

Push to go social media strategies for IBM Business Partners

Tab 1 — Get started creating a community of interest

Social media can be used to grow your business and present demand generation campaigns to your audience in a personalized, one-on-one space. Social media is an easy to use, cost-effective, viable option that's in your reach today. This flip book guide will tell you how to get started with your own social media strategy. It will help IBM Business Partners develop a savvy social media strategy.

It will explain:

- Why social media is important
- How to use it
- A framework for using it effectively

And did we mention, media makes connecting with your targeted audience fun? Keep reading to find out just how easy it is to get started on your own campaign.

[Left column sub-tab 1] Why should social media be important to you?

Social media has big benefits for BPs.

Social media is important because you need to know what people are saying about your company or products. Don't begin using social media simply as a "me too"; because it's a bandwagon dragging you along. If you start using social media simply because competitors are using it, it can end up hurting your business more than helping it. Instead, use it with a business goal in mind, as social media is a means to achieving a goal. It's a tool, not a means in and of itself.

By expanding marketing reach, social media gives you access to new buyers at different stages of the buying cycle. It offers you the opportunity to:

- Educate, inform and influence prospects and customers
- Build awareness, trust and credibility in IBM as an industry leader
- Build personal eminence and create a forum where other IBM subject matter experts can do the same
- Increase customer engagement and deepen relationships
- Listen and respond to your target audience
- Expand the reach of your marketing efforts by leveraging the Internet's viral nature

Remember, markets **are** conversations. Audiences don't always trust traditional messages and channels. More and more, they are dismissive of "corporate spin" and "the organizational voice" as credibility shifts to individuals and audiences take control of both message and medium. This means your involvement in that dialogue has become critical, and social media is your fastest, easiest ticket to direct participation.

[Left column sub-tab 2] The social business era

What's the difference between social media and social business?

Because they sound so similar on the surface, it's important to define the differences between social media and social business.

Social media

Social media involves using social tools and techniques to deliver marketing, PR and communications that may previously been conveyed through traditional methods such as print, radio or television. It is an umbrella term used to describe web-based and mobile technologies that support the creation and exchange of user-generated content. They facilitate interaction, information-sharing and relationship-building between users.

Social business

Social business takes social media a step further. Becoming a social business is not simply a matter of deploying social networking technologies and hoping for the best. It means redefining the business to center on people and the relationships among them. A social business recognizes that people do business with people and optimizes how people interact to accomplish organizational goals:

- Deeply connecting individuals in productive, efficient ways
- Providing line of sight across traditional boundaries and better aligning actions to needs
- Speeding up business with insight to anticipate and address evolving opportunities

At its core, a social business provides a new model for agile organizations with more intuitive processes, where employees can collaborate in real time across company divisions (and beyond firewalls) to make timely, effective business decisions. IBM is investing time and energy at becoming a watershed for social business, helping our clients and partners benefit from this emerging set of technologies and practices.

Tab 2 — Shattering the mystique around Social Media

Don't worry. Social media wouldn't have caught on as well as it has if it wasn't easy to use. It's not too complex for you to engage and integrate into your overall marketing strategy. The sub-tabs on this tab will explain how you can ease your way into using social media as a delivery method for your campaign. And when you begin your first social media strategy campaign, it's ok to start small; focus on your campaign's goals, not on it's size and scope.

[Left column sub-tab 1] Introducing your options

Social media has expanded to the point where it now offers marketers several good options. Here's an overview of some of your most useful options, with links to resources that give more details.

- A **blog** is a Web publishing tool that enables users to self-publish posts and interact with readers. Learn how to use blogs to establish yourself as a subject matter expert, share your knowledge, and improve your search engine rank. [Blogging](#)
- **Facebook** is a social utility enables you to post real-time updates to your network in order to share information, increase engagement and build loyalty for your brand. [Facebook](#)
- **LinkedIn** is professional social networking tool where users maintain a profile, share their professional expertise and accomplishments, meet and stay connected to other users, join interest groups, and explore business opportunities. Use LinkedIn to stay connected to your business associates, share your expertise and make new contacts. [LinkedIn](#)
- **Twitter** is a real-time microblogging service, which enables users to post updates of no more than 140 characters, or tweets. Get started using Twitter to share news, engage with followers, or drive traffic to your Web site or blog. [Twitter](#)

- **YouTube** enables users to upload, manage, and share video media with their networks. Learn how to use YouTube to educate, engage and entertain your followers. [YouTube](#)
- The public **Lotus Connections Communities** on [ibm.com](#) provide a suite of powerful tools that let you connect, share, and collaborate with other Business Partners and IBMers who share your interests and expertise. [Public Communities on ibm.com](#)
- The **developerWorks** community is a professional network and unified set of community tools tailored to the needs of software developers that enables you to connect, share, and collaborate with other developers. Troubleshoot a technical problem, lend your knowledge to a group project, or soak up wisdom from experts with developerWorks community tools. [developerWorks](#)

[Left column sub-tab 2] Our favorite tips for social media strategy success

Research has shown social media may produce [better results](#) than traditional marketing campaigns. Social media is “permission based”, meaning that by connecting with you, your audience has signaled an interest in hearing your message. Before you post, make sure you understand what information will be most useful or interesting to your audience. The following are some of our favorite tips for messaging that will help make your every post a success.

- **Do not use traditional marketing, “sales-pitch” language.** Blatantly selling your product will instantly ruin the credibility and authenticity of your relationship with the follower/prospect client created by the social media environment.
- **Think about the quality of your engagements, not how many there are.** A single follower who reads your posts regularly and responds is far more valuable than a hundred followers who have glanced at your page only once. The key value is in the dialogue you create.
- **Figure out your area of expertise and identify your principle audience.** Do not be all things to all people. Stay on track with who you want to target and what information and expertise you have to offer them in order to gain followers’ trust and continued interest.
- **Post content that offers something of value to followers, not sales solicitations.** Your posts should offer something of value to followers free of charge, such as information, best practices, or free resources. You can have these free resourced developed especially for your followers.
- **Add new posts and updates frequently.** Because social media never stops, your presence shouldn’t, either. A profile that is silent for weeks or months can do more damage to your brand than good. To stay top of mind, you should post consistently and frequently, but don’t confuse quantity with quality – make sure you have something relevant to add.
- **Integrate social media streams and accounts into every page of your website.** These include “like,” “tweet,” and “follow” buttons. This provides engagement and enables your followers to evangelize/share your brand.
- **Perfect your profile.** Think of your profile like a 30 second elevator pitch. It will be the page your followers see most, so it should be consistent with your organizations’ brand, yet interesting enough to give people a reason to want to connect with you.

Tab 3 — Developing your own social media strategy

There is a strong case for using social media networking, but not without a plan. By understanding IBM's social business strategy you can align your campaigns with ours, for unified messaging. IBM's social business strategy is to:

- Monitor the market conversation
- Identify and engage the influencers
- Maximize digital asset distribution
- Empower consumer advocacy
- Understand the impact

And always remember to:

- Think long-term.
- Keep things simple.
- Add value.
- Listen! What do your customers want?
- Don't be intimidated – Relax and have fun!

Defining your business goals

Have you thought about what you want to accomplish? Here are common goals your social media strategy can achieve when properly executed:

- Listen to the marketplace
- Increase event buzz and attendance
- Drive traffic to the IBM website
- Generate leads through whitepaper downloads
- Increase subscriptions to e-newsletters
- Give IBM SMEs a forum for eminence while building IBM's brand
- Solicit customer feedback
- Monitor your competitors
- Establish thought leadership
- Create an ongoing dialogue with customers

[Left column sub-tab 1] Sellers speak: How social sells

Tactics that further sales conversations

Social resources are just one set of tools in the sales arsenal, but they can carry significant weight depending on a client's involvement. Here are some ways successful IBM sellers are using social media to meet clients earlier in the sales cycle and further conversations.

It all starts with search

Thanks to searches, people are more proficient at finding their own answers to questions. Savvy sellers recognize that clients and prospects first turn to Google and social media for solutions to their business needs. When the search process begins, clients look for related keyword combinations in Google and often extend questions to professional networks on LinkedIn.

Many clients have learned to hold off on announcing their business needs to Twitter followers until they are ready to initiate a conversation with salespeople. They realize that sellers are following their posts closely and looking for an opportunity to begin discussions. So, not only are our social sellers meeting clients earlier in the sales cycle, they are there to further conversations by answering questions and engaging as soon as clients are ready to get started. Here's how you can do the same:

- Build social presence with focus on related [keyword](#) combinations
- Set up [Google Alerts](#) and [Social Mention](#) to follow keywords, clients and competitors
- Use [Addict-o-matic](#) to create custom pages with the latest buzz on any topic
- Consider [LinkedIn Premium](#) account for additional search benefits
- Include links to rep page, blog and product pages on [high-SEO LinkedIn space](#) – click “Other” to name the site accordingly, as opposed to generic “personal website”
- Enhance online reputation with [LinkedIn recommendations](#)
- Offer useful answers to questions posed and direct clients to industry experts, taking advantage of [Slideshare Expert Network](#)

[Left column sub-tab 2] A smarter way to keep ‘em talking

Further your conversation with social intelligence.

Data from a new lead often provides few insights into exactly what challenges the client is currently facing, which is information that could open up a conversation. This is where social intelligence offers significant value. Access to timely and in-depth knowledge of important events affecting a company makes it easier to start sales conversations.

To gain insight, IBM’s social sellers use social media monitoring applications to feed information about clients, prospects and competitors directly to their desktops. Social intelligence provides an efficient way of identifying what matters when sales connections are made.

Follow the lead of top social sellers and use content gathered from the Web to show companies how you can address their key concerns and meet their desired outcomes:

- Track clients, prospects, competitors and analysts in one space with [TweetDeck](#)
- [Monitor Facebook, LinkedIn and other accounts](#) through Tweetdeck
- Research the best [social monitoring applications](#) for your sales initiatives
- Shorten hyperlinks and track visits with [bit.ly](#) to understand the topics in which your followers are most interested
- Subscribe to social media content feeds, such as [Social Message Calendars](#)
- Discover social guides, such as [STG Social Resources for Sellers](#), through IBM Connections communities

[Left column sub-tab 3] Twitter or LinkedIn: Good options for different results

The pros and cons of Twitter and LinkedIn

Every social media venue has its purpose. Some may lend themselves to certain types of demand generation campaigns better than others, or may put you in contact with different demographics or markets. Here’s scoop on which of the three preferred social media networks is the best fit for your social media strategy.

Twitter

Pros:

- We can use Twitter to give people insight into our business using bite-sized nuggets.
- Twitter enables real-time communication. For example, you can tweet during events, poll followers, or start discussions.
- You can share content easily including re-tweeting others, repeating tweets or pre-scheduling tweets.
- You can build connections with industry influencers, partners, competitors and other followers.

Cons:

- Followers want insight. For this, you'll need SME participation so seek the commitment of your SME(s) to tweet independently or as part of the marketing effort.
- Tweets can be easily overlooked unless users are actively following you.
- A variety of add-on tools can make Twitter use overwhelming.
- Metrics tracking is manual if you do not pay for an analytics service.

Best practices:

- Use Twitter to capture buzz, build community and promote IBM's presence leading up to an event.
- Complete your Twitter profile. Include a relevant IBM URL and use a URL shortening tool (such as <http://bit.ly>) to measure activity.
- Follow others in your industry. Use tools like [Twitter search](#) to find others interested in your topic.
- Build followers by providing valuable content. You'll need SME participation for this. You can:
 - Ask SMEs already on Twitter to follow and retweet you
 - Ask SMEs to comment on others' tweets so people know you're out there
- Setup SMEs on CoTweet and train them on how to use it
- To build followers, marketers can:
 - Ask influential Twitter users (event organizers, Smarter Planet, IBM Research) to follow or retweet you
 - Ask to be a co-tweeter on related IBM Twitter accounts so you can retweet relevant content
- Initially, you may want to create an editorial calendar with certain people responsible for tweeting on certain topics. Include a mix of business content and event-specific content.
- Pre-schedule tweets using a tool like CoTweet during events to ensure key content gets out.
- Post at least three to four tweets a day.
- Use URL shortening tools to save characters and measure click-throughs.
- Marketing teams should tweet under their own name as well as under the official account, as people on Twitter tend to respond better to individuals.
- Also see [Twitter Basics](#).

LinkedIn**Pros:**

- LinkedIn targets business and professional users
- LinkedIn groups have no single authority. Any group member can initiate and drive discussions so relationships.
- Conversations started in groups can turn into real leads.
- Groups can be open to anyone or limited to specific users. This promotes exclusivity.
- Executives may be more willing to participate.
- The format is inherently non-sales.

Cons:

- Limited metrics are available.
- Group content is not indexed by Google. Users must join to partake.
- Requires SME commitment to initiate or participate in discussions. However:
 - Discussions have more substance so getting them to participate may be easier than with Twitter (there's no pressure to tweet).

- Group managers should monitor discussions and engage SMEs if their expertise is needed.

Best practices:

- Use it to deepen existing relationships such as event follow-up or e-nurture touch.
- Include keywords and phrases in group profiles so users who search can find the group.
- Gain commitments to participate from SMEs, marketing, sales or communications colleagues.
- Identify a group manager who will monitor or facilitate discussion daily, move jobs postings to the “Jobs” tab and delete spam.
- Have the group manager post varying content that informs, not sells. For example, post industry studies, news, case studies, point-of-view papers or survey results. Ask open-ended questions to prompt dialog. For fresh industry-specific content, regularly check the [IBM press room](#) and [case studies database](#). Use [Google alerts](#) to receive custom web searches with email and reach out to worldwide teams for event info.
- Post case studies and other content that cites clients by name for best performance.
- Discussions initiated from case studies have generated numerous leads in the past.
- Invite industry and brand colleagues, analysts, SMEs, business partners and client representatives to join the group and participate. Once the core team is on-board, promote the group to external customers.
- Urge client teams to invite customers to join as a door opener.
- Use “Search groups” in the top right corner to see if other groups exist targeting the same community. If so, join, listen and participate. Urge and enable SMEs to do the same.
- See actual examples of how to promote your group: [Integrating Social Media into 360 Marketing](#).
- Have marketing managers add "events" to LinkedIn, such as webinars or big industry events and invite people to attend.

[Left column sub-tab 4] Developing a blog strategy

Blogging is an effective way to demonstrate expertise, build relationships and influence thinking. Blogs are usually authored by subject matter experts or other individuals with authority over a topic. As marketers, you are encouraged to follow, share and comment on blogs relevant to your industry. Thoughtful commenting that encourages further discussion helps you shape conversations in a non-promotional way. Here are some steps to get you started:

1. **Establish a blogging strategy:** Blogging is a time-intensive activity. If you’re going to make the investment, you’ll want to make sure that your blogging strategy complements your overall business objectives.
2. **Choose a blogging service:** There are many blogging services out there. Here are some things to consider when choosing a blogging platform:
 - a. What is your long-term strategy?
 - b. How technically savvy are you?
 - c. Will your blog be self-hosted or hosted by the platform?
3. **Start blogging:** Whether you like it or not, bloggers are writers. In order to engage readers, you’ll need to develop a voice and generate interesting content. Nobody will want to read your post if you can’t provide a fresh perspective, so make sure you can add something to the conversation.

Promoting your blog

The “if you write it, they will come” strategy does not work in practice. Especially in the beginning, you will need to do a fair amount of work to drive traffic to your blog. Here are some tips on how to do it effectively:

- Provide a link to your blog on your company website and in your social profiles.
- Tweet about new blog posts.
- Make sure that your RSS feed is highly visible on your blog.
- Bookmark your posts on sites such as Digg, Delicious, and StumbleUpon.
- Provide feedback loops within your blog, such as comments, ratings, and ability to share with friends.
- Recommend similar blog posts at the end of each post.
- Optimize for search engines, including use of keywords, tags and outbound links.
- Establish a blogging schedule. Many potential bloggers are hesitant to start a blog because they are concerned that they will not be able to keep up the pace. Here’s some tips on how to make sure your blog remains fresh:
 - Manage the expectations of your readers by establishing a regular cadence of posts; even if it’s biweekly or monthly. The content won’t seem stale as long as you post at regular intervals.
 - Plan and research your content in advance to make sure you can maintain the cadence.
 - Consider whether a multi-author blog will suit your business goals. This approach provides a less personal connection, but allows for a wider variety of topics.
 - Invite guest bloggers to help you provide new content or a fresh perspective.

Tab 4 — How to make your website social media friendly

Here are a few ways web sites can make themselves more social-media friendly:

- **Fresh content:** To play the search and social media game, a web site must be in the content publishing business. Search engines and participants of the social web respond favorably to the signals created from frequent updates. Participation in-off site social channels can be brought into the corporate web site through RSS or widgets providing web site visitors access to additional forms of information and interaction with the company.
- **Social content:** Not all of a company’s social web participation happens offsite with third party tools. The addition of a blog, reviews, forum or even a live social feeds to the company web site can provide interested consumers opportunities to interact with other brand fans as well as the company. In addition, make sure any links to third-party social profiles are easily accessed from your home page.
- **Easy to share:** Besides the ability to contribute to conversations happening on a corporate web site, there’s a tremendous opportunity and benefit to making it easy for site visitors to share that content with others. Many sites offer “share this” options that make it easy for readers to submit the page being viewed to popular social bookmarking and social news web sites such as Digg, Delicious and StumbleUpon. Sharing options for Facebook, Twitter and email are also popular. Making it easy for web site visitors to share interesting content (web pages, video, images) facilitates the word of mouth recommendations people make in real life, except when done online, they become searchable assets.

- **Surface experts on your website:** If your company employs subject matter experts who are active on social media, make them visible on your site and easy to connect. Remember, people do business with people!

Tab 5 — Monitoring progress and measuring success

Measuring social media success is something that's still difficult to clearly quantify, but there are a few metrics that can help you understand whether or not your messaging is effective. The tips and tools highlighted in this section are designed to help you see how your share of voice and social media interactions are changing over time.

Once you've launched your campaign, how can you measure its success? The number of views or followers alone does not always mean you've accomplished your objectives. This tab offers advice on ways to judge the effectiveness of Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn campaigns, and how to track the seemingly elusive ROI social media can deliver.

Measuring effectiveness and results for each social media forum

Twitter

- Number of Twitter followers (provided by Twitter)
- Number of tweets re-tweeted (provided by Twitter)
- Click throughs to shortened URLs (provided by bit.ly)
- Number of times your hashtag was used (provided by whashtag.com)
- Number of times your Twitter account was mentioned (provided by Tweetdeck and CoTweet)

YouTube

Channel owners can access metrics by hovering over their YouTube username in the top right corner, then clicking "Account", then clicking "Insight".

- Number of subscribers to your channel
- Comments or ratings left by users
- YouTube provides channel and individual video metrics including:
 - Total number of views for all videos on your channel
 - Top ten videos on a channel and percentage of views for each
 - The geographies from which your views are coming
 - Demographics of your audience
 - How are people discovering your videos (that is, using YouTube search, Google search or related video)
 - Websites and keywords that refer users to individual videos
 - The level of viewer attention while a video is playing (YouTube calls these "hotspots")

LinkedIn

You can track:

- Total members
- Number of new members in the last seven days
- Number of new discussions in the last seven days
- Number of comments in the last seven days
- Discussions with the most comments

Unavailable metrics include:

- **Member profiling:** Name, title, employer, the date they joined. (This can only be done manually.)
- **Engagement metrics:** The number of members who have commented or posted: The most active members.
- **Traditional web metrics:** The number of visits to the site, the number of repeat visits and the amount of time spent on each page.

[Left column sub-tab 1] Suggested metrics for determining success

Goal	Metrics
Listen & learn	Number of mentions Tone of conversation Share of voice Usage of key tags, keywords
Build relationships	Number of new leads, partnerships Quality of new leads, partnerships
Improve reputation	Sentiment
Generate support	Word of mouth CLV Ratings, votes
Generate ideas	Number of responses Quality of responses
Optimize search results	External search referrals Inbound socially shared links
Call to action	Downloads

Figure 1: Suggested methods for taking metrics

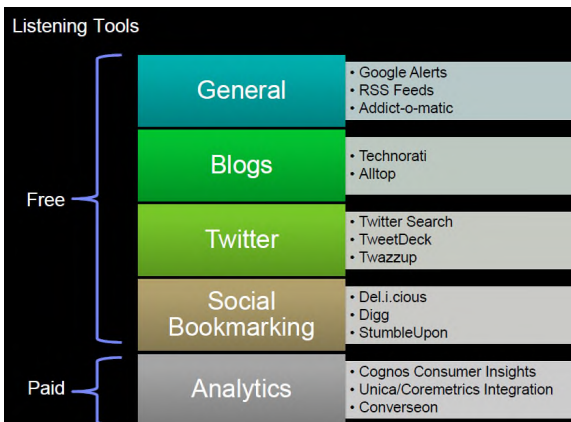


Figure 2: Recommended tools (free and paid)

[Left column sub-tab 1] Even more help with your social media strategy

When you need help with your overall marketing campaign, Just Push Go has all the tools you need.

Knowing how to use social media effectively is crucial in meeting consumers' informational demands. But before you select a social media missive for your message, how do you develop the demand generation campaign itself? Our Just Push Go resources can help you plan, deploy, manage and measure your demand generation campaign before you even decide if you want to present your campaign through social media or traditional marketing methods. To get started visit the Just Push Go resource at:

Tab 6 — Resources and additional info

Now that you've seen how easy it is, it's time for you to get started with your own social media campaign. Here are some additional resources to give you even more useful information.

Additional resources

- [Getting started with social media](#)
- [IBM Partner World community discussion forum](#)
- [Social media analytics with Cognos® Consumer Insight](#)
- [World map of social media networks](#)

Have any more questions about developing your social media strategy or about this guide? Please contact: