

## Introduction

Do you know that there are 2.7 billion Internet users around the world? Quite an amazing number, if you ask me.

However, what I find even more amazing is how social media has reshaped the way brands do business. No longer can they expect audiences to passively sit and watch as they dictate consumer behaviors. Over the last six or seven years, a fundamental shift occurred.

This shift is particularly obvious in the way we use the terms “community,” “relationships,” and “customer service.” Now, a consumer has a voice and the power to tilt the balance in favor of more accountability and a better status quo.

Will this current state of affairs ever go away? I do not think so. Seeing big businesses start to understand the most important part of the equation (people) is wonderful.

With that said, the concept of humanizing one’s brand is still in its infancy. We have seen numerous businesses forced to learn important lessons the hard way -- like we will see throughout this eBook.

This realization first hit me in 2011, while working on *The Little Big eBook on Blogging: 40 Traffic Generation Tips*. After its release, I decided to wait until I could back up my observations with some solid data. Teaching social media classes to small business owners and solo-entrepreneurs was an excellent starting point. The rest came from conversations with clients, fellow social media advocates, and readers of Creative Ramblings, my now defunct blog.

At the end of 2012, a question popped up in my mind after reading several articles on social media strategy: What do personal brands and small business owners really know about the concept?

My interest did not lie in definitions, but rather in knowing how they implemented their strategies. While every industry is different and what works in one situation may not in another, I wanted to focus on universal rules.

So, I asked readers to submit their tips to the blog. The result was a [fantastic collection of must-follow advice](#). I loved it so much that I asked contributors if they would let me use their tips in my new eBook on social media strategy. They all said yes.

A year and four drafts later, I found myself stuck. The book started well, but fell flat around the middle, and then stretched too thin. And the quotes did not seem to fit anywhere. There clearly was something missing. My test readers noticed that as well.

“Back to the drawing board,” I thought before taking a complete break.

Stepping away from the project to focus on different endeavours helped me see things very differently. The day I decided to start working on the eBook again, everything became suddenly clear. Many of the chapters asked the same question: Your social media strategy starts with

your audience; do you know them? And most of the discussions I had with people revolved around the concepts of “audiences” and “advocates” – people who love a brand so much that they will support it and/or recommend it publicly.

This topic obviously needed to be broached in more depth. There had been too many articles about selling products and making money, and not enough about what truly matters: Those who allow you to make your business profitable. So, instead of writing a new eBook, I decided to build on what I already had. I got rid of the chapters that did not deal specifically with audiences, then reshuffled and edited what was left. The last step was to add more examples.

The reason why this eBook exists is simple. I did not want to reinvent the wheel. My goal was to go back to the basics to show that social media is really about one thing: people.

I truly believe that social media success is within the reach of anyone who is willing to make it work. And you do not need a huge budget for that.

Whether you are just getting started or have been involved in social media for a while but feel overwhelmed, this eBook is for you. In it, I will reveal tips to help you:

- Find the right audience for your product or service
- Understand what really matters to them
- Build positive and solid relationships
- Deliver valuable and relevant messages that will get you noticed

Note that I have tested and used all these tips myself, and would never recommend them if they did not work.

This eBook also features useful case studies and important takeaways, as well as recommendations of social media tools that will allow you to be more productive.

I hope you will enjoy this eBook.

To your success!

Cendrine Marrouat

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