



SMO for Local Businesses in 4 Easy Steps

Social Media Optimization (SMO), like its close cousin Search Engine Optimization (SEO), is a way for local businesses to improve their chances of being found online.

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Yikes! Not another annoying web acronym I'm supposed to master! Just when small business owners were gaining confidence and traction with search engine optimization, or SEO, along comes this explosive social media "thing" that's making everything even more complicated than it was before.

Do small businesses really need to know about this stuff? Can social media help me attract customers, keep the ones I have and make me more money? Will social media even be more important in the future?

Good questions!

And the answers are Yes, Yes and Yes.

SEO remains a vital tactic for business owners who want to show up in search engine results. SMO – or social media optimization – is important if you want your business and your business's website to show up on social media radar.

SMO isn't technically new because some web marketing geeks have been talking about it for several years. But with social



media usage – and the "Big Three" in particular (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) – skyrocketing, businesses that don't join in risk being left behind. Basically, SMO is the process of making changes to your business website in order to make it more visible in searches that take place on specialized social media sites and search engines.



Here are four things you should know about social media optimization:



1. Make your business website your social media and brand central.

This requires thinking about your website and your overall online presence in different ways. Instead of merely conveying basics about your business products and services, turn your site into the internet hub for everything related to your business or brand.

For example, make it easy for customers to connect to your site from Facebook. Open a Twitter account and add your Twitter stream to your site as well. If you have videos, post them on YouTube and connect to those as well.

2. Create content that's shareable and make it easy for people to share.

Shareable content means good content. The better, more useful or entertaining it is, the more people will want to share it with others. Unique content is a valuable currency that you can use to promote your business. Top shareable content includes tips, lists and how-to guides as well as eye-grabbing photos.

Tweet about your content. Blog about it too. Make PowerPoint slides of your content and post them on sites such as Scribd.com. Add buttons that let visitors "Like" your content on Facebook or share it on StumbleUpon.

3. Offer participation rewards to customers.

In the world of social media, "engagement" is the one thing that matters the most. Customers and prospects who visit your site, leave comments, "friend" you on Facebook, follow your Tweets and share your content are the gold standard.

Engagement is behavior you want to reward. You can do this by responding quickly to customers and offering special deals, information or perks.

4. Focus and magnify your efforts with a social media dashboard.

Part of optimizing your own website for social media includes participating in social media sites yourself, which means you need -- at a minimum -- a Facebook page, Twitter account and probably a blog.

To avoid social media overload and to make managing all this simple, try using a social media dashboard such as Hootsuite.com. This easy-to-use service lets you update multiple networks in one step, including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, WordPress (a free blogging platform) and others. You can track results, monitor mentions, schedule updates and manage multiple contributors, among other things.

Dashboard services make social media easier to handle and less time-consuming, so you can stay active and engaged.

