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## Does your business really need to be on social media?

**Instead of following the crowd, business owners need to weigh up the pros and cons of going on social media. Expert Eimer Duffy from FIT Social Media gives her thoughts on the matter.**

So you have your website, which is great! There's just one thing you are not sure about, regarding your business's online presence, do I really need to be on social media?

You hear from others "Oh, you have to be on Facebook!" or "You need to be on Twitter!", "Instagram is so important!", "Are you not on Pinterest?", "Oh, my business is on LinkedIn as it's the best platform!", "What do you mean you are not on Snapchat?" and the advice goes on... And you feel "Eek! What should I do?"

I will be honest here and say most businesses do benefit from being on social media when they commit to it. So how do you really know if social media is right for you? Let's look at social media compared to traditional methods for example; newspapers well I don't remember last time I bought a paper or even sat down and read one, do you? When it comes to TV, I flick through the channels when the ads are on, or I watch what I recorded on Sky or pop over to Netflix.

With radio, I prefer podcasts so I miss the ads. Junk mail and flyers normally end up in the bin). So, businesses have become aware that the way they used to market themselves has changed and many have crafted a social media presence, knowing that nowadays most people are on social media one way or another.

So, you say are still in two minds about social media as the next step and wonder what are the pros and cons? Let's keep it simple and start with some pros for being on social media for a business:

### **Pros of social media for a business:**

1. *There's no cost in getting started!* This is a great benefit to having a social media presence it is FREE to set up Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and all the other social media channels compared to other avenues. Advertising is also cost effective as in targeting your ads, you can set your budget and your timeframe, which you can't do with traditional forms of advertising.
2. *It gives you the opportunity to showcase your business.* With social media you can get to build and increase your brand awareness. You have the ability to stay top of mind, as most social media users check in multiple times a day. By engaging, entertaining and educating your audience with a good mix of content, you will build a loyal following who will become brand advocates for you. So you have the opportunity to highlight your latest products, services, events, what's happening with your business, share related content and more! You never know you might even go viral!
3. *Increase growth through leads, sales and traffic.* Social media ranks with search engines and so if you don't have a website you will be found having a social media presence. Social media offers you free ways to generate leads you could offer a free download, promote a free event, run a contest and more. By connecting and engaging with your audience you can increase sales, such as promoting special offers for a limited time or encourage your customers to share their photos and feature their photos on your channels, who wouldn't tell their friends about that! If you do have a website, having a link to it will give your audience the opportunity to click through to it and increase traffic to your website.
4. *Content is King!* By being on social media you can as I mentioned before engage, entertain and educate your audience with your content, this increases interest. Remember this is social media and not selling media so you need to mix up your content with your own content as well as related finding content that is relevant to your business to share. By doing so you will keep your audience connected and even interested enough to share it.
5. *More contact with your audience.* Social media gives you the ability to show there are people behind your brand, start a conversation and get immediate feedback. You don't get that with traditional marketing avenues. Knowing what your customers are saying about your business online is so important. Having a social media presence allows you to be able to communicate with your audience especially if they make a comment on a post or tweet.
6. *Online Reputation and Customer Service.* Another area to consider is it helps you with reputation management. For example, if you had a customer who communicated on social media about an issue that they were not happy about, you would be able to communicate directly and be seen to be interacting with that customer. So social media can provide you with a customer service channel. It does show that social media is a two-way communication channel.
7. *Data is your friend.* Social media has the great ability to provide you with analytics to show

lots of really interesting data that will help you with things like when the best time to post is, what post or tweet was the best performing, what gender is interested in you the most and more such as engagement rate, followers, page likes, post clicks and reach. All this will help you to craft your content and help with creating ads.

Now I will play “Bad Cop” and give you the other side of the coin...

### **The cons of social media for business:**

1. *It's “Rented” ground!* You can build a good online presence with social media, but you are building it on rented ground and I do advise having a website as it's space on the internet that you own.
2. *Time and Consistency.* Do you have the time and will you be consistent with your social media channel or channels? If you don't have this factored into your daily, weekly or monthly timetable then you could find this a challenge. You need to have a good social media strategy and content calendar, if these are not followed this could result in loss of focus and look bad for your online presence. Not setting the time aside for your social media, posting inconsistently and not keeping your channels up to date will damage your social media presence.
3. *Having a good content mix can be a challenge when it comes to showcasing.* As I mentioned before “Content is King” and if you don't have a good mix of content this will leave your social media looking unappealing and boring. Posting the same thing or too “salesy” can be very off putting and your audience will become less engaged. As time goes on this could have an impact on your business. Having a content calendar and social media strategy is something you need to put time into.
4. *Long time for return on investment.* As I always say “Social media is a marathon, not a sprint” so it takes a long time before you see any return on your social media investment. You should see it as building brand awareness and you want your audience to get to know you, like you and trust you. This takes time and effort which is not always taken on board.
5. *Be aware that you need to monitor and engage back ASAP!* Social media is 24/7 and never takes a holiday! It is so important to monitor your social media channel or channels. Replying to comments ASAP and reviews within a 24 hours otherwise it's a little too late.
6. *Gives everyone a voice be ready for all types of commentary.* Remember there could be comments or reviews which could be negative and to be able to keep on top and reply to them as positively as possible, as soon as possible is key. Digital customer service is something businesses need to be aware of and have a good communication strategy in

place when dealing with upset customers or trolls.

7. *You competitors can see what you are up to.* You can see them, but they can see you too. Your competitors are most likely on social media and will be looking to see what you are doing and how well you are doing it. They can find inspiration from what you are doing. See how you engage with your audience and respond to comments etc... Compared to traditional methods your competitors can gain a greater insight via social media into how you are doing. From there, they will no doubt want to endeavour to try and out do you.

Let's wrap it up. So, as you can see social media does have its pros and cons. So I hope I have helped you in regard to being on social media for your business. Thanks for reading and please let me know if you have any questions regarding this. I help businesses of every shape and size to gain a better online presence through social media optimisation and training. So if you would like to get in touch I would be delighted to see how I can help you.

*Written by Eimer Duffy, social media personal trainer and the owner of [FIT Social Media](#).*

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