

Unforeseen Pitfalls of Social Media Success

By Kristen Luke

April 13, 2010

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Two common pitfalls are quickly cited by financial advisors when it comes to social media. The first and most obvious is compliance. Many advisors are concerned about violating FINRA's and the SEC's rules regarding advertising and marketing. The second is that social media can become a time suck. Most advisors have limited free time and are fearful that participating in social media will eat up their valuable time and produce no results.

A third pitfall is rarely anticipated and only occurs for those who are the most successful using social media. This pitfall is that social media can create more relationships and opportunities than one person can reasonably handle.

According to "[Dunbar's Number](#)," the average human being can only maintain 150 stable social relationships. If you are an average user of [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), you have 130 Facebook [friends](#) and 126 Twitter [followers](#). If you are a savvy networker on [LinkedIn](#) you have 61 [connections](#). Assuming you have no cross-over relationships (which is unlikely), you would have to maintain 317 relationships on your social networking sites alone. This is more than twice the number of relationships that you can maintain according to "Dunbar's

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Number.” If this is just the average, you can imagine how many relationships someone who has successfully utilized social media has to maintain.

There is a compelling marketing reason to connect with hundreds or thousands of people on social networking sites. The more people you are connected with, the more people hear your message and hopefully engage your services.

However, this strategy comes with a price.

That price is having too many relationships to maintain and too many opportunities to pursue.

I am beginning to see some advisors, whom I would classify as successful social networkers, become overwhelmed by the success of their efforts. If you are engaging in social media or just contemplating on using the medium, here are three things to be aware of so that you can avoid similar pitfalls.

Responding to comments

A few years ago, you may have felt overwhelmed responding to your emails and voice mail messages in a timely manner. Now, you are expected to respond to all of your social networking messages in addition to your email and voicemail. As you build your network, you will receive more and more Facebook comments, Twitter direct messages and replies, LinkedIn emails and blog comments. You will need a strategy to accommodate all of these comments. One strategy can be to allocate a specific time each day to respond to all messages. Another strategy can be to prioritize relationships and respond to only the most important ones.

Determine how you are going to address this issue now so that it doesn't become a burden down the road.

Guest blogging

Websites are always in search of good content and advisor bloggers are often asked to post their blog on other sites. This can be a successful strategy for finding a new audience for your blog and driving traffic to your website. It can also help with inbound links to help improve search engine optimization for your website. However, each site has its own guidelines about how to post your blog. If you aren't careful, the specific requirements of each site can quickly add hours to your weekly task list.

If you are a blogger, you may be asked to write original articles for other publications and sites. At first this sounds like a great idea because you will gain further exposure. However, you need to be selective when accepting these



requests. Writing can be a time-consuming process and if you aren't writing for your target market or centers of influence, you may not be spending your time wisely.

Remember, your job is to serve existing clients and find new ones. Spend your time on activities that fulfill these two objectives.

Helping your peers

Social media is about sharing information freely and social media savvy advisors have mastered this skill. These advisors are usually willing to share how they have achieved success through social media with their peers. Sitting on the occasional panel discussion or giving a presentation on social media will help elevate your status within the industry; however, you can easily find yourself spending too much time in the role of social media consultant to your peers and not enough time focusing on your core business. Set a limit to the number of hours each quarter you are willing to spend educating your peers and don't go beyond that number.

As a strong advocate for the integration of social media into marketing plans, I'm not discouraging advisors from using these tools. Instead, I encourage you to learn from the issues faced by your peers who have been successful with social media over the last couple of years.

Social media marketing is ultimately meant to drive revenue to your business. If you begin to feel overwhelmed with all of your relationships and opportunities, then ask yourself, "Does this help me with my business objectives?" If the answer is no, refocus and concentrate on your core business. It's only when social media drives revenue that you have truly become a social media marketing success.

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