

## Social Media Basics for Small Businesses

More and more, social media is becoming the “buzz.” Increasingly it is becoming practical to connect your business to your clientele through these social media channels. It is also recommended to have a regular website to tie information back to. Here are suggestions of which channels to put time into.

**Facebook** – <http://www.facebook.com/>

Facebook is an online social utility that connects people and organizations. People use facebook to keep up with friends, to share links, to share photos and videos and to learn more about people and organizations. **Facebook Pages** are incredibly useful for businesses. As you update your Facebook Page, they will show up on your fans’ wall feed, whereas Facebook Group updates will not. Facebook Groups are basically a mini message board, with a single area where you can post a message that shows at the top of the group. However, Pages are fully customizable. This makes it become like a mini website! When it comes to getting visibility away from Facebook: non-Facebook users can view Pages, and Pages can be found (spidered) by search engines; Facebook Groups cannot. It’s also important to mention that Facebook Pages can have a “vanity URL” (facebook.com/mypage), whereas Groups do not have this feature. Facebook also offers many other sharing and promotional tools that can spread your online presence. A few tips:

- Create a Page, not a profile or group, then build your Page with purpose in mind
- Help customers showcase their own identity and respond to their questions
- Share success stories, share updates from other business pages
- Post a status message daily: what are you doing today?
- Include maps—there are increasingly more “apps” for GPS/car/mobile/online devices which will add your business into the search component. Add photos too, people look at this stuff!



**Blog** – <http://www.wordpress.com/> or <http://www.blogspot.com/>

A blog is an online journal. Blogging = Sharing: Blogs are a great way to share your products and ways to use them, as well as sharing everyday insights and keeping up with current events that are concerning you (weather, House Bills, etc.). A blog will make you think more about how you can share your content, your thoughts and why others may want to work or connect with you. Blogging = Business: Make no mistake about it. Blogs are a means for your business to tell the world how you think about your products, how you produce them, and what you do with them. Treat it as a place that is directly tied to your overall business objectives and marketing plan. Often it is helpful to give blogs a human face—allow readers to know that they are doing business with someone they trust. A few tips:

- Regularly updated website, or section of a website
- Write down customer questions; blog the answer
- Reuse good material in other forms
- Focus on what customers want to know, not what you want to tell them about your business

Kentucky Association of Food Bloggers, Digital and Delicious article, <http://www.bizlex.com/Articles-Food-and-Drink-c-2011-11-03-99362.113117-Digital-and-Delicious.html>

A few examples:

<http://www.savoringkentucky.com/>

<http://chefscollaborative.org/category/blog/>



**LinkedIn** – <http://www.linkedin.com/> or LinkedIn Learning Center: <http://learn.linkedin.com/>

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social network site with millions of users from all around the world. With more users than any other professional social networking site, LinkedIn is a place to build, maintain, and track professional contacts. In addition to management of personal contacts, LinkedIn can be an effective means of self-promotion, providing space to maintain a living and public resume of work and educational experience.

- Be a billboard; another vehicle for increasing your presence on the Internet.
- Use your expertise to answer questions; promote your experience to others.
- Ask smart questions
- Capitalize on affinity groups; connect with other professionals, potential employers and peers in your field.

#### Videos via YouTube – <http://www.youtube.com/>

YouTube is the world's most popular video sharing website. Anyone with a Google or YouTube account may upload videos free of charge, and share them through email, other messaging systems or within other websites (i.e. Facebook or blog) using simple code. Keywords and tags drive the search function, so it is best to populate the tag fields of all videos with useful keywords.

- Demonstrate products; show off your expertise, share knowledge, market your programs and connect with users
- Introduce your people
- Profile your customers
- Show how you solve problems
- Tell your stories – take viewers on a tour of your offices and community to help them feel connected with you
- Share your community
- Start with the camera you have – prepare and pick the right spot – use a tripod – shoot more than once – edit with your existing software (or free online) – share on your site and distribute
- Youtube is free and houses tons of space for you → then embed the videos into your website, blog, facebook and twitter accounts
- Upload recordings/slideshows of presentations you've given to demonstrate authority and public speaking skills; create "how-to" videos...
- To get started: [http://www.youtube.com/create\\_account](http://www.youtube.com/create_account)



More in-depth information about Facebook, twitter, and youtube can be found here:

[http://ofbf.org/uploads/Social-Media-Guide-V2\\_single-pages-PRESS.pdf](http://ofbf.org/uploads/Social-Media-Guide-V2_single-pages-PRESS.pdf)

#### Which tools should you use?

Ask your customers! Then, spend time where your customers are.

1. Set aside time daily to work on Marketing
  - Finding the Time: Multiply your efforts
    - Write one blog post → pull the most discuss-able sections and post on your Facebook Page → Use interesting quotes from it on your LinkedIn status → Edit the post for your paper/email newsletter → archive on original website too.
2. Sample Daily Goals – pick a specific time to do this
  1. Update your Facebook and LinkedIn status
  2. Respond to comments on your blog
  3. Like 5 interesting links or businesses on Facebook
  4. Answer a question on LinkedIn Q&A

For more: <http://files.mccrayandassoc.com/downloads/Getting%20down%20to%20business-final.pdf>  
<http://www.toprankmarketing.com/>

## **PACA Primer**

### **Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act**

The Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA) of 1930 was enacted to promote fair trading practices in the fruit and vegetable industry. All fresh produce sales are covered under PACA. Sellers must ship the quantity and quality of produce specified in their contracts, and buyers must accept shipments that meet contract specifications. Because fresh produce is perishable, it must be quickly sold to the end user; farmers are protected when selling a seasonal, perishable commodity with payment due after delivery. PACA is a United States federal law regulating commerce (national, international and interstate) in fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables. PACA is a body of substantive law that governs all of these transactions; it also includes provisions about the inspection of fruits and vegetables, licenses, rules of commerce and receipt, and resolution of claims concerning products sold. PACA protections benefit growers, sellers, buyers, truckers, packers, processors, wholesalers, brokers, grocery wholesalers, and food service firms. Fruit and vegetable traders in the produce industry need more protection than other industries because of product seasonality and perishability. Rapid transactions are necessary; just a one or two-day delay in movement or marketing can be the difference between profit and loss.

PACA mandates that sellers of perishable commodities be paid within 10 days. If the buyer goes out of business or does not pay a farmer, a PACA claim can be made. If the buyer cannot be made to pay and the claim is legitimate, the farmer may be compensated from the PACA Trust Fund. If a business or a person purchases fruits or vegetables or is a broker in such products, it is almost certain that PACA will apply to transactions with this person or entity. If the person or entity sells at retail to the public and its purchases of such products in one year exceed \$230,000, PACA also applies.

In order to preserve the rights to PACA trust protection a statement saying you wish to do this must be on the invoice:

“The perishable agricultural commodities listed on this invoice are sold subject to the statutory trust authorized by Section 5c of the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, 1930 [7 U.S.C. 499e(c)]. The seller of these commodities retains a trust claim over these commodities, all inventories of food or other products derived from these commodities, and any receivables or a proceeds from the sale of these commodities until full payment is received”.

You may also want to put a statement on your invoice about past due accounts being charged interest after 30 days.

For additional information:

PACA Trust Fund, <http://www.pacatrust.com/index.php>;  
<http://www.pacatrust.com/paca101.pdf>

Produce Law 101: [http://www.meuerslawfirm.com/articles/produce\\_law\\_101.htm](http://www.meuerslawfirm.com/articles/produce_law_101.htm)

Agricap Gazette: [http://www.agricap.com/news/agricap\\_gazette\\_2007\\_qtr\\_3\\_digital.pdf](http://www.agricap.com/news/agricap_gazette_2007_qtr_3_digital.pdf)

## UPCs

Universal Product Codes (UPCs, also known as GTIN-12) are unique 12-digit codes for a range of products represented as scannable bars. Often, they are helpful when marketing your products to grocers and wholesalers. When your product is scanned at the register, the scanner reads the UPC number from the barcode, looks up your products' price and description in the retailer's database and your sale is recorded. Barcode scanners read the bars and convert them back to the 12-digit number they represent and the corresponding inventory information can be found. For each product, a different UPC barcode is needed.

UPCs provide detailed, up-to-date information on key aspects of any business, enabling decisions to be made more quickly and confidently:

- Fast-selling items can be re-ordered automatically
- Slow-selling items can be identified, preventing a build-up of unwanted stock
- Historical data can be used to accurately predict seasonal fluctuations
- Items may be re-priced on the shelf to reflect sale prices or price increases

UPCs are also very valuable in shipping, receiving, and tracking:

- Information can be transmitted through Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), a communication system, so the retailer has shipment information before it arrives
- Tracking results when shipments are sent to a Distribution Center before being forwarded to the final destination
- A Unique Identifying Number (UID) can be assigned to the box, and at final destination the UID is scanned, and the store knows where the order came from, what's inside the box, and how much to pay the manufacturer

There are a few websites able to directly sell UPC barcodes:

<http://www.upccode.net/index.html>

<http://www.barcodetalk.com/homepage>

<http://www.createbarcodes.com/CommunityPages/CBCOM/index.aspx>

The main source of UPC barcodes is the American counter-part of a European company, GS1. GS1 US ([www.gs1us.org](http://www.gs1us.org)) is the organization dedicated to supporting the implementation of barcoding in the United States. Formerly known as the Uniform Code Council (UCC), GS1 works with the industry to solve supply chain problems through solutions based on the standards of the GS1 System. The GS1 Systems – the world's most accepted standards system – standardizes identification numbers, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), Business Message Standards using Extensible Markup Language (XML) and other supply chain solutions for more efficient business.

The first step to placing a UPC barcode on your product is completing a membership application for GS1. Members receive a unique license number to create UPC barcodes and other FS1 identification numbers, plus many exclusive tools and resources. To apply log onto <http://www.uc-council.org> or you can contact them at:

GS1 US

7887 Washington Village Drive, Suite 300, Dayton OH 45459

Telephone 937.435.3870; Fax 937.435.7317

Email: [info@gs1us.org](mailto:info@gs1us.org)

## QR Codes

There has recently been an interest in QR codes and increased usage of them in food products! It may be helpful for you to look into creating your own code for your products. Here are some tips on how to find out more information about doing this.



### Quick & Easy Overview of QR Codes:

1. QR = Quick Response
2. These codes are 2D matrices and are able to contain several hundred times the amount of product information compared to a bar code. This is because information is stored both horizontally and vertically – bar codes only store information horizontally.
3. The purpose is to code different types of information: text, URLs, other sorts of data...basic point is to connect people to the information that you (as a business person) want or need them to see and know about your product.
4. How it works: People scan the QR code on their smartphone, and all the information stored within the code is available to them. Free “QR code reader apps” are available for smartphones.
5. These codes are capable of error correction – data from the code can be restored up to 30%!
6. QR codes are free of license.
7. QR codes can be generated for **free** online. Check out these sources: <http://www.qrstuff.com/> - <http://qrcode.kaywa.com/> - <http://zxing.appspot.com/generator/>
8. I have not been able to find if there are ways to track how many people are looking at your code or if you can determine where they are checking it.

Here’s a good website that provides a simple overview:

<http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-qr-codes-can-grow-your-business/>

Here is information from the original source of QR codes:

<http://www.denso-wave.com/qrcode/aboutqr-e.html>