Build a Powerful Online Presence in Less Than One Hour a Week

Gihan Perera
As social media continues to grow in popularity, smart business owners realize it’s an important marketing tool for their business. However, many of them are becoming increasingly worried about the amount of time it takes to engage actively on all the social media channels available.

For example, Internet marketing expert Chris Brogan says he spends this much time online every week:

- Blogging – once or twice a week
- Video posts – once a week
- Email newsletter – once a week
- Tweeting – 30 minutes a day
- Google+ – 20 minutes a day

Fortunately, when it comes to social media, most business owners don’t need to be as active as Chris Brogan. In fact, unless you’re operating a purely online business, you can build the foundations of an effective social media presence in as little as an hour a week.

This report will show you how.

**The Big Picture**

The key is to focus on the areas that matter the most and ignore the lower-priority areas. Make some smart decisions about which Internet marketing tools you’re going to use and which you can afford to ignore.

You can group these tools into four broad categories based on how you use them to deliver high-quality content:
Create
This will typically be your website itself. You create it once and then adjust it as required. You do need to be able to update it yourself, but most of the updates are promotional (for example: adding testimonials, promoting new events, adding new products and services).

When you start doing specific marketing campaigns, you’ll be updating this much more regularly – for example, fine-tuning the keywords on pages, creating landing pages for search engine marketing campaigns and so on. However, you don’t need to do this immediately, and you can first focus on the other activities below.

Generate
These are the tools you use for generating and distributing your content regularly. The two main tools are your blog and email newsletter, and these are supplemented by other regular content distribution tools such as YouTube videos, SlideShare presentations, a podcast (an audio newsletter) and article directories.

You don’t have to create brand-new content for each platform. Later in this report, you’ll see how easy it is to adapt one piece of material into different formats.

Automate
If you don’t have the time to get fully involved in social media, at least get a simple presence by automating the process. Every time you publish a blog post, let your followers know on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. (The free TwitterFeed.com service will do this for you.) You can also manually post links to Google+ and Pinterest.

This gives you a minimal – but useful – social media presence. Like anything else, social media will work better when you put some serious time, effort and focus into it. However, you still need to earn the right to use it as a marketing platform, and this is a way of creating a presence slowly until you’re ready to do more with it.

Participate
Finally, you can participate in online conversations. This can happen on the big social media platforms like Twitter, Google+, Facebook and LinkedIn; or they can be niche on-line communities of your customers, clients and colleagues.

This is important, and eventually it will probably give you the greatest return. It’s also what many social media consultants will advise you to do. However, it does take time, so make sure you choose the right communities and engage in the right conversations.
Summary

Here’s a summary of the four stages, written as a marketing plan:

1. Build a high-quality website that promotes you.
2. Publish articles regularly to your newsletter and blog; and optionally leverage them in other forms.
3. Automatically notify your social media followers of new blog posts.
4. Take part in conversations and discussions with peers and clients.

In this report, we focus on the middle two layers of this plan: generating high-quality content and automating your exposure on social media.

The key is to be consistent. Your online presence is based on small, consistent, high-quality contributions rather than a few sporadic marketing campaigns.

This is by no means a complete Internet marketing plan. Indeed, there are some potentially large areas of Internet marketing that we’ve completely ignored. For instance, in the “create” segment, we don’t focus on traffic analysis, SEO and lead conversion. And in the “participate” segment, we ignore most social media engagement, online communities and content curation.

Nevertheless, this is still an effective online marketing strategy. Although it’s not complete, it sets a strong foundation for your online presence, takes very little time to execute (an average of an hour a week!), and – despite its simplicity – will put your business ahead of most others in your industry.
The Plan

Broadly, your plan has three steps:

1. Identify the problems and challenges of your customers.
2. Write a high-quality article to address each of these problems.
3. Leverage the article into different forms.

Start with Their Problems

A critical first step in the process is to understand your customer’s biggest questions, problems, challenges, issues and goals. This might seem obvious, but most businesses don’t know what their customers are thinking. Sometimes, even if they do know, they still prefer to focus on their own products and services, rather than starting with the customer.

Regardless of your business, position yourself as a trusted adviser, like a doctor: You listen carefully, ask some clarifying questions, make a diagnosis and then prescribe a solution.

The first step of that process – listening carefully – will help you identify their problems. You can listen individually (from surveys, online comments and other direct customer feedback) or en masse (in industry surveys,
research and other aggregated research). If appropriate, do this both offline and online, so you get a full range of responses.

Write Articles

The next step is to write an article about each problem. Aim to write a compelling, informative article that also promotes your business.

If you already have access to good writers, ask them to write these articles. If you don’t, here is a simple five-step process – called the “PIPES” process – for writing a high-quality article that also sells:

1. State the problem using their own words.
2. Explain its implications (costs and negative consequences).
3. Point out the possibilities if there wasn’t a problem.
4. Give a brief explanation of how they can solve it.
5. Tell them what solution you offer to help them.

Each of these five points will be about one-to-two paragraphs (about 50-100 words), which means your entire article will be about 400-500 words long.

The first four steps provide high-quality information, and it’s only at the last step that you do any promotion. That’s about the right mix in an article: about 80% content and at most 20% self-promotion.

For example, here is the outline of an article for a mortgage broker writing for home owners who worry about the hidden bank fees on their home loan:

1. **Problem:** You might see the bank’s advertised rate, but what about the other fees and charges?
2. **Implications:** These extra fees might look small, but they add up over time and can cost you thousands of dollars over the life of your loan.
3. **Possibilities:** If you could reduce or eliminate those fees, that extra money could pay for a family holiday, or a new car or school fees.
4. **Explanation:** To avoid the trap of excessive fees, you could read the loan agreement carefully, check a consumer website to understand the terminology or create a spreadsheet yourself of all the banks and their various loan products.
5. **Solution:** Alternatively, you could talk to me – a mortgage broker. I’ve done in-depth research on all the major loans available in Australia, and I can tell you exactly how much each of them will cost you. It’s a free service (because I get paid by the bank), and I have access to all the major banks and their products. Contact me at [phone number] or visit my website [address].

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Although this is only an article outline (it’s 180 words, which you could expand easily to 400-500 words), you can see how effectively it provides high-quality content and promotes the business as well.

Follow this process for writing 10-12 articles and you’ll have an excellent collection of high-quality content you can share with your network.

**Leverage the Content**

Each article is a high-quality piece of content. Now let’s us look at how you can leverage that article. Here are 16 options:

1. **Blog**
   
   Your blog is the hub of all your online activities, and also a convenient tool for automatically distributing content to social media. So publish every article you write to your blog.

   If you don’t already have a blog, create a free blog at [Blogger.com](http://Blogger.com).

Let’s look at each of these ideas in more detail.

**Text Version**

1. **Blog**

   Your blog is the hub of all your online activities, and also a convenient tool for automatically distributing content to social media. So publish every article you write to your blog.

   If you don’t already have a blog, create a free blog at [Blogger.com](http://Blogger.com).
As noted earlier, use Twitterfeed.com to connect your blog to Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. You only need to do this once, and then every blog post you write is posted automatically to these platforms.

2. Email newsletter

You should publish both a blog and newsletter because they serve different purposes. The blog is permanent but isn’t delivered to inboxes. The newsletter is transient but reaches your subscribers in a place they value highly (their inbox).

If you don’t have an email newsletter, use MailChimp.com, a simple but powerful tool for managing mailing lists. It’s also free for up to 2,000 subscribers.

3. Article directory

Publish the article to EzineArticles.com, which is one of many “article directories.” These sites allow other people to use your articles free of charge in exchange for promoting you and your website. It’s easy to use and free, so upload your article there.
4. **Google+**

Post the article on Google+, which is Google’s social media network. Google+ allows you to post entire articles (unlike, say, Twitter and LinkedIn), and because it is owned by Google, everything you do there influences your Google search ranking. That alone makes it worthwhile, even if you don’t use any of its other features.

5. **Print**

Print 10 copies on your letterhead, add a handwritten personal note to each, and send it to key people in your network. People do still appreciate getting material in the post, and this can be a point of difference in an increasingly online world.

**Audio Version**

Now we create an audio version of the same content, for people who prefer to listen rather than read.

6. **MP3 file**

Read your article out loud, record it and publish it as an MP3 file on your blog. Mac users can use the built-in Garage Band software; PC users can use a free tool like Audacity (from [audacity.sourceforge.net](http://audacity.sourceforge.net)).
7. Podcast (audio newsletter)

A podcast is an “audio newsletter” – the audio equivalent of an email newsletter for text articles. People who subscribe to your podcast through iTunes or another podcast reader will get new episodes automatically.

If you don’t have any podcasting software, use Hipcast.com, a very cost-effective platform for publishing a regular podcast.

Visual Version

Now, let’s look at ways to publish your article in visual form.

8. SlideShare

Convert your article into a PowerPoint presentation and publish it to SlideShare.com (Think of SlideShare as “YouTube for PowerPoint”). Simply take your article and create a simple 6-slide presentation: One title slide and one slide for each of the five “PIPS” elements in the article. Each slide can have a summary of the main point you’re making and an attractive photograph to accompany it. (You can get professional but affordable photographs at iStockphoto.com.)

The biggest benefit of publishing to SlideShare is that users can discover your presentation there (just like they discover videos on YouTube) or via...
Google. Another benefit is that you can also embed the presentation into your blog.

9. AuthorStream

Publish the same PowerPoint presentation to AuthorStream.com, which is not as popular as SlideShare but still has a large number of users. Because you’ve already created the presentation, it takes very little extra effort to publish it here as well.

10. Animoto

Take your PowerPoint slides, save them as individual graphics and upload them to Animoto.com to create an animated slide show. Animoto is designed for creating personal photo albums, but it’s just as effective for educational content. Be sure to upgrade to the commercial license to create your slide show, then download the video you create and publish it to YouTube.
11. **Postcards**

Save your PowerPoint slides as individual graphics and then use them to create a series of printed postcards. Use a local printer in your area or an online service like Vistaprint.com to create the postcards.

12. **YouTube**

Record a video of you talking through the article to camera and publish it to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com). Don’t read it out word for word – simply talk through the content. If you’ve written your article using the PIPES process, you will find it a natural sequence for presenting an idea to camera.

Combination

Everything we’ve done so far has been based on a single article. Now we can extend this even further by combining some of the articles you’ve written. Because the articles all solve customer problems or concerns, they will naturally fit together.

13. **Special Report**

Combine articles into a special report, which is simply a Microsoft Word document combining the articles, with a brief introduction and conclusion. Give your report a catchy title – for example, “The Seven Biggest Problems with Your Golf Swing,” “Six Simple Ways to Make More Money in Your Business” or “The Five Biggest Traps With Online Marketing.”

Save the report in PDF format and offer it as a free download on your website. Optionally, you could ask for a name and email address in exchange for the download.

14. **Issuu.com**

Upload the special report to [Issuu.com](https://issuu.com), which is like YouTube for PDF. This makes it searchable on Issuu.com, and – like your PowerPoint show on SlideShare – allows you to embed it into your blog.
15. **Diagnostic Questionnaire**

Take each of the problems you have identified in each article and convert it into a question that your readers can rate on a scale of 0-5. For example, if one article is about the hidden cost of bank fees, your question can be: “How well do you understand all the fees and charges on a home loan?”

Save this questionnaire as a PDF file and make it available on your website, just like you did with the special report.

16. **Webinar**

Offer a free promotional one-hour webinar on this same topic, using a tool like GoToWebinar.com. Conduct this as a Question & Answer webinar, where you spend the first 10-15 minutes listing the most common problems (based on the articles you’ve combined into the report), then open up the rest of the webinar for questions.

If you need more structure, ask for the questions in advance. This gives you the chance to prepare, arrange the questions in a meaningful order and do research before the webinar.

If you haven’t conducted webinars before, this is a very easy way to get started. You don’t have to create a lot of slides or prepare a lot, and the Q&A format increases audience engagement and interaction.
One Hour a Week

It might seem like a lot of work to write all of these articles and publish them in different formats. But if you look carefully at the effort involved, and distribute it over a month, you’ll be pleasantly surprised at just how little time it takes.

For example, here’s one way to do most of the work above, averaging only about an hour a week:

- Week 1: Write one article and publish it to your blog (1 hour). This will automatically post it to Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter as well.
- Week 2: Create the audio version and publish it to your blog and podcast (30 minutes). Create the YouTube video (30 minutes).
- Week 3: Copy and paste the article into your newsletter (30 minutes). Submit it to EzineArticles.com (15 minutes). Manually post it to Google+ (15 minutes).
- Week 4: Create the PowerPoint version and publish it to SlideShare, AuthorStream and Animoto (1 hour).

This doesn’t include some of the more time-consuming tasks, such as printing postcards, stuffing envelopes, running a webinar or creating the special report. However, even without those tasks, the schedule above gives you a strong – and consistent – online presence.

Conclusion

Use this process as just a starting point for your Internet marketing strategy. As we described at the start of this report, our focus here is on generating content and automating social media.

There’s much more you can do to build your online presence, but this is a good start – and a lot more than what most businesses do. So get started with this process and add other elements to the plan as time permits.
About Gihan Perera

Gihan Perera is a consultant, speaker and author, who helps thought leaders and business professionals leverage their expertise.

He is the author of the book Webinar Smarts and Fast, Flat and Free, among others. Forbes magazine rated him the #5 social media influencer in book publishing.

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