The Definitive Guide to Integrating Social Media and Email Marketing

HubSpot

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Introduction

Social media's rapid rise in recent years gave marketers exciting new tools for communicating with customers and prospects. Suddenly, established marketing tactics such as email were seen as old fashioned, one-way channels that consumers were increasingly likely to ignore. Social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter offered an alternative: two-way communication channels where marketers could listen more than talk, and then engage with customers and prospects in a true dialogue.

But rather than making email obsolete, widespread use of social media has in many ways made email an even *more* powerful marketing channel.

For starters, social media gives marketers other online options besides an outbound email campaign for messages they want to share with their audiences. That flexibility can help reduce email list "fatigue" by letting you cut back the number of emails you need to send while making sure each email offer or newsletter is more personalized, targeted and relevant to you email list.

What's more, social media usage actually makes consumers even more engaged with their email inbox: 42% of social media users said they check their email more than four times a day, compared with just 24% of non social media users, according to a 2011 survey by Merkle.

And those social media users are likely to share email-delivered content with their personal networks, giving campaigns new legs. Adding "social sharing" buttons to email messages increased the reach of an average email by 24.3%, according to a study by email service provider Silverpop.

As a result, smart marketers have learned that email and social media are complementary – not competitive – channels. Social media's massive reach, viral characteristics, and opportunities for dialogue help propagate content far and wide, helping you build better relationships with customers and prospects. But email

marketing can also intensify those relationships through permission-based, personalized, targeted messaging.

To get the most out of email and social marketing, you can't treat the channels like trains running on separate tracks. The best results come when your marketing strategy integrates social media and email marketing to grow your audience, share your company's content, convert more prospects into customers, and boost your campaign ROI.

Here's our advice for making sure your email and social media tactics are working together to improve your overall marketing results.

Discovering Where Your Audience Is

Before you can integrate email and social media marketing, determine which social networks are a good fit for your brand.

Social media is an enormous category. It includes everything from the big-name networks like Facebook and LinkedIn, to more niche options like social bookmarking sites such as Digg, industry-specific online communities, and location-based mobile services like Foursquare.

Not every company will have a large number of customers and prospects using all of those outlets, so focus your marketing strategy, initially, on the places your customers and prospects are likely to congregate.

Currently, social media marketing is dominated by the "big three" networks: Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. In a 2010 survey by MarketingProfs and Junta42 that asked marketers which social networks they are currently using:

- 55% said they are using Twitter
- 54% said they are using Facebook
- 51% said they are using LinkedIn

% of Marketers

LinkedIn Usage	51%
Facebook Usage	54%
Twitter Usage	55%
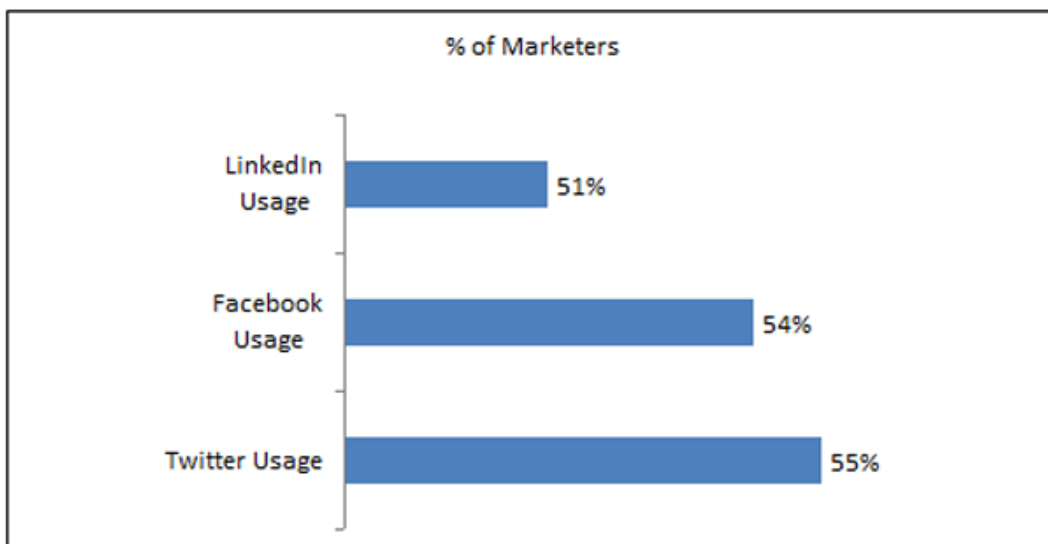
Data from MarketingProfs and Junta42

ook!

The network that will be most effective for you depends on your audience and the strength of your brand's efforts on each site. But in general, Facebook has been the most effective site for B2C marketers, and LinkedIn the most effective for B2B marketers, according to HubSpot's State of Inbound Marketing 2011 Report, which notes that:

- 67% of B2C marketers reported acquiring at least one customer from Facebook, compared with 41% of B2B marketers
- 61% of B2B marketers reported acquiring at least one customer from LinkedIn, compared with 39% of B2C marketers
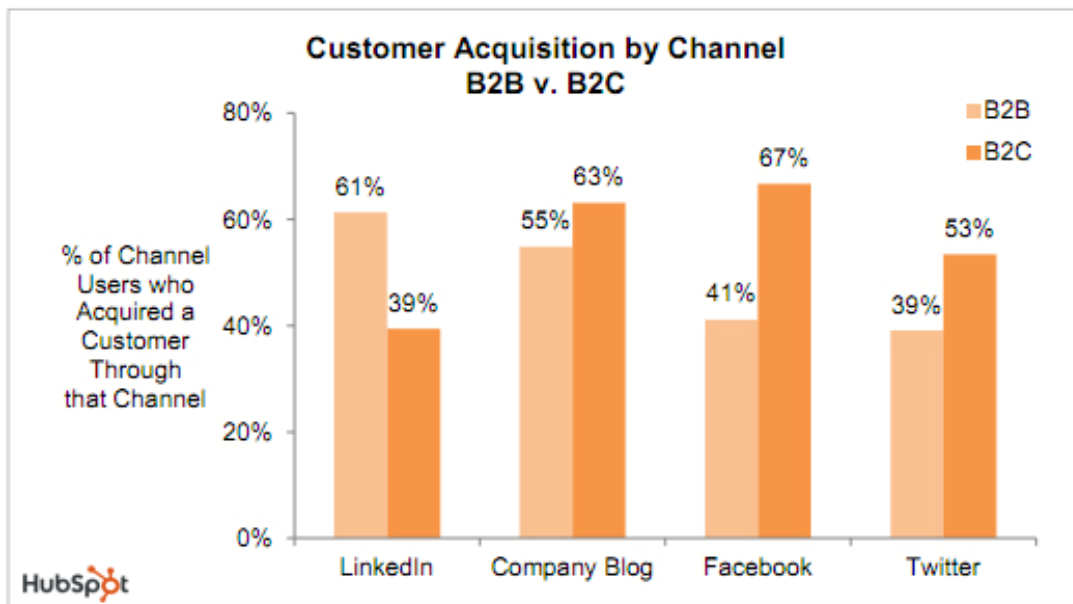
Data from HubSpot's State of Inbound Marketing 2011 Report

One way to assess which social networks your customers and prospects favor is to check your web analytics data. If you discover you're already driving a lot of traffic from Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn -- or from smaller, niche sites -- you've got a good sense of where to focus your social marketing efforts.

Finally, don't assume that your email opt-ins are the same people who engage with your brand on social media sites. Ask them!

- Survey your social media fans and followers to ask whether they also subscribe to your company newsletter or email promos.

- Then, survey your email subscribers to find out how many are also fans or followers of your company's social networking accounts, and how many have ever shared your email content with their peers.

You may find that there isn't as much overlap between the audiences as you think. According to a MarketingSherpa Case Study, when the baking accessory company Wilton surveyed its email and social media audiences, it discovered that about half of its Facebook fans and Twitter followers were also subscribers of the company's email newsletter. That means that about half of the company's social media followers were good prospects for an email list-growth campaign.

Using Social Networks to Grow Your Email List

Social networks provide a fantastic platform for sharing content and engaging with customers and prospects. But from a marketing perspective, a fan or follower is not quite as valuable as an email subscriber. Only with an email opt-in do you have clear permission to send the kind of highly-targeted, relevant messages that help turn prospects into customers.

In fact, 75% of social media users said that email is the best way for brands to communicate with them, according to a MarketingSherpa survey.

So one of your first goals for social media and email integration is to convert social media fans and followers into email subscribers. Here are some suggestions for achieving that goal.

Converting Facebook fans

Start by adding an email opt-in form on your Facebook page. Surprisingly, only 10% of brands currently do this, according to a Silverpop study – which means you can get a leg up on your competitors by making it easy for Facebook fans to become email subscribers.

The tactic can be incredibly powerful. For example, Wilton followed up its audience surveys with a campaign to convert Facebook fans who hadn't yet opted-in to the company's email newsletter. The marketing team created a Facebook wall post that encouraged fans to join the email list, and as a result, saw a 225% increase in newsletter subscriptions.

Adding an email opt-in widget to your Facebook page is relatively simple. In fact, your email service provider may provide the technology for you: Aweber, Bronto, MailChimp,

and StrongMail are just a few of the ESPs currently offering an email opt-in form for customers' Facebook pages.

Consider offering a small incentive, such as a coupon or free content download, to convince Facebook users to sign up. Footwear retailer Crocs added an email opt-in form to its Facebook page and offered fans a 20% off "welcome" coupon for signing up. Now, nearly 12% of their new weekly email subscribers come from Facebook.

You also can repost articles, offers, and other content from your email newsletters and promos to your Facebook page as examples of what subscribers receive when they opt-in to your company's email.

Converting Twitter followers

There are several ways to mix email opt-in offers with your regular tweets. The most direct way is to tweet occasional requests for followers to join your email list (including a shortened URL that links directly to your email sign-up page).

When tweeting an email opt-in offer, briefly describe the benefits of joining the email list, such as getting access to exclusive offers, valuable content, industry news, etc.

Other list-building tweet ideas include:

- Teasers of email newsletter content
- Mentions of current email-only promotions, with a reminder that followers must sign up to get access
- Links to registration-required content, such as white papers or on-demand webinars

Also make sure your email opt-in box is on every page of your website or blog. That way, any content you tweet features a way for visitors to join your email list after clicking on a link shared via Twitter.

Converting LinkedIn connections

LinkedIn Groups are a great way to expand your reach on the social network and connect with people interested in a specific topic. 81% of LinkedIn users are members of at least one group, according to a survey by Lab42.

You can create your own LinkedIn Group to promote discussions about your company or industry, or join existing Groups. Then, look for ways to share content that encourages Group members to sign up for company email. Good content for Group sharing might include educational content that requires registration, or articles from recent email newsletters.

Using Email to Grow Social Followers and Expand Your Reach

Email subscribers can be ambassadors for your brand, helping you gain new social followers and fans, and spreading your content far beyond your existing audience. Thanks to simple widgets provided by your email service provider or the social networks themselves, it's easy to connect people directly from your email messages to your social networks.

➢ Add "Follow us" buttons or links for each of your social networking accounts in the sidebar, header or footer of your email template.

   When the fast-food chain Chik-Fil-A used this technique to promote a Facebook fan club to its email subscribers, it grew its Facebook fans from 25,000 to 1 million in less than one year, according to a MarketingSherpa case study.

➢ Add social sharing buttons to each article or link in your email messages that let subscribers share that content – e.g., the "Tweet this" button, Facebook's "Like" button and LinkedIn's "Share this" button.

   Using social sharing buttons in email messages resulted in a 30% higher clickthrough rate on average , according to a study by GetResponse. The study also found that the more sharing options you provide, the more activity you'll generate. Messages with three or more social sharing icons generated a 28% higher CTR than messages with one icon, and a 55% higher CTR than messages with no social sharing icons.

➢ Include content from your social networks in your email messages to entice email subscribers to become fans and followers. Look for any opportunity to show email subscribers the value of connecting to your brand through multiple channels. For example:

Tweet This eBook!

- Highlight an individual as "fan or follower of the month"
- Feature the best discussions or comments from Facebook or LinkedIn in your email newsletters
- Alert email subscribers to recent social media-only promotions or contest winners

➢ Include links to your all your social network accounts in your email signatures. That way, even your employees' personal email communications can help grow your social media audience.

By making it as easy as possible for subscribers to share your email content, you can reach new prospects by tapping into the massive reach of users' personal networks. For example, according to a case study from the email service provider StrongMail, the online personal finance site Mint.com used social-media-enabled email messages to ask existing customers to refer the service to their friends on various social networks. More than 10% of the recipients of the message shared that offer with an average of five friends each – and those invitations generated a 61% clickthrough rate. In the end, the site signed up one new user for every 2.6 clicks.

Developing the Right Content Approach for Each Channel

The key to making social sharing buttons work is providing "sharable" content. But people have different reasons for following brands on each social network, which affects the type of content they'll deem most sharable.

Here's a breakdown of major reasons people cite for subscribing, fanning, and following brands through different channels – and what that means for your content strategy.

Email subscribers

Email opt-ins want highly-relevant, personalized content. That means messages that serve their interests based on choices they've made in your email preference center, or through a lead nurturing strategy that sends follow-up messages based on a user's past activities or content downloads. For example, a subscriber who downloads a white paper on a specific topic is likely to be interested in an upcoming webinar on the same topic.

But email opt-ins also want relevant promotions -- and they typically look to email first for special offers, according to a study of email/social preferences by email service provider Exact Target. When the survey asked consumers where they go when seeking promotions, 62% said they sign up for a brand's email, compared to 17% who said they check Facebook, and 3% who said they check Twitter.

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Facebook fans

Facebook users, too, say they become fans of a brand to receive discounts and promotions, according to ExactTarget. But the survey also revealed several other top reasons people become fans, including:

- To show support for the company
- To stay informed about the company's activities
- To get updates on future products
- For fun or entertainment

So to get "likes" and other interaction on Facebook, develop a mix of content to share with your fans. Yes, you can provide occasional special promotions, but also consider sharing inside looks at life inside your company, or news and analysis of industry issues that are likely to start discussion among your fan base.

Facebook is also a good place for fun or entertaining topics – such as games, quizzes, contests and videos. And don't overlook opportunities to respond to questions or customer service issues from customers and prospects. Often a company's well-handled response to a Facebook question will generate likes from appreciative fans.

Twitter followers

Once again, special offers and deals are a major draw for Twitter followers: 43.5% said it's the top reason they follow brands on Twitter, according to a recent Get Satisfaction/Column Five study.

But you can't just pump your Twitter feed with sales promos. Active Twitter users also happen to be the most influential online customers, according to ExactTarget's survey. They're more likely to publish their own blogs, write company and product reviews, or participate in online discussions.

So your Twitter strategy should feed these influencers content that gives them something to talk about. Other top reasons for following brands on Twitter, according to the ExactTarget survey include:

- "To obtain new, authentic perspectives on companies and to find out what they really stand for." That's a great opportunity to tweet short commentaries on industry news and issues and receive retweets from your followers.

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- "To receive insider information about upcoming products and services." But don't just talk about what you plan to do – ask Twitter followers for their feedback or suggestions for new product development.

- "To get to know the personalities behind a company." Use the human touch with your tweets. For example, if you're tweeting a link to a recent newsletter article, briefly tell your followers why you've selected this link, or what special relevance it has to your team.

- "To see how a company responds when its brand is publicly criticized." Listening and responding on all social media is critical – but nowhere more so than twitter. Quickly responding to criticism and concerns voiced on Twitter can impress other Twitter users and make them more disposed to follow your brand or see what other communication options are available to them.

LinkedIn connections

LinkedIn users are professionals that primarily use the service as a way to network with their peers and key players in their industry. They like to discuss important topics, and get answers to critical, business-related questions.

For that reason, it's better to approach LinkedIn as a lead-generation channel, rather than a channel for direct sales offers. You can use activities such as:

- Starting discussions in relevant LinkedIn Groups on important industry issues
- Sharing articles from your email newsletters
- Answering questions on the LinkedIn Q&A section
- Sharing your company's educational content when it's relevant to an ongoing discussion

Tying it All Together for Integrated Campaigns

Once you've used email to grow social media followers and social media to grow email opt-ins, develop campaigns that take advantage of both channels and maximize your ROI.

Here are a few examples of how the channels can work together on a single campaign.

Priming the pump via social media

Use your Facebook updates, tweets, LinkedIn updates, and other social media posts to build awareness for an upcoming event, special promotion or product launch. It's a great way to spread the world without hammering your opt-ins with repeated email messages.

For example, Wilton used email and social media to promote the launch of its annual "yearbook" of cake decorating ideas. The team posted weekly Facebook updates about the upcoming book release and responded to customer questions about the product on their Facebook page. At the same time, they used Twitter to tease the book's content, including a "guess the cover image" contest. Finally, they launched the product with an email campaign. The results: a 65% increase in year-over-year book sales.

Maintaining the momentum of an email campaign

You can use social media to extend the life of an email campaign by sharing links to the message or individual newsletter articles, and inviting followers to discuss the topic on Facebook or LinkedIn.

For example, when email service provider MailChimp sent an email to its customers announcing a service price drop, they added a "P.S." that asked customers to click a link to the company's Facebook page and say how they planned to spend their savings.

[Tweet This eBook!](#)

The Facebook link generated more than 61% of total clicks in the email, and generated instant comments and discussion among customers about the new pricing deal.

Highlighting top email content

After you send your regular email newsletter, share the top stories from that edition (based on total clicks) with your social media followers. Followers who see regular social media posts about "top email newsletter articles" are likely to find something that piques their interest and gets them to read – or even subscribe.

Cross-channel referral campaigns

If you're creating a referral program, such as a discount for existing customers to share with their friends, family and colleagues, give the audience as many options as possible to spread the word. Include all social media sharing buttons as well as "forward to a friend" email capability.

Chik-Fil-A's team received honors in MarketingSherpa's 2010 Viral Marketing Hall of Fame with just such an effort. The campaign featured a direct mail coupon for a free sandwich and a URL for a landing page where recipients could use Facebook, Twitter, email and SMS to share the offer with friends.

Having multiple sharing options helped the campaign reach 3 times the number of people on the initial direct mail list, and generated a 279% increase in response rate.

Monitoring Metrics and Measuring Results

Optimize your email/social media integration strategy by tracking key performance metrics from each channel. Look for insights into what's working and what's not, so you can fine-tune your efforts.

Photo by drtel

Important metrics to track include:

- Clickthrough rates on social networking "follow us" buttons in your email template

- Percent increases in fans and followers after implementing "follow us" buttons in your email template

- Opt-in rates from email sign-up forms on Facebook, and from opt-in offers shared on Twitter and LinkedIn

- Social sharing rates – both the overall percentage of email subscribers who like or share a link from an email message, as well as a qualitative assessment of the kind of email content that gets shared. Look for specific types of offers or content that tend to be most "sharable" on each of your social networks.

- Number of comments or discussions generated on Facebook or LinkedIn from content delivered via email, and number of retweets of content delivered via email

- Website traffic generated by email and social links

- Total conversions generated (leads or sales) from an integrated email/social media campaign

The more you study your integrated campaign metrics, the more opportunities you'll find for optimizing your strategy. For example, by carefully studying which of your

subscribers, fans, or followers tend to do the most sharing and cross-posting of content, you can identify your top "influencers."

Then, you can create a special segment of these influencers and reward them for their contributions. Rewards could be special offers or even simple acknowledgement, such as a "Facebook fan of the month" or suggesting that others follow your top Twitter followers on "Follow Friday."

That way, you're cultivating the members of your audience as partners in your marketing efforts, and achieving the biggest benefit of social media/email integration: moving from one-to-one email communication to many-to-many outreach, with thousands of individuals ready to share your content and offers across the social web.

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Next Steps

If you are a company that is interested in growing your business and generating leads, <u>use HubSpot's free 30-day trial to learn how HubSpot's software can help you</u>.