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Looking to optimise your ROI? Let the two worlds of digital and live collide
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LIVE EVENTS

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Introduction and contents

This is the essential FaceTime Social Media Guide, downloadable through the FaceTime website: www.facetime.org.uk/social

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Three questions for you...



1 Does your business **talk to its customers?**

2 Do your customers **talk to your business?**

3 Do your customers **talk to each other about your brand?**

Of course the answer to all three questions is 'Yes'. We're social animals and we love to talk. It's human nature. It's what we do.

We talk about ourselves and each other. We talk about what we like and what we don't. We share knowledge and ideas. We give guidance and make recommendations. Whatever the subject, whatever the purpose, conversation has a profound influence on our understanding, attitudes, and behaviour. It's also how we build trust, and the opinions of those we trust have the greatest influence of all. That's human nature too.

The human connection is what makes live events so powerful. Potential customers don't have to base buying decisions on faceless literature, websites, or advertising. They can shake a hand, look someone in the eye, and have a one-to-one dialogue about what matters to them. It's personal.

Given the choice between two products or services of equal quality and price, a potential customer will always buy from the brand they feel they know best and trust the most, or which has been recommended by their trusted peers. Engagement and trust win business.

That's why social media marketing should be at the heart of every integrated marketing strategy, and why it has

particular relevance to live events. Social media and live events are both about the engagement between customers and brands, building relationships, earning trust, developing influence and managing reputation. They're both fuelled by interaction and conversation.

This guide will show you how your business can use social media marketing to achieve greater success at live events and build a more competitive brand.

Social Context

In its broadest sense, the term 'social media' is used to describe any web or mobile-based technology that facilitates interaction and conversation, and the sharing of content created by users.

Social media gives individuals a global voice and the opportunity to express their views and share information with a global audience in real-time. Unlike traditional media, it tends to be very open, democratic and, to a large extent, self-regulating. Social networks, blogs, wikis, photo and video sharing services, discussion forums, and review sites all fall under the overall banner of social media.

55%

of social network users are **connected to brands**.²

1.47 billion

people are using **social networks worldwide** in 2012 to **1.73 billion** 2013 - **an 18% increase**. By 2017 there will be a network audience of 2.55 billion.¹

This guide focuses on the current seven big players most relevant to businesses and their live events: Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Linked in, YouTube, Google+, and Blogging.

Social networks in focus



facebook

- **1.26 billion** active facebook users³
- **751 million** mobile users⁴
- **65%** of the European Internet population are **Facebook members**.²

An individual member has a '**Profile**' and '**Friends**'. A business has a '**Page**' and '**Likes**'.

Think of '**Friends**' simply as contacts (they don't have to be real friends). The average Facebook user has 130 'Friends'.^{8,3}

Think of '**Likes**' simply as expressions of interest or approval. When you connect with a brand by '**Liking**' a business '**Page**', you'll receive updates from that brand and be able to interact with it.



- **63%** of Google + members access the site via their **smartphones**²
- There are **500 million** registered users and 359 million active users on Google +¹²

Google + is the social media network for Google. It integrates elements from the other social media platforms whereby you can post content, use the hashtag and engage with other users.

twitter

- **500 million** active users with 200 million regular users.¹⁵
- **19%** of the European Internet population are **Twitter members**²

A 'Tweet' is a short update, up to 140 characters long, and can include links to other pages on the web.

Every Twitter user (both individuals and brands) are identified by a unique username prefixed with an @ symbol. For example, the FaceTime Twitter account is @FaceTimeUK. Usernames can be up to 15 characters long.

Twitter's equivalent to 'Sharing' on Facebook is the 'Retweet' (or 'RT' for short).



- **83%** of Pinterest members access Pinterest through their **smartphones**²
- **41%** of Pinterest users share **branded content** on their website²
- Pinterest tops **70 million** users on the site¹¹

Pinterest is a pinboard-style photo-sharing website, which allows users to manage theme-based image collections. These collections could be anything from events to interests and hobbies.

LinkedIn

- **200 million** active members of which 11 million are UK members.¹⁵
- **3 million** LinkedIn company pages.¹⁷

LinkedIn is a social network specifically for business contacts, or 'Connections'.



- **More than 70 million** unique users visit YouTube each month¹⁸
- **Third** most popular website in the UK after Google and Facebook.¹⁸

YouTube is the largest online video-sharing service and, although it isn't a social network in quite the same sense as the others, users can share and comment on video content and subscribe to other users' 'Channels'.

Seven social media myths



Many businesses are missing a powerful marketing opportunity by believing (or hiding behind) popular myths and misunderstandings about social media. Is yours one of them?

1 'Social media is just for kids chatting to their mates and playing games. It's not relevant to business.'

Chat and gaming are certainly popular aspects of social media (and not just for kids), but they're far from the whole story. There are more 35-54 year-old users on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn than any other age group. Part of the motivation to join Facebook and Twitter for over half the users was to find out about new products and brands.

2 'I don't care what people had for dinner and I'm not interested in photos of their pets, so social networks aren't for me.'

Social networks are just a platform for people to talk and share information. Whether it's online, in the office, at home, or down the pub, what people talk about isn't always serious (thank goodness) or interesting to you, but so what? It's easy to ignore the 'noise' if you choose to. If you don't embrace social networks as a way of engaging with your customers, you'll miss out on far more than just what they had for dinner.

3 Monitoring social networks would be a waste of staff time and would reduce productivity.'

Which staff? Whose productivity? Does your business invest in a marketing team and staff to take care of customer service? Are they a waste of time too?

4 'Social media might work for B2C brands, but it's no use at all in B2B marketing.'

Marketing to businesses is of course quite different to marketing to consumers, but they have one very important thing in common: It's people that make buying decisions. Relationships, trust, influence, and reputation are just as critical for B2B marketing as they are in consumer environments (perhaps even more so) and that's exactly where social media has impact. It's also worth remembering that people don't join social networks because they're 'a consumer' or 'a trade buyer'. They're just people, with a diverse range of work and personal interests.

5 'We're not using social networks, because we don't want customer complaints being made in public.'

If customers choose to complain about your business via social networks, they'll do so whether you're active online or not. In fact 36% of social network users have posted content about a brand (both positive and negative). The only difference is that, if you're not part of the conversation, you probably won't get to hear about a complaint and won't have the chance to turn it into an opportunity for fantastic customer service.

6 'Using social media doesn't cost anything so we'll give it a go and see what happens.'

It's true that the major social networks don't charge usage fees, but it's a huge mistake to think of social media as 'free' or something to dabble with. Just like any other kind of marketing, social media needs to be part of an integrated strategy and its implementation requires planning, time, resource, and training.

7 'We're not using social media, because we can't predict the ROI.'

Predicting the return on investment of social media is certainly difficult at the outset, but predicting the outcome of ignoring it as a marketing channel is easy: Your brand will suffer and you'll lose business to your socially-enabled competitors. It's a bit like investing in a great customer service team. It would be almost impossible to predict the direct ROI of having one, but not providing customer service would be a disaster. What you can do, to help with future planning, is measure the impact of social media on website traffic and the uplift on e-commerce or enquiries. You might also conduct regular customer surveys to monitor signals about brand perception. Remember too that social media is a channel for gathering customer feedback to help you improve your products and services, as well as a really useful way of monitoring your competition.

BEFORE, DURING
AND AFTER A
LIVE EVENT



Before a live event



Customer interaction through live events and social media can create ever-increasing circles of influence and engagement.

Use the event hashtag! The hashtag has become pivotal to the events industry. It should be used to create buzz in the lead up, and ultimately lend itself as a catalyst to maintain buzz during and after the event, building the brand awareness you need to give your event that final push. How does more traffic to your website sound? The more you engage with the hashtag, the more likely you are to get retweeted. And we know what retweets mean - maximum exposure, and a greater potential to drive traffic to your website.

Social media can feed the success of live events and since offline brand experiences are the main online conversation starters, **live events** can feed the success of social media too. It's a **highly powerful combination**.

During the weeks and months leading up to your next live event, use your social channels to **create a growing 'buzz' about the show** and your involvement.

Like and follow the event on Facebook and Twitter, and do the same for other brands attending. Cross-promote announcements, website links, photos, and videos from the event organiser by sharing and retweeting. If the event is using a #hashtag on Twitter, make sure you use it too.

Share and retweet updates from show visitors and other attending brands too (though obviously not from your competitors)

Create a Facebook event and invite people to attend. **Post details of where you'll be at the event, what you'll be doing, and what visitors can look forward to.** Answer visitors' questions about the event and ask people to share their views and explain their priorities. Use the 'Question' option on Facebook to conduct interactive mini-surveys.

Don't be afraid to **repeat updates** at regular intervals to make sure key messages aren't missed (the automatic scheduling tool in Hootsuite is handy for this). To really get people engaged with your brand, and to drive visitors to you during the event itself, **offer special incentives to your social media audience. Free tickets, prize draws, and exclusive discounts** always work well, but use your imagination and make sure the incentive is trackable and linked directly to making contact with your business during the event.

What's a #hashtag

Twitter users often prefix key words in their Tweets with a # (hash) symbol. This is called **hashtagging** and it's a simple and effective way to categorise updates. Think of hashtags as the theme of a Tweet. **Users can click on a hashtag to see other similarly-themed Tweets.**



During a live event



Whether it's a one-day conference or a week-long exhibition, whatever kind of event you're attending, it's important to plan ahead. Having created lots of buzz, it's crucial you keep the momentum going during the event itself.

Think about how you'll access your social channels. Will you have a laptop and wi-fi, or will your staff use their smartphones (or both)? Get everything organised in advance, including who's going to do what and when, and make sure your signage, literature, and presentations all include the URLs of your social channels.

From your smartphone, create a Facebook Place for the event (or your location in it) and encourage your visitors to 'Check In'. Don't forget to check in yourself too. Post frequent updates about what's happening throughout the event, including photos and short video clips.

Invite people to tag themselves in your photos and to upload their own photos to your Facebook Wall. For extra buzz and interaction, consider using a live 'Twitter Wall' from a provider like TweetWallPro

(www.tweetwallpro.com). Most important of all, make the connection between people you've talked to through social media and actual event visitors. They're likely to be your most engaged customers and prospects.

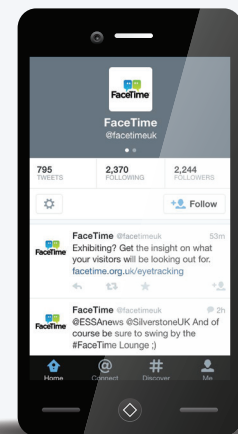
To record who you've met at the event, and to join the dots between social media (and other channels) contacts, incentives, visitors, and outcomes, it's worthwhile hiring barcode scanners from a visitor management service.

Make sure your staff are fully briefed and know how to use the scanners. Ensure you've invested in the right staff who will ascertain the leads you're after. Staff who can talk about your product and your brand confidently and get you the scans you're after for a successful event.



68% **67%** **53%**
Linked-In **Twitter** **Facebook**
users are smartphone owners*2

74% of smartphone owners
have used **location-based services**
(like **Facebook** Places)*2



After a live event



Post event buzz

Just because the event is over, it doesn't mean the dust has settled. The iron is hot and it is prime time to connect with new contacts made and those who attended – even those who didn't! Encouraging attendance for the next, unmissable event is one means to reach out.

Before you do anything else, **friend, like, follow, and connect** with all the new contacts you made at the event.

Upload more photos to Facebook and more video clips to YouTube. Ask for feedback about the event from your Social audience and give them yours. Publish a review of the event on your website or blog. Tweet the success of the event. Give thanks to businesses and individuals who supported the event. Remember, the more re-tweets, the better! Social Media is a great place to keep the buzz going! And while the enthusiasm is still bubbling, start creating the buzz about your next event.

Cross-promoting everything through all your social channels is imperative.

Maximise your ROI

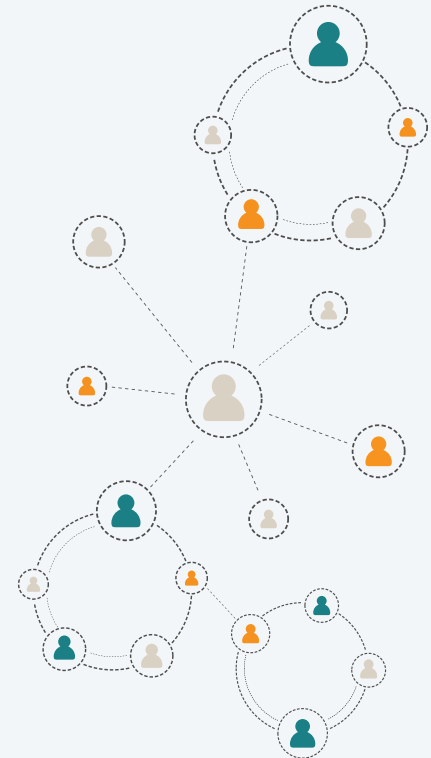
Event organisers are increasingly **making their events 365 experiences through digital channels**. Tailor your event objectives to **assume your activity will be all year round** even if you are only attending a two day event!

A gentle reminder

To be successful, your social media activity needs to be consistent, co-ordinated, and integrated with all of your marketing. Add icon links to all your social channels on every page of your website (in the header is best) and in your email newsletter templates. Add links to your staff email signature files, and when you re-print business stationery include the URLs of your social channels there too.

Add content-sharing buttons to every content page on your site (e.g. 'Like', 'Tweet', Google '+1', and LinkedIn 'Share'). Check out AddThis.com. Tell your customers and business contacts about your social channels and invite them to connect. If you send out a regular email newsletter, include a special feature about your social media activity.

Don't use your social channels in isolation. If you post a link on one social network, post it on all your others too.



STEP-BY-STEP



Step-by-step



facebook®

f Admin profile

Do you already have a personal profile on Facebook? If so, great! Here's the process: Create a page > Assign the most relevant person to act as admin. (If you're an owner or manager, you should create an account in your own name and not your business name, so you will always have control of the business' presence, independently of individual staff.) Go to www.facebook.com and follow the sign up instructions.

f Create a page

Go to www.facebook.com/pages/create.php and select one of the 6 options that best suits you. Most businesses will opt for company, organisation or institution > enter the brand/product name as you'd like it to appear on your page > tick box to confirm you agree to terms and conditions and get started!

f Set your profile picture

Set your Profile picture - this should be the image/logo that best represents your product/brand > skip a step - this is your opportunity to invite friends, import contacts, share the new page on your wall and like the new page. Not ready to do this? Skip a step and come back later.

f Basic info

Enter the URL of your website (including <http://>) and add a short description). You'll be able to change it later if you need to. Make sure you repeat your website URL in the 'About' box. Click the 'Continue' button when done.

f Don't 'Get Started'

The next screen is titled 'Get Started' and gives you five options. Ignore them all for now. Once your page is up and running

this screen will stop appearing. Instead, click the 'Edit Page' button towards the top right-hand corner. Most of the options on the next screen are OK by default, but change the 'Age Restrictions' if appropriate and make sure the 'Users can add tags to photos...' box is ticked. Click 'Save Changes' when done.

f Basic information

From the top-left menu, click 'Basic Information'. This is a more complete view of what you began earlier. Don't worry about 'Community Page', but fill-in as many of the other fields as are relevant. Make sure you complete the 'Email' and 'Phone' fields with details of how people can reach your customer service team. Click, 'Save Changes' when done.

f Notes for later

25 'likes' means you'll be able to set up a Facebook username, more suitable for offline promotion. E.g. facebook.com/WidgetsEngineering

If you have a Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube, Google+, Pinterest or any other social network account, don't forget to add those links to basic information, where it sites, 'website'.

f Add photos

Click the 'photos' link and then click the 'Upload Photos' button. Follow the on-screen instructions and upload a minimum of five images. They might be product shots or photos from events. Use whatever suits your business. When prompted, click the 'Publish' button so that the images appear in a row at the top of your page.

f Almost there

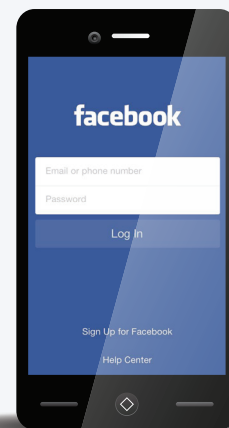
Tidy up your wall by clicking on the cross above each sited activity. No one needs to see your activity during your 'page creation'. You are now ready to interact with your customers.

f Seeding part 1

Plan your content strategy > Post Content (get the ball rolling by posting a link to your website/forthcoming live event your business is attending. You can do this by pasting the link into the white status box at the top of your page and clicking, 'post'. You can also add a caption about the link in the box.

f Seeding part 2

Get Some 'Likes'. Now you're ready to start growing your Facebook audience. You're still logged-in as the Admin user. At the top of the Page, click the 'Like' button. If your Admin user is just a made-up identity logout and then log back in using your personal account so you can 'Like' the Page too. Ask all your staff who use Facebook to 'Like' the Page (email everyone a link) and ask friends and willing business contacts to do the same.



Step-by-step



Pinterest

Most businesses are at a loss when it comes to the value of Pinterest. The reality is that social media continues to grow and breed and the popularity of online visual culture cannot be ignored. It's a way to bring your brand values to life. Words are logical, pictures are emotional. It's key that you combine both creatively for maximum impact.

What are your audience's business and/or lifestyle interests?

A big challenge for all marketers is getting to grips with understanding who their customers are. Pinterest can be a great way of painting that picture for you, as well as bringing your customers interests and lifestyles to life...

Create a few boards before promoting it

Some ideas include:

- Pictures of your products & customers/customer's lifestyle and interests/Info- graphs
- Memes, which again revolves around your target audience's lifestyle interests
- Behind the scenes of your company

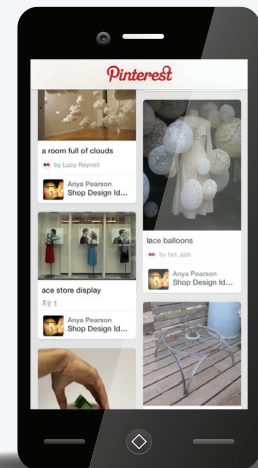
Follow pinners you want to follow back

- Pinterest is a social media site, and like all social media it's crucial you take an interest in other people's content too.
- Hash tag away. This makes it easy to combine your Twitter and your Pinterest strategies!

Boost traffic back to your website

Add a URL to your pins, driving traffic to your website!

Hash tag away. This makes it easy to combine your Twitter and your Pinterest strategies!



Step-by-step



twitter

Twitter is an exciting place to grow your brand and enhance your B2B and/or B2C marketing initiatives. The main objective of Twitter is to share your content with the hope that it will get retweeted on such a vast scale that your brand will go viral. This involves a combination of factors including knowing who your audience is, having a clear communication strategy, and having fabulous blog, YouTube and Pinterest content to share. Another handy tip is to identify and build relationships with stakeholders that have a high number of followers. If you were to get retweeted by them, it would greatly expand your twitter reach.

Create the buzz internally

One way to enhance your company's brand on Twitter is by empowering all of your employees to be part of Twitter culture. If they don't know how to use it, teach them. The more active and engaged you are with Twitter, the more fruitful your results will be.

Keep focus on the end goal. Increase your ROI

Nobody is expecting a hard sales pitch through social media, but remind yourself why you're there. You're representing your brand and ultimately the objective is to increase your ROI. A call to action IS expected and accepted. Drive traffic to your website!

Spin negative engagement into positive engagement

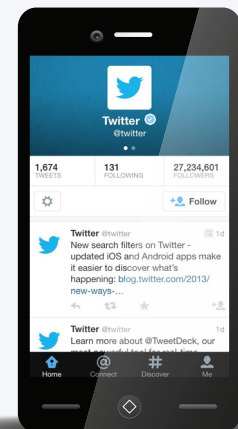
You can't please everyone. While most people engage with brands on social media in a positive way, people will also use it as a platform for complaints. This is your opportunity to convey the transparency of your brand, and lend an explanation or solution to the customer. Twitter is the preferred platform to do this as it works in real time.

Get the top dogs involved!

Yes, these guys are busy and powerful. This is exactly why they are perfect Twitter advocates. They're constantly travelling and meeting with people from all over the place and will have interesting opinions on the market. All of which are tweet worthy!

Schedule tweets

Diarise key email and social media campaigns and run your blogs alongside them. This will help the audience become familiar with your consistent messaging and is fundamental to the success of any campaign.



Step-by-step



LinkedIn

To create a Company Page on LinkedIn, you first need a personal account. If you don't have one, go to www.linkedin.com and follow the on-screen instructions to 'Join Now'. As you configure your new account (or when you 'Edit Profile' if you had one already), you'll be given the option to 'Add a current position'. Enter your business name in the 'Company Name' box. If a Company Page already exists for that name (e.g. if a member of staff has previously created one) then you can select it. If there are no matches, you'll be prompted to 'Add [your business] as a new company'. Click that link and follow the on-screen instructions. The process includes an identity validation by email.



Attracting more than 500 million registrants, and complete with a SEO tool, this is one platform not to be missed.

Unlike Facebook, it is integrated with other Google products and technologies such as Google Search and YouTube, thus making it a powerful business tool.

Getting started:

- Share content with communities as you would on LinkedIn.
- Include hashtags. As with Twitter, they'll make your posts discoverable.

YouTube

To create a channel for your business on YouTube, go to www.youtube.com and follow the on-screen instructions to 'Create Account'. When prompted for an email address, use a generic company address (e.g. info@) rather than one that's specific to a member of staff. Under 'Account Settings' you can configure your 'Profile', 'Email Options', 'Sharing', and 'Privacy'. When looking at the 'My Channel' page, there are more configuration options under 'Settings' and 'Themes and Colours'.

Once your Channel is created, subscribe to other relevant channels, add some individual videos to your 'Favourites', and then upload videos about your business and its products or services.

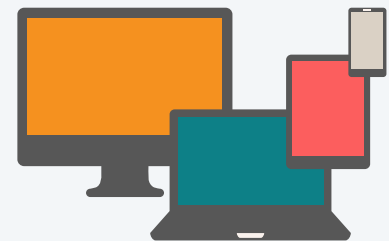
- Unlike Twitter, Google+ utilises hashtag to posts, although you should still use your own tags to help categorise relevant content on similar discussions.
- Optimise visual content. One suggestion would be to source content from your Pinterest to enhance the visual element of your Google+ account.
- Add the +1 button to your site.
- Last but not least, boost your SEO. Post often. Share content. Connect with profiles. Automate your tweets through your Google+ to maintain consistent messaging.

LinkedIn Tip

If one or more Company Pages already exist for your business, try to consolidate into a single page by co-ordinating with your staff (past and present) who use LinkedIn.

Google+ Pages

The Google+ social network also allows businesses to create 'Pages' for their brands and products. Google+ is growing fast, so make sure you consider it in your social media strategy.



Step-by-step



Join the blogging revolution

Blogs have never been at the forefront of marketing managers' game plan, but why? Well, we all know that they're busy people who have little time to play with. Blogs sound daunting and time consuming! But are they missing a trick here? Is blogging worth investing in? The answer is YES. But it doesn't have to be painful. Below you'll see a breakdown on how to speed up the process:

STEP 1

Content strategy

Ask expert speakers and exhibitors if they have any interesting blogs, whitepapers, press releases, videos, or visual content that they wouldn't mind sharing with you. It's great for exposure and a speedy way to generate content. Once you have this, the ground work is in place! Ask the whole team if they have anything interesting to contribute to the blog. There'll always be something someone has seen in this morning's industry news, or heard on yesterday's grapevine. Generating blog content is much easier and less daunting as a team effort. You'll be surprised how quickly the content starts accumulating.

STEP 2

Style guide

As a marketer, a style guide is something you'll already be familiar with. Maintaining a consistent tone should be no different in your blog as it is in your everyday marketing communications. If you know who your audience is, you'll know how to speak to them and communicate with them. A style guide will help keep things consistent and maintain the trust and credibility you need from your audience. It will also act as a guide in steering the content. No one wants to read anything that doesn't engage them. Quality content is imperative when it comes to any form of media including blogs. It's the only way to get people talking about what you're offering. It's more logical to share a blog, than feed all of your content in bite-size pieces through Facebook and Twitter.

Be sure to include the following key points:

- What events are you attending and why?
- Interesting and engaging insights into your products and services.
- Interviews with stakeholders, which include: 'How to' guides/industry news/ video content/ re-spun press releases.

STEP 3

Blog calendar

Diarise key email and social media campaigns and run your blogs alongside them. This will help the audience become familiar with your consistent messaging and is fundamental to the success of any campaign.

Why blog?

Blogs are social media and social media is the human element of the brand that your audience feel comfortable engaging with. Unlike Facebook or Twitter, there is the opportunity here to flesh out good content!

- Ideas are powerful. A blog can help you reinforce important ideas to customers, which in turn will build better relationships.
- Elements of your content can also be used on your Twitter or Facebook updates, and you can even share your blog on LinkedIn.
- When tactically combined within your email marketing strategy, quality blog content can help increase email click through rates.
- By focusing on your keywords, embedding appropriate links, and optimising your URLs, blogging can significantly boost your SEO, and grow your twitter reach.

Statistical sources

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The Essential Guide
to **Social Media** for Live Events