



Social Media: Sales Genius or Misrepresented Fluff?

By: Joshua Decker

Social media seems to be the sparkling darling of small and mid-size businesses. Why is that? There is the promise of being able to connect with and sell to your audience without the annoying cost of paid advertising. At least, this is what has been said since marketing professionals really embraced social marketing nearly 10 years ago.

However, what once was a great dream with a few exceptional stories has left many businesses feeling discouraged that Social Media just doesn't work. The lack of success for some does not represent a lack of opportunity. Just check out these stats:

260,000....that's the number of people in Florida who are interested in sustainable and native landscaping on Facebook.

19,000 is the number of Twitter users who fall within those interested in or connected to an organization who promotes Florida Native and sustainable landscaping and gardening.

5,000 estimated weekly impressions for Pinterest users in Florida with an interest in Florida Native Landscaping.

These stats demonstrate how much opportunity there is to reach your target market...If you understand how. Keep reading for more.

What Is Often Misunderstood

When it comes to marketing, Social Media is often looked at as a very simple to deploy marketing channel. Don't get me wrong; the complexity of Social Media is much less than some other available channels. However, gone are the days of simply posting to your accounts, and watching magic happen. You may get lucky, and get a little business, but your growth will not be sustainable with this strategy.

Rather, like other forms of marketing, Social Media should be approached with a plan that first understands your market and then understands how to reach that market through your selected social channels. This will require some learning beyond simply how to make a post.

What It Takes To Be Successful

There most certainly are success stories around Social Media. However, to achieve this success you will want orient around a few things:

- 1) **It's Not Free** – This is one of the biggest changes to Social Media in the last few years. If you really want to get your company and your work visible, then you need to budget to some funds to invest in promotion. This will allow you to target a very specific audience, ensuring your growing fan base is filled those who are likely to purchase from you. Further, it ensures you are not dependent on the changing whims of the social networks and where they place brand posts among the feed of your followers.
- 2) **It Takes Consistency And Time** – You really need to commit to being consistent in your social media efforts for no less than 6 months. If you are active only when you have time, or only for a week or two, you will never realize the results you are aiming to achieve. Commit to your Social Marketing at a pace you can sustain, and keep it up for 6-12 months and see what happens.
- 3) **It Takes Visual Appeal** – Social Media has really focused on the visual aspect of the senses. Pictures and videos are exceptionally important. What is amazing about social is the most successful posts are not professionally produced pictures and videos. That means if you have a modern smart phone, you can have the quality people are looking for, and keep your production costs low.

Come Learn More At The Native Plant Show

Marketing a small-medium sized business is not rocket science, but it is something that takes some investment to learn. Make a small investment in growing your business by joining me at the Native Plant Show on April 9th in Kissimmee. I will be presenting more on how to grow a thriving native plant business. From designers to nurseries to wholesalers, there will be something in it for everyone. You will not want to miss it! Get your tickets at <http://www.nativeplantshow.com/>.

About Joshua Decker: Josh is a certified Internet Marketing Professional (OMCP) and serves as a Marketing Solutions Engineer [at LocalDirective](#). He has a passion for finding "outside-the-box" solutions for businesses from local retailer and service providers to national and international manufacturing firms to break the through the profit ceiling leveraging creative marketing and technical solutions.

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