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Q&A with Wendy Soucie*End Result Marketing**October 21, 2009* | COMMENTS **Question: What are three common mistakes businesses make when entering into social media?**

When talking with companies who are starting out with social media, I find many have "missed the boat" on why they should be using this channel to expand their reach.

Mistake 1: Jumping into social media just because it's big.

Do some listening and research before jumping into the social web. Simple tools such as Google Alerts, Twitter Search, and Technorati can help collect this information for you. Find larger groups on social media sites that you can track and see what the discussions are about. This will help you gain a clear knowledge about issues you might need to solve for your market. Figure out how you can become the one who is recommended most in your market.

Mistake 2: Using social media as free advertising.

Don't send constant sales messages. Social media is about having conversations, using Internet technology, that add value and content among people who share similar passions and interests. I haven't met too many people who have a passion to read sales messages all day long. Your profiles on any site should be authentic and about people, not companies—save that for the website. Have real conversations and updates reflecting your own experiences. Share stories. Build relationships first; money, products and selling will come later.

Mistake 3: Asking the first available person to do "something" with social media because you don't have time.

You don't have to spend hours doing social media, but you do need to start. A social network is built over time. You can accomplish a lot with a plan, carefully selected social media tools, and one hour a week.

Take a moment to regroup. Research, strategize, create a plan, use internal staff, and reduce activity to something you can manage yourselves. Baby steps are best when starting in social media.

Wendy Soucie is a social media/marketing strategist based in Madison, WI. Soucie and Doug Tangwall of [End Result Marketing](#) provide marketing and social media services to business clients.



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