

The hottest marketing tools out there are in social media.
Think of it as word-of-mouth on steroids

Social Skills

This staff-written article first appeared in the
July 2012 issue of *Remodeling* magazine

Internet marketing used to mean a “business card” website where potential customers could see some project photos, find your company phone number, and maybe fill out a “Contact Us” form. These days, static “brochureware” websites are business tombstones. Most of the action is “interaction” in the social media universe, where the game is short and sweet, fast and frequent. It’s about push more than pull, and whoever pushes themselves into the most conversations wins.

Websites and SEO (search engine optimization) are as important as ever, maybe more so, but the ways remodelers are enticing potential customers to visit are changing. People of all ages are using more and more mobile devices and the social media apps made to run on them. Search engines are still in the picture, but it’s increasingly likely that your next customer will find your company in a tweet or Facebook posting while using a smartphone app.

In what follows, we take a closer look at how social media works and how remodelers are starting to build it into their day-to-day business. And we provide some insight into how you can start putting it all together in your business.

Social Media Possibilities

Used wisely, social media is a bullhorn — otherwise, it's just bull

90% of online consumers say they trust recommendations from people they know

Ecoconsultancy,
July 2009

Social Media Can

- **Let people know what you do:** By showing videos of your company in action on YouTube or highlighting projects on Houzz or Pinterest.
- **Help you meet clients and prospects:** This is where consumers — and their friends — hang out. And you can engage with “your existing customer base that might form an affinity group,” says consultant and *Remodeling* columnist Joe Stoddard. “You can gain new customers through testimonials from that group if you’ve created positive relationships with them.”
- **Raise brand awareness:** “It can provide a non-salesy, informal, friendly place for people to learn about your business personality,” says Dave Alpert of Continuum Marketing, but don’t push sales. You need to offer something of value, such as free information.
- **Boost website traffic:** Promote your site with links and keywords when using social media. Check out AddThis.com, which offers an easy button for people to click to share your information.
- **Help you manage your reputation:** Use Angie’s

List, Yelp, and other local sites to respond to reviews, show how you deal with problems, and create links to testimonials.

Social Media Can’t

- **Do what you do best:** “Social media makes it easier for happy and unhappy customers to share their experiences. But for a remodeler to develop a good social media strategy without making a concerted effort to deliver exceptional customer service is a waste of time,” says Geoff Graham, president of GuildQuality.
- **Quash criticism:** There’s always someone who’s unhappy. But at least you can join the dialog early.
- **Provide free marketing:** Many sites may be free to use, but it takes a lot of time and effort to properly feed and care for social media. If you’re going to set it and forget it, well just forget it.
- **Be your only marketing method:** Social media can only support a larger marketing program.
- **Promise a following:** You must create a narrative for consumers to see what’s in it for them — and be patient.

Sharing Menu

Quick and easy ways to share content you’re interested in with a broader audience

Have you just read an interesting article online? Use the Share menu, usually displayed near the article title, to post article links to your favorite social media sites.

Post to your **Facebook** page so friends and followers can “like” or comment on the article, too. Tweet the link to your **Twitter** feed, or post it as an update for your **LinkedIn** connections. **Google+** shares the article publicly on your page or just with those in your chosen circles.

At sites such as **Delicious** you can save your

links in themed interest categories, called “stacks,” that you create and can share with others. In a similar way, **Digg** promotes articles on topic pages (e.g., Business, Lifestyle, etc.) and can rank them according to how much interest they attract. **Reddit** does something similar and allows users to subscribe to topic feeds.

For some of these sites, you can load a widget into your browser menu so it’s always available. However you do it, sharing is a fast and easy way to tell others what you’re thinking about.

Market shares

43% of all online consumers are social media fans or followers.

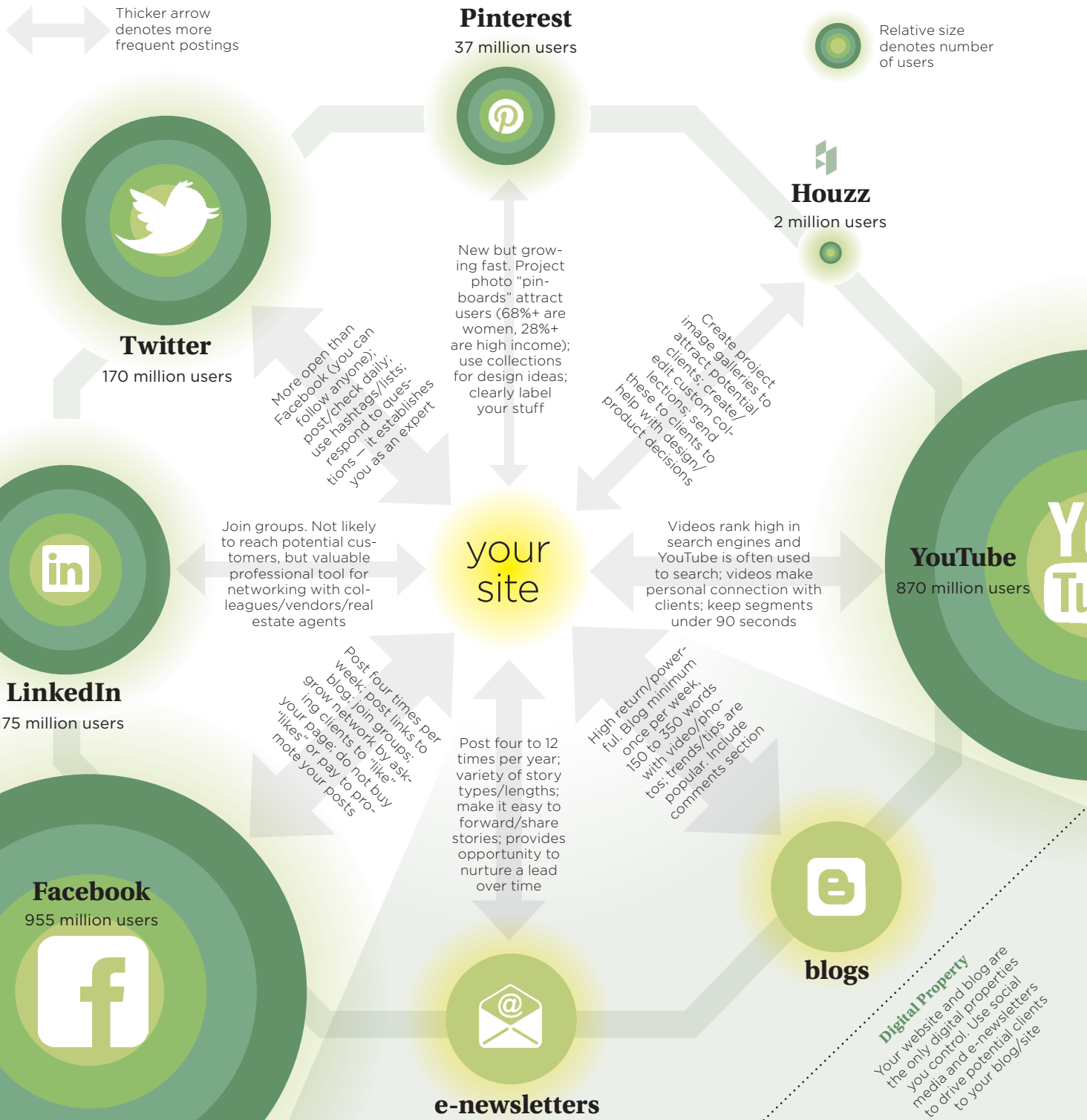
Hubspot Blog

Share with your friends

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Google+
- Del.icio.us
- Digg
- Reddit

8 Ways to Build Your Audience

One advantage of using social media to educate homeowners about your brand is that you can engage with them at the websites or mobile apps they prefer. The goal is to translate visibility into leads. That means increased traffic to your website or blog, so make sure those digital properties are in good shape before using these other sites.

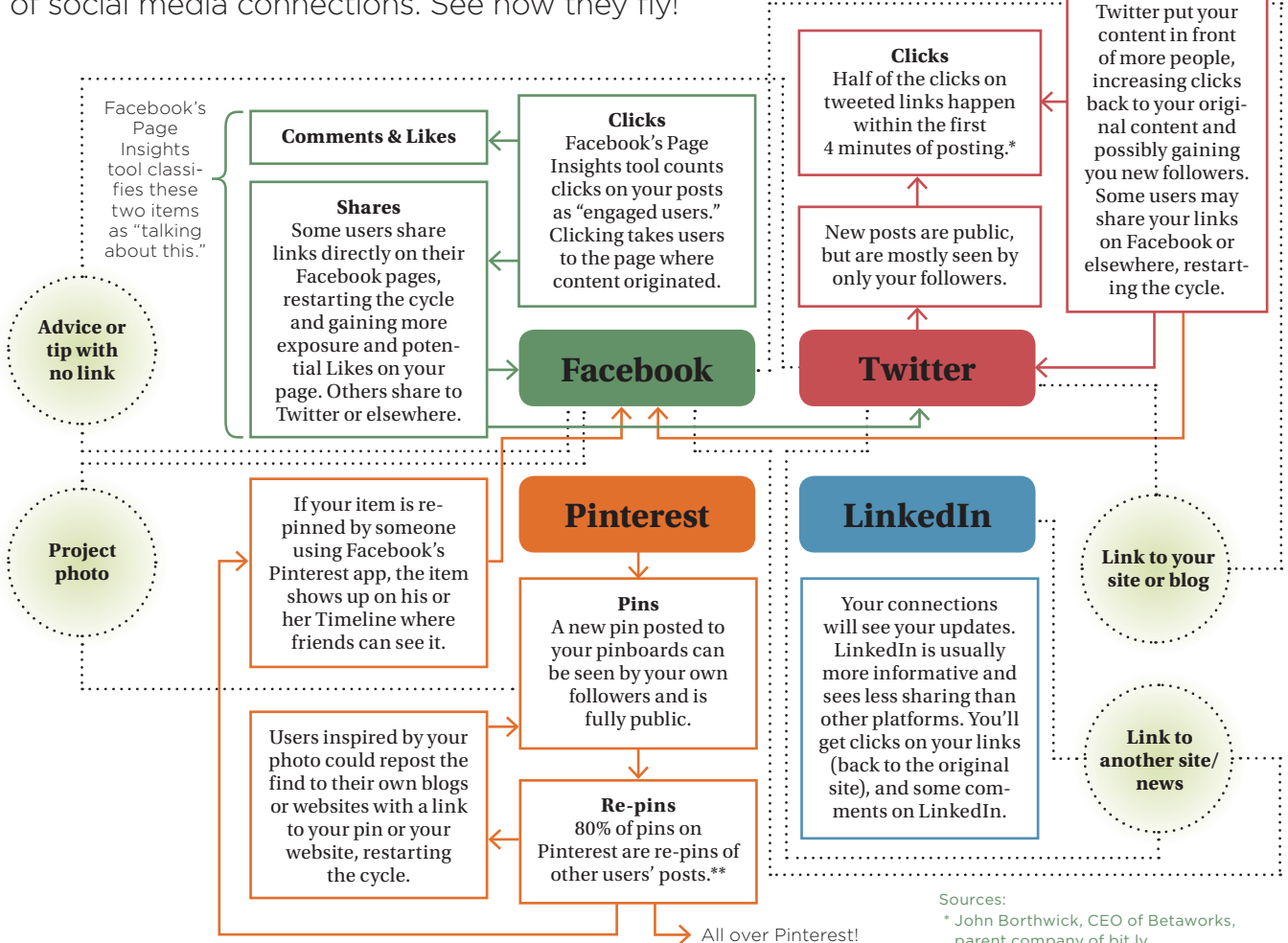




To the Twitterverse!

Follow That Bird!

A simple tweet (or pin or Facebook post) can mean dozens of social media connections. See how they fly!



Sources:
* John Borthwick, CEO of Betaworks, parent company of bit.ly
**RJ Metrics, software development firm



Anatomy of a Tweet

1. Mention

To bring a tweet to someone's attention, use @ (username) within the body of the tweet.

2. Hashtag

Place a # symbol before any word or phrase to create a searchable keyword. Hashtags are great for tracking events or topics you cite frequently.

3. Links

Short URL services such as those built in to Twitter will reduce a link of any length to about 20 characters or fewer.

4. Reply

Hitting "Reply" will put the original Twitterer's @ (username) at the beginning of the tweet. When you reply, your response is public.

5. Retweet

Share someone's tweet by retweeting it. Use the "Retweet" button, or add RT @ (username) to send the message to your followers.

Source: Twitter

Finders Keepers

Make it easy for your customers to find you

The days of potential customers finding you by leafing through the Yellow Pages is gone. Now they just log on and search, and you'd better make sure you're there!

The first place they are likely to search is Google, specifically **Google Places**, which is now part of the company's new social networking site **Google+**, according to Corey Perlman, president of eBoot Camp, an educational firm that guides businesses on the Internet.

"Google+ is an opportunity for consumers to learn about your business prior to going to your website," he explains. "And they will often decide who they will do business with based on what they see." A customer may even make a decision based on your proximity to his or her home, also revealed on Google+.

Yelp.com is strictly a review site rather than just a business listing like Google+ or Yahoo Local. However, while all these sites host reviews, Yelp is

by far the leader simply due to its prevalence and a popular mobile app.

Regardless, you have to brace yourself for the possibility — more likely, the probability — of some negative reviews. The only way to counteract them is to make sure the positive reviews outnumber the bad ones, according to Larry Green, CEO of System Pavers, in Santa Ana, Calif.

"Bad reviews won't go away, they just get moved lower," he says. "So you have to put your neck on the line and ask your customers to post an honest review about you. This is literally the only way to do it. The process never stops. Customer satisfaction is raised to a whole new level due to the transparency out there."

Perlman likens these sites to alcohol: "When people drink, they say things they wouldn't normally say sober," he explains. "Likewise, when people get behind a computer screen, they say things online they wouldn't normally say to your face."

Yelp had
71 million
unique
monthly
visitors in
Q1 2012

Google Analytics

Site for Sore Eyes

Respect your user's time: Don't create barriers to finding information

What makes a good website? To judge, you need to know the site's objective. "The goal for most remodelers is ... to drive qualified sales traffic into [their] sales pipeline. Secondly, it will support [their] core vision and mission," says Joe Stoddard, a remodeling industry consultant and *Remodeling* columnist.

To drive traffic to your site, all marketing should have your company's URL. All posted photos should have a watermark with your company name and URL. Engage with other relevant sites to create links for better search engine optimization. Once they're at your site, offer viewers a rapid call to action and value-added material.



My Name Is URL
Your URL should be short and based on your company name, but buy and register other similar URLs to avoid losing traffic to a typo.

Crystal Clear
Visitors should immediately know what you do. Make contact information visible in many places. On this site it's at the bottom of every page.

Social Hub
Create easy access to social media.

Lead Me On
Information such as blog posts and videos should peek "above the fold" so viewers will scroll down.

Immediate Action
Distribute calls to action throughout the site. Ask for email addresses and offer some value in return. Respond to visitors right away.