above, communication with people around the world is much easier, and certainly more affordable than before. Social media, in all its iterations, is enabling communities of like-minded individuals to interact as never before.

Social media technology covers everything from “social” sites such as Facebook



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to "micro blog" sites like Twitter. There are "bookmarking" sites such as Digg which allow users to let others know about things they've found of interest. Of course, there are blogs as well, some allowing comments and others not.

From a commercial standpoint, social media has opened up new marketing methods. Manufacturers have been able to interact with customers. Writers and actors have been able to communicate directly with fans and their audiences. Social media often preempts the mainstream media with news stories.

### **"MAKING THE CONNECTION"**

So, what about you? Where does "social media" fit into your business plan? Does it even matter?

The answer can be as complicated as the technologies available to you.

Social media is still very new and it is developing and evolving at an incredible rate. New sites and technologies appear weekly. Some make it, some don't. Some are bought by bigger companies and others crash and burn.

There is always a risk of "fadism" with emerging technologies. Many people want to be part of the "next big thing". There are many "experts", marketing and otherwise, who are telling anyone who will listen that they need to be involved in social media. Some are going as far as to suggest you cannot survive without it.



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I doubt that's quite true.

Social media is, as the definition at the beginning of this document states, a method for communicating between people. Before investing your resources, whether time or money, consider some basic questions:

- What are you clients doing?

Are your clients social media users? Are they heavy or casual users (sounds like a drug, doesn't it?). If your current or prospective clients are not technology users, how much will you gain with a huge investment in social media? If they are using social media, then what tools and sites?

- What is your message?

Too many people are trying to "sound clever". This is particularly true on "micro" blogging sites such as Twitter, where you have 160 characters in which to make your point. There are too many people trying to say something interesting enough to drive traffic to their blog or site (or another) or becoming famous by being "retweeted" (having your message repeated) and attracting more followers.

If you have nothing to say, then why say it? Will people care enough to read what you have to say? Does your product or service translate sufficiently well to be marketable in this new environment.



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- What's the competition doing?

This one should be obvious, but while it pays to keep an eye on the competition, you don't have to do what they're doing.

- What is your game plan?

Baby steps. Learn. Read posts, comments, blogs and everything else. Start gently. Post a reply if you agree or disagree with something. Social means interacting. Don't try to be too clever...

### **NOT EVERYONE CAN BE A ROCKSTAR**

As in anything, there are going to be achievers and then there is going to be everyone else. This is the nature of the beast. Whether you're in real estate, athletics, acting...or social media, there are going to be "rockstars" and not everyone can be one.

But it's also not about how many "followers" you have. It's about the end result. Personally, I'd rather have five clients who do business as a result of reading my blog than 100 who aren't interested in anything very much but are following me "just because".

### **A (VERY) FEW EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES AND SITES**



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Technology / Term	Description	Example(s)
Social Networking	"Be and be seen". Connect with friends / relatives. Very "socially" and less "professionally" oriented	<a href="http://www.facebook.com">www.facebook.com</a> <a href="http://www.myspace.com">www.myspace.com</a> <a href="http://www.friendster.com">www.friendster.com</a> <a href="http://www.netlog.com">www.netlog.com</a> <a href="http://www.classmates.com">www.classmates.com</a> <a href="http://www.ning.com">www.ning.com</a> <a href="http://www.skyrock.com">www.skyrock.com</a>
Blogs	Opinion, diary, news views. A BLOG (weB LOG), can be anything the author wishes to be. Feedback usually takes the form of comments. Some blogs allow open comments, others regulate or don't allow them at all.	<a href="http://www.wordpress.com">www.wordpress.com</a> <a href="http://www.blogger.com">www.blogger.com</a> <a href="http://www.technorati.com">www.technorati.com</a> <a href="http://www.activerain.com">www.activerain.com</a>
"Micro" Blogs	"One liners"	<a href="http://www.twitter.com">www.twitter.com</a> <a href="http://www.twitpic.com">www.twitpic.com</a> <a href="http://www.tumblr.com">www.tumblr.com</a> <a href="http://www.friendfeed.com">www.friendfeed.com</a> <a href="http://www.swurl.com">www.swurl.com</a> <a href="http://www.12seconds.tv">www.12seconds.tv</a> <a href="http://www.jaiku.com">www.jaiku.com</a>



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Bookmarking	Flag content on other sites of interest to self and others.	<a href="http://www.digg.com">www.digg.com</a> <a href="http://www.technorati.com">www.technorati.com</a> <a href="http://www.mixx.com">www.mixx.com</a> <a href="http://www.stumbleupon.com">www.stumbleupon.com</a> <a href="http://www.newsvine.com">www.newsvine.com</a>
Pocasting	Multimedia blog	<a href="http://www.podcast.com">www.podcast.com</a> <a href="http://www.live365.com">www.live365.com</a> <a href="http://www.youtube.com">www.youtube.com</a>
Wikis	Community-generated sites / content	<a href="http://www.wikipedia.org">www.wikipedia.org</a> <a href="http://www.wikitravel.org">www.wikitravel.org</a> <a href="http://www.qwika.com">www.qwika.com</a> <a href="http://www.wetpaint.com">www.wetpaint.com</a>
Photo / Video Blogs	Photo / video uploading and sharing, Sometimes with comments.	<a href="http://www.youtube.com">www.youtube.com</a> <a href="http://www.flickr.com">www.flickr.com</a> <a href="http://www.fotolog.com">www.fotolog.com</a> <a href="http://www.kodakgallery.com">www.kodakgallery.com</a> <a href="http://www.snapfish.com">www.snapfish.com</a> <a href="http://video.google.com">video.google.com</a> <a href="http://vids.myspace.com">vids.myspace.com</a> <a href="http://video.aol.com">video.aol.com</a>



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Business Social Networks	Professionally-oriented social networks, the most popular of which connect users with former coworkers, managers etc, allow them to solicit recommendations, post resumes and request introductions to others.	<a href="http://www.linkedin.com">www.linkedin.com</a> <a href="http://www.plaxo.com">www.plaxo.com</a> <a href="http://www.yammer.com">www.yammer.com</a>
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### **YOUR IDENTITY (SEPARATE CHURCH AND STATE)**

Most people use a single online "identity" including email, username etc for both personal and professional communication. Consider not doing this, especially in a social networking environment. Do you really want professional contacts to see those embarrassing high-school photos of you on Facebook? What about comments you leave?

Online reputations are very easy to trash and hard to recover from.

### **Other Dangers**

- Risk vs Reward

How much time do you spend building your network? It is very easy to spend a great deal of time attempting to find potential clients. Ask yourself whether the effort might be better spent somewhere else. Nothing beats face-to-face networking!



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- Legal ramifications

Be careful what you say. While blogging or other comments might be considered "personal opinion", protected by law, a few recent lawsuits are suggesting otherwise. If you plan on making negative statements about individuals, companies etc, be sure you can back them up with facts...