

## Social Media and Search Marketing

Mike Moran: Chief Strategist, Converseon



### Expert Advice for Growing Your Business

Mike Moran, Chief Strategist for Converseon and author of *Search Engine Marketing, Inc.* discusses the important aspects of social media and search engine marketing strategy for business start-ups.

**Q: Are Internet marketing and social media still the great equalizers for small businesses? Or have the "rules of the game" changed?**

**A:** Marketing is never equal between large and small businesses; large businesses have a resource advantage that always matters. But social media and most forms of digital marketing are less resource-dependent than advertising and other traditional forms of marketing. So, although digital marketing is not equal between large and small businesses, it's certainly easier for small businesses to compete online than anywhere else.

**Q: You've written that a small business's social media strategy should focus on "help, help, help," rather than "sell, sell, sell." What are some tips for formulating such a strategy?**

**A:** Customers aren't interested in your salesmanship. They want solutions to their problems. If you can provide helpful information that addresses the problem that they have, they are far more likely to buy your product than they are now convinced solves their problem.

**Q: Are target market demographics-particularly age-critical to shaping a social media strategy?**

**A:** I am not sure that they are. I've seen studies that show that senior citizens are using online video more than people in their fifties, so that would tend to surprise most people. So it's not good enough to assume that older people do not use social media and younger people do. What's more important is finding a message that resonates with your market, then refining it based on market feedback.

**Q: What emerging social or search marketing trends are you watching closely?**

**A:** Google Places pages are taking over search results and location-based social networks such as Gowalla and Foursquare are starting to force the big guys (Facebook and Twitter) into beefing up their functions for users to check in at a particular location. Local place pages make sense for any business whose location is a key part of whom they sell to and location-based social networks allow customers to broadcast their location to friends, who might come to meet them. These services are not needed by every business, but small businesses would do well to note these new services and see if they apply to their target markets.

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**Q: Why should entrepreneurs work with a SCORE counselor to tailor a marketing plan to the specific needs of their business and market?**

**A:** For one thing, SCORE is a free advisory service, and free is my favorite price. But the real reason is that most SCORE counselors have forgotten more about small business marketing than I will ever know. Find one with experience in your industry and don't let go