Social media is top-of-mind for business owners looking for new ways to drive sales, foster engagement and generate leads. In fact, 96 percent of small business leaders worldwide employ some form of social media marketing¹ and more than half (57 percent) of consumers say they would think more highly of a business after seeing positive feedback online.² Follow these four steps to optimize your company’s social media presence and potentially boost sales:

1. **Find the right platform for your audience**

   Finding new customers is all about **knowing how to socialize**. For example, Facebook is a strong platform for B2C sales, but the site’s algorithm can make it difficult for brands without an advertising budget to be seen or heard. LinkedIn has proven successful for sales of B2B services and products, but keep in mind that customers on LinkedIn expect professional and informative content. While Twitter can be leveraged for both B2B and B2C sales, it also provides the opportunity to listen to prospects to identify key trends and pain points. Instagram can serve as an outlet for brands to highlight visual content and reach audiences that are ready to engage. More than half of Instagram users follow a business, and 60 percent of people learn about products or services through the photo-sharing service.³

2. **Connect with prospects**

   Connect with potential customers by using audience-targeted keyword searches within each social platform and listen for discussions, questions and conversations about your product. For example, if your business sells grilling equipment, search for mentions of the brand names you carry, as well as all users who mention barbeque, grilling and cookouts. Search for keywords that relate to your industry and your competition to connect with your target audience. Once you connect, don’t bombard your community with sales pitches. Instead, get to know your audience by reading profiles and identifying your prospects’ needs.

3. **Build relationships by engaging**

   Social media is a powerful way to build your brand at a relatively low cost. Professional services firms, for example, use social media to establish themselves as thought leaders by sharing valuable content, such as case studies and educational videos, with their target audience. And although 36 percent of small businesses with social media pages never respond to customer comments², customer interaction is critical. Reply to all queries as soon as possible and provide a quick solution or explanation. Once you build relationships, you can tell prospects how your product or service might be of value to them.

4. **Drive your social community to your website**

   Mention your company’s website or product page on all social platforms, regularly create and share relevant content, and use social media advertising. Also, don’t forget the importance of mobile. Roughly 80 percent of all social media engagement happens via mobile devices⁴, making these channels ideal for reaching a high volume of buyers on the go.

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1 “12 Social Media Marketing Trends for Small Business,” June 9, 2015, Social Media Examiner
2 “Small Businesses and Consumers Not on the Same (Web)Page,” Aug. 27, 2015, DMN
3 “Hitting 500,000 Advertisers,” September 2016, Instagram for Business blog
4 “Nearly 80 percent of social media time now spent on mobile devices,” April 4, 2016, Marketing Land

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