

## Social media: HYPE OR HELP?

Is social media a smart use of time to sell more tools? Only if it's done right.

BY PHIL SASSO, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



Phil Sasso is president of Sasso Marketing Inc. ([www.sassomarketing.com](http://www.sassomarketing.com)), a technical marketing agency specializing in tools and equipment. Subscribe to his free marketing tips at [philsasso.com/blog](http://philsasso.com/blog).

**Q.** I think social media is a waste of my time. What do you think?

**A.** Are you asking if you should be Facebooking or restocking your truck? I'd say stock your shelves. I don't care about your after-hours life, but reconnecting with your junior high school lockermate isn't going to pay the mortgage. Stick to work during work hours.

Am I being a smart aleck? Kind of. I assume you're asking about the value of using social media to sell more tools. That's a tougher question. But it still boils down to time management. Social media, if not used wisely, can be a huge timesuck.

You already see your customers face-to-face once every week or two. So, you have an edge other businesses don't have. But if you can do it efficiently, time spent on social media can help you connect with customers in ways you don't have time for on your day-to-day stops.

Using five minutes to connect with 100 customers using social media is much more practical than spending an extra five minutes with each customer.

So, if you do it right, I don't think it's a waste of time.

**Q.** Are there tricks to using social media? I don't think my customers are reading my posts.

**A.** I guess the real trick to successfully using social media is not to use any tricks.

Let me define social media with an analogy: social media is stopping for a beer with the gang after work. It's the digital version of hanging out. I'm sure you don't tote and promote during a backyard barbecue. Think of social media the same way. It's not a place for blatant sales pitches.

"You can't just talk about yourself; that's boring. You have to talk about them and how your tools engage with them and their lifestyle, whether it be the owner of the shop or the people under the cars," says findability expert Heather Lutke ([findability.com](http://findability.com)) a 2012 Specialty Equipment Marketing Association (SEMA) speaker and author of the books, "Thumbonomics" and "Findability Formula."

"Do things like giving them information on NASCAR and the latest tools that are being used in the pit," says Lutke.

Use social media to talk about what interests your customer. Then let the product promotion flow naturally from that topic. Don't force it.

Social media can also mean sharing practical information like giving customers checklists or tech tips to help them be more productive with the tool they may already have in their toolbox.

"These are gifts. We're not charging for these," says Lutke. "We're not trying to make it seem like we're trying to sell them anything. We are truly an advocate for their success and by doing that, you'll build a natural rapport."

**Q.** How do I manage all this social media? And how do I know if it's working?

**A.** Bottom line: you know it's working if you're selling more tools. Otherwise, you're wasting your time.

(Continued Page 22)



## SALES Q & A

Again, let me emphasize time management. Look into one of the online social media tools to make your life easier. This avoids you having to sign in to every account every day. It automates the process.

Hootsuite and Tweetdeck social media management systems (SMMS) will help you monitor your social media effectiveness and help you manage your postings across multiple social media sites, says Lutke. (Both have free and paid options.) "They're dashboards which let you take one piece of content and share it."

"They will also let you listen to the response you get," says Lutke. It's easy to push out content. It's much harder to get "engagement," that is, to get your customer involved with your content.

"If you're not getting direct messages. If you're not getting mentioned and retweets. If you're not getting shares, then there's something fun-

**"DO THINGS LIKE  
GIVING THEM INFORMATION  
ON NASCAR AND THE  
LATEST TOOLS BEING  
USED IN THE PIT."**

damentally not working in how you're developing content," explains Lutke. Ask yourself if what you're saying is interesting and meaningful.

I suggest you follow the social

media of manufacturers you carry. (Open a separate business social media account to do this.) Then you can just repeat (or retweet) whatever you find interesting to your customers. It will save you hours creating content.

By the way, are your customers subscribed to your social channel? The easiest ways to get followers is to bribe them. Offer them a coupon for following you. Then print some business cards with your social media accounts listed. Lutke suggests using QR codes to link to your social sites so they can scan it with their smartphone.

Try social media. Start small. Don't dive in head first. Pick one outlet and add others as you're comfortable. Take it one step at a time. Keep what works. Dump what doesn't. ■

## SUSPENSION AND DRIVELINE TOOLS



U-JOINT PULLERS



PITMAN ARM PULLERS



WHEEL STUD SERVICING



SLACK ADJUSTER PULLERS



COOL IT 12V NO IDLE SYSTEM



YOKE PULLERS



KING PIN PRESS



PIN & BUSHING PULLERS

**TIGER  
TOOL**  
International Incorporated

1 800 661 4661

WWW.TIGERTOOL.COM



Enter 50 at "e-inquiry" on VehicleServicePros.com