

Navigating around the social media landscape



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IT'S DIFFICULT to keep up with social media. Which networks are in or out? Popular or unpopular?

In 2016, things don't look quite like they did in 2012 (or even 2015). We're here to help!

Before we jump into the networks that matter, though, here's a tip: only use the networks you can maintain well. In other words, don't rush out and set up pages on each of the sites listed below unless you have the time to keep them up to date. It's better to be fantastic on one social network than half-baked on several.

The social world can be a maze, but knowing the landscape will help you navigate. Here are the social networks you need to know about, in order of priority:



Facebook

I can practically hear the collective groan. But love it or hate it, Facebook is still the most important social network for businesses.

With 1.65 billion monthly active users, Facebook is still where the majority of the country congregates to share news about their lives and keep up with the friends and businesses with which they are connected.

If you don't have a company Facebook page or are not maintaining it well, you are missing an important opportunity.



Twitter

Twitter and Instagram are probably tied for second place in terms of importance.

With only 140 characters available for status updates, Twitter is all about being as pithy as you can be.

In recent years, however, Twitter has changed its feed so that images and videos are visible as users scroll, which is a helpful feature for businesses because your content can be seen more easily.

If you launch your business into Twitter — retail or wholesale — expect to update your feed at least once per day.



Instagram

If you want to appeal to younger audiences and reach Millennials — and who doesn't? — Instagram is a great place to start.

More popular among young people than Facebook, Instagram allows you to demonstrate the natural beauty of the nursery industry.

Instagram lets you share photos and short videos — the more artistic the better. The nursery industry is perfectly suited to Instagram, because flowers and plant life make fantastic photography subjects.



LinkedIn

Particularly for wholesalers, LinkedIn is an important option.

As the most popular networking site for business, LinkedIn is a great place for making connections with business colleagues. You can set up a page for your business, share information about products and open jobs, and post regular updates for your followers.



Pinterest

Remember when we all had bulletin boards and we pinned the things we liked most — pictures of loved ones, cartoons, inspirational quotes and more — on them? Pinterest is an online version of the bulletin board.

On Pinterest, you can make several boards for people to check out, each with its own focus; for instance, seasonal plants, the seed-to-growth cycle, and so on.

Like Instagram, the focus is on the visual, but Pinterest has the added benefit of linking pictures and videos to the website from which they come. Yes, that could be (and should be) your website.



Snapchat

As the parent of tweens, I shudder at the name Snapchat because of its reputation for less-than-wholesome activity. Snapchat lets you send out a picture or short video that disappears forever a few seconds after someone has viewed it. It's the ultimate in expressing what is of the moment, what is happening right now.

It's not the most obvious platform for a company, but it's very popular with young people. Most commonly, businesses use Snapchat to give their customers exclusive deals, announce flash sales and other promotions, or give people a behind-the-scenes look at how the company works.



Google+

Put Google+ in the "honorable mention" category. It's not used by tons of people, and often those who use it are people who have renounced Facebook for one reason or another.

The main reason Google+ is important is this: did you notice the word "Google" in its name? Google uses Google+ in search rankings, so if you have a Google+ page, you'll edge out the company that doesn't. It may not be fair, but it's reality. If you have time, put yourself on Google+ to boost your company's Google search rank.

Good luck, and I'll see you in the socialsphere! ☺