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### To Tweet or not to Tweet?

Defined as the use of internet and mobile technology for social interaction, **social media** has become increasingly popular among consumers over the past 10 years.

As the popularity of social media sites like *Facebook* and *LinkedIn* have continued to grow, most business owners can now agree that it's a medium that can successfully help build brand and product awareness.

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## Social Media: Today's Key to Small Business Success

Though to many, social media sites such as Facebook and Myspace are still the reserve of the young and carefree, the truth is that over time social media has become an ever increasing integral part of the success of today's small business.

### Owners using Social media



35% of small business owners have a Facebook page

18% of small business owners have a LinkedIn profile



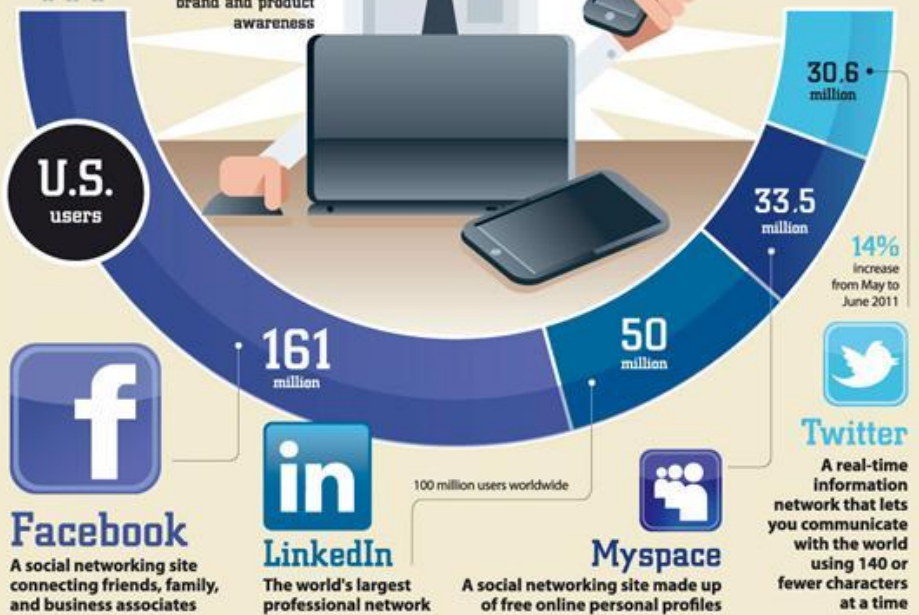
**What is Social Media?**  
Use of internet and mobile technology for social interaction

10% of small business owners have a company Twitter feed

8% of small business owners have a company blog

6% of small business owners have a YouTube or video-streaming channel

**Most** owners use social media to build brand and product awareness

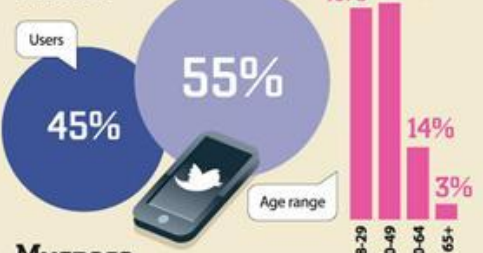


### Who Uses Social Media (Demographics)

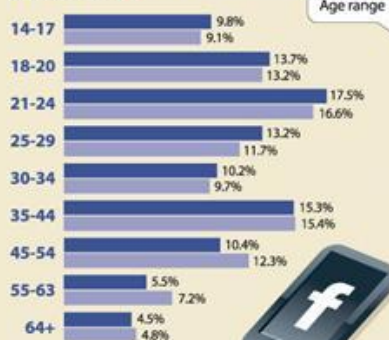
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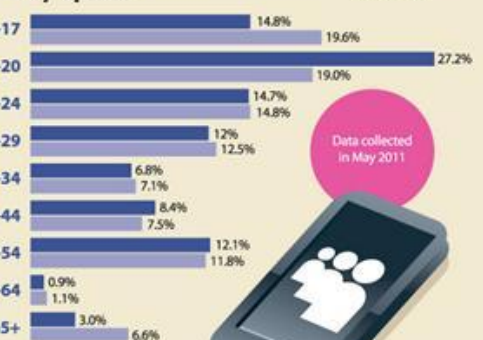
### Twitter



### Facebook



### Myspace



## How BIG is Social Media?

# Social Media: Key to Small Business Success

By Andrew Green

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Defined as the use of internet and mobile technology for social interaction, social media has become increasingly popular among consumers over the past 10 years. As the popularity of social media sites like Facebook and LinkedIn have continued to grow, most business owners can now agree that it's a medium that can successfully help build brand and product awareness.

The appeal of social media comes from the fact that it is virtually free for businesses to use. Whereas billboards, radio ads and magazine ad campaigns have high price tags (and can cause some serious business credit card debt!), the only expense that comes with social media campaigns are the time investment and any giveaways you incorporate with the campaigns. Small business owners who embrace this "new" medium are able to see marketing success without having to make the upfront financial investment. Others are also using the platforms as an extension of their customer service departments, making it easy for clients and potential clients to get the service they are seeking.

There is obviously value to embracing social media. However, many small business owners are uncertain what steps to take to join in on the social media success. Here are some of the popular social media sites and ways you can implement them into your business plan so you can get in on the success.

## Facebook

This social networking giant has 161 million users in the U.S. alone. It is the most popular of the social networking sites available today, which has led to 35% of small business owners to create a Facebook page.

Here is just one way you can incorporate Facebook into your business plan—create a Facebook fan page. Sounds simple but by creating a fan page and then hosting contests to encourage followers, you'll see brand awareness increase in no time. It is easy to encourage followers by holding a giveaway contest. Better yet, hold a photo contest where users submit pictures of them utilizing your product/services. This will encourage existing clients to promote your business among their Facebook friends, which will automatically increase awareness of your company.

## Twitter

Twitter has been slower to grow but is starting to gain in popularity. From May 2011 to June 2011, Twitter saw a 14 percent increase in its number of users, bringing it to 30.6 million users in the U.S. And while this platform has been slower to grow, small business owners have discovered its value, prompting 10% of owners to have a company Twitter feed.

One example of a successful Twitter campaign comes from the consumer-oriented computer company Dell. Dell earned approximately \$3 million simply from posting coupons and news on Twitter in 18 months in 2008 and 2009. Your customers will need to know that you are on Twitter so they can follow you, so one tip is to include your Twitter name on all of your marketing materials, prompting clients to look you up on Twitter.

## LinkedIn

Social media isn't just for personal networking. LinkedIn provides professionals with an online platform to make new industry connections. With 100 million users worldwide, LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network.

Surprisingly, just 18% of small business owners have a LinkedIn profile. Profiles are easy to create and require very little time to maintain. By creating a profile, you will be able to "link" to current colleagues, past companies and vendors you utilize in your industry. In doing so, you will be exposed to other likeminded professionals who you can recruit for your company. You could also strike up a conversation for potential sponsorships and other opportunities to get your company out in your community and industry.

## Myspace

With 33.5 million U.S. users, many business owners would think that Myspace would be a good networking site to delve into. However, Myspace does not have the option for business profiles and largely caters to a younger audience (the majority of users are between the ages of 14 to 25). Unless your company is in the music or entertainment industries, this is a social media platform that you can safely skip for now.