

How to tell if your business needs social media



By [Catherine Milward-Bridges](#)

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This is Part 1 of a two-part "How To" series on social media.

Surprised that this is even a topic for discussion? Don't be. Many are still debating the relevance of social media as an integral part of business in SA. In fact, a 2012 Worldwide Worx study found that only 15% of SA businesses view their social media skills as optimal.

Whether you're a laundromat owner, property developer or marketer, you need social media to amplify your brand voice.



The landscape is changing - fast. It's gone from social media being a good idea, to it being the lifejacket for brand relevance.

Every modern day business needs a trustworthy digital footprint that (in turn) needs hands-on nurturing, through an agile strategy, as well as savvy.

Maybe your business hasn't yet accepted social media into its marketing mix; or it has, but needs help 'getting it right'.

If these describe your view of social media, then it's time to consider getting guidance:

1. My business has survived for so long without social media, why waste resources on it now?

Agility and innovation are what set thriving modern day businesses apart from their struggling counterparts.

Gone are the days when the survival of your business hinged solely on word-of-mouth advertising, supplemented by the odd 'cold call'. Equally, the "I've always done it this way" approach is a sure-fire way to obscurity in this fast-changing business landscape. It'll be a matter of time before your business dissolves quietly into obscurity.

The trick with social media is to cleverly blend a back-to-basics approach with selected modern day practices - always checking that whatever you do ties in with your overall plan.

2. As long as I have a social media account, I'm okay

If you reckon a 'spray and pray' approach is the better alternative to not having a social media account at all, think again. So what if you go for weeks/months without using or checking the social platforms you're registered on? Right? Wrong.

This stance could greatly damage your brand, and compromise its relevance.

Social media activity for businesses has gone beyond being a mere option. Therefore, it's critical that your social media activities are aligned with your business strategy and needs. Find the link between social media and your business - this is critical.

3. Strategy is overrated - social media is merely for social interaction

Demonstrating clear direction through your social media activities will showcase you and your business as a source of



guidance and knowledge, to those who matter most. I like to call this 'finding your lane'.



There's a myriad of social media platforms available, and usually only a few will resonate with a business' needs and targets. Identifying your platform(s) will save you a lot of time and money. It'll also make it easier to then attract the right followers - ones that are most likely to turn into real leads.

4. Adopting social media will require content creation and I simply don't have the time

Research shows that many prospective clients will look at your social media activities before deciding whether or not to do business with you.

It's the thought leaders and influencers who get noticed on social media. They're the ones who get followed, recommended and ultimately commissioned.

The best way to achieve this status is to create content that is useful to social media users.

The content that your business shares needs to be interesting, show savvy and be free of blatant promotion of your services. If writing is not your forté, invest in someone who can create engaging content for you.



5. I'll only invest in something that will yield returns - social media isn't one of them

The modern day business relies heavily on sound reputation management.

Social media is the best place a business can either enhance or annihilate its reputation. You could do this by:

- saying nothing
- saying the right things; or
- promptly fixing whatever blooper you may have made online - many big brands have survived this.

With the following in place, you'll soon reap the (tangible and intangible) benefits of social media, that your competitors have been relishing:

- carefully selected content that adds value to readers' lives, who could be potential customers
- agility and savvy
- good old patience

And in time, who knows, you may even outpace your competitors. Bear in mind, though, that engagement levels (rather than follower numbers) are what ultimately determine your clout on social media.

ABOUT CATHERINE MILWARD-BRIDGES

Catherine Milward-Bridges is a passionate communication specialist and founder of simplyput.co.za. Catherine guides her clients in taking their engagement efforts from good to great; and helps them optimise social media with strategic know-how.

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