

GETTING CLIENTS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA: 4 THINGS YOU NEED TO FIX

By Michelle Nickolaisen



Most of the time, when social media marketing is discussed, it's in reference to larger companies. But I often hear freelancers lamenting that their social media strategies don't seem to be working for them, and they aren't sure why.

Here are four common reasons that you're not getting clients from social media — with fixes for each one, of course:

1. You Don't Have a Distinctive Voice or Brand

Social media is noisy. We all see hundreds of social media posts a day, in between LinkedIn, Google+,

Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest... the list goes on. To stand out and be memorable enough that people will hire you, you need to have a distinctive voice and brand. You need to make sure you don't sound like a personality-less robot.

There's a line here — you don't want your Twitter feed to be *all* jokes about whatever TV show you're currently watching, or commentary on your local nightlife. But at the same time, expressing personality is important. I always think it's interesting when I see business gurus encouraging a strict separation of personal and business accounts. It might be a generational issue, but I've never bothered to do that, and I've had clients who specifically said they sought me out because of the personality that shines through in my social media accounts.

But it's not just about personality, it's also about differentiating your business, too. Mike Tielemans, co-founder of [Meraki Marketing](#), says:

Create a brand for yourself on social sites by understanding your unique proposition to the market. *Don't* try to become everything to everybody. Instead, find one thing that hits the sweet spot between demand and your capabilities/passions.

Design a sexy one-page website with the vision for your company and how you aim to wow everyone you choose to work with. Then validate your idea (see [Noah Kagan's work on validating a business idea in 24 hours](#)) and target from there.

2. You're Not Sharing Your Expertise

People want to see that you have a personality and a unique viewpoint, but they also need to know that you have expertise and real-world know-how to back that up.

One way to do this is by freely expressing your opinions on industry matters – even if it seems like you might drive clients away by doing so. Seth Knapp, CEO at [GetChitter](#), says, freelancers can't be afraid to be a thought leader:

Often times freelancers fail to establish themselves as a thought leader on social media. This is a critical error because businesses automatically carry a certain amount of trust in the eyes of consumers, whether it's deserved or not, but freelancers lack this natural trust.

They need to use social media to establish themselves as thought leaders by posting relevant, insightful commentary, sharing high quality articles, and engaging with other thought leaders.



As Knapp touches on, **another way to do this is by sharing high quality content.** Ideally, this is content you've created yourself, but you can also share content from other sources. In fact, sharing industry news with commentary can work just as well, says Vishal Srivastava, co-founder at [Trainedge Consulting](#):

The key to getting high quality work through social media is sharing lots of relevant content. You need to understand that you cannot generate all of this content yourself, and nobody expects you to.

If you share good content created by others, that is also valuable. It also tells your followers that you are active in your field, have an intellectual interest in improving yourself, and are in touch with the latest news in your area.

3. You're Not Balancing Your Activity

There are two sides to this problem:

You're not being proactive enough

You should be sharing opinions, industry news, and useful content (whether it's content you've created or not), as we've already covered above. But at the same time, **you need to be proactively engaging with people one-on-one to see real results from social media.**

You might remember this being mentioned in [the list of unconventional ways to get clients](#) we published a few weeks ago:

Using Twitter and tools like [Hootsuite](#) or [Tweetdeck](#), you can set up searches for specific keywords such as "web designer" or "WordPress developer". Check in on it a few times a day and see what questions people have about your field of expertise or what discussions are going on about working with freelancers in your field. Chime in where you can, always with the goal of being helpful, not salesy.

William Kinirons, president at [BMK Media](#), summarizes the problem as being two-sided:

One of the biggest mistakes I see other developers make in promoting is a lack of a true call-to-action, or one that is so broad that it totally fails to engage the viewer. Posting "Busy doing X for client Y" or "We can handle all your development needs" doesn't really move anyone towards retaining you.

The second biggest issue is lack of deal-closing follow-through; a friend or follower asks a question and the responder fails to reply in a way that allows them to immediately set up a meeting or retainer.

And this article at FastCompany ([How Startups \(And Everyone Else\) Should Handle Social Media](#)) isn't 100% developer focused, but gives another example of a way that you can be proactive without being pushy.



Being too pushy or 'broadcast-y'

On the other hand, if you think of social media as strictly a sales tool, your efforts will probably be doomed from the start. John Turner, CEO of [UsersThink](#), says:

One of the biggest mistakes a freelancer can make trying to get clients via social media is treating the medium as late in the funnel (the "close" point) when it's much earlier in the buying process, closer to discover and education. Use social media to prove your abilities, knowledge and skill, not to close.

Think of it as a balancing act: Your personality, intelligence, and engaging conversations will draw people in, and the call-to-action or promotional posts sprinkled throughout your social posts can help turn people into potential clients. You wouldn't walk up to someone at a networking event or party and immediately pitch them on your services, but you probably would proactively start conversations, and mention your services if it became clear that they (or their friend, or colleague) could use them.

4. Last but Not Least: Are You Getting an Accurate Perspective?

You may *think* you aren't getting any clients from your social media, and wonder what you need to change. **But the problem may not actually be with your social media — it could be with your analytics or sales-tracking processes.** [Brian Carter](#), author and consultant, notes:

The lack of good analytics makes it look like you aren't getting clients from social media, but that may not be the truth.

The number one reason it may appear that you don't get clients from social media, even if you do, is that usually when we reach people in social media, they aren't yet ready to buy. We may get them to become fans, followers or email subscribers, and later when they contact us, the original social media referral information is not attached.

In the research I've seen where prospects were tracked long term, and credit was given to the original referrer — the first interaction — it was often social media.

For a thorough guide on setting up your own tracking efforts to make sure you're getting an accurate picture of your results, check out [How To Really Measure the ROI of Social Efforts](#).

Your Client-Getting Social Media Checklist

- Do you have a memorable brand? When interacting with you on social media, are the differentiators of you and your business clear?
- Do you sound like a robot? Is your personality shining through in most — if not all — of your social media updates?
- Are you sharing your industry opinions and expertise on a regular basis?
- Are you sharing useful content, whether from you or other people, on a regular basis?
- Are you balancing being proactive with not being too broadcast-y?
- And last but not least, do you have an accurate way to track your social media results? (If not, set one up today!)

About the Author

Michelle Nickolaisen is a freelance writer/biz owner that lives in Austin, TX. When she's not writing (typically about business or productivity related topics), she's watching Buffy, Doctor Who, or Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. When she is writing, Spotify is her best friend. She's been freelancing since 2008 and blogging since the wee age of 13 when a teacher encouraged her to start a daily writing practice. You can snag more free content on growing your freelance business [here](#).