Social Media Engagement for Dummies

Learn to:
- Connect with prospects and turn them into customers
- Build trust and credibility
- Use social networks to engage your customers
- Involve customers through video, blogs, and e-mail

Aliza Sherman
Danielle Elliott Smith
Chapter 1
Explaining the Why, Who, and How of Social Media Engagement

In This Chapter
► Recognizing the benefits of social media engagement
► Identifying the many roles of social media
► Deciding how your organization can best use social media

Social media engagement (SME) is the “stuff that happens” during your social media marketing campaigns. SME is an essential part of social media marketing. If you don’t connect with others in social networks — and if they don’t respond to you — you don’t have engagement. Without engagement, you’re simply broadcasting messages that fall on deaf ears. Nobody wants that to happen, right?

In this chapter, we help you start thinking about SME, including the benefits of engaging with customers. We outline who participates in SME. Hint: It isn’t just you. We also introduce concepts that explain how SME happens — or how it should happen — if you’re using best practices.

If you’re being thoughtful about the way you communicate with — and connect with — others online, you’ll have greater success in reaching customers via SME. But first you need to understand what it is, how it works, and what your role is in making it happen.

Seeking the Benefits of Social Media Engagement

When will it ever end? Technology changes constantly and so quickly that it feels like the moment you gain a new skill or figure out how to use a new online tool, everything changes again and your newly acquired skills seem obsolete. Let’s face it: Social media engagement seems to change daily.
Simply put, social media engagement (often abbreviated as SME) is the process by which online communications and the content you post online help you build connections with other people within online communities. Social media engagement involves the use of the tools of social media — social networks, for example — to build relationships with others that, ideally, result in some kind of reaction, interaction, or action.

You may be wondering why you should consider using SME. Maybe you’re satisfied with your current marketing strategies that involve concrete numbers and set dollar amounts. Maybe you’re buying advertising in traditional media such as print, television, or radio and even though you’ve witnessed its declining effectiveness over the years, it’s what you know.

Maybe you’re committed to advertising online with banner ads, skyscraper ads, and interstitial (pop-up) ads. Sure, the number of click-throughs on your ads has declined, but you chalk it up to people being busy with publishing their own content and being too distracted by Facebook and Twitter activity to pay attention the way they used to do.

You might even be concerned about losing control of your content or copyrights. Nobody fully controls information that’s published online. SME acknowledges and encourages not only the consumption of the information you put out there but also lets others interpret, remix (by adding their own ideas), and share it. You can still protect your copyrights and trademarks in social media as you have been doing over the past several years on the Internet. But in SME, you want people to spread your message, and you need to let them do it in their own ways.

Let’s face it: This isn’t your grandparents’ marketing campaign. The world of marketing online as you once knew it has changed drastically since social networks entered the scene, and it’s changing even as you read this chapter.

**Keeping up with changing consumer needs**

Today’s consumers are using the Internet for both personal and professional activities, and they’re savvier than ever about the way companies like yours are trying to reach them. Though they’re inundated and overwhelmed by blatant advertising that tries to pull at their attention, they now tune out most ads, especially the ones that aren’t relevant to them.

**Finding out how your customers use the Internet**

To reach today’s consumers online, you must understand how they use the Internet, which sites they visit online, what they’re looking for, and how they behave. Spend time pinpointing your ideal customer’s online habits. A study in 2012 by Experian shows that more than 91 percent of adults who go online use social networks regularly:
Chapter 1: Explaining the Why, Who, and How of Social Media Engagement


That number is up from 65 percent from earlier in the year, as reported by Pew Internet Research in April 2012:


Your customers and your prospects want you to be available to them whenever they go online. Just as they expect a search engine to give them instant results for information they’re seeking, consumers who go online to search for your company expect that you’ll have not only a website but also a presence on at least one of their favorite social networks.

Add social media icons representing the social networks where your company is present and participating, including links directly to each network so that visitors to your website can connect with you in the way they prefer. In Figure 1-1, you can see that The Gap embeds social media icons in the footer of its website so that they appear on every page.

Figure 1-1: Typical social media icons on a website.

Knowing what customers want from you

Today’s consumer takes their expectations a step further than when they were limited in how they could respond to companies marketing to them: They expect you to

✓ Hear them when they praise you: People willingly post both positive and negative statements publicly about you, your products, services, or company on their favorite social networks. You need to listen.
Part I: The Basics of Social Media Engagement

- **Respond quickly:** If someone comments about a company online, that person expects a response — and may instantly receive responses from their friends, fans, and followers. You want to be part of that conversation.

- **Provide a forum for them:** Calling a 1-800 customer service line is no longer the way consumers want to ask questions, air grievances, or lavish praise on a company. Your presence on a social network can provide customers with a new way to communicate with you. We realize that it may seem intimidating, but they want to communicate with you publicly.

- **Offer communications choices:** Consumers want multiple options for connecting with you. Offer them a variety of options based on their preferences.

In short, the very people whom you're trying to reach — your target market — are expecting you to be present in major social networks and not only to lurk there but also to be ready to interact with them.

**Humanizing your brand in the marketplace**

You may have heard the word _authentic_ tossed around in blog posts, articles, workshops, or lectures as an important aspect of social media engagement. We understand the term to mean _real_, as in genuine, honest, and transparent rather than fake, overly commercial, insincere, or shady. We state it this way: Be human.

“Of course, I’m human,” you say. “And so is my team. We’re _all_ human.” We know that you’re human; however, you need to be human in social networks. Don’t subscribe to a regimented formula, set stringent restrictions, or automate every possible action to avoid investing the time and effort it takes to truly engage — and to be engaging — in social networks with your following.

**Putting faces to names**

Being human in social media engagement starts with people, involves people, and ends with people. No social network functions without people who love to use it connecting with other people through it. For example, the cable television company Charter posts customer service hours on Twitter and shows the people behind the brand. Figure 1-2 shows how Charter features a photograph of its social media specialist (whose Twitter handle is @CharterAbby) as its Twitter icon and a photograph of its customer service team on its Twitter page to come across as friendly and approachable.
Your main goal in SME is to be human, real, and responsive so that people want to connect with you and your company in the same networks where they connect with their family and friends.

**Attracting and engaging people**

You’re entering people’s inner circles when they let you into their content streams. These content streams are the new online spaces where people are paying attention. To stand out to followers and engage them, you need to:

- **Attract their attention.**
  
  News feeds on social networks move quickly, and most people now skim the feeds or reorder them to see only what they want to see from the people they know and like. Use strategic and relevant words and images to get them to notice.

- **Entice them to come to you.**
  
  You want people to click on your links or images to move them away from the main news feed and over to the source — your website, your Facebook Page Wall, or another place that you own where you can provide them with more detailed information.

- **Compel people to take some kind of action.**
  
  After people notice you and click through to the destination of your choice, give them something to do that is measurable — preferably, something that connects them with you for the longer term, such as sign up for your e-newsletter or like your Facebook Page.
Part I: The Basics of Social Media Engagement

✓ Give people a reason to return.
Based on where you’ve directed them, provide incentive for them to come back to you. If they’ve signed up for an e-newsletter, draw them in with your messages or invite them to one of your social networks to continue the conversation.

✓ Convince people to do business with you.
Continue providing value, be responsive, and interactive, and prove that they should stay in touch with your brand. Close the sale, but don’t look at the sale as the end of the road. Converting a fan to a customer is only the beginning of a longer-term relationship.

In the age of information overload online, social media impressions must be even more attractive and more constant and consistent to make a dent in someone’s attention. And it all begins with a human touch and with genuine, human connections made via social networks and other social media tools and platforms.

Strengthening connections with customers
Social media engagement requires you to create meaningful impressions to build awareness, gain trust, and increase customer loyalty. Social media engagement also provides your happy customers with the means to spread the word about how great you are to their friends, fans, and followings — all of whom may be potential customers for you. More than anything, well-executed SME helps you close sales and then keeps the conversations going.

Consumers won’t be engaged if you give them the impression that you care only about sales. They’re interested in having a relationship with the brands they love, not in consuming commercial after commercial. For ongoing engagement, find interesting topics to talk about and share.

When you build your presence in social networks, keep in mind that people aren’t only connecting with you and your brand and its representatives by liking your Facebook Fan Page or following you on Pinterest — they’re also connecting with other people who like your brand.

By way of social networks, people can display their affinities — the things they like — in their feeds or content streams and on their profiles, pages, timelines, and walls. What they like is a reflection of who they are, and it connects them with like-minded people for online interaction. You want people to show how much they like your brand, to display their connection to you, and, in turn, to expose your brand to their online connections. When a person likes a Facebook Page, the action appears in that person’s News Feed, and the Page icons for the brand are displayed on their timeline, as shown in Figure 1-3.
Chapter 1: Explaining the Why, Who, and How of Social Media Engagement

Figure 1-3: Page likes displayed on a Facebook timeline.

Provide people with a place to connect with you via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and other social networks that are appropriate to your brand. Cultivate communities of engaged fans and followers — wherever you’ve built your company’s social media presences that feel welcoming to customers and prospects alike. By making strong and consistent connections with your customers, you’re laying the groundwork for turning customers into evangelists and avid ambassadors for your brand.

Tapping into new markets

Social media engagement includes using online networks and tools for outreach and interactions. The nature of many of the networks you use for engagement provides you with a built-in reach beyond your immediate audience. Some networks have features that amplify your messages and reach better than others.

For example, on Facebook when fans of your Page like, comment on, or share your posts, their friends can see signs of their interaction with your Page. You have the potential to increase your reach exponentially to your fans’ friends. On Twitter, if someone retweets your message, it’s amplified to people beyond your own following. It’s the same principle with Pinterest repins, YouTube thumbs-up votes, and LinkedIn or Google+ shares. Whenever people pass along the information they read, watch, or hear online from you, your content and brand gain more exposure.

One action that’s important to successfully expand your outreach is to publish content worth sharing and to regularly remind your followers that they can share the content you’ve put out there. Even more important to SME is to interact with your immediate audience in meaningful ways so that they’re more attentive, responsive, and willing to share.
Part I: The Basics of Social Media Engagement

Figure 1-4 shows how the stationery company TinyPrints hit the engagement jackpot with a post that received numerous likes, comments, and shares — clear signs that it was well-received and amplified by the company’s fans. This great content — in this case, promoting a bakery with a beautiful image of cupcakes — produces strong connections and a lot of sharing. This type of engagement activity can translate into exposure for your brand and growth of your fan base, including people you might not be able to easily reach directly.

The most popular social networks offer paid advertising options to reach highly targeted audiences. You can reach the right audience based on not only demographics but also their affinities, and in some cases, their connections to your friends, fans, or followers.

**Reaping the rewards of an engaged community**

An engaged community is attentive and responsive. That kind of attention and responsiveness can be leveraged for your business in many different ways:

- **Customer feedback**: Receive immediate input from your customers about their needs to better serve them or to identify business and marketing opportunities.

- **Market research**: Ask your community to answer questions, take polls or surveys, and fill out questionnaires to produce on-the-fly market research that you can apply to your business.
Chapter 1: Explaining the Why, Who, and How of Social Media Engagement

- **Brand evangelism:** Someone who feels connected to your brand often voluntarily talks about you with their friends, fans, and followers.

- **Brand ambassadorship:** Provide exclusive perks and incentives to turn your brand evangelists into ambassadors for your company. A brand ambassador program requires a strategic plan and mutual benefit to work, but it starts with identifying your most engaged fans and followers in your social networks and paying attention to them.

Negativity ignored breeds more negativity. Don’t focus only on the people who say positive things about your brand and ignore the naysayers and critics. Look for opportunities to address unhappy customers and turn around their opinions.

A natural offshoot of SME and an engaged community is social sharing. When you’re interacting with your followers online and you’re publishing content that they in turn share with their connections, your content gets distributed within trusted networks.

People who receive your content from their friends are more likely to welcome it than if you push it out to them unsolicited. Spreading information by way of peers is far less commercial and can be much more intimate than using typical online advertising tactics.

Social engagement is not a “quick hit” or short-term folly. The best SME takes place over an extended period, building slowly, evolving as you go (to adapt to the responses from your online community and throughout), and helping achieve mutually beneficial goals.

**Seeing How People and Organizations Engage with Social Media**

Many people are involved in the exchanges that make up social media engagement. Every person goes online with different needs and different expectations. Knowing what motivates people as they use the Internet helps you better engage with them. Pinpointing your own motivations for being online and using SME to reach customers and prospects is also vital.

Not all roles in SME are set in stone. Both people and entities have presences online and in social networks and all of them contribute to the engagement process in different ways.
Part I: The Basics of Social Media Engagement

**Individual consumers**

In today’s social web, individuals have more power than ever. Consumers are increasingly aware of the power they hold: A person with a blog can review products, build awareness of a brand, and drive sales. Someone can share their opinions about a brand on their favorite social networks and their thoughts can spread exponentially.

New consumers expect more from you and your company, particularly if they’re your customer or a prospect. An individual in the mix of SME is looking for these qualities:

- **Respect:** Every person responds well to a respectful approach. A simple thank-you is a good place to start.
- **Response:** Someone who asks a question expects to receive an answer.
- **Rewards:** Though everyone has a different concept of rewards or perks, people like to feel appreciated.

If you’re worried that you’re at the mercy of individuals who can potentially make or break your company by publishing their opinions online, don’t panic: Understanding how people online act and react is a lesson in human psychology. Your own actions toward engaging others online should be thoughtful and positive to generate positive results. Throughout the book, we address all of these issues further.

**Online communities**

Online community is the collective, a virtual place, and the groups of people who fuel social media engagement. Your SME efforts cannot happen in a vacuum. The activities of SME happen within online communities, even communities composed of only two people, such as you and someone else.

Social media platforms and tools convert an individual person into a network of people, interconnected as friends, fans, followers, or other types of connections. Social networks link people to others whom they know personally, but just as often to people they don’t know. The connection between individuals in social networks may be another person or even a shared interest. Brought together, they form a community.

To move from broadcasting or publishing online into SME, someone else must be “present” to

- **React:** Reaction differs from network to network and can include superficial responses such as liking or favoriting or clicking the thumbs-up icon. This requires the least amount of effort.
Interact: Interaction, which takes a little more effort than reaction, shows a certain degree of commitment such as repinning, retweeting, or commenting.

Act: Action requires a higher level of effort from a fan than reaction or interaction. Action can mean having the confidence to share your content with others or providing detailed responses to your questions, furnishing contact and personal identifying information, or closing a transaction of some kind including a sale.

Without reaction, interaction, or action in response to what you “broadcast,” you don’t have social media engagement.

Online communities have been around as long as online tools have helped people congregate and communicate among themselves. Understanding the dynamics of online communities is critical to successful SME.

Your business

Any interaction has by definition more than one participant. In social media engagement, your company or organization can be one of the participants. “But a company isn’t a person,” you might say. True. Therefore, your challenge is to make your company — a corporate entity or the brand that represents it — more human and to understand some basic rules of engagement, both implicit and explicit.

To foster relationships by way of social media — even if you’re engaging via your business identity or brand — keep these principles in mind:

People want to connect with people. You’re putting your company or organization on social networks; however, you and other company representatives need to be there interacting, person to person.

Your brand needs a clear voice. Appropriate and effective communications online starts with basic branding guidelines to ensure that the way you participate in online conversations is consistent and in keeping with your brand personality. A clear brand voice is especially important when multiple people or third-party consultants or agencies are managing your social presences.

You need your own rules of engagement. Every organization using SME needs both a set of internal guidelines and policies and external community guidelines that spell out which content is allowed and not allowed in the social networks you use.

You need a plan. For quality interactions, develop a game plan for whom you will engage, where you will reach them, and what you will do regularly, also considering what you want your followers to do. Use tools such as a social media calendar to schedule messaging in advance that dovetails with your overall goals. (See Chapter 5 for how to develop a social media calendar.)
Part I: The Basics of Social Media Engagement

Publish social content that encourages social sharing. Think of the material you post online as the beginning of conversation, not simply content that you broadcast for others to passively consume.

To effectively draw the reactions, interactions, and actions that make SME work for you, get people talking — to you and to each other.

Survey your friends, fans, and followers online to understand why they connect with you, to determine what topics interest them, and to see what they expect to hear from you. Look for the intersections between what you need and what they need and focus on common areas for better engagement.

Your employees

Even if you’re the only person engaging via social media for your company, anticipate that employees or team members or assistants or even agencies will, at some point, complete these tasks on your behalf. Spell out your ground rules for online engagement now rather than wait until you need to hand off the duties to someone else.

Your company’s internal guidelines for social media engagement will often look similar to the public guidelines you post for your online community to follow. That’s because the basic tenets of good community behavior work well regardless of the participants or environment.

This list describes some issues to address to cover the way your employees handle SME for your company:

- **Frequency of participation:** Even if you already have a posting schedule, you need guidelines to specify how online communities and conversations should be integrated into people’s day-to-day work.

- **Approved content:** Let your social media editorial calendar (see Chapter 5) be your internal guide for developing and publishing approved content.

- **Tone of conversations:** Your brand guidelines inform your messaging map (detailed in Chapter 5) to provide more than the visual elements of your logo — they also guide the personality, tone, and voice of your brand in social media, down to the key words and phrases to use online and the types of content to post, depending on who you’re targeting.

- **Response style:** Every social network and online communications tool has platform-specific ways to respond and interact. Spell out the way your team needs to respond, such as when to like people’s comments on Facebook or how to respond to a retweet on Twitter.

- **Chain of command:** Establish a clearly defined system to determine who’s in charge. If your organization has different team members,
specify who is an employee’s direct supervisor and which activities or actions need to be approved or considered by a manager.

Policing process: Outline steps for removing inappropriate content or comments online, and spell out who has the power to delete material. Many social networks do not provide different levels of administrative access, so your rules and guidelines will dictate roles, responsibilities, and permissions.

To a certain degree, allow employees to use their best judgment when interacting online. As long as everyone is aligned in terms of values, tone, and overall goals, your team should be able to respond and act as needed, especially if you — or their supervisors — aren’t available to respond promptly. Delays in responding can create a negative situation in social networks. Attentiveness and responsiveness can help avoid potential problems.

Address the likelihood that your employees use social media in their personal lives. Add to the employee handbook specific rules for content that your company allows and doesn’t allow for at-will employees about their behavior in social networks on their own time and within their own, “private” online networks.

We say “private” because nothing that’s posted online is truly private. Even the most locked-down Facebook or Twitter account or e-mail message can produce fodder that’s distributed across the Internet. After material is released from a secure computer onto the Internet, the reality is that it can potentially be revealed to the online world.

You aren’t immune to the dangers of careless online communications and inappropriate exchanges in social media. One mistake can snowball into an avalanche of trouble for your company. Watch what you say and publish online, and be a role model to your employees in terms of appropriate online behavior.

Setting Goals for Social Media Engagement

Social media engagement is an essential part of social media marketing — it’s the way you share content online in social networks and the way others respond to that content. SME consists of several parts, like pieces in a puzzle:

- **Audience:** The people you want to reach and engage
- **Content:** The type of information you put out there
- **Reaction, interaction, and action:** The ways people can respond to you
- **Outcomes and measurement:** The results of engagement
SME is the “stuff that happens” during your social media marketing campaigns, but also the way you do things to make that stuff happen. We’ve identified five goals of social media engagement. All these goals involve interactions with people, as we discuss in the following sections.

**Building trust and credibility**

Online, as in life, you can build better relationships and have more positive outcomes in communications if the people who are communicating trust each other. Trust in the offline world is built over time, and trust in social media engagement is no different.

The need for transparency in SME is huge. More people have greater access to information about anyone and any company because of the Internet. Material that you previously could hide behind your company firewall can now become fodder in social networks in the blink of an eye. Even trusted brands risk tarnishing their reputations with missteps in how they communicate and engage online as much as in how they behave offline.

Both trust and credibility are built on consistency and on follow-through, as we discuss in Chapter 4. Do what you say you’re going to do. If you ask for feedback, address head-on whatever you hear. If you “overhear” somebody complaining about your company publicly on a social network, be attentive and responsive. Sincerity and the human touch go a long way toward building trust and credibility and toward laying the foundation for your efforts in SME.

**Being present with a human touch**

Technology tools exist to automate many tasks, but still no substitute exists for actual human interaction. Even the best artificial intelligence software cannot fully replicate human sentiment, emotion, and sensitivity. Many aspects of social media engagement can be automated, but without the human element — the personality, emotions, reactions, and responses — engagement can fall flat or even utterly fail.

As we mention in Chapter 5, a major challenge of being present online is time. You may feel that you don’t have enough time to add engagement via social media to your lengthy to-do list. If you want to turn prospects into customers, build strong and lasting relationships with customers, and convert happy customers into avid evangelists, you — and your team, employees, or representatives — need to personally engage regularly.

Use canned messaging and automated responses sparingly to supplement, not dominate, your presence in social networks. You cannot expect others to be present and to engage with you online if you aren’t there as well.
Chapter 1: Explaining the Why, Who, and How of Social Media Engagement

Creating connections

You want more friends, fans, and followers in your social networks, but don’t think that amassing sheer numbers gets you closer to achieving your business goals. Bigger numbers may look attractive on the surface, but if the wrong people help you accumulate them — individuals who aren’t in your target demographic and who aren’t interested in what you have to say — those “connections” are empty and meaningless.

For SME to be successful, you need to be connected with more of the right people — the individuals who willingly align themselves with your brand, who pay attention when you share content online, and who gladly pass along the content you’ve shared. To attract the right people, start by creating an online presence that reflects your brand and that is focused, attractive, interactive, and intrinsically valuable to the audience with whom you want to connect.

As you begin your outreach to gain friends, fans, and followers, follow the people whom you want to follow you. To boost your outreach, leverage the highly targeted advertising options on the most popular social networks to hone in on the right audience to build your fan base.

Social media engagement works best when you respect your connections and understand that their time and attention are valuable — and often stretched to the limits. Your connections in social media are only as strong as the effort you invest in obtaining and cultivating them over time. Without strong and attentive connections, you can’t have real or lasting engagement. For more on the importance of connections, see Chapter 6.

Sparking conversations

We may use the terms broadcasting or publishing or even sharing to describe sending information by e-mail, via the web and social networks, or by using mobile devices. When you’re participating in social media engagement, though, you’re conversing. Everything you post online should be thought of as the beginning of a conversation.

If you want to engage with others via SME, you have to be willing — and able — to be part of the conversation. Your engagement efforts begin, as always, with your business goals, who you’re trying to reach, and what you’re trying to get them to do. But then your challenge becomes converting your key messages into meaningful conversation starters and maintaining conversations to foster relationships with your connections.

A great way to start a conversation is by telling a story. Storytelling in SME is a powerful tool — you can do it by using words, images, audio, and video. Tell stories that are compelling enough for others to want to pass them along.
Conversations are happening online *all* the time. Some of these conversations involve your brand — whether or not you’re part of them. Listen more to what is being said about you, and find appropriate ways to be a part of those conversations.

You can’t control all the conversations happening around your brand, but you can engage people who are talking about you outside of your networks, address their comments or concerns, and invite them to continue the conversation in more direct ways including e-mail, website forums, social networks, and even by phone or in person if it makes sense.

Turn to Chapter 7 to see how to start and manage conversations in social media.

**Driving interaction**

The activity that goes hand in hand with sparking a conversation happens during the conversation and after it ends. You have business goals — we get that. You want people to take action, whether it’s to click on your web ad banner, sign up for a prize or content, contact you, or make a purchase. All these actions require deliberate effort — they don’t happen automatically. Any telephone salesperson who initiates cold calls can tell you that hang-ups and rejections are much more common than actual sales.

Social media engagement is both the warm-up and the marathon. Attracting more than a passing glance online and making a deliberate action to connect — to like or favorite your content — is only the first step in driving interaction. That one-time action of clicking the Like button doesn’t help you reach your goals.

Turn those quick-and-easy liking and favoriting actions into greater commitments of time and trust — into comments and shares. You accomplish this task by executing a well-planned approach to content development and publishing, thoughtful outreach, consistent presence, meaningful conversation, and subtle and not-so-subtle encouragement. Give people a reason to continually interact with you. Understand what motivates your audience to interact. Social engagement starts with you, but interactions aren’t only about you. (We dig into this topic in detail in Chapter 7.)
Introduction

You’ve probably heard that “business as usual” is no more. The way that people communicate, market, and sell has changed dramatically since the advent of social media marketing. We’re here to tell you that even though the tools are new and different — and seem to change regularly — you can definitely find out how to master them.

Every step of the way, we coauthors emphasize the best practices of online marketing, customer service, and genuine human communication. As a business owner, you benefit from knowing not only how Internet tools work but also how people use them and how you can leverage them to better reach the customers and prospects who matter the most to you and your business.

About This Book

Social Media Engagement For Dummies starts by shedding light on the fundamental principles of social media engagement — the ingredients that put the social in social media marketing. Effective social media engagement (or SME, as we often refer to it throughout this book) should provide tangible and measurable results for your business and boost your bottom line.

By mastering the techniques in this book, you strengthen your connections with potential customers. But don’t stop there: Convert potential customers to actual customers, and then use SME tactics to turn customers into active and passionate evangelists for your company.

This book is a practical, hands-on guide to social media engagement, and we speak from experience. We don’t only consult and teach others to engage well via social media — we also benefit daily as business owners ourselves, by avidly using social networks and social media tools and platforms. We use these tools to communicate our messages to our respective audiences and to connect with the people who read, listen to, and watch what we publish online.

We build relationships with our audiences and truly care about them. In turn, we are humbled to see that our audiences trust us and respond positively to what we say and do online. We are confident that you, too, can benefit from social media engagement.
Here are some of the things you can do with the information in this book:

- Understand and apply the elements of social media engagement.
- Find out how to plan ahead for engagement.
- Determine which social media tools are right for you.
- Effectively incorporate engagement into your social media campaigns.
- Measure your social media engagement efforts.

*Social Media Engagement For Dummies* isn’t meant to sound technical or geeky. We take a down-to-earth approach to the technology and provide a lot of explanations and examples so that you can immediately incorporate SME strategies and tactics into your online marketing efforts. We’re results-oriented, and we know you are, too.

**Foolish Assumptions**

We do our best to be clear and detailed in our explanations of suggested tools and tactics. We assume, however, that you have a basic understanding of several ingredients:

- You have more than entry-level knowledge of the Internet.
- You have a website and you know what a blog is, even if you don’t personally blog.
- You’re aware of, and familiar with, some of the most popular social networks.
- You have at least one social networking account for your business.
- You’re engaging in forms of online marketing and even social media marketing, and you’re looking to increase the effectiveness of those efforts.
- You know that your participation is the key to successful social media engagement.
- More than anything, you value your customers — you want to bring more customers to your business, and you want to turn all your customers into enthusiasts.
Conventions Used in This Book

To be consistent, we use these common For Dummies conventions:

- The first time we use a new term, we define it and italicize it.
- When we tell you to type something (in a box or a field, for example), we put it in bold.
- When we mention a website, a network, a platform, or an online application, we provide the URL for your convenience.
- When we provide a URL, it looks like this: www.dummies.com.

What You Don’t Have to Read

You don’t have to read this book sequentially, and you don’t even have to read all its sections in any particular chapter. You can skip sidebars and read only the material that helps you complete the task at hand, or you can start by reading only the sidebars, to access information that you can apply immediately to your social media engagement efforts.

How This Book Is Organized

Social Media Engagement For Dummies is split into six parts. Think of the earlier parts of the book as introductions to theories, concepts, and tools; think of the latter parts as plans for turning concepts into actions. In this section, we briefly describe what you’ll find in each part.

Part I: The Basics of Social Media Engagement

We start this book with an overview of social media engagement, from understanding the concepts to using the tools. Part I begins by justifying your investment in social media engagement and explaining the concepts. We explain measurement and the value of engaging, and we introduce a variety of online tools for implementing social media engagement tactics.
Part II: Exploring the Elements of Social Media Engagement

Moving beyond the basics, Part II delves more deeply into the concepts of social media engagement, including building trust and credibility, creating connections, and understanding the importance of being present in social networking. We explain how to start, and participate in, online conversations and drive interactions that help you achieve your business goals.

Part III: Examining the Basic Engagement Tools

In Part III, we review online communications tools that you may already use and others that you may not be using yet. We outline how to use these tools — from the more traditional e-mail, forums, blogs, and websites to Facebook and Twitter — specifically for social media engagement.

Part IV: Engaging Through Additional Social Channels

We don’t stop with the popular social networks covered in Part III; in Part IV, we look at a few up-and-coming networks that are changing the way people engage online. We break down the ways that Pinterest, LinkedIn, Google+, and location-based networks (such as Foursquare and Instagram) provide opportunities for engagement in more ways that drive results.

Part V: Leveraging Audio and Video for Engagement

We’d be remiss not to mention multimedia options for social media engagement. In Part V, we cover ways to use audio and video to capture your audience’s attention and encourage interactions. We cap this part with a close look at YouTube features that facilitate engagement.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

In typical For Dummies fashion, this book includes The Part of Tens to give you quick-reference guides to social media engagement. First, we fill you in
on common social media engagement mistakes that you definitely want to avoid. We finish this part with the stories of ten businesses that use social media engagement tactics successfully.

**Icons Used in This Book**

What’s a *For Dummies* book without icons to point you to helpful information that’s sure to help you along your way? In this section, we briefly describe each icon we use in this book.

- **The Tip icon** points out helpful information that’s likely to make your job easier.

- This icon marks an interesting, useful fact that you may want to remember for later use.

- **The Warning icon** highlights pitfalls you should avoid. With this icon, we’re telling you to pay attention and proceed with caution.

- **When you see this icon,** you know that there’s technical information nearby. If you’re not feeling technically minded, you can skip it.

**Where to Go from Here**

Like any *For Dummies* book, this one is written to ensure that you can dive into any section at any time and find useful information. Parts I and II offer an introduction to theories, concepts, and tools; Parts III, IV, and V lay out distinct road maps for turning concepts into actions. Don’t hesitate to skip around this book and refer to it often as a step-by-step guide to completing a task or simply as a refresher. Use the table of contents to find the chapters that can serve you immediately, such as a specific social network, or check the index to key in on a particular concept or task.

Occasionally, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., has updates to its technology books. If this book has technical updates, they’ll be posted at www.dummies.com/go/socialmediaengagementfdupdates.
# Contents at a Glance

**Introduction** ................................................................. 1

**Part I: The Basics of Social Media Engagement** .......... 7

Chapter 1: Explaining the Why, Who, and How of Social Media Engagement ....... 9
Chapter 2: Assessing the Impact of Social Media Engagement.............................. 25
Chapter 3: Discovering Social Media Engagement Tools ................................... 43

**Part II: Exploring the Elements of Social Media Engagement** ........ 65

Chapter 4: Building Trust and Credibility .............................................................. 67
Chapter 5: Demonstrating Your Online Presence to Maximize Engagement ......... 85
Chapter 6: Creating Connections ........................................................................ 105
Chapter 7: Driving Interaction ............................................................................. 121

**Part III: Examining the Basic Engagement Tools** ........ 137

Chapter 8: E-mail, Forums, Blogs, and Websites ................................................. 139
Chapter 9: Facebook ............................................................................................. 157
Chapter 10: Twitter ............................................................................................... 183

**Part IV: Engaging Through Additional Social Channels** ........ 209

Chapter 11: Pinterest ............................................................................................ 211
Chapter 12: LinkedIn ........................................................................................... 241
Chapter 13: Google+ ............................................................................................ 263
Chapter 14: Location-Based Services ................................................................. 281

**Part V: Leveraging Audio and Video for Engagement** ....... 301

Chapter 15: Audio and Videocasting ................................................................ 303
Chapter 16: YouTube ........................................................................................... 317

**Part VI: The Part of Tens** .................................................... 335

Chapter 17: Ten Social Media Engagement Mistakes to Avoid ....................... 337
Chapter 18: Ten Businesses That Excel at Social Media Engagement ............. 343

**Index** ................................................................................. 353
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** ................................................................. 1  
- About This Book ............................................................................ 1  
- Foolish Assumptions ........................................................................ 2  
- Conventions Used in This Book ........................................................ 3  
- What You Don’t Have to Read .......................................................... 3  
- How This Book Is Organized ............................................................. 3  
  - Part I: The Basics of Social Media Engagement ............................. 3  
  - Part II: Exploring the Elements of Social Media Engagement ....... 4  
  - Part III: Examining the Basic Engagement Tools ......................... 4  
  - Part IV: Engaging Through Additional Channels ....................... 4  
  - Part V: Leveraging Audio and Video for Engagement ............... 4  
  - Part VI: The Part of Tens ............................................................... 4  
- Icons Used in This Book ................................................................. 5  
- Where to Go from Here .................................................................... 5  

**Part I: The Basics of Social Media Engagement** .......... 7  

**Chapter 1: Explaining the Why, Who, and How of Social Media Engagement** .................... 9  
- Seeking the Benefits of Social Media Engagement .............................. 9  
  - Keeping up with changing consumer needs .................................. 10  
  - Humanizing your brand in the marketplace .................................. 12  
  - Strengthening connections with customers .................................... 14  
  - Tapping into new markets ............................................................... 15  
  - Reaping the rewards of an engaged community ............................ 16  
- Seeing How People and Organizations Engage with Social Media .... 17  
  - Individual consumers .................................................................... 18  
  - Online communities ........................................................................ 18  
  - Your business .................................................................................. 19  
  - Your employees ............................................................................... 20  
- Setting Goals for Social Media Engagement .................................... 21  
  - Building trust and credibility .......................................................... 22  
  - Being present with a human touch ............................................... 22  
  - Creating connections ...................................................................... 23  
  - Sparking conversations ................................................................. 23  
  - Driving interaction .......................................................................... 24
Social Media Engagement For Dummies

Chapter 2: Assessing the Impact of Social Media Engagement 

Considering the Downsides of Social Media Engagement ........................................ 25
Managing the “time suck” ........................................................................................... 26
Overcoming the barriers to entry ............................................................................ 27
Surviving information overload .................................................................................. 28
Dealing with potential backlash ................................................................................ 31
Avoiding inconsistent messaging .............................................................................. 33
Measuring the Value of Your Social Media Engagement ......................................... 35
Determining what interactions are valuable ............................................................. 35
Knowing which numbers to measure ....................................................................... 36
Setting benchmarks to evaluate progress ............................................................... 38
Reassessing to improve engagement ....................................................................... 39
Leveraging success .................................................................................................... 41

Chapter 3: Discovering Social Media Engagement Tools 

Considering Traditional Online Communications Tools ......................................... 43
E-mail ......................................................................................................................... 44
Online forums (groups) ............................................................................................. 46
Websites and blogs ..................................................................................................... 48
Engaging with Social Networks .................................................................................. 50
Facebook .................................................................................................................. 51
Twitter ....................................................................................................................... 53
Pinterest ..................................................................................................................... 54
LinkedIn ..................................................................................................................... 56
Google+ ..................................................................................................................... 58
Incorporating Audio and Video Platforms ................................................................ 59
Audiocasting or podcasting ...................................................................................... 60
Videocasting or video podcasts ................................................................................. 61
YouTube .................................................................................................................... 61
Recognizing Other Social Engagement Tools .......................................................... 63
Mobile applications .................................................................................................... 63
Location-based services ............................................................................................. 64

Part II: Exploring the Elements of Social Media Engagement

Chapter 4: Building Trust and Credibility .............................................................. 67
Earning Trust in Social Media .................................................................................... 67
Making your message clear ....................................................................................... 67
Giving your team clear guidelines ............................................................................ 68
Interacting authentically ......................................................................................... 68
Finding your brand’s voice ...................................................................................... 70
Table of Contents

Contributing meaningfully to the conversation ...................................................... 70
Listening carefully to your community .................................................................. 74
Responding promptly for greater impact ................................................................. 76
Giving the audience what they want ..................................................................... 76
Building Trust in Traditional Online Marketing .................................................. 78
Engaging appropriately with the media ................................................................. 78
Adding engagement to press releases .................................................................... 79
Soliciting third-party endorsements the right way ................................................. 80
Assessing Trust and Credibility ............................................................................ 81
Analyzing sentiment and impact ......................................................................... 81
Measuring the amplification of your messages ....................................................... 83

Chapter 5: Demonstrating Your Online Presence to Maximize Engagement ........85

Setting Realistic Goals Up Front .......................................................................... 85
Assessing your capacity ......................................................................................... 86
Evaluating the competition ..................................................................................... 87
Paying Attention to Demonstrate Presence ............................................................ 88
Being notified when you need to engage ................................................................. 88
Responding to comments and following up ........................................................... 91
Establishing a Presence Process ............................................................................ 92
Creating a messaging map ...................................................................................... 93
Developing a social media editorial calendar ......................................................... 97
Setting a Schedule .................................................................................................. 100
Determining how frequently to update .................................................................... 101
Figuring out the best times to engage ................................................................... 102
Deciding when to interact ....................................................................................... 104

Chapter 6: Creating Connections ........................................................................105

Starting with Your Connection Goals .................................................................... 105
Setting short-term goals ......................................................................................... 106
Establishing longer-term goals .............................................................................. 108
Identifying Your Audience ..................................................................................... 109
Determining who you’re trying to reach ................................................................. 109
Finding your audience online ................................................................................. 109
Figuring out what your audience does online ....................................................... 110
Creating a Space for Engagement ......................................................................... 112
Setting ground rules for participation .................................................................... 112
Offering a forum for opinions ................................................................................. 112
Showcasing what others know and do ................................................................... 113
Getting the Engagement Ball Rolling ................................................................... 114
Asking for action ..................................................................................................... 115
Offering rewards for action .................................................................................... 116
Handling negative feedback ................................................................................... 117
Chapter 7: Driving Interaction ................................................. 121
  Creating the Setting to Stimulate Engagement ......................... 122
  Moving past the what's-in-it-for-me? mentality ...................... 122
  Building a space where people feel comfortable ..................... 123
  Inspiring others to pay attention and care ............................ 124
  Starting Conversations ......................................................... 125
  Tapping in to trending topics ................................................. 126
  Lighting a fire with hot-button issues ................................... 126
  Turning to humor ................................................................. 128
  Building engagement by way of inspiration ........................... 130
  Providing Additional Incentives for Sharing ......................... 132
  Offering freebies and discounts .......................................... 133
  Holding contests and sweepstakes ....................................... 133
  Aligning your company with a cause .................................. 135

Part III: Examining the Basic Engagement Tools .......... 137

Chapter 8: E-mail, Forums, Blogs, and Websites .................. 139
  Creating Social-Powered E-mail Newsletters ......................... 139
  Choosing an e-mail marketing tool ...................................... 140
  Putting out the word ......................................................... 142
  Prompting subscribers to become fans ................................ 142
  Driving more than clicks .................................................... 144
  Participating in Online Communities .................................... 145
  Forming and growing an online community ......................... 146
  Identifying the people you want to reach ............................. 147
  Crafting appropriate messages ............................................ 148
  Entering conversations effectively ...................................... 149
  Forming Your Own Groups and Forums ............................... 151
  Evaluating the benefits of a custom group ........................... 151
  Choosing a group management tool .................................... 152
  Building groups in social networks .................................... 153
  Enhancing Blogs and Websites for Engagement ................... 154
  Facilitating sharing with social network widgets .................. 154
  Expanding commenting with apps ..................................... 155

Chapter 9: Facebook ............................................................ 157
  Building Deeper Relationships on Facebook ........................ 158
  Growing Your Page Community .......................................... 159
  Increasing follower loyalty .................................................. 160
  Promoting your business page with your personal Timeline .... 164
  Standing Out in the News Feed ............................................ 165
  Navigating EdgeRank ......................................................... 166
  Crafting engaging posts ...................................................... 166
  Adding visual elements to draw instant attention ................... 169
  Reaching out to other pages .............................................. 170
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 10: Twitter</th>
<th>183</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in Real-Time via Twitter</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding how individuals, brands, and small businesses use Twitter</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conveying who you are on Twitter</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devising a plan to keep up with fast-moving conversations</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring Twitter engagement</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making an Impact in the Twitter Stream</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafting attention-grabbing tweets</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leveraging links to get results</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retweeting and @mentioning others</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being “present” even when you’re not</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing Engagement via Twitter Features</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving kudos using Favorites</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building connections via lists and columns</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting personal with a direct message (DM)</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attracting more followers with widgets and buttons</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding Twitter to Facebook (and vice versa)</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing Twitter on the go</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Part IV: Engaging Through Additional Social Channels    | 209 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 11: Pinterest</th>
<th>211</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating Connections by Incorporating Visual Elements</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing your business account</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting up the right boards for your brand</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinning to clearly convey your messages</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting using pins, repins, likes, and comments</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantifying the value of Pinterest</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Noticed In People’s Pin Feeds</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking and pinning winning images</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honing your repinning strategy</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing how often and how much to pin</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leveraging Pinterest Features to Increase Engagement ......................... 228
Adding hashtags to attract attention .............................................. 228
Getting noticed by tagging others .................................................. 229
Running a contest to increase interactions .................................... 230
Inviting participants to group boards .......................................... 232
Benefitting from Pinterest Integration ...................................................... 233
Inspiring others to pin your images ................................................ 233
Linking Pinterest to Twitter .............................................................. 235
Integrating Pinterest into Facebook Timelines .............................. 237
Integrating Pinterest into Facebook Pages ..................................... 238

Chapter 12: LinkedIn ................................................................. 241
Setting Up Your LinkedIn Profile ................................................... 241
Creating a new public profile ....................................................... 242
Editing and enhancing your profile ............................................. 244
Reaching Out and Connecting with Your Peers ................................ 245
Engaging in reciprocal interactions ............................................. 246
Joining LinkedIn Groups ............................................................... 247
Communicating through Your Company Page ................................ 249
Creating a Company Page ............................................................. 250
Making the most of your Company Page ...................................... 251
Stimulating Interactions through Updates .................................... 251
Posting compelling content ......................................................... 253
Interacting with others in the feed .............................................. 254
Taking Advantage of More LinkedIn Features ............................. 254
Giving and receiving recommendations ....................................... 255
Providing endorsements ............................................................. 257
Forming and managing a LinkedIn Group ...................................... 258
Gauging LinkedIn Results ............................................................ 259
Tracking interactions ................................................................. 259
Analyzing engagement ............................................................... 260
Checking the business benefits ................................................. 260
Using analytics tools ................................................................. 261

Chapter 13: Google+ ............................................................... 263
Checking Out the Benefits of Google+............................................. 263
Getting Your Feet Wet on Google+ ................................................. 264
Building your personal profile .................................................... 265
Setting up a Google+ business page ......................................... 266
Setting up an effective page .................................................. 267
Getting into the Flow of G+ .......................................................... 269
Leveraging long-form publishing ............................................. 269
Posting multimedia ................................................................. 270
Interacting in the stream ........................................................... 271
Building your page audience ................................................... 273
# Table of Contents

Expanding Your Google+ Engagement ...................................................... 274  
  Circling your connections ................................................................. 274  
  Connecting with groups in Hangouts ............................................... 275  
  Leveraging the power of +1 .............................................................. 278  
  Collaborating in Google+ communities ........................................... 279

**Chapter 14: Location-Based Services ........................................... 281**

  Bridging the Real and Online Worlds with LBS ........................................ 281  
  Choosing an LBS (or two) ................................................................. 282  
  Setting up an LBS account ................................................................. 283  
  Making Connections with LBS ............................................................ 284  
  Checking in to locations to engage others ...................................... 285  
  Discovering others nearby ............................................................. 286  
  Tying images to places through geotagging .................................... 286  
  Using LBS for Promotions ............................................................... 287  
  Doing business with Foursquare ..................................................... 288  
  Tapping into the power of Instagram .............................................. 289  
  Linking LBS for integrated posts .................................................. 291  
  Offering deals driven by check-ins .................................................. 292  
  Adding Mobile to Your Engagement Mix ........................................... 293  
  Reaching customers through SMS marketing ................................ 294  
  Using QR codes for location-based marketing ................................ 295  
  Geolocating and geotagging .......................................................... 297  
  Creating hybrid online/offline engagement .................................... 298

**Part V: Leveraging Audio and Video for Engagement ... 301**

**Chapter 15: Audio and Videocasting .............................................. 303**

  Enhancing Your Marketing with Audio ............................................. 303  
  Using podcasts to build an audience .............................................. 305  
  Publishing audio from a mobile device ........................................... 308  
  Adding audio to your social network ............................................. 309  
  Offering Teleseminars and Webinars ............................................. 310  
  Seeing the benefits of webinars and teleseminars ............................ 310  
  Choosing between webinars and teleseminars ................................ 311  
  Selecting the right tool ................................................................. 312  
  Getting More out of Multimedia ..................................................... 313  
  Conferencing with video ............................................................... 313  
  Engaging with live streaming video .............................................. 315  
  Showing on the go: Mobile video ................................................... 316
Chapter 16: YouTube ............................................................................. 317
  Using Video to Build Community .......................................................... 317
  Capturing your audience’s attention ....................................................... 318
  Optimizing your YouTube Channel ......................................................... 320
  Creating a playlist ..................................................................................... 322
  Maximizing your subscriber base ............................................................. 323
  Interacting with the YouTube community ................................................. 323
  Standing Out on YouTube ........................................................................ 325
  producing video content that keeps people watching .......................... 325
  Mastering metadata .................................................................................. 326
  Using annotations and thumbnails.......................................................... 329
  Extending Your Reach with Video ............................................................ 330
  Embedding and integrating your videos ............................................... 331
  Taking advantage of video responses ..................................................... 332
  Uploading video on the go ....................................................................... 333
  Analyzing your impact ............................................................................ 333

Part VI: The Part of Tens ........................................................................ 335

Chapter 17: Ten Social Media Engagement Mistakes to Avoid . . . 337
  Flying by the Seat of Your Pants ............................................................. 337
  Using Too Much Automation ................................................................. 338
  Broadcasting or Sharing Only Your Content ......................................... 338
  Being Inconsistent ................................................................................... 339
  Lacking Personality .................................................................................. 339
  Ignoring Feedback .................................................................................... 339
  Assuming That Social Media Is Easy ....................................................... 340
  Spamming ................................................................................................. 340
  Posting the Same Content Everywhere ................................................. 341
  Repeating Mistakes .................................................................................. 341

Chapter 18: Ten Businesses That Excel at Social Media Engagement . . . 343
  Wine Sisterhood ......................................................................................... 343
  Mabel’s Labels .......................................................................................... 344
  Girls Crochet Headbands ....................................................................... 345
  Ramon DeLeon, Marketing Mind behind 6-Store Domino’s Pizza Franchise, Chicago .......................................................... 346
  Cabot Creamery Cooperative ................................................................. 347
  Nylabone ................................................................................................. 348
  MomBiz .................................................................................................... 349
  Blendtec .................................................................................................. 350
  Chobani ................................................................................................... 351
  AJ Bombers ............................................................................................. 352

Index ........................................................................................................... 353