



HOW TO GET A **SOCIAL** FOLLOWING IN CONSTRUCTION *(and know how to keep it going)*



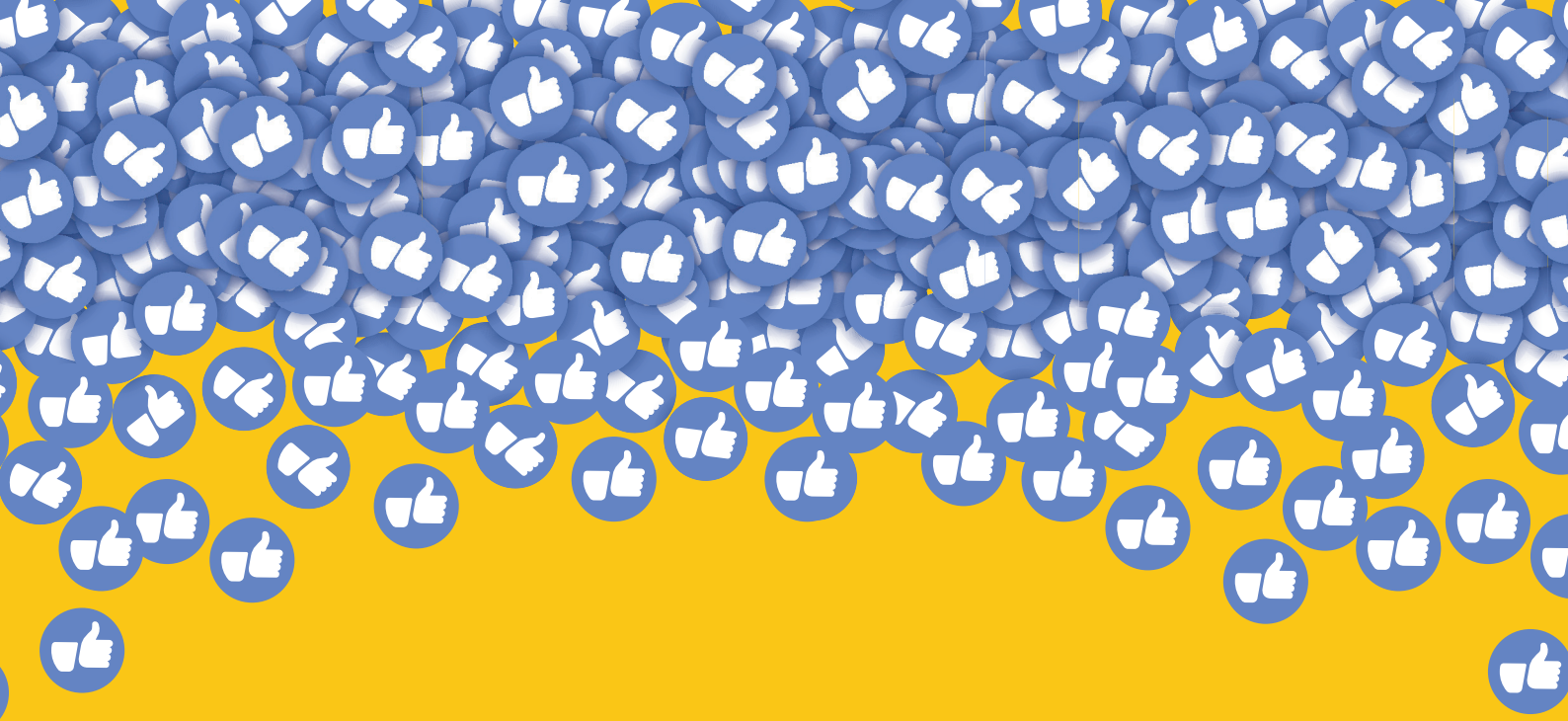
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Brought to you by the construction professionals who

**joked, wrote
and promoted
themselves to
100,000 social
followers** 



No one **'cares'** about your company *(so make them)*

Social media is emotional. The reason it's addictive is that interacting with it causes humans to experience a tiny dopamine hit every time they use it. People go into social media to 'care about' something or someone. That can be a negative response ('God, I hate that guy that keeps uploading bathroom selfies in his hi-vis') or a positive response ('Look how cute my brother's kid looks on a skateboard') – the only way to get someone's attention on social media is to illicit a response either way.

People come to social media to experience an emotion and it's very difficult to illicit an emotion from anyone when you're talking about your goods and services targeted at the industrial services industry. It doesn't get much drier, or unemotional – than our industry.

That's why it's impossible to promote your company and succeed in social media unless you find a way to relate your business to things people really care about – fun, leisure, interests, hobbies, politics, humour, celebrity, their friends, allegiances, prejudice or play to their aspirations – wishing to be rich, retired, travel more, buy a bigger house, or appeal to their fears – being fatter, poorer, out of work, in debt, injuring themselves etc.

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The **halo** effect

Social media needs to be thought of, in some respects as 'halo marketing' – meaning it is most successfully used when you are promoting what your brand stands for, not what it is. So, using content in social media you inadvertently communicate the themes behind your brand, rather than actually talk about it (at all, ever if you can avoid it).

At iSeekplant we've decided to translate our own internal culture into our external brand (and a lot of our social media footprint directly mirrors the personality of the founders). When you meet us, the first thing you'll notice is that we are happy and love a laugh. We are industry experts, we are fair, good blokes, we have a massive sense of humour and don't take ourselves too seriously (whilst, I hope being thought of as the experts in our field). The reason we have a strong following – is because heaps of other people in the industry are just like this, and we mirror it back to them.



The **halo** effect cont.

Authenticity and congruency is really important – the reason people feel attached to our social presence is that if you’ve ever met anyone from iSeekplant – we’re exactly the same in real life, as we come off on social media. The larrikin attitude carries through everything – right through our sales emails, communications with customers, account service calls, staff events, investor engagements, public speaking. The thing is – if you invest in your ‘voice’ in social media and it doesn’t at all represent the ‘cut’ of your company’s ‘jib’ – then it won’t work as well, and the flame will snuff out pretty quickly.

Sit down one day and describe your business personality (which is probably an extension of your own personality if you are an owner operator) as if it were a human personality, then it’s easy to quickly deduce what type of content would communicate this personality the best. Having a really distinct, individual voice is important.

“ The purpose of building a following in social media...

**maybe isn't
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The **Purpose** of Building a Social Following

The purpose of building a following in social media – maybe isn't for reasons immediately obvious to you. Getting likes, shares and comments are not actually commercial outcomes that convert to cash for your business. But the larger your following is, and the more engaged they are – the larger the circle Facebook and LinkedIn draws around your business. These algorithms read your business page, and through the size of your following, and the degree to which your following interacts with you – determine how large an audience your business should have in the platform.

But, one of the little-understood issues with Facebook and LinkedIn is that these platforms do not serve up everything you post, to everyone following you. They only show your content, even the great stuff with heaps of likes and shares to a small portion of your audience. The platforms are getting tighter and tighter about this and more often you have to pay to boost the post to get it viewed by audience and their friends.

I won't talk about how to use social media to advertise in this eBook – because most of you just need to run before you can walk. Build the following first, then in the next eBook – I'll help you build really successful advertising campaigns to reach out to your big, happy and engaged social audience.

*But the larger your following is,
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your business*



The upside-down triangle of social success

Whenever I get the opportunity, and a clean whiteboard, I like to draw this graphic to explain social media to customers (or anyone that will listen to me rant). This graphic shows how you should weight the types of content you publish (and assign quantities and regularity) if you want to build a following;





FUNNY

Memes, funny pics, images with one liners, videos, gags, office fun, pics from the field



HELPFUL

Aggregate and republish information about the industry or topics of interest to you and your audience. Curated news, announcements, instructional guides.



OPINION

At iSeekplant – when you read our stuff, you can tell that we really stand up to our customers and the industry. We are pro-progress, and take the mickey out of any of the special interest groups who slow the advancement of infrastructure projects down. Provided you ‘pick on’ the shared enemy of your audience, it doesn’t matter if you cop a bit of flack, because your audience will back you to the hilt, and you will only annoy people who aren’t in your audience. Selectively picking fights, is a really strong way to grow a following. You just have to be super careful that your audience really does share a similar dislike for your target – otherwise you end up in a world of hurt (and once a social media stoush kicks off, it’s impossible to control).



DEEP DIVE

Not for the faint of heart (or time poor), but this is an example of a ‘deep dive’ topic – where you explain something in extended detail, aggregate information and research on a topic, create an infographic or put something on the net that is extremely helpful to others and demonstrates your in-depth knowledge of a topic that others find confusing.



SEO KEYWORD ARTICLES

God, the internet is full of useless spam articles intended to rank under particular keywords (I must admit to there being literally HUNDREDS on our site). You need to write these articles ‘Top 100 Australian Construction Companies’ and ‘What is an excavator’ or ‘The definition of Dry Hire’ to target keyword searches in Google – but it doesn’t mean you should share these in social media. Do this sparingly.



BRANDED

Purely promotional information about your company – available machines, monthly price promotions, offers, ads.



How often should you **talk about your company and services?**

Try this – try **NOT** ever talking about it. Or, if you reference it, make small references to it (being a screaming success) buried deep in the copy of articles.

The less you talk directly about your company – the better.

To build a following, you need to pump out interest base content (using the top 5 parts of the triangle above) and worry about promoting your company once you have critical mass.

When did I hear from you last?



Every social platform rewards people who post regularly. Baked into every social platforms algorithm (algorithms are an eBook for another day) is a section that will look at when you posted last. It is in Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram etc's best interest to promote the accounts that use their platforms the most, also, users prefer to see pages they are comfortable with and trust in their news feeds. To really make an impact on social you need to be posting at least several times a week, if you post less than this not only will you have fewer chances to reach your audience, but social platforms will automatically reduce the reach of your posts.

To solve this make sure you dedicate at least 30 minutes a day to social. That will give you enough time to generate or find a piece of content relevant to your audience and share it. Remember, you don't need to write a 10,000 word blog post everyday. An engaging image or photo can be just as engaging to your audience as a blog post.

For those with more person power and resources at their disposal a content calendar can be a really valuable asset for managing the content due to be published on social. Along with this a content calendar can double as a place to track the results of your social posts so you can nail down on what your audience responds to best.



The **'Unfun'** Stuff – Safety, Credibility, Reliability

The problem most brands in construction face with social media – is that there is almost no levity about their service or brand, and there can't be. Because the things that are most prized and valued in our industry are incredibly boring, stoic concepts – we value safety, credibility, scope, reliability, productivity, precision, skill, engineering and cost reduction.

Trying to make any of that fun and relatable is really difficult – and it's also really inappropriate to make fun of any of these concepts as well. There is no place for a construction company or service provider to the industry to post materials on social media where people are acting unsafe, unproductive or making errors – because even the smallest of 'stuff ups' can have enormous cost ramifications on a job. The halo association of being reckless online will tar your brand with this brush and it really offends people (especially in LinkedIn). There is still a way to be a rascal and loveable, without violating the unfunny topics that govern construction.

“ People are on social media to goof-off (generally speaking) and you have to remember,

**the ‘state’ of a
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What are you **wearing** right now?

People are on social media to goof-off (generally speaking) – and you have to remember the ‘state’ of a person when consuming that medium – I think it’s helpful to imagine what clothes they are wearing so you can understand how to appeal to them. They are in their ‘civvies’ when they are using Facebook and are there to have fun – laugh, get angry, kill-time, amuse themselves, connect with friends, argue, be a voyeur or get up-to-date with news. As such, the most prolific time to get traction in social media in construction is usually 8pm (when they lying on the couch in their PJs with one eye on ‘Wicked Tuna’ on the TV). So it’s best that you schedule your fun, light-hearted, funny, scary, amazing content for night-time and avoid talking shop.

When they use LinkedIn – they are in work mode and usually consuming content from 9-5pm, wearing orange, or business clothes. So, imagine everything they think, write, comment on is in a professional capacity – they are way more ‘buttoned up’ in this setting, they find less funny and get annoyed by their time being wasted. At work, people care about different things to what they care about outside of work hours, and you will often find that they are completely unwilling to think with their work brain outside of work hours (I never read anything on LinkedIn over the weekend so I can stay out of the work headspace).

All the rules that govern behaviour in the workplace (appropriate language, gender equality, appreciation of diversity, safety, the customer-is-always-right etc) also apply to behaviour in LinkedIn, and everything is highly visible. So, pump out your professional articles during the work day into LinkedIn – and keep the funny stuff out of this space altogether. If you’re commenting on articles in LinkedIn – keep it clean, professional and supportive. It reflects really poorly on you and your company to be slagging off people and businesses in a public forum. Nothing good will come of targeting competitors directly, people who haven’t paid you or really any other business. You can criticise groups (the greens, activists, protesters, politicians) but never people or companies directly.

facebook



Linked in



Thought Leadership



This was a term I used to use a lot, but don't anymore because it's become such a pedestrian concept. Sprouting off knowledge for the purpose of traffic generation is basically the entire reason the feed in LinkedIn exists – but the proliferation of this tactic in social media has lead to a whole pile of armchair experts desperately trying to acquire a click through crappy, useless content. I've seen so many people in LinkedIn trying to do this and doing it in such a boring way. Very little is worth reading.

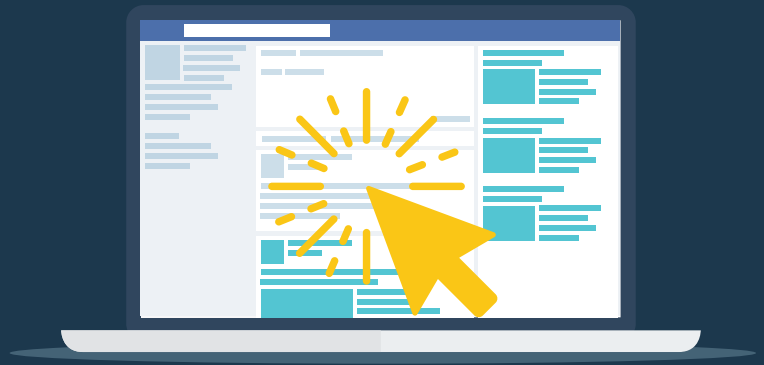
We found success, as I've said before, in standing up for other people, the industry and ourselves – by raging against people (outside of the industry) disrupting progress. There are groups of people who now make a career out of destroying and damaging the construction and mining industries – and these people are easy targets if you want to rally the troops.

Most of the bigger companies with the resources or interest to do social media well, don't like ruffling feathers and don't have the stones to deal with the negative commentary (never realising that the only people who will disagree with you are the people who aren't ever going to be customers of yours). Having weathered many a social media storm – I stand here, 4 years into building the most widely read social publication in plant and equipment in Australia to tell you that I don't have one single example of losing a customer over one of my table-thumping articles. Not one single customer has ever left the platform because my articles have offended them. We've only gained followers and support. But, I can't stress clearly enough – that you have to have a very good read on what matters to your audience and what side of the argument they are on. You have to be sure you're all angry about the same things.

But sharing your unique expertise, in a very authentic and useful way – just as I am here – will always resonate well and help to grow your following. Or, you could research a topic deeply and offer an opinion or alternative viewpoint on it. But make sure these articles are gutsy and meaty – because there is so much useless fluff out there – that this tactic works now if you are really pumping out articles that are very interesting or unique.

Clickable Headlines

Will I click on your link?



The only things your audience will have to judge your article by before they click through is the headline, subheading, status and image.

I spend as much time creating the article's headline and subheading and choosing or creating the image as it takes to write the whole article. My view has always been, what's the point of writing and editing an informative and engaging blog post if no one is going to read it.

If you want to learn how to write a clickable, interesting, intriguing headline without misrepresenting your content – I would suggest you follow some mass media sites on Facebook (because you will quickly learn the structure of how to post an article with just enough words to attract the click).

Social Media Today, Wordstream and HubSpot have all written awesome, highly technical guide to writing a great, highly clickable headline. I'd recommend them as further reading.

Here are some major players to look at as examples:

MamaMia

 **news**
.com.au

Daily **mail**.com

The  **BETOOTTA ADVOCATE**

NEW YORK POST

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

BuzzFeed

JEZEBEL

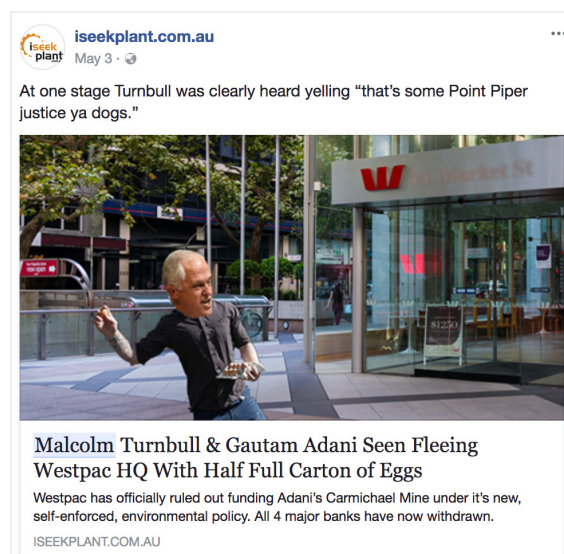
TMZ

There are a few basic things to consider when choosing an image to include with the article. The first thing to absolutely make sure you do is choose an image that you have the rights to. If you don't have the rights to the image your article can easily be taken down for being in violation of copyright law.

From there it's all about choosing an image that will speak to your audience. No one's going to click on a blurry, low quality image so make sure that your image is of a high resolution. Next, make sure your photo matches Facebook and LinkedIn's image dimensions, here's a tool that will automatically crop your images to the right dimensions.

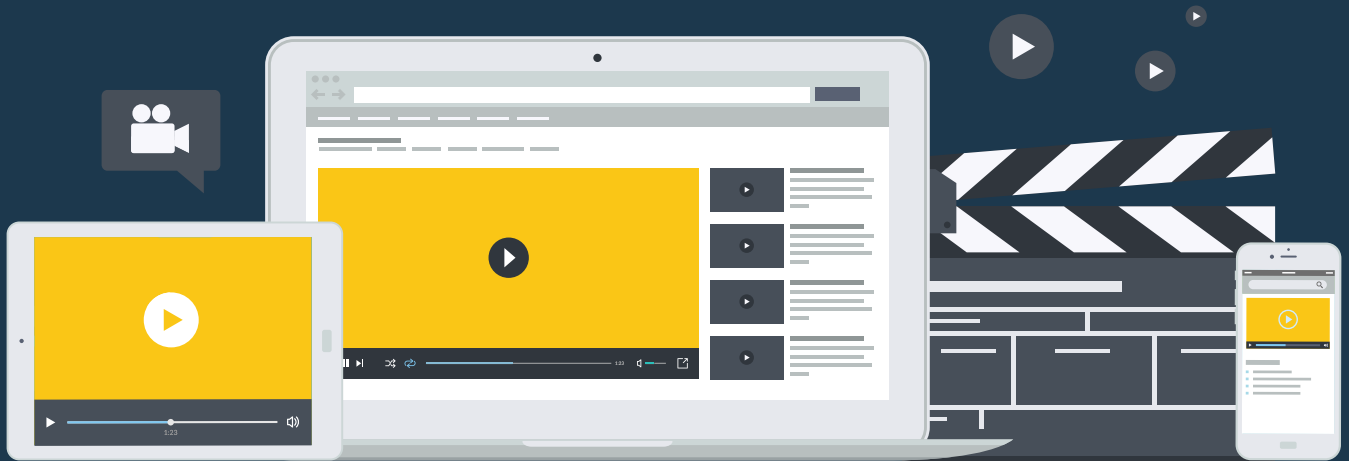
Finally, I've found that the images that work best (especially on funny posts and op-eds) are those that we have edited in house. A pre-done image rarely, if ever, can fully display the intentions behind one of our funny articles, so to make sure it does we make necessary edits. The key to this is to make sure your not being deceptive with your edit, my advice would be to make it clear you have edited your photo for humorous reasons.

Adobe Photoshop is still the best tool for editing and creating a photo for your post, but if you don't have the time, know how or resources to use Photoshop there are plenty of other free options you can use. I would recommend Canva, it's 100% free to use and comes with some great pre-done templates (not to mention it's an Australian company).



Video, video, video!

Make and post more videos.



They don't have to be long, or expensive to produce – there are heaps of cheap and free services out there to take your videos to the next level.

Most people don't know that Facebook is trying to take down YouTube and supercede it. LinkedIn just launched a native video product as well. Both platforms are heavily pushing video on their platform – which means that videos posted on your page will see more organic views than images and written articles.

Top Tips for Videos:

- Make them less than 1:30 mins. 30 secs is the best format for the medium
- Add subtitles, so people who can't play the sound don't miss any action
- There are really cool video making tools out there that anyone can use that make your vids look great
- Post video as 'native' in Facebook and LinkedIn – meaning don't copy the YouTube link across, upload from your computer into their video upload functions – it will go way further.
- In the headline and supporting copy on the post – make sure it's clear what/why it's about so people don't swipe past



Tired Tactics.

Stuff that used to work and doesn't anymore:

- Heaps of staff and employee engagement stuff: posting photos of your company ping pong table is so dull. It doesn't really bolster your brand and no one cares
- Using wordplay in clickable headlines: There was this guy calling himself "That Start-Up Guy" on LinkedIn, Daniel Mumby, who had never worked in a start-up or built one. But he started pumping out articles on inspiring start-up content. One of them was titled "Ladies, get off you 'buts' and start a company" or something equally as inane, including a photo of a ladies butt – but what he meant was that women need to stop making excuses to follow their dreams (ugh, because this idiot would really know, right?). He got slammed online for 3 months, it was so bad they wrote about the stoush in the Sydney Morning Herald and Start-up Daily. Word play is dumb, old fashioned and doesn't work to entice readership.
- Selfies in LinkedIn with accompanying 'thoughts for the day'. Seriously, just don't.
- Sexy stuff. Anything gender related, putting pics of women, or leveraging female sexuality is the fastest way to alienate an enormous amount of people online (as it relates to your company). If you want to pick the wrong kind of fight, post something sexist and watch it explode.
- Reposting tired old images and memes from other pages. There is the same content swirling the net about construction and machines that has been around since we started doing this 4 years ago. It's getting really old and tired. Come up with your own stuff.

Great social examples from construction.

There are a couple of great examples of social legends in our industry in Australia who are building a following incredibly well (however, I've not seen anyone leverage their following well for paid advertising yet – but, as I said, that's a story for another day).



ISEEKPLANT

Of course, US! iSeekplant. Watch the upside triangle in action.



BERRIMA DIESEL

This guy is a diesel fitter in Berrima with 40K likes! He must post all day long.



DIGGA AUSTRALIA

These guys do video so well. They post a great mixture of videos and photos



EVERYTHING EARTHMOVING

They do heaps of original content, including video and share a lot of content from their suppliers and customers.



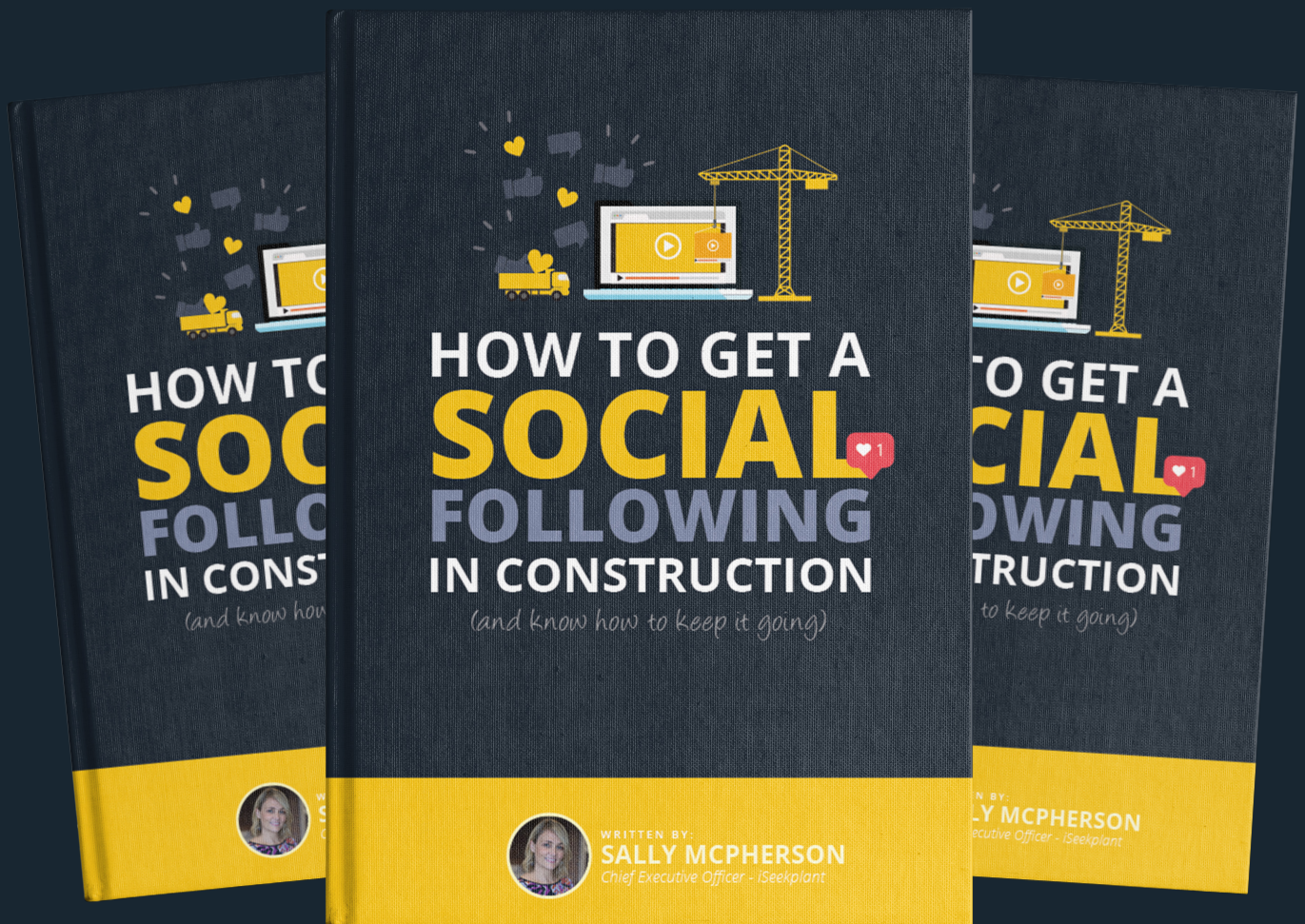
GARY RADFORD

Gary Radford writes well, shares and supports others in the industry. He also finds an insulting thing to call me, every time he writes about 'disruption' in plant hire.



CONSTRUCTION ADVISERS

These guys do curated news and 'helpful' really well.



Kick start your social media efforts today
by sharing this eBook to your followers:

