

7 Social Media Marketing Secrets No Marketer Wants to Admit

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Talk to professional online marketers, and they'll likely tell you about the raw power of **social media marketing**. Talk to business owners from an older generation, and they're likely to tell you how **social media marketing** is a useless fad.

Obviously, the former group has an incentive to tell you how great **social media marketing** is, and the latter group has a negative bias toward communications technologies. Does the truth lie somewhere in the middle? Kind of.

With proper planning and successful execution, **social media marketing** can be effective for practically any business. In fact, in a survey of 357 marketers that I recently conducted, **social media marketing** had the highest percentage of respondents (96 percent) who claimed they planned to increase or keep their **social media marketing** budgets the same over the next year. **Social media marketing** also had the third-highest average ROI rating, out of 10 strategies surveyed.

Still, there are a handful of dark secrets about **social media** that no marketer -- including myself -- likes to admit.

1.

Social media marketing isn't free.

One of the greatest advantages of **social media marketing** that marketers like to play up is the fact that it's free. And, yes, it won't cost you anything to claim your business' **social media** profiles, flesh them out or post on a regular basis -- at least not monetarily. The problem is that, even though you won't necessarily have to spend money to fund your strategy, you will spend lots of time.

It takes hours of work to build out your profiles, and several hours a week to even maintain the most basically active presence. Add up those hours, and suddenly the amount of time that **social media marketing** does "cost" will become clear. After all, time is money, right?

2.

There's no predictable pattern of success.

No matter how sure people seem when telling you they hold the “secret” for a business' **social** media success, know that there's no verifiable or consistent way to guarantee success for this task. For starters, every business is unique, with a unique target demographic, history and competitive landscape.

There's no way any single strategy could possibly apply to everyone. Add in the fact that **social** media is always evolving and other random variables that could interfere with your results, and the predictability of success sinks even more.

3.

You need a lot of followers before social media marketing starts to pay off.

The bottom line for **social** media, like any online **marketing** strategy, is your total ROI, or return on investment. Over an extended period of time, it will be very good if you execute your **social** media strategy correctly, but your initial ROI will probably be terrible.

Imagine that it takes you 15 minutes to write a good post, and you submit it to your 15 followers. Now, imagine you create the same post, but for 15,000 followers. Which one do you think will have a higher return for your investment (assuming those followers are all genuinely interested in your brand)? It takes a long time for **social** media to start paying off.

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4.

Social platforms restrict your reach.

Social media companies have a vested interest in getting you to pay for their **advertising**. As a result, they often restrict the amount of reach you're able to get through organic (unpaid) posts. Even though you have 500 followers, that doesn't mean that every post you make is going to reach 500 people. Keep this principle in mind when considering the sheer potential of **social** media -- it's probably far, far less than you think it is.

5.

Data won't tell you everything.

Another advantage **social** media has is its access to sheer volumes of data -- you'll be able to

probe deeply into user behavior, patterns of interaction and demographic information. But unfortunately, data can't tell you everything. It can't give you qualitative insights about how individuals feel toward your brand, or about specific interactions.

Nor can data help you generate new ideas you haven't tried before. It can't even give you actionable insights unless you're asking the right questions of that data in the first place.

6.

Adapting is important but exhausting.

Social media changes often, with new platforms cropping up seemingly constantly and new trends coming and going at an ever-increasing pace. If you want to be successful, you have to try to keep up, but keeping up is exhausting even for the most passionate, dedicated marketer.

It's comforting to settle into a routine, but with **social** media, you'll never get that opportunity -- at least, you'll never get to stay comfortable for long if you're doing things right.

7.

You'll end up kicking yourself -- a lot.

There's a lot of regret in the **social** media world, especially on a minor level. You'll end up making typos or mistakes occasionally, but more often you'll kick yourself for what you didn't do. You might miss a good opportunity for a post, a hashtag or an engagement. You might see a competitor's post and wish you'd thought of it first. In any case, your strategy won't be perfect, and you'll be all too aware of that fact.

Despite these ugly truths and seldom-mentioned secrets about the true nature of **social** media **marketing**, it remains one of the most cost-efficient and approachable online **marketing** strategies you can adopt. No matter what stage of growth your company's in, who your target market is and what your long-term goals are, **social** media can help you in your journey -- as long as you recognize its advantages and limitations.