



# Twenty Ways to make Social Media Work for You

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Voloper Creations Inc.,  
3100 Steeles Avenue West Suite 400,  
Vaughan Ontario L4K 3R1 . Canada  
Ph.: 905.660.1481 Fax: 905.660.6053 Toll Free:  
1.888.252.4519  
General Inquiries: [info@voloper.com](mailto:info@voloper.com)  
Sales: [sales@voloper.com](mailto:sales@voloper.com)  
Web: <http://www.voloper.com>



  


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### What is Social Media?

Social Media is a term used for various web-based platforms designed to connect individuals, organizations, and businesses via social interactions. Users can interact using text, images, and audio/visual media.

Top social media sites include:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Flickr

Traditional media (like radio or newspapers) feature a one-to-many paradigm. Social media feature and facilitate a many-to-many paradigm. While the many-to-many paradigm provides individuals and businesses with an unprecedented ability to reach large numbers at very low costs (or at no cost), it also means having to compete with many more "publishers" of information. One also has to be particularly sensitive to different forms of social interaction permitted on each site and the level to which users wish to be "prospected" by one with a commercial motive.

### Making It Work

This eBook will walk you through the basics of making social media work for you and/or your business. Different social media sites vary in what they offer, intended use, and etiquette. For a detailed look at the top social media sites, please download our [Basics of Social Media](#) white paper. Here we will explore twenty generalized strategies that can be applied to most forms of social media.

#### 1. Provide Useful Content

People will find you and let you into their networks if you provide useful content.

YouTube, for example, has become a remarkable source for homegrown "how to" videos, covering everything from how to tie a Windsor knot to how to build your own computer. No one minds if you promote yourself within the context of those videos or within the context of your YouTube "channel" page.

#### 2. Avoid Direct Selling

Who of us hasn't experienced the disappointment of being invited over to an acquaintance's house for an intimate dinner party only to find out the dinner party was a way to oblige you to stick around for a long

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pitch on why you should join his/her multi-level marketing scheme. People join social media sites to make new friends, communicate with old ones, and discover new and interesting things. A Twitter feed or a Facebook news feed that is purely promotional or even semi-veiled promotion will be of interest to few.

### 3. Don't Let Your Content Get Stale

Nothing hurts a business like a "cob web" site, a site that's obviously not been updated since 1998. The same goes for social media. Before you jump into trying to establish your presences in one or more social media venues, ensure you have realistic resources for updating a Twitter account or your own Facebook fan page.

### 4. Lurk for a while and then Uncloak

Before jumping into any social media venue, lurk for a time. To "lurk" means to spend time consuming the content provided by others but you're not providing any content (messages, posts, "tweets", etc.) yourself and users might not be aware you're even part of their community. Lurking allows you to absorb user culture and avoid breaches of etiquette that seem obvious to experienced users. After lurking for a time, you're ready to "uncloak", which means making it obvious to other users you're an active member of their community by joining discussions or providing your own content.

### 5. Make Your Content Portable

Portable content makes it easier for others to spread your message. Consider sites that



allow others to syndicate your content via RSS or embedding code. Make sure you properly watermark your content so others can follow it back to your site for updates or similar content.

### 6. Use Humor

A good, appropriate sense of humor is an excellent way of raising your profile within a network. Naturally what is funny to some people might be considered highly offensive to others. It's best to keep your humor conservative and respectful.

### 7. Don't Ignore Tags

If a social media site supports tagging (entering key words), make effective use of tags. Tags allow others to discover content based on tags (typically by just clicking on a tag) and you're ignoring a potential source of traffic.

### 8. Pass On Compliments

Instead of telling people how great your product or service is, tell others how great their efforts are. Social networking is about building levels of trust. It's very easy to trust and like someone if they like you first.

### 9. Ask Questions

Who doesn't like to demonstrate their smarts before their peers? Asking questions gets a discussion going, makes people favorable to you, and raises your profile within a community. Pick your questions well and make sure they're not answered by an obvious Google search.

## 10. Answer Questions

Many people have questions but rarely do they get an adequate answer. So many "answer exchange" type services provide answers that are extremely cursory or simply posted for a quick laugh. You can raise your profile in any social network by bringing your knowledge and experience to bear.

## 11. It's More Important to be Sociable than to be "Right"

There's a classic comic of a guy who refuses to go to bed, despite the urgings of his wife. He discovered, much to his amazement, someone on the Internet has the wrong opinion and he won't sleep until he has corrected the other's opinion. The best way to blow your profile is by losing your cool. If something looks like it's heading towards a charged debate, state your position, thank the other for stating his/her position, and disengage.

## 12. Make It Easy for People to Find You

Take a step back and consider how another might find you for discussions outside of the social networking venue. Are you taking advantage of a linkable signature line? Is there a link to your home page in your profile? Have you configured the site to alert you via email if someone has private messaged you or followed up on some posting you've made?

## 13. Complete Your Profile

An incomplete site profile makes you appear hasty and lacking in attention to detail. Complete your site profile to the fullest possible extent. Include anything interesting about yourself you're willing to share with others: books you've read, exotic foods you enjoy. These things add dimension to your online "character" and might be talking points others use to break the ice with you. Also, try to include an appropriate, complimentary picture of yourself. People like to look at smiling faces.

## 14. Leverage Immediacy

Magazines require you to wait until next week or next month to hear about it. Newspapers make you read about it the next day. TV makes you wait until 11 pm. Twitter lets you read about it while it's actually happening. People have come to expect the Internet to provide the first draft of any event. The event doesn't have to be a flood or a war. For every person who attends a major conference in your industry, there are probably 10 people who wish they had the time to attend. These people would welcome on-the-ground coverage by someone in their social network.

## 15. Don't Underestimate People's Intelligence

In points 9/10 it is suggested asking questions or answering questions as a way to raise your profile. Many people are tempted to turn a question or answer into a semi-veiled promo for their product or service. Avoid these kinds of gimmicks.



## 16. Get a Second Opinion

You know you. People who know you know you. But how do people who do not know you, view you purely via your words. What you think is succinct can seem terse or arrogant when words are not accompanied with vocal inflection. If possible, find someone who has no prior knowledge of you and get an opinion as to how you come across online.

## 17. People Love to Read About Others' Problems

Many years ago there was a computer column by science fiction author Jerry Pournelle in the now defunct computer magazine *Byte*. Every month Pournelle would talk about tinkering with some new computer he was trying to set up for his wife or install some new video card in his PC. Surveys indicated people very much enjoyed his columns where he encountered problems. People have an innate fascination when things go horribly wrong for others. Don't hesitate to walk readers through a problem you're having. Just keep it reasonable and whine free.

## 18. Don't Ramble

Twitter, of course, enforces a 140 character limit forcing you to be very succinct. Other sites are pretty open ended. As in all things on the Internet you have only a brief amount of time to get a person to commit to reading what you wrote or watch your media presentation. Write in the newspaper style, keep your important facts at the top and answering the five W's in the first two or three paragraphs. If you're doing a video, YouTube

gives you ten minutes but, save for the most detailed "how to" type video, keep a video much shorter than that. Movies stick to scenes that go no longer than two to three minutes.

## 19. Don't Get too Attached to a Social Media Venue

The Internet is the classic Red Queen's Race from *Alice in Wonderland*. The Red Queen character comments "...it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!" To wit, today's Twitter might be tomorrow's Friendster. Keep an eye open for the next big thing, where your clients, customers, and visitors are going next. Make sure your content is easily portable to the next big thing no matter what it is.

## 20. Practice the Three R's

Remember you're representing either your business or you as a professional person. When online keep it:

**Rational:** Stick to the facts. Support your opinions with facts and logic.

**Responsible:** Stay on topic. Keep your messages, images, and media appropriate.

**Respectful:** Respect people's tolerance for being marketed to. Don't waste people's time making them think they're getting something they are not. For example, don't provide a YouTube how to video and then ask people to visit your site to see the final key step

