

April 26, 2012

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[Rana Florida](#)

CEO, The Creative Class Group

Your Start-Up Life: Am I Wasting My Time With Social Media?

Posted: 04/26/2012 7:59 am

Thursdays at the Huffington Post, Rana Florida, CEO of [The Creative Class Group](#), shares her conversations with successful entrepreneurs and thought leaders about how they manage their businesses, their relationships, their careers, and more. She also answers readers' questions about how they can optimize their lives. Send your questions about work, life, or relationships to rana@creativeclass.com

Hi Rana,

My partner and I have a new graphic design business that we are desperately trying to get to break even before the end of second quarter. There are a lot of articles out there about how to effectively use social media to enhance your product or service. I've been trying to follow all the tips but having to do it all is very time intensive and I'm not really sure it is helping our bottom line. From Foursquare, to Vimeo, to Google+, to Tumblr, to Flickr and Facebook, there are so many it's dizzying. Plus, all the time I'm spending promoting our work seems to be taking time away from client relationships and sales. Would love your feedback.

*John and Greg
Seattle & Vancouver*

Social Media Landscape 2012



Photo credit: FredCavazza.net

Hey guys,

You're right; the options to connect and engage through social media are very thick and constantly changing. Social media can greatly enhance sales and a brand if done correctly but a wrong step can also turn off customers and tarnish a reputation -- just think of Alec Baldwin's Twitter rants about American Airlines or Charlie Sheen's #winning hashtag. Check out this [chart](#), which shows how much social media has evolved over the years. Note how the landscape is divided into categories: publishing, sharing, playing, networking, buying and localization. I would first focus on the center of the circle and then experiment with expanding your social architecture.

I agree it can be very time intensive to manage a business's social media, but according to a recent [article](#) from INC.com by [Rudina Seseri](#), "a brand may or may not have a bricks and mortar location, but it certainly has a website, a Facebook page, a Twitter account, one or several blogs, and a Pinterest board ...for starters."

I think the most important vehicles to promote your brand for long-term results are [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). Twitter gives you access not just to your customer base, but to experts and partners you want to align with and media who might pick up your story. Facebook lets you connect with your fans and supporters in a more intimate way. I have compared [Pinterest](#) to online scrapbooking, but all joking aside, it is an important tool for companies with visual messaging.

Now how to do it correctly? So many people on Twitter take their tips from celebrities who tweet about what they are wearing or what they are eating, and most of us just don't care. The goal of putting your business on Twitter is to position yourself as an expert in the field. So ALL of your tweets should work to that end.

If you're a dermatologist seeking new patients or press coverage you should tweet about new skin care products, research on sun damage, or interesting articles you've authored or read. Your followers should be other experts and practitioners in the field, publications in healthcare and dermatology, media covering that beat, lifestyle publications, academic journals, and products or brands in the industry.

[Tony Hsieh](#), the founder of Zappos and the *New York Times* best-selling author of *Delivering Happiness* says he plans his tweets to do one of four things, each of which is focused around his core message of happiness: inspire, connect, entertain, or educate.

As new graphic designers trying to gain additional customers you should tweet your designs, expert tips, new fonts, articles and other interesting tidbits about how design enhances your brand. Twit pic creative photos, colors, artwork, logos, etc. Be careful that your tweets aren't too blatantly promotional, as that is a quick turn off to followers. Follow companies, people, and brands that you want to work with or who you think are good for brand alignment.

Use Pinterest to display your work, or work you like. Post photos of great art, interesting visuals, and designs that come together to epitomize your particular style. Look at it as a mood board or a visual resume. How do you want your clients to see you? Melody Kramer, who works for NPR's *Fresh Air*, uses Pinterest to [show](#) listeners who's being interviewed, deepening their connection to the show and its brand. Creative designer Kelly Wearstler's dramatic [pins](#) come together to make a stunning visual collective of her fashions, jewelry and interior designs.

The great thing is that all of these media are mobile, so you can update, connect and inform on the go. Good luck!

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