

# Using online community to improve business

In this digital age, online is where it is at and while many of us use social media to keep in touch with our personal social networks, it is becoming more and more important to keep up with the times and use those networks to leverage businesses.

"The evolution of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook happens so quickly that it means you now have to keep up with general hacks to attain your social media marketing goals," says Jeremy Wilkinson, marketing manager at Webafrica.

"There are a great variety of benefits in using social media to help you reach your business goals - such as the fact that it is inexpensive."



Image via [123RF](#)

The first step in applying social media to improve your business is to identify your main objectives:

- What do you want to achieve?
- Do you want to direct more traffic to your website or more sales?
- Do you simply want a platform to spread the name of your business?

Five social media hacks will enable you to save time, money, gain wider exposure, more followers and improve engagement for your business.

## 1. Know your platforms

You know the usual suspects: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. But then there are a few platforms that are used less frequently, but are just as powerful: Snapchat, Tumblr, Vine and more. The secret is to know that each platform is different and completely divergent. Where some focus mainly on images and short descriptions, some give you the opportunity to upload videos, documents and longer articles. Do your homework and apply the platform/s that will work best for your business goals.

## 2. Speak the language

Times have changed and we no longer use the same language to communicate like we did years ago. Today, everything is "instant" and more focused on the "new generation". For example, on Twitter you are only allowed to use 140 characters to convey your message. This means that you are forced to use abbreviations more frequently, and even informal dialect has become more acceptable when used on social media (do beware of spelling and grammar errors, though)! And don't forget the ever present # to make it easier for potential followers to find you.

### **3. Update regularly**

Social media is like a flower - if you don't give it water it will neither grow to its full potential, nor will it ever bloom. If you do not update your social media profiles frequently, you will disappear in a sea of users. Stay updated with current affairs, join in conversations, and make sure your posts are interesting. The more you engage, the more you will grow.

### **4. Follow follow follow**

Always follow back: follow your followers back, and follow those who interact with you. Focus on building relationships and creating a place where clients or customers can have a discussion with you.

### **5. Respond to feedback**

Let your followers know you acknowledge them. If they have a complaint, respond quickly and in a professional manner. In addition, should you receive good feedback, always remember to send an appreciative reply. Being engaging makes it more personal: everyone wants to know he or she is speaking to an actual person and not an automatic replying machine.

Remember that social media is a very powerful resource. Always review your posts before they go live, and never use your business' profile for personal posts. Be creative, but stay professional. Once you make yourself present on social media, it will open a whole new world of advertising, marketing and networking for you.

When you are confident that your profiles are all well on track, link them to your website and emails. Now clients will be able to find you easily and you can grow your network even further.