



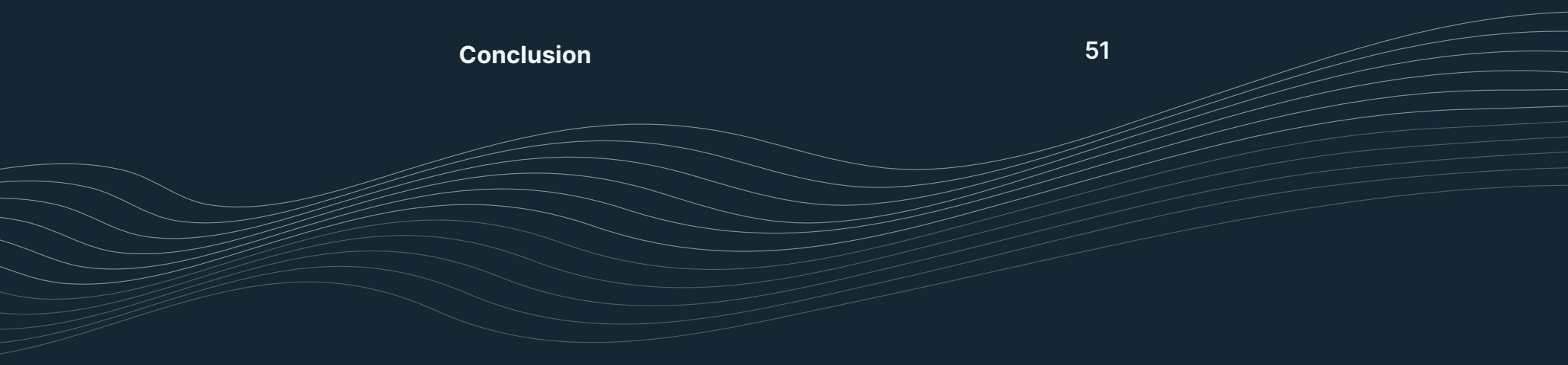
The Whys and Hows of Social Selling

Proven tips to gain a lasting competitive advantage



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It's 2021 and some companies are growing faster than ever. Others are having a *really* hard time.

Part of the reason for these different fortunes comes down to how well they're handling a digital first – sometimes almost entirely digital – world. Those individuals – and those companies – that are adapting best are leaving their competition *far* behind.

One critical part of this digital world of ours is social media. Long gone are the days when social was just for friends and fun.

Today, social media is increasingly *where business gets done*.

Where brands are built. Where relationships are nurtured. Where business-building conversations begin.

Join me for a deep dive into what it takes for an individual – and a company – to make the most of this incredible growth opportunity.



Steve Watt
Marketing Director,
Seismic



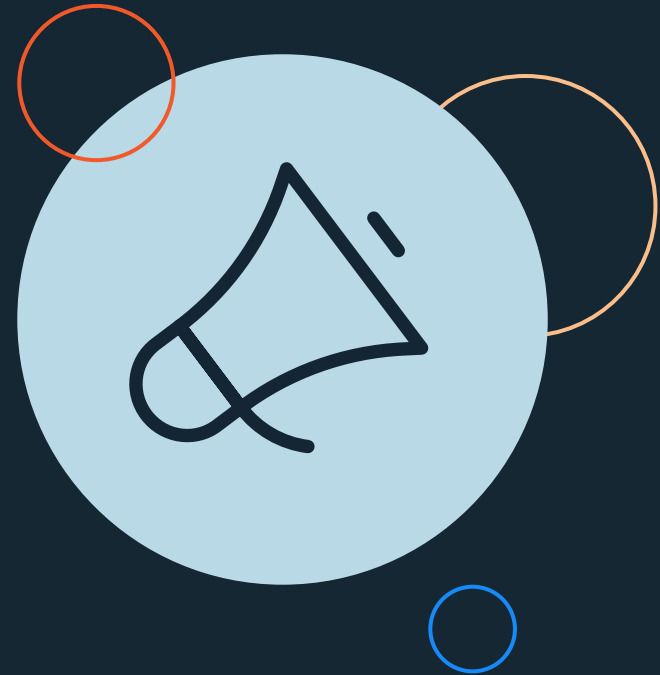
**When social is
done right, a huge
opportunity awaits**



Not just another advertising channel

Most companies see social as just another advertising channel. They've shifted some spend away from television, radio, and print, and begun delivering their brand message on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and other social platforms.

They're not wrong so much as they're missing a much larger opportunity.





The critical importance of trust

Trust is important in every purchase decision. We do business with people we know and trust.

And while we may have some degree of trust in organizations, trust is a fundamentally human thing.

We enter into business relationships with people we know and trust. We expand and deepen our relationships with people we know and trust. We refer our family, our friends, our neighbors and our coworkers to people we know and trust.

And we are much more likely to become a champion for a company, and to advocate for them up and across our own organization, if we respect and trust their salespeople.

The real opportunity: Build trust at scale

For a business to grow and thrive in today's world, it's essential that they build and maintain trust at scale. No advertising campaign can do that.

Only your people can.

When your people consistently show up, speak up, and provide authentic, *human* value on social media, you're on the road to building trust at scale.



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There are no quick fixes or shortcuts to building digital relationships. Those companies that drive the most competitive advantage from social selling are those that focus on quality and consistency of interactions online.”



Sarah Goodall
Founder & CEO,
Tribal Impact, Ltd.

Real humans, not robots



Some companies try to fake it. They instruct their people to share from a small library of social media content. Worse yet, some have automated the process of sharing content.

The result is *far* from authentic. Far from trust-building. Much the opposite in fact, with the same content being shared by every seller.

It's a really bad look when many of your people share the same thing at the same time.

Are they human beings or are they robots?

They're not demonstrating expertise, passion, and care for their community. They're not engaging in conversation. They're not being *human*.

Leave the robo-blasting to your competitors. You can do *much* better.

Form new relationships

When your people are active and authentic on social media, they form new relationships.

They get on people's radar and they demonstrate that they're real people with real expertise and real passion. They demonstrate that they care.



Tip:

Interact with people before asking them to connect. Like and comment on some of their posts over a period of days or weeks. Sincerely add value and they'll be much more open to engaging with you.

Nurture existing relationships

When your people are active and authentic on social media, they nurture existing relationships.

Imagine you know three people who compete with each other in the same industry or profession. One you never see on Facebook or LinkedIn. One blasts her company's promotional content day in and day out.

The third regularly shares current, relevant, high-quality content from a variety of sources. Content that educates, inspires, and entertains.

She also engages in online conversations, commenting on other people's posts, celebrating others, and contributing helpful insight and information.

Which of these people is pulling people toward her?

Become customer magnets

When your people engage on social media with a give-first mindset, they become a *magnet* for business opportunities.

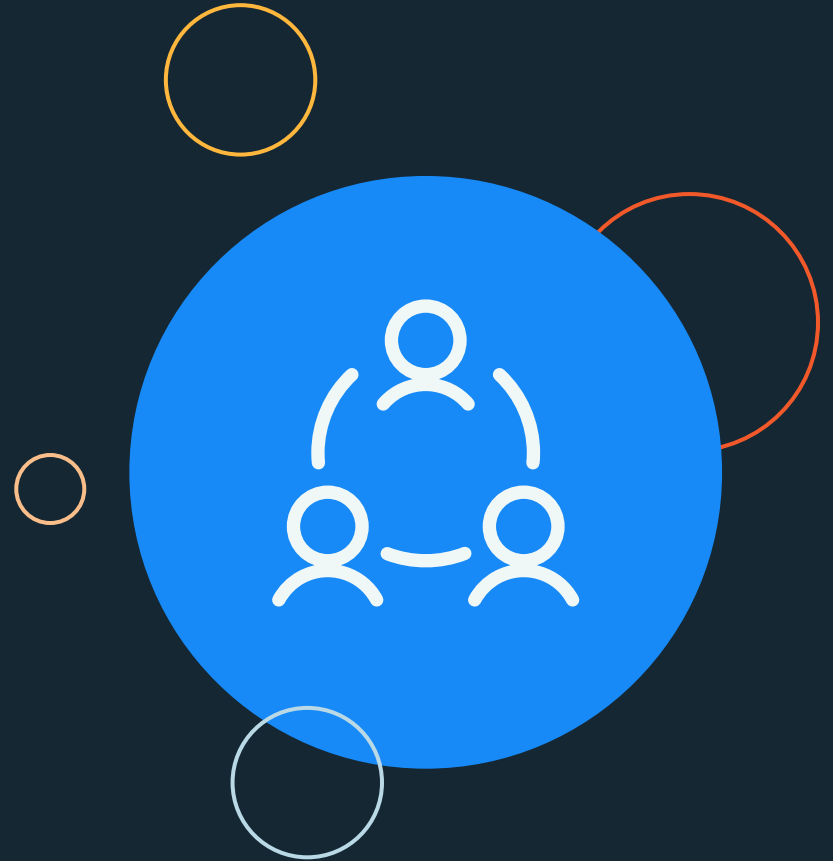
While your competitors drive people away with a hunting mindset, your team pulls people in.

While your competitors destroy trust, your people build trust.

While your competitors repel customers, your people become powerful, authentic, *magnets* that form and strengthen relationships and spark business-building conversations.



While your competitors destroy trust, your people build trust.”



“

The old world was still accustomed to face-to-face engagement. Our newly transitioning environment demands more, and faster. As we all have experienced, the current crisis has put a new perspective on growth: the what, the how, and the overall equation around customer needs. Selling today requires a clear understanding of social media, their algorithms and the strategies to win.”



Sabine VanderLinden
Co-founder, CEO & Managing Partner
Alchemy Crew



The competitive advantage that can't be copied

This is the opportunity. This is the competitive advantage that can't be copied.

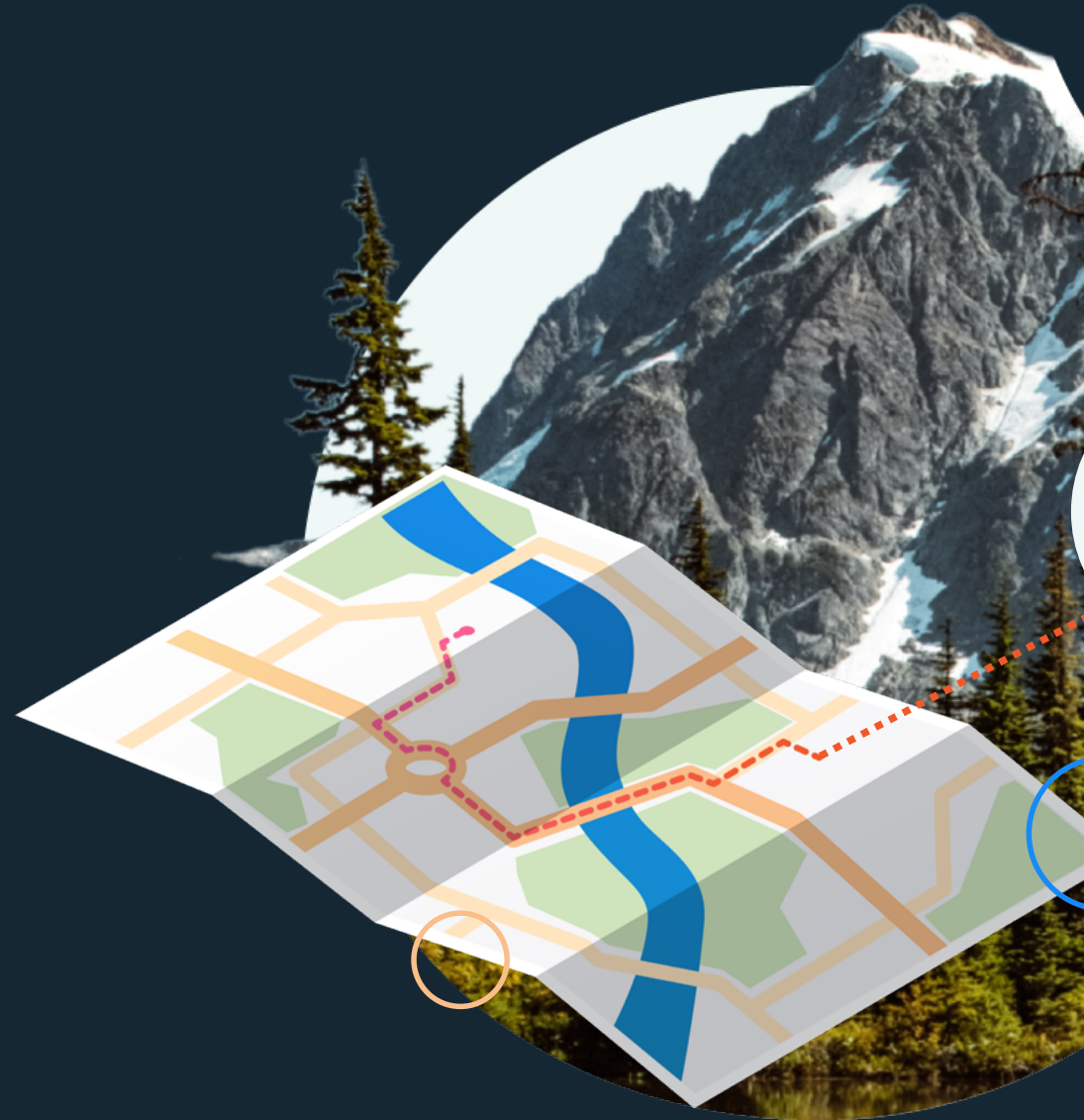
No matter how large or well-known your competitors, or how vast their advertising budget, there's no campaign or promotion they can run that can compete with this magnetic approach.

This is what will increasingly separate the leaders from the pack.

Making it happen

In the sections that follow I'll cover a lot of what people in different parts of your firm need to think through and do to embark on this journey, including:

- How salespeople and professionals of all sorts grow their business on social media
- How program managers roll-out, scale, and measure a powerful social program
- Getting your marketing leadership on board
- Soothing the fears of your risk management or compliance team



The roadmap to building trust at scale



There are four pillars for success in a social selling program. For a social engagement program to succeed at scale, it needs to be:

Authentic

It's all about empowering and enabling your people to show up, speak up, and demonstrate customer-centric expertise and passion. You can't automate it. You can't fake it. It has to be authentic.

Intuitive

If your social media tools aren't easy to use, and if they don't provide clear feedback loops to users, your people won't use them. Your social selling program will thrive when your people are very willing participants with a clear understanding of why social is critical, and how to seamlessly incorporate it into everything else they do to grow their business.

Measurable

Individuals need to see the impact of their actions, and leaders need to be able to roll things up and measure impact across teams, regions, lines of business and more.

Compliant

Risk exists and must be managed. Companies like Financial Services firms need to manage regulatory compliance. And every company in every industry needs to manage brand and reputational risk.



“

Modern sellers need to be online, demonstrate their subject matter expertise, and move from vendor status to the role of a trusted advisor. This is critical in elevating both the personal brand of the salesperson and the overall brand of the organization.”



Julio Viskovich
Marketing Instructor,
Thompson Rivers University

Advice for individual sellers



In the following sections, I've provided some advice for individual sellers, much of it from my own experience building a solid, positive personal brand on social media.



Common social media mistakes

Understand who you don't want to be on social media, including:



The No-Show

While not all of your clients and prospects are active on social media, a great many are. And they're looking for you. You're not doing yourself any favors if you're nowhere to be found.



The LinkedIn Job Seeker

If your LinkedIn profile reads like a resume, you're sending a pretty strange message. Are you actively serving your clients or are you looking for a new job? A client-centric LinkedIn profile that explains what you do, and who you do it for, sends a much better message.



The Confusing Facebook User

Facebook is a great place to show that you're a real person with real family, real friends, real community involvement and more. Don't miss the opportunity to show that you're a person who cares and who's worthy of the trust your clients want to place in you.



The Promotional Bullhorn

If all you do on social media is promote yourself and your company, you're sending a pretty clear message and it's not a good one. People don't want to be sold to. They do, however, often want to buy. And when they do, they buy from people who have earned their trust.



The Single-Minded Hunter

If you see social media as nothing but a hunting ground, you're chasing people away. Nobody wants to be hunted. Sales pitches left and right cause people to put up walls to keep you away. Build trust and pull them toward you instead. They'll be far more receptive if you slow it down and invest in giving first.

Value-destroying mindsets run deep

Much of what it takes to become a business-building magnet starts with your mindset.

Value-destroying mindsets like the ones on the right run deep.

Maybe these mindsets are right if you run a tourist-trap souvenir shop in a cruise ship harbor. You've got a never-ending stream of people who will pass by for an hour or two and never return.

That's not your world, is it?

If you're in sales for the long-haul, your reputation matters. And this isn't how you establish yourself as the most reputable, most trustworthy professional in your region, your industry, or your niche.



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Social selling can take hours a week you may not have, so you need to build a toolset to support finding relevant material to post and to automatically schedule and post the items across social networks.”



Rob Tyrie
CEO
Ironstone Advisory

Moving beyond transactional mindsets

The most successful social media business builders understand that there isn't a simple, immediate relationship between action and result.

Results compound over time when you consistently do the right things.

It's like eating well, or exercising.

Are you measurably healthier tomorrow because you ate your vegetables and did your workout today? Of course not. It's not that simple and immediate.

Are you measurably healthier over time if you regularly eat well and exercise? Absolutely!

Building engagement, reputation, and trust on social media compounds over time and delivers tremendous rewards for many years. But only for those who move beyond requiring simple, immediate gratification.



Tip:

Far more people will see you engaging through comments and conversation than will ever view your profile page. Join the conversation and demonstrate the passion and expertise that makes you great!



Start with a plan

Some considerations as you chart a course to success:

1

What are you all about?

Who are you, and who do you serve? What makes you, and them, different? Are you an expert in a particular region, industry, or market segment? Do you solve specific sorts of problems for your clients? Get clear on this and everything else begins to fall into place.

2

Why, specifically, should people trust you?

Beyond being an all around great person (as I'm sure you are), what's the foundation of the trust you build? Is it your years of industry experience? The many clients who enthusiastically refer you? Your community involvement and volunteer work? Something else? Clarity here will help you to stay consistent and become memorable.

3

What social platform(s) will you focus on?

You don't need to do it all. In fact, you'll likely be more successful leveraging one or two platforms consistently well rather than trying to do too much. Your decision to emphasize Facebook or LinkedIn or Twitter or anything else will be partly about where your ideal clients spend their time and partly about what feels natural to you.





Tip:

Your LinkedIn profile is much more than your resume. It ought to be a compelling, customer-centric message to the people you most need to engage.

Create client-centric social profiles

Your social media profile pages answer critical questions for those who see it:

- Who is this person?
- Are they relevant to me?
- Should I trust them?

Use this space wisely, and in alignment with your overall plan. Don't send mixed messages. Don't fail to make an impression. Don't be out of date or out of tune.



For corporate executives, social media engagement has moved from being a nice-to-have to an imperative. Leaders must have a distinctive and authentic social media presence in order to build business and remain relevant in these volatile times.

The opportunity extends well beyond leadership. Increasingly, we're seeing sales professionals and others throughout the organization enhance their impact through strong social engagement."



Brooke Worden
President
The Rudin Group

Share quality content

You need to ask, what content will be most interesting and valuable to your ideal clients?

You've gained clarity on who you serve and what makes you stand out, now deliver the goods.

Don't just blast promotional content. Share fresh, quality articles, reports, news and videos that make you a value-adding part of their social networks.



What content will be most interesting and relevant to your ideal clients?"



Tip:

Avoid “random acts of content”. Share content that demonstrates an understanding of what’s important to your target audience and what supports your personal brand.



Strike a balance

There's nothing wrong with including some of your company's promotional content, but if that's all you share you're very unlikely to build meaningful engagement.

While every company and every individual will strike a bit of a different balance, you can be sure that if you provide lots of non-selling, actually interesting and relevant third-party content, your branded content and your promotional pieces will be much more likely to be well received.

Engage

Social media isn't just a broadcast medium. It's a conversational medium. Authentic engagement is an essential part of building lasting success.

Don't just post content; engage with other people's content too. Like good posts. Comment where you have something to say. Add value to the network and you'll get so much more back in return.

People notice who makes their social networks a better place.



Tip:

Social media is best understood as a conversation. Don't just broadcast... discuss. Value conversations over views and likes.

What you can measure

There is much you can measure on social media. Over time your network will grow. The number of people who read, like, and comment on your posts will grow. The number of people who view your profile will grow.

And, of course, the number of conversations you have will grow. Some of these conversations will stay on the platform. Others will move to email or to the phone or to in-person meetings.

You often won't be able to draw a straight line from any single post or comment to a business outcome, but a commitment to consistent engagement absolutely delivers measurable results over time.

What you can't measure

A lot of what you're building can't be easily measured. Perhaps can't be measured at all. And that's okay.

You can't measure the number of new people who form a positive impression of you and of your company.

You can't measure how often an existing client sees you as being a good contributor and feels a sense of pride that they do business with you.

You'll also get word of mouth referrals that you may never know about. But their impact on the growth of your business will be very real.



Advice for sales enablement program leaders





If you're tasked with building, running, expanding and reporting on a social selling program, start by knowing that all of your people are unique individuals with very different understandings of — and attitudes toward — social media. As a result, their goals, expectations, and activities are going to differ greatly.



All of your people are unique individuals with very different understandings of – and attitudes toward – social media.”

Here's something that we've seen to be true in every company we've ever worked with.

This pyramid exists in every company. The distribution of people across the layers will be different from one company to another, but the three sorts of people are always there.

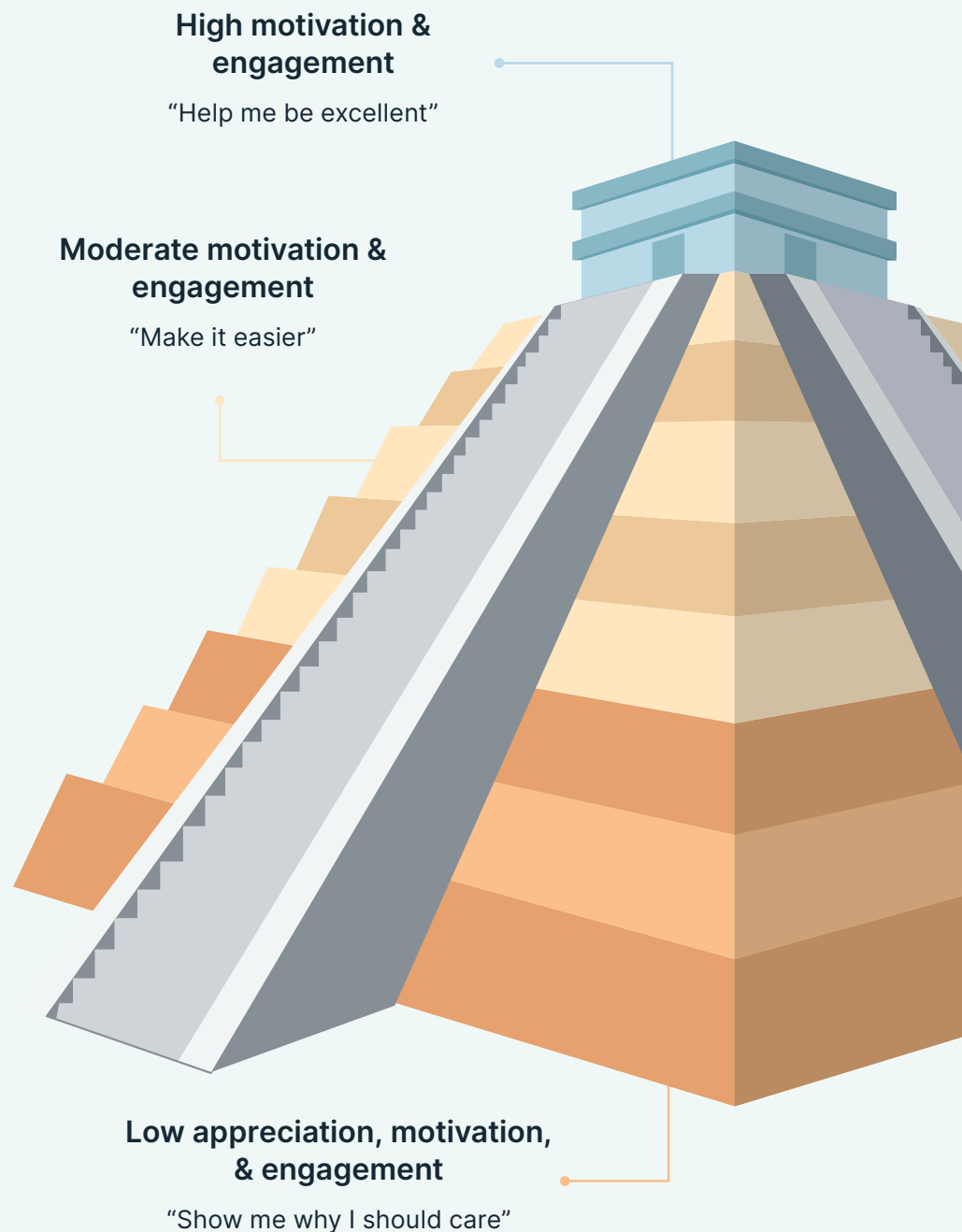
It's a bit like physical fitness.

Serious athletes continuously strive for excellence. They'll eagerly embrace a tool or training method that will improve their performance, even by a small amount.

Folks in the middle know that it's important to be active and fit, and they do their best amidst everything else going on in their life. They're most likely to react positively to things that make it easier to stay active. Step tracking apps and spin classes at home help them work fitness into their busy days.

Those at the bottom aren't on board with the need. They aren't going to respond positively to performance enhancements or to things that make it easier. If you're going to get through to them, it's going to have to be more in terms of why it's important at all.

If you try to sell your expert triathlon training program or your easy home workout machine to the wrong segment, you're going to come up empty. Your message just won't resonate.



Shifting people up a level

Scaling a powerful, sustainable social selling program requires understanding that you have people in each of the levels of the pyramid.

Some sellers are already consistently active. How can you help them get even better? What tools can help them find and post the best possible content? What sort of analytics can help them better understand exactly what their audience most values and engages with? It's all about helping your social sellers to excel.

Some know they ought to be more active but they're having a hard time building momentum. There are dozens of other demands on their time at work and at home. What tools can minimize the time it takes to maintain some reasonable level of activity? Can aspects of scheduling posts and writing introductory comments be automated without sacrificing the human touch?

And, of course, there are a good number of people in your company who aren't on the playing field at all. You're going to need to start by helping them see the opportunity. And see the risk of losing clients and new opportunities to competitors who are more engaged.

Map your organization along these lines, develop the right approach for each segment, and you're on your way. You won't easily move people from the bottom to the top, but the impact is huge if you consistently move a lot of people up a little bit.



Tip:

Lead by example. Sales enablement leaders who consistently engage on social media will be much more knowledgeable – and much more credible – when they ask others to step up.





Tip:

You can't just issue a directive or buy a tool and expect a social engagement or social selling program to flourish. Plan for ongoing education and encouragement as you increase adoption and impact over time.

Setting the right expectations

It's important to set the right expectations. If salespeople or sales leaders expect immediate wins, they'll likely become discouraged and stop trying.

If people measure success in too short a time horizon, they'll likely engage in trust-destroying behavior like relentlessly hunting prospects rather than adding value and building trust over time.

Set reasonable expectations at the top.



If salespeople or sales leaders expect immediate wins they'll likely become discouraged and stop trying."

Laddering up program momentum

It's hard for frontline employees to do great things on social media if their company doesn't understand the opportunity and empower them to succeed.

At the same time, it's impossible for corporate leadership to mandate widespread, authentic social engagement.

Both need to ladder up together.

The field force and headquarters leadership all have so much to gain by embarking on this journey together.

It takes a shared vision of what's possible.

It takes a commitment to work together to learn and grow.

It takes an investment in tools and in training. Done right, this ought to be one of the best investments the company will ever make.

The opportunity is massive. And the risks of being left behind are very real.



Tip:

Think carrot not stick. Compelling your people to be active on social is very unlikely to succeed. Far better – and far more respectful – to educate, empower, and enable them. This is about their success as much as the company's success.

Advice for corporate marketing leaders

A series of thin, white, wavy lines that flow from the bottom left towards the right side of the slide, creating a sense of movement and modern design.

The social selling program is a marketing function, but it's not *just* a marketing function.

It's about building the brand, but it's not *just* about building the brand.

It's about driving traffic to the website and other standard marketing deliverables, but *it's about so much more than that too.*

Marketing has the opportunity to shepherd an incredibly impactful social engagement program toward success by partnering closely with other critical stakeholders.



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Marketers have been shouting for years that what buyers want is personalization and the way this was provided was in the form of personas. The problem with personas, is that as a buyer you have immediately treated me not as an individual.

Social media and the concept of social selling allow you to move from a 1-to-many, to a 1-to-1 relationship. This provides the buyer with personalization and, better yet, relevance.”



Tim Hughes
CEO & Founder
DLA Ignate

Brand lives at the edge of the organization

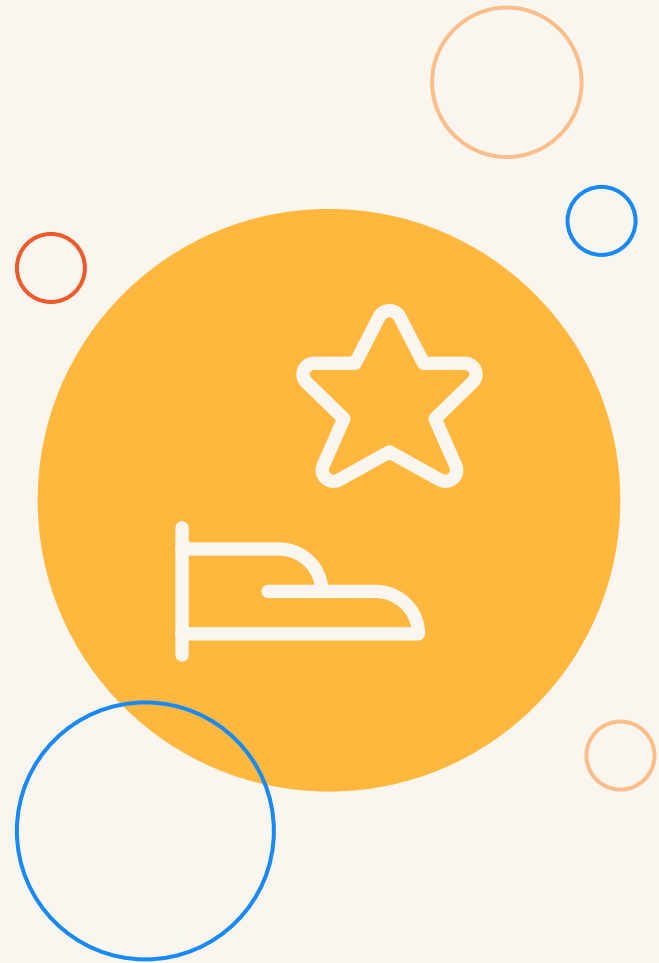
Your brand no longer lives in your television commercials or your full-page ads in the New York Times. We've all known that for a long time.

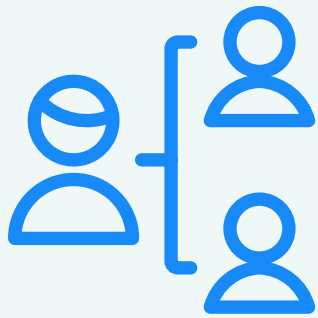
We've all shifted emphasis (and spending) toward digital marketing, but we've retained much of the sense that brand is in the center. That brand is a voice. That brand is something that is crafted and pushed out to the world.

The reality is that brand lives at the edge of the organization.

It lives in the voices, the actions, and the relationships of your individual employees. All of your employees, but especially in your client-facing ones.

The reality is also that brand lives in millions of conversations and interactions. And a great many of those conversations and interactions are happening on social media.





Tip:

The combined social reach of your company's employees is very likely to be many times that of your corporate social accounts. Approached correctly, this represents a massive opportunity.

The power of many

The collective reach of your people vastly exceeds the reach of your corporate social media accounts and your advertising channels.

But it's not just about reach. It's the potential for engagement.

People generally don't choose to engage with brands. They engage with people.

Other than a very few companies who seem to have ascended into social media nirvana with a massive following of highly engaged followers, engagement levels with corporate accounts are dismal.

So look to your people. When you empower and enable your people to show up and speak up and be real on social media, you're opening the door to a massive opportunity.

The power of authenticity

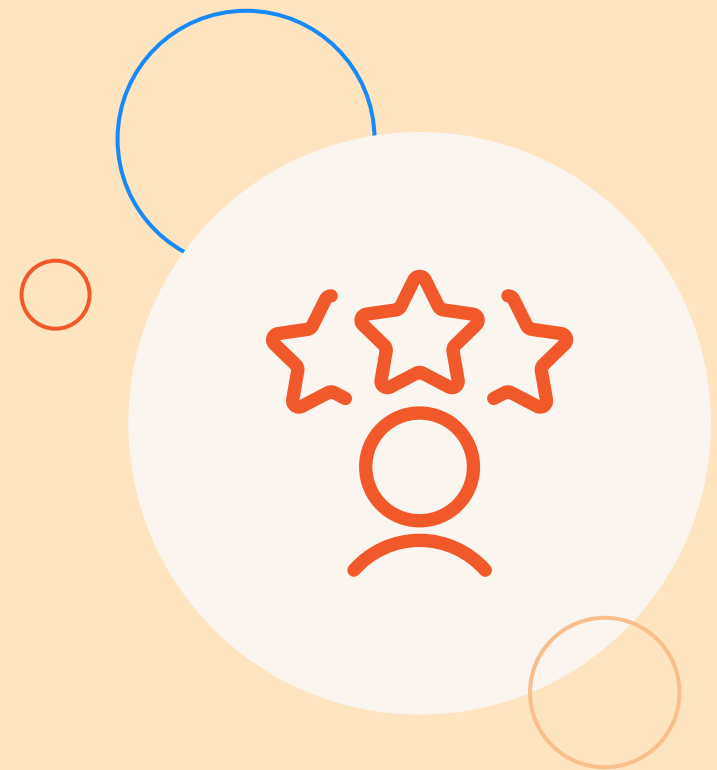
An important word of warning to marketers: Don't look at your people as advertising bullhorns. Don't look at them as just mouthpieces to robotically blast your centralized messaging and content.

They won't like it. They won't do it. And most importantly of all, it won't work.

People engage with people because they know them. Because they respect them. Because they trust them.

Don't burn that wonderful and powerful opportunity in your haste to harness thousands of loudspeakers to shout at the world.

The real win is in humanity. In authenticity. In empowerment. It's NOT in attempting to turn your people into advertising robots.



Tip:

Lead by example. Marketing leaders who consistently engage on social media will be much more knowledgeable – and much more credible – when they ask others to step up.

The power of third-party content

Key to building strong engagement is a diverse mix of fresh, credible, high-quality third-party content for each of your client-facing people.

If all you push is your brand content, engagement will be weak.

If all your people share from the same small pool of curated content, everything will look insincere. Forced. Robotic.

It's a really bad look when you see this happening. Don't let it happen at your company.

Seismic LiveSocial provides every user a unique feed of professional and personal content that matches their interests, their audience, and the way they choose to best represent themselves.

Our technology reviews and categorizes more than 150,000 pieces of content from more than 11,000 publishers every day and serves the very best of it up to your people in completely personalized feeds that they control.

No more time wasted finding content.

No more robotic look-alike posting.



Tip:

Empower your people to not only share your brand content, but relevant, quality third-party content too. It's a much more customer-centric approach and it significantly boosts engagement.





Your brand content lands better

And then, amidst this regular sharing of high-quality third-party content, your brand content can be worked in with much greater impact.

Your people are no longer promotional bullhorns. They're earning trust and nurturing authentic relationships and sparking business-building conversations. And when they share some of your brand content (which is also part of their LiveSocial feed), it will be much more likely to find a receptive audience.

“

Your people are no longer promotional bullhorns.”

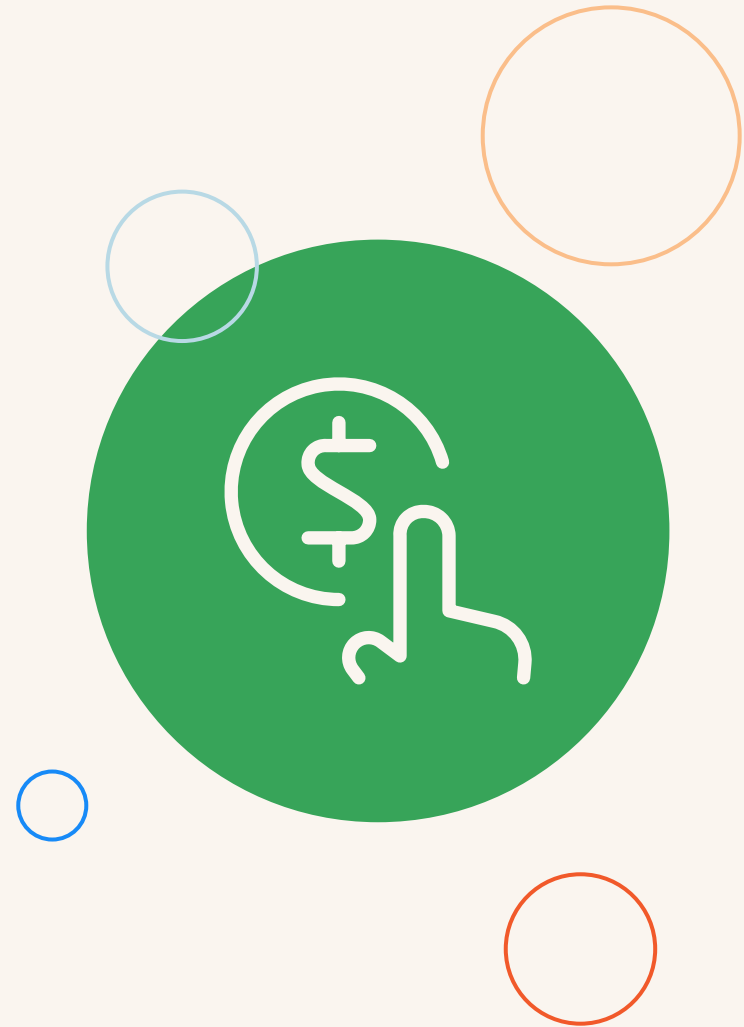
Earned media value

Some Seismic LiveSocial clients have begun to calculate the Earned Media Value (EMV) of their people's activity on LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social platforms.

They're taking the total number of clicks through to the content their people share (which is one of a great many pieces of information available in the LiveSocial administrator console) and calculating what it would have cost to purchase that engagement on a cost-per-click (CPC) basis at typical rates charged by the social media platforms.

Some are exploring the value of their reach on a CPM basis and applying other calculations to the LiveSocial reporting output, too.

There's much more to be explored in these areas, but clients are seeing very favorable comparables that further support investment in the program.



Advice for risk management and compliance leaders



Your people are already on social media, and that creates risk that your firm has a responsibility to manage. How do you scale oversight of huge numbers of interactions without the expense and complexity of a large supervision team?

Through the right social selling tools.

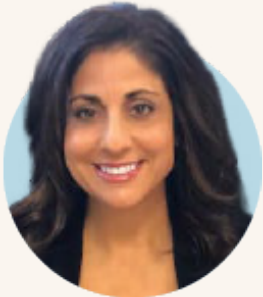


Your people are already on social media, and that creates risk that your firm has a responsibility to manage.”



Spending on social media is rapidly increasing as social platforms become central to every aspect of sales, marketing, operational collaboration, recruitment, customer service and more. In today's world, a strong social media security stance is imperative.

Protecting your company against social media cybersecurity threats is a complex job, and comprehensive security requires specialized policies and tools. The right security technology platform sets your enterprise up for success.”



Lisa Hayashi
Senior Vice President, Marketing,
SafeGuard Cyber



An intelligent compliance platform

An intelligent compliance platform that uses AI to quickly identify potential reputational, company, and regulatory risk is critical. The right tools can determine which social media interactions should be approved, rejected, or require human review.

Your agents can't be left waiting for approval. Conversations happen and opportunities arise much too quickly. With LiveSocial, the right safety rails are in place without complicating the experience and the firm stays on-side with regulators without incurring huge expenses.

Compliance leaders sleep well at night knowing every social interaction will be checked against company and regulatory policies. Your people thrive as they share the most timely and relevant content, and engage in real-time conversations without worry.



Social media is a key part of the human experience in our increasingly digital world. And human error and behavior on these platforms can expose your firm to compliance and legal risk. But social selling doesn't have to be a scary proposition for compliance teams. With advanced technologies and process management, you can monitor, supervise and remediate employee social media activity at scale."



Darren Lee
EVP & GM Compliance & Digital Risk
Proofpoint

Conclusion

An effective social engagement and selling program creates tremendous value for individual sellers and for the whole company. It's an investment that delivers ever-greater returns over time.

Those organizations that empower and enable their people to show up, speak up, and engage on social media with confidence and purpose are building a critical competitive advantage that will be very difficult for their rivals to overcome.

Their people build reputation and trust at scale, establish and nurture relationships, and spark a great many business-building conversations.

They become magnets.

Implementing a successful program requires the right mindset and commitment from the top, education and support for individual sellers, and a platform that automates content curation, enables authentic and personalized sharing of content, and reduces risk for the organization.

This is a massive opportunity, and Seismic is here to help.



About the Author

Steve Watt is Director of Marketing for Seismic LiveSocial, the social engagement platform trusted by many of North America's largest banks, wealth management firms, insurance companies, and technology providers.

Steve believes traditional inbound marketing has peaked, outbound selling is getting terribly noisy, and authentic personal connection is the future of sales and marketing. He believes that every professional has the opportunity to become a magnet for business-building opportunities of all kinds.

Steve was an early employee at LinkedIn and has been a social selling and digital engagement practitioner, writer, podcaster and educator for more than a decade. He has spoken at dozens of industry and corporate events, dozens of colleges and universities, and his guidance in the field has been published by the American Marketing Association, DemandGen Report, the LinkedIn Sales Solutions blog and more.

Connect with Steve on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

About Seismic

Seismic is the industry-leading sales enablement and marketing orchestration solution, aligning go-to-market teams while empowering them to deliver engaging buyer experiences that drive growth. To see how Seismic is being used by companies in your industry, please visit seismic.com.

