



Welcome to Be

Dear Client

Welcome to Be Brief and as always at this time of year I would like to thank you for your valued business and offer my very best wishes for the New Year.

This edition is mainly the work of Stuart Duffy, our new Business Consultant, who is enthusiastically and painstakingly encouraging us to recognise and embrace the merits of this strange phenomena that apparently goes by the name of Social Media. Thanks to Stuart my knowledge has been greatly enhanced in the last few weeks and I am now a mine of the following "useless" information but still not sure whether it is my view or Stuart's that is "alternative":

- Facebook has over 30 million active users in the UK and 800 million active users worldwide.
- Facebook carries a valuation at over \$50 billion.
- Twitter has over 7 million users in the UK, regularly tweeting.
- 55% of tweets come from users on the move via their mobile handset.
- LinkedIn has over 4 million UK professional users.

Unlike me you may be totally au-fait with the term and perhaps also use it to showcase your business or simply for personal communication. I have to admit that when presented

with these statistics my first thought was "so what" but then I realised that love it or loath it, it's here to stay and I am out of step with about 50% of the UK population. I am however consoling myself with positive thinking that I'm still in step with the other 50%. Until now my only knowledge of Twitter, Facebook et-al has been a little bit of snooping on my teenage sons (for their benefit you understand) but I am just beginning to see both sides of the argument, and myself and the Be Team are gently dipping our toes in the water.

Progress indeed for such a sceptic, but will I be tweeting about the calorific value of the filling in my lunch sandwich, or the catastrophic effect missing a train will have on my day? I think not - but perhaps there are a couple of topics suitable for sharing that some of you may just find interesting but early feedback is always appreciated in the interests of preserving my professional reputation.

It has taken a great deal of persuasion for me to take up the gauntlet and join the Social Media Circus but would it be my first choice of communicating with my clients, definitely not; is it the right choice, well I have yet to be convinced.

Kind regards

ANGELA BRUNTON

Managing Director

Are your customers now speaking another language?

Hashtag; Like; Retweet; Blog; Unfriend; Check-in; Friends List; Connections; Followers are words that are now in everyday use as the reach of social media widens. Once a social pastime for sharing pictures and gossip among teenagers, it has now become a worldwide addiction for many and you may already be in some way familiar with the 3 most common sites -

Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Despite millions of users interacting with these sites daily, realisation of the potential to unlock business benefits seems to be sluggish although growing slowly. For early business adopters, becoming familiar with these tools quickly has meant they are ahead of changing markets and most importantly can react to new demands from their customers - simply viewing how customers are reacting through social media is replacing traditional market research. Businesses who

feel there's no part for Social Media in their sales strategy, may risk losing at least some of the customer loyalty they have enjoyed for some time.

So why use social media? Quite simply, it could get you closer to your customers or audience. We all know that creating an emotional bond between customer and brand is a strong influencing factor in someone's buying decision. While it's very difficult to create this in a 2-dimensional internet site, you can take a big step closer by carefully socialising your business using a medium that can be controlled. For example, someone choosing to 'Like' your business on Facebook is a conscious decision they make, whether prompted by an ad or simply to display loyalty. This action is worn like a badge on their profile and visible to other Friends on the site making this a powerful recommendation which is shared with those you value and trust most.



There are clear tangible business benefits too.

- Direct marketing and advertising can be made more effective through controlled costs and instant reporting.
- Useful intelligence on your customers can help you develop services and products for specific markets, all available from their interaction with your site.
- Most importantly is perhaps the speed of messaging.

With the explosion of smart phones onto the market, social media is in your pocket wherever you go (if you have a good signal!). Exploiting this mobile medium for business means you can have your message delivered to your customers immediately. Your message can be issued, read and a response received in the time it used to take to call the local paper to place the advert! Its proactive marketing to a specifically targeted group of people who

already want to know more about what you're selling rather than passive 'walk-by' messaging which was entirely hit or miss in the past.

Of course social media hasn't been adopted by everyone (Angela included!). There are people who still don't have a broadband connection or 3G mobile reception in the UK (and even some without a mobile phone - gasp!) so this isn't the answer to full customer engagement by any means. It does however demonstrate how quickly technology is evolving and its ease of use means consumers can adopt new ways of interacting with each other instantly which also means that your competitors could be speaking to your customers before you are. *Don't be left behind.*



What's it really about? Facebook, LinkedIn & Twitter

The 3 main social media sites have combined users of over 40 million in the UK alone - the majority of the adult population in the country has a Facebook page and actively uses it daily. Most big brands have an online presence and now very sophisticated social media pages too but for small businesses, which sites would work best? Here's a quick outline of each service as I see them:



- 850million active users around the globe.
- Currently valued at over \$50billion.
- Advertising revenue predicted to double from 2010 to stand at over \$4billion for 2011.

Clearly the market leader and has the widest range of 'social tools' available - uploading pictures, adding friends, status updates, gaming, organising events, instant messaging, checking-in to places you visit, commenting on your friends activity and 'Liking' everything from brands to music artists. For businesses, the tools go further with advertising and insight applications allowing you a wide range of access to information about the people with whom you wish to interact. It has a growing popularity among the 30+ age group which might be surprising given its rather youthful roots, depicted in the box office hit The Social Network. In fact 'silver-surfers' had the highest rate of growth in new users in data published by the BBC in June 2011. This service has the widest range of users and tools available and is a good 'all-rounder'.



- Often called the "Facebook for Business".
- the network can now boast over 4million users in the UK.
- This is a hub for professionals from all business sectors and industries.
- 'Connecting' with other business colleagues or contacts is just as easy as Facebook.

Similarities are also evident in the benefits and tools available with status updates, Liking, adding content and links being the most common. LinkedIn has been fast to copy their competition in advertising terms, now making it even easier to create and publish adverts to specific audiences across the network. One rather unique selling point over other outlets is the promotion of access to employment data to aide more effective recruitment and selection. Recruitment companies can pay to access the data of LinkedIn members, creating a faster and targeted sourcing model for some vacant positions.



- Reached a milestone of 200million 'tweets' per day back in June this year, a staggering 200% increase in 12 months.
- Around 7million UK consumers use their 140-character update box to tweet about all kinds of topics.

One neat tool on Twitter is the ability to share topics you tweet about with other users. By adding a hashtag to a word or phrase, users around the world can instantly create a trending topic about anything, from Cheryl Cole's latest hair style to the Arab Spring, but I'm still not convinced its not just a #wasteofmytime! However, it's not just pointless blogging or thoughts of the general public that fill the large farms of Twitter servers across the globe - the big brands are in there too, using the instant messaging site to interact with customers, often using it as an alternative to the traditional contact centre by manning dedicated agents to a feed of complaints and gripes from unhappy customers. There's no doubt it has cut costs for many businesses by increasing productivity of one-call-one-agent call centres, to multiple-issue-resolving-Tweeters! Demographics vary from region to region however there is a surprisingly equal spread amongst adults of all ages in the UK. Most common use is for comments on the entertainment industry, evidenced by the fact that TV and Movie stars take up 8 out of the top 10 users (by volume of followers across the globe).

Whichever medium you consider, each has its benefits to business somehow. The key is deploying them in the most effective manner for your consumers and of course your brand after carefully considering which service will suit your target market. It's certainly not something to rush into and can be damaging for the brand if not used in the right way, but as Angela mentioned earlier, its probably here to stay so I'm all for embracing it and exploiting its benefits to make our businesses more profitable where possible!