



Why You Need Social Media In Email Signatures

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Executive Summary

Turning email contacts into social media contributors is the purpose of this guide – and any business, however naïve or savvy, can benefit.

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37 million senders worldwide use Exclaimer software, email signatures have been our business for 12 years – with this guide we're sharing some of that expertise, specifically, on social media.

Adding a 'Follow' or 'Tweet' button below every staff email signature brings customers, leads and everyone your company knows into your social sphere.

Then embedding your Tweets, updates, statuses or posts under your signature keeps them there – reminding them why they interfaced with you initially and reinvigorating their interest for your output.

These are two obvious opportunities for enhancing social media prominence – but the idea isn't difficult, it's the execution.

Expertise is required to make the above possible – controlling the appearance of everyone's signature, updating it instantly, retrieving social content automatically.

It's instant social media impact.

Whether that expertise is human, like a nominated member of staff, or automated – in the form of signature software – it's instant social media impact.

The idea isn't difficult, it's the execution

Introduction

Email as a familiar, well-integrated channel already has all the interaction most companies want out of social media – this guide explains how to use it.

First, we'll discuss methods for transferring that email audience onto social media in 'Interactivity' – gathering 'Fans' and 'Followers' through quick links in email signatures.

Second, the preservation of that activity will be explained in 'Content': bringing already active audiences back to a profile by adding recent updates, statuses and posts under signatures.

Finally, we'll examine their impact and benefits – when used separately and then together – in an endnote which draws on our own experiences and those of our users.

This guide describes how to conjoin email with social media



Interactivity

Turning email contacts into social connections.

Friends, families and colleagues connect through social media - as a marketer, you don't belong. They're there to share jokes, ideas, memories, celebrations, commiserations and more: your products or services are very far from the top of that list.

The only thing worse than a cold, hard-selling ad is a false, clichéd attempt to meet them on - what you believe to be - their level.

Subtly inviting readers to join you on social media can be much more comfortable than paid advertising, direct marketing or on-channel endorsement – and the results reflect it.

As a marketer, you don't belong.

A simple start can be adding a Twitter 'Follow' or Facebook 'Share' link to staff email signatures – but try to limit the number of links per signature, and better yet, to allocate them appropriately to various teams.

The mere presence of a link is invaluable

For example, the sales team could show a link for LinkedIn 'Recommendations' about the product they're discussing, while customer service could have a Facebook 'Share' link relating to the whole company.

Though the mere presence of a link is invaluable, accompanying it with information can improve its efficacy.

Offer information or exclusive content... free items and discounts can cause skepticism.

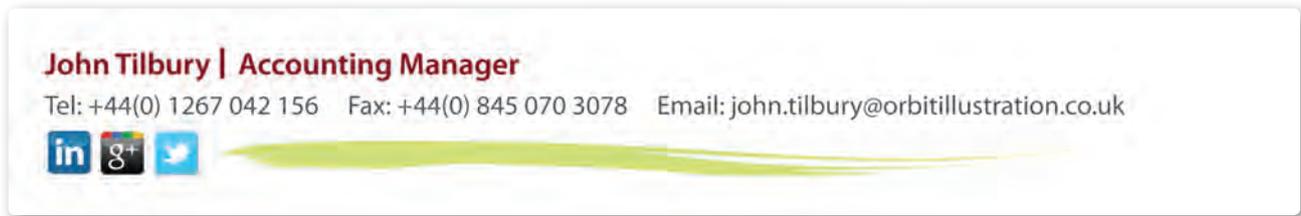
PRmoment.com (PRmoment.tv, 2012) recommends openness: confidence and honesty are more effective than contradiction or conformity – avoid campaigns that conflict with the brand's identity or conform to what you assume readers want to see.

Michael Lis of SPECK media suggests a 'value exchange' (Lis, 2010) – in which something of value is offered to the social media user for their cooperation.

Confidence and honesty are more effective than conformity

This need not and perhaps should not be material or monetary. Discounts, free items or products traded for intangible endorsements like a Google '+1' or Twitter 'Tweet' may only cause skepticism and friction.

The distance between the much offered and little given can seem desperate and predatory. Instead, offer information or exclusive content.



Describe a potential benefit and show readers the opportunity to collect it

For example, a banner promoting a pre-launch preview of a new product for all Twitter followers is not just relevant, but subtle – rather than ordering viewers to 'Follow', they've described a potential benefit and shown readers the opportunity to collect it: a link beside the promotional message.

Summary

Consider social media like any social situation, success depends on three factors.

Be there – let all your email users know you're on social media and they can join you, quickly and easily, in a single click.

Be interesting – offer them some information and an incentive to do so, perhaps with a promotional banner beside the link.

Be yourself – incentives offered should be appropriate (not suspiciously expensive or desperately disproportionate) and should reflect your sector or output.

Content

social media activity

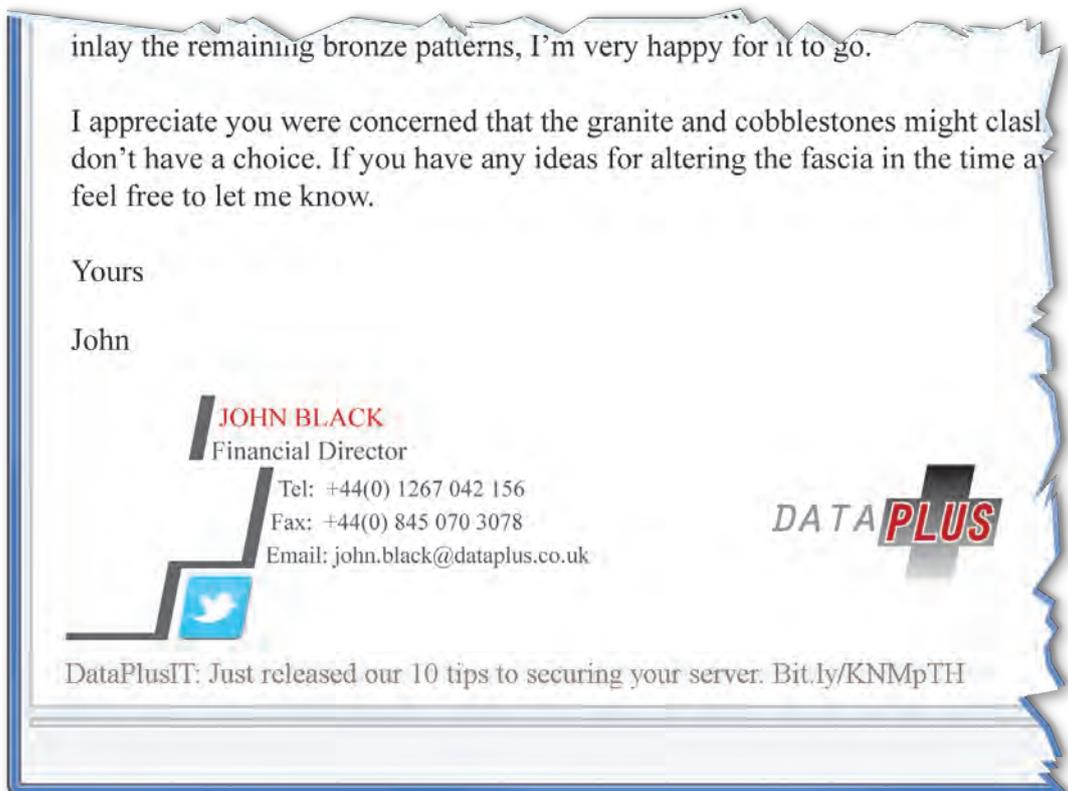
People listening to you isn't enough – you need people participating.

Talk to your 'Fans', 'Followers' or 'Circle' as much as you want - but if they don't talk back, it's worth nothing.

They won't say the things you want your potential customers to hear, they won't do the things you want your existing customers to do - and they eventually won't care because it will seem like you don't.

Again, creating a flow between the emails you send and the sites they like can be crucial.

By adding social media content – like comments or Tweets – to signatures, readers are regularly reminded about your social output: and, potentially, why they wanted to associate with you in the first place.



inlay the remaining bronze patterns, I'm very happy for it to go.

I appreciate you were concerned that the granite and cobblestones might clash. I don't have a choice. If you have any ideas for altering the fascia in the time available, please feel free to let me know.

Yours
John

JOHN BLACK
Financial Director
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Email: john.black@dataplus.co.uk

DataPlusIT: Just released our 10 tips to securing your server. Bit.ly/KNMpTH

The difficulty here, unlike the 'Interactivity' section, is not strategic but technical: deciding what to say is simple, adding it to every signature instantly and constantly is not – unless you have dedicated software.

Content like Tweets and updates can age rapidly (Macale, 2011) – seeing them even twice might be too much.

It's possible to configure signatures to automatically cycle the content: showing a different entry each time, to avoid tiresome repetition.

*Automatically cycle content...
to avoid tiresome repetition*

A related issue is segmentation. Different sets of customers may use different networks – business customers may be on LinkedIn but consumers may use Facebook (GraphicDesignBlog.org, 2009).

Even within the same network, some users may not be interested in statuses that others are.

Defining who uses what may seem difficult but is ultimately worthwhile. If different teams can display different updates, the more likely it is the content will resonate with their very different readers.

Summary

As different as social media and mail are, a campaign that spans both will always be more effective than either one alone.

Any company can rely on email to drum up interest in its social media output by transferring audiences from one to the other.

Email readers already communicate, discuss and react to your company: social media is the perfect place for them.

Endnote

37 million users rely on Exclaimer software, in some of the largest, most elite brands – and smallest, most inventive – in the world. We examined how integrating social media had helped them.

Our pilot study of 30 companies suggests the above measures helped increase their social media audience by 17%, though our analysis is ongoing.

Responses increased significantly for most users, who also felt the social dialogue they created was consistently positive.

The data available leads us to believe that pulling audiences from one medium to another may vastly increase their activity in social media – if they know a firm already, they're more likely to pay attention.

Furthermore, separating audiences by network – LinkedIn for corporate partners, in our case, but Twitter for media contacts – helped enhance the quality and frequency of relations.

The visual style of social media links had mixed results – some firms fared better with smaller icons, others saw stronger interest in more overt visuals.

We can't draw conclusions without further study, but we speculate it might relate to the marketer's industry – the more consumer-focused, the better the response to bolder graphics.

Do what social media requires – join in.

But even before a fully developed strategy becomes necessary or effective, simply integrating the two communication methods is crucial.

The ideology can be difficult for more conventional companies to acquire and accommodate, but the technology is almost instantly accessible – drop in a link and start the conversation.

This isn't an advanced strategic guide – it's an examination of a few quick, easy suggestions that the most and least experienced alike can use for maximum effect.

This is about helping any company to do what social media requires – join in.

About Exclaimer

Exclaimer provides Microsoft Certified, award-winning signature software for Exchange, Outlook and Office 365.

Since 2000, our products have been the preferred tools for financial giants, technology leaders and small businesses alike – we know mail and we know business.

We're a Microsoft Gold Partner with Microsoft IT Professionals serving our customers, former Microsoft talent developing our applications and even Microsoft MVPs praising our products – we work hard to earn the trust users place in us.

But we're proudest of the entire package provided: not just software, support or assurance, but all of it together. As we see it, you don't just get software – you get us too.

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