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MINUTE MARKETER

B2B Social Media Marketing

9 tactics for using social media for
lead generation and engagement

30-Minute Marketer

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B2B Social Media Marketing: 9 tactics for using social media for lead generation and engagement

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TACTICS YOU CAN LEARN OVER LUNCH

Welcome to *30-Minute Marketer* – a resource from MarketingSherpa featuring bite-sized tips for busy marketers.

In this report, we show you how B2B marketers can harness the power of social media.

It wasn't that long ago that many B2B marketers were skeptical of social media as a marketing tool, viewing it as a more valuable tactic for the consumer sector. Times have quickly changed. Today, many B2B marketers have realized that social media can be an important asset in helping to generate leads and engage the contacts you already have.

In this report, we'll show you:

- How to plan a manageable system
- Why content is vital to social media success
- Ways to best utilize Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter
- Tips for combining SEO and social media

We know you're in a hurry, so let's get started. We're eager to share these tips on how you can supercharge your social media efforts!

Bobbi Dempsey
Editor, *30-Minute Marketer*

About *30-Minute Marketer*

MarketingSherpa's *30-Minute Marketer* is designed with you, the busy marketer, in mind. We provide quick, simple tips that you can put into action right away.

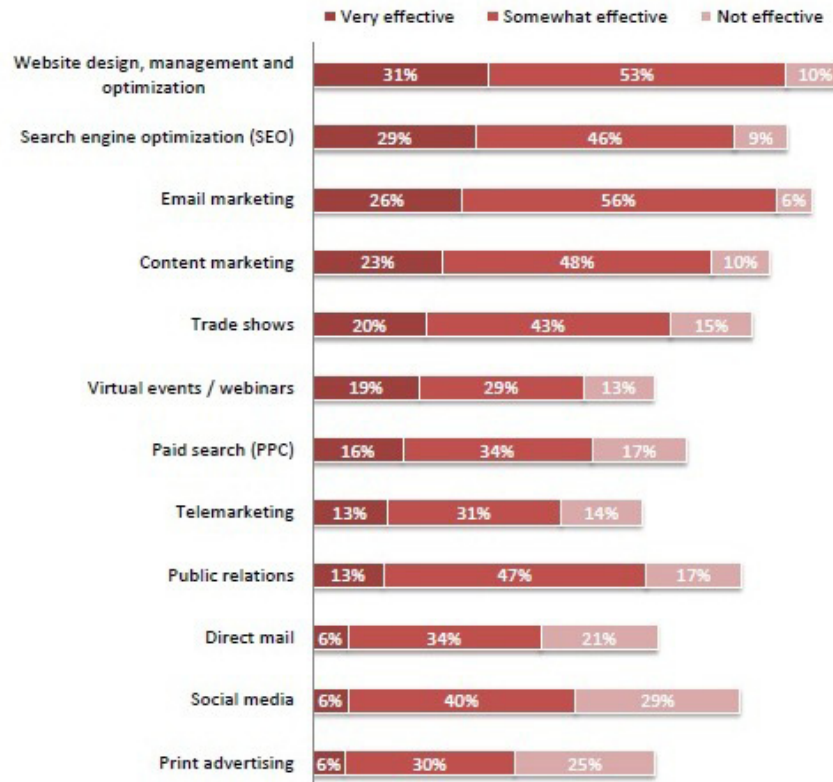
For each *30-Minute Marketer*, we scour the vast MECLABS library of marketing research, from MarketingSherpa case studies and benchmark reports, to MarketingExperiments optimization tests and analysis. We highlight tips to help improve your marketing performance right now ... or, at least, by the time you're done with lunch.

When social media was beginning to be used as a marketing tactic, a common perception among B2B organizations was that social media wasn't a fit for B2B. Now, many B2B organizations are proving otherwise by finding target audiences on social sites and effectively marketing to them through the medium.

As the chart below from the [MarketingSherpa 2012 B2B Marketing Benchmark Report](#) (free excerpt at this link) shows, 6% said social media is very effective while 40% viewed it as somewhat effective.

Q. Please indicate the effectiveness of the following lead generation tactics for your organization.

Chart: Effectiveness of B2B marketing tactics



marketingsherpa Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa B2B Marketing Benchmark Survey Methodology: Fielded June 2011, N=1,745

Picking the right mix of lead generation tactics is challenging, so we asked survey participants which tactics they found to be the most effective in providing a benchmark for the top B2B marketing tactics.

Social media's infancy as a marketing tactic is clearly not affecting its perception of effectiveness, with nearly half of B2B organizations viewing this as either a "very effective" or a "somewhat effective" tactic.

Social media is commonly perceived as an effective tactic towards soft objectives like improving brand awareness or reputation, but the emerging trend is that as social media marketers become more seasoned with this tactic the perceptions of its effectiveness towards achieving hard metrics like generating ROI will improve.

Tactic #1: Create a Manageable Program That Works

In the B2BLeadRoundtable Blog post, "[Lessons from a B2B Summit Coach: Five Steps to Cut Through the Noise, Turn Off the Hype and Create a B2B Social Media Program That Works](#)," Brian Carroll shares some tips from Zuzia Soldenhoff-Thorpe, research manager for MECLABS Conversion Group. Zuzia has provided one-on-one coaching to the B2B marketers at MarketingSherpa's B2B Summit, and says social media is one of the most challenging channels for B2B marketers to manage. Her tips for making the process less overwhelming:

- **Know your audience.** Where are they gathering online to learn about your product or services? Do they have favorite publications or platforms they turn to for industry information? For instance, an engineer may have a Facebook profile, but is he really on there to learn about the newest technology?
- **Know what your competitors are doing.** Analyze and monitor their social media. Learn from their mistakes and successes. Watch what's being said, and where, about your company, product or service.
- **Begin with a blog.** Why be on social media if you don't have anything to say? A blog is the means to provide meaningful information your audience will care about and a vehicle to distribute it to other social media platforms. You don't need to write all of your own content. You can repurpose relevant content you've already created – this could be whitepapers, articles, and news releases. Use one of your public relations professionals or a freelance journalist to interview experts within your organization and write a blog post on their behalf. Use guest bloggers or provide content from a third-party source that's respected in your field.
- **Consistency is critical.** Make social media the responsibility of one or two people in the organization to maintain a uniform voice and image across your platforms. However, be sure to encourage as many people as possible within your organization to engage, post comments, promote your posts and spread your message.
- **Because social media is so unpredictable, test and test some more.** Is your audience paying attention and what are they paying attention to? Social media was created so people could engage and interact online, so it's easy to ask and respond to questions, post polls, and conduct surveys. Don't miss out on this unprecedented opportunity to identify what your audience wants to see, read and receive.

Tactic #2: Combine content marketing with the social media strategy

In the MarketingSherpa article, "[B2B Lead Generation: 6 Social Media Tactics from 7 Experts](#)," David Kirkpatrick shared advice from several experts that can be helpful to B2B marketers interested in stepping up their social media efforts.

Jonathan Gebauer, Product Manager, Co-Founder and CEO, exploreB2B, suggests incorporating social media marketing into the content marketing strategy. "In my experience, this is the most effective way to generate leads via social media," he explained. "It is the best way to provide valuable and helpful content for people within a target group. Content ranges from articles, videos and infographics, to whitepapers."

Gebauer said the goal with this strategy is to position yourself as a thought leader in your field, which would then provide incentive for people to follow you and listen to your social media output increases. "Content can

effectively be posted and spread via social media. It is very important to connect your different channels. An infographic on Pinterest can link to an article. A guest post on a blog can link to a video on YouTube,” Gebauer said.

Frank Dale, President and CEO, Compendium, also agreed that combining content marketing with an overall social media strategy is the best way to generate leads.

“In a sense, content marketing is the purest form of marketing, because it allows companies and their customers to tell stories that are true and to educate prospects so they can make a choice,” he said. “This approach works well for B2B marketing because it focuses on knowing the customer, understanding the pain points, and developing good information that answers questions.”

He offered three points to use content marketing to generate leads:

- Develop varied content. Develop useful content that will draw individuals to lead generating mechanisms on you website. Mix up your content to include written material like whitepapers and case studies, graphical information like photos and infographics, and interactive material such as videos, podcasts and webinars.
- Use keywords and strong calls-to-action. Make sure content is loaded with keywords to attract prospects, and then draw them to lead generation mechanisms through clear calls-to-action. These can be contact forms, RFP forms or email opt-in lists.
- Share your content. Distribute content on all your channels: blogs, social media, email marketing, etc. Use a content marketing platform to make social sharing easier.

“Widen, a Madison, Wis.-based digital asset management (DAM) software provider, implemented this process to spur inbound marketing,” Dale said.

Dale continued, “Today, more than a third of Web referral leads come from its blog. The company’s content marketing program focused on educating its audience about the existence of DAM software and drawing individuals toward lead-generating materials, such as webinars, whitepapers and requests for pricing and demos.

As a result, Widen’s blog is the top referrer of sales leads to Widen.com, and has helped make Widen.com and its landing pages some of the highest ranked in the DAM industry for key search terms.”

Tactic #3: Use Facebook wisely with a range of offerings

Also in the “7 Experts” article, Courtney Seiter, Community Manager, Raven Internet Marketing Tools, said it is key is to offer the “right mix” when it comes to using Facebook to generate leads and engage with contacts. Seiter said you should balance Facebook posts between what engages your audience, such as photos, videos and open-ended questions, with what you want to promote, which is typically links to your content or website.

She explained, “The first half grows your audience and improves your EdgeRank (Facebook’s system for determining how widely your brand’s content gets seen) so that you have the largest audience possible when you

go to promote your own content. When it comes to engagement, focus on comments and shares in order to increase your brand's exposure to the friends of your fans, a powerful segment to grow your audience.”

Shama Hyder Kabani, CEO, The Marketing Zen Group, recommends paid placement, as well. “Facebook ads can be super targeted,” she said, “and they are a great way for B2B companies to go after their prospects.”

But, Kabani cautions, “With B2B marketing, you can't be caught up in how many ‘followers’ you get or simply increasing Facebook likes. Social media needs to be part of a much bigger picture. It has to be in sync with SEO, website conversions, public relations and more.”

Tactic #4: Track effective content and thought leadership using Twitter

Eddie Smith, CRO, Topsy Labs, singled out Twitter as a platform that B2B marketers can use to identify, qualify and generate leads. “Two specific use-cases come to mind, both utilizing data and metrics from Twitter: Use [link-mention metrics](#) from Tweets to identify what content on specific B2B domains are resonating, and use [link-trending metrics](#) generated from Tweets to understand what content is resonating on a domain.”

These data points are useful because you get beyond Twitter mentions and find out the velocity of the content and the timing of the mentions for your earned media. “Using social media, Twitter in particular, B2B marketers can isolate and understand earned media contribution for lead generation better than any other social source,” stated Smith.

Seiter said, “Twitter is an avenue for news and resources at a rapid pace, so capitalize on that by being a thought leader in your segment. Being the go-to source for industry knowledge and trends can open the doors for a deeper relationship and sales down the line. Carve out a set time daily to read industry blogs or news sources, and use a Twitter scheduling tool to tweet the most relevant news throughout the day.”

Tactic #5: Leverage your customers' connections on LinkedIn

Nichole Kelly, CEO, Full Frontal ROI, sees LinkedIn as the most natural fit for B2B marketing and lead generation, because it gives you a modern way to utilize good old-fashioned word-of-mouth. “LinkedIn provides you with X-ray vision into your customers' contacts, which could be great prospects for your business,” she said. “Are you doing the right things with your customers and providing superior service? If so, simply asking for a warm introduction to one of their contacts should be a breeze.”

Another way to utilize LinkedIn is to search the companies you target, to find out if anyone in your network is connected to employees at that business. Kelly explained, “A large portion of B2B sales is based on whom you know. When you can leverage your network to get a personal introduction to a highly coveted prospect, the time you spent building your LinkedIn network will pay off in hard dollars and cents.”

Tactic #6: Provide value to your customers

In the B2BLeadRoundtable Blog post, "[Communicating Value Helps Double Inbound Leads and Increase Revenue, Site Traffic and More](#)," Andrea Johnson discussed how it is important to focus on what value you provide to your customers. This approach enabled Celarity, a marketing and creative services staffing and recruiting firm, to double the number of candidates it places, and increase revenue by more than 35% over the past two years.

Celarity has accounts on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Google+. Until Arnold came on board, the company wasn't using them very often. So, Arnold started Tweeting articles featuring career advice, news about upcoming events and job openings, in addition to [blog updates](#).

In a few months, Celarity's Twitter following ballooned from 100 to 2,000. The company started a LinkedIn group that now has more than 300 members. Most importantly, Celarity is now a well-recognized brand among Minnesota creatives.

"When I told people about where I worked when I started at Celarity, it was 'hit or miss' on whether they would know the company," says Arnold. "Today, I rarely come across someone who doesn't know who we are."

Tactic #7: Incorporate Social Media into Event Marketing

In the B2BLeadRoundtable Blog post, "[Nine Simple Tactics to Drive a Higher Return on Trade Show Investment](#)," Pamela Markey said combining social media with event marketing can drive your lead scoring and, in turn, boost your ROI.

Markey says you must leverage social media before, during and after the event. Connect with attendees and build your profile before the event through your blog and updates on Twitter and LinkedIn. Tweet relevant content during the event. Invite customer feedback afterward.

Tactic #8: Make social media and SEO work together

In the webinar, "[How to Integrate Social Media and SEO to Drive More Leads and Increase Marketing ROI](#)," Sergio Balegno, Director of Research at MECLABS (the parent company of MarketingSherpa), explains how using SEO and social media together can accelerate your lead generation and conversion efforts. In fact, companies with integrated search media and SEO achieve 60% higher conversion rates. Balegno explained when prospects find information that's relevant to them during a search they feel more engaged with the organization presenting it, which drives conversion.

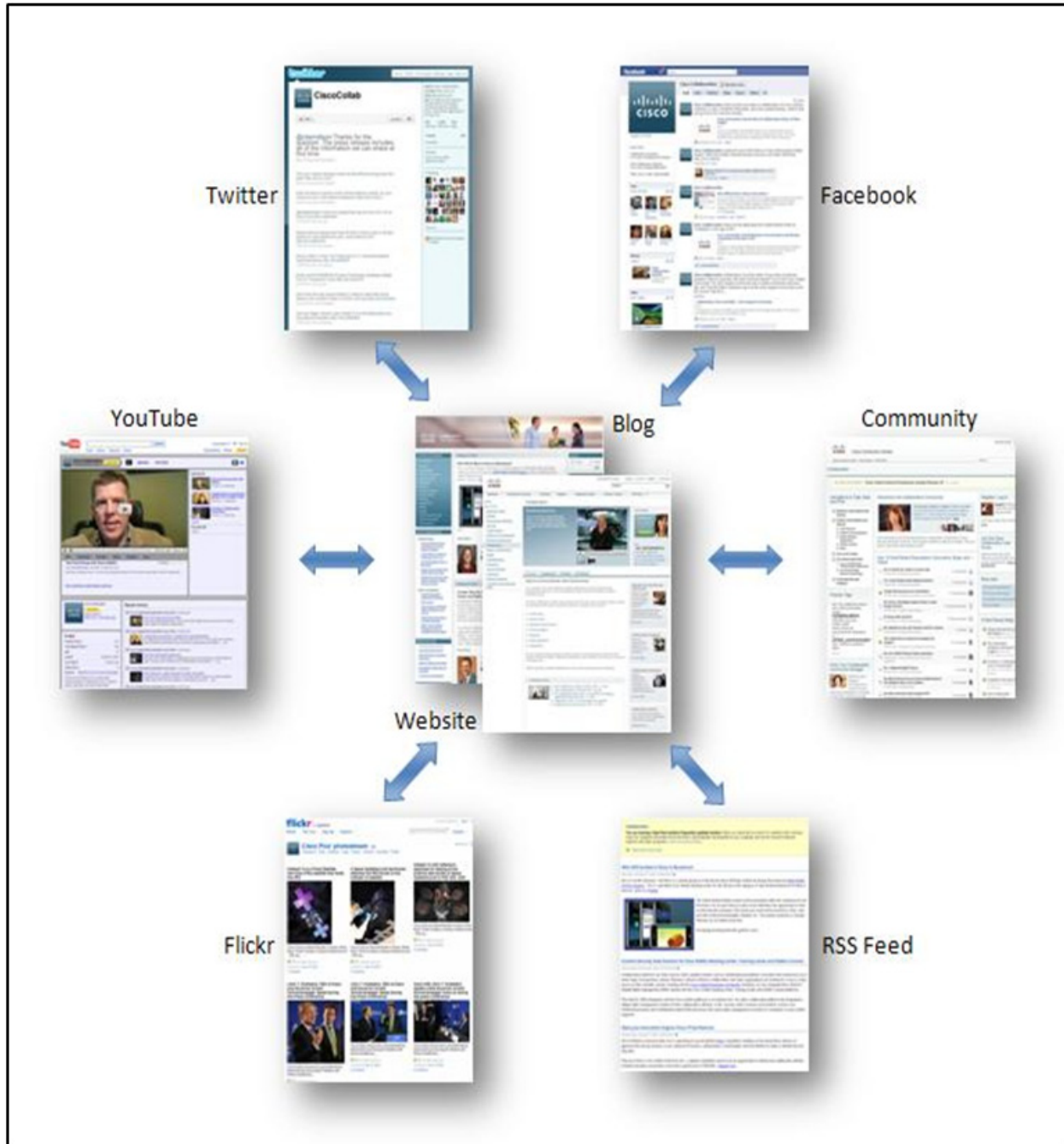
Balegno says social media and SEO integration is a B2B marketing essential. Prospects aren't only searching the Web for information; they're searching for videos, blogs and real-time discussion. Search engine algorithms are tied to this younger, more relevant content.

Balegno presented a case study that showed how Delivra, an email marketing services provider, developed an inbound strategy that pulled in 70% more leads, and doubled revenue in one year. The company was seeing a decline in the quality and quantity of their leads. With a limited budget, they wanted to improve their leads using existing resources. However, they lacked content and didn't have a social marketing architecture in place.

By reviewing the process Delivra used to achieve its goal, Balegno pinpointed five steps for making this two-pronged approach work for you.

Step 1: Align messages across brand channels from conversation to conversion. The team pushed to create content designed to attract leads. Delivra's entire customer-facing organization – from customer service to sales representatives – embraced the brand messaging integrated into their social media channels.

Step 2: Design a social-marketing architecture. Create a hub, typically a website or blog. Surround it with "spokes" (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter) that engage communities and direct traffic to the hub to be captured or converted.



Step 3: Add content designed for SEO conversion. Balegno pointed out that too many people write content for social media without considering SEO, or vice versa. Social media requires engagement, which, in turn, requires content the audience can find and cares about. Delivra produced two types of content:

- Open access — keyword-rich blog posts and how-to articles, designed to lift search rankings and establish subject matter expertise
- Premium content behind registration form provides a highly relevant exchange of value (whitepapers in exchange for contact information)

Step 4: Leverage auto-response marketing. Leads from inbound marketing are much easier to convert than outbound, so auto-responders must be adjusted accordingly, notes Balegno. Inbound leads don't require an extensive nurturing process.

Step 5: Analyze and optimize. Balegno notes that Delivra did more than merely analyze data; they analyzed the data that was most relevant to company leadership who controlled the budget.

Tactic #9: Realize the benefits to ROI—and the challenge of measuring it

Balegno's summarization of social media ROI is as follows:

Social Media ROI = (Value gained from the investment – cost of the investment)/cost of the investment.

He admits that calculating the value of social media for building reputation is challenging and complex. It helps if organizations put a value on leads. Results can be directly measured through a CRM system that can track a sale back to when it was captured as a lead.

Balegno also points out that what's rarely being measured is cost reductions in customer support and customer acquisition. Only 13% are using reduced costs as a value to calculate ROI.

Useful Links and Resources:

[B2B Lead Roundtable Blog: Is social media really living up to expectations?](#)

[B2B Lead Roundtable Blog: B2B Marketing: Combing sales and marketing knowledge to improve lead qualification](#)

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MarketingSherpa is a primary research facility, wholly-owned by MECLABS, dedicated to determining **what works in marketing** via exclusive case studies, surveys, and results data analysis. Then we publish what we learn so our community of marketers and weekly readers can improve their results and train their teams.

Praised by *The Economist*, Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge Site and Entrepreneur.com, MarketingSherpa is distinguished by offering **practical, results-based marketing** information researched and written by a staff of in-house reporters.

MarketingSherpa features:

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About MECLABS

MECLABS is a science lab that uses real-world research and training to **help business leaders get better use out of sales and marketing technology and resources**, including Internet marketing, website optimization, and lead management. We have been involved in direct research partnerships with companies throughout Europe and North America since 2001.

MECLABS deploys a rigorous methodology to conduct research. This research is compiled from:

- More than **10 years** of research partnership with our clients
- **1,300** experiments
- Over **1 billion** emails
- **10,000** landing pages tested
- **5 million** telephone calls
- **500,000** decision maker conversations

MECLABS has consulted with companies like Cisco, Johnson & Johnson, *The New York Times*, 1-800-Flowers, and NetSuite to optimize sales and marketing processes and achieve triple-digit ROI gains.

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