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Social media has gone beyond a craze â€” itâ€™s a daily routine for millions of people and your small business needs to be ready. Start off small and before you know it, your business could be tweeting promotions and receiving thousands of likes of Facebook.

First, why should you adapt a social media campaign for your small business? Because people â€” your customers â€” are likely already starting the conversation about your business. If you don't get involved with that conversation, you could risk losing customers and developing a bad reputation. That's right, even if what people are saying on their Facebook or Twitter account isn't true, it could hurt you in the long run.

Before signing up your business for Twitter or Facebook and blindly filling in some information to satisfy the objective of completing a profile, determine what you want to accomplish through social media.

You might run a chocolate shop, like the Sweet Boutique in Bay City, Michigan. The shop sells various types of decorative chocolates and basic coffee drinks throughout the day. Its owner uses Facebook to not only show photos of their latest chocolate creations, but he also shares newspaper articles about chocolate and coffee, funny internet memes that could relate to his business and photos of customers at the store. The owner isn't trying to specifically sell a product on the store's Facebook page so much as he is trying to develop a brand personality.

After you sign up for your accounts, find a social media manager. Don't get scared about the thought of hiring an employee for social media â€” you can use an application that can keep all of your different social networks in one easy-to-use window. HootSuite is one of those applications that can allow you to follow and update Twitter and Facebook followers at the same time. As you get more involved, you might want to up your level of service and buy a premium social media service like SproutSocial.com, which also provides you detailed analytics about your social media impact.

Your next step is content. A social media presence isn't a presence at all if you don't consistently post up new content. Social media moves fast, so keep it short and simple and keep it interactive. You want to engage with your friends and followers and keep them coming back, just as you would if they came into your small business.

How do you get those friends and followers? Well you can start adding people that are already on Facebook that you know come into your store (don't spam people to like your page, that never works), or you can advertise your social media presence in your small business. Maybe even consider running a promotion for people who like you Facebook or mention you on Twitter.

Outside of Facebook and Twitter there are paid programs you can sign up for, like SocialEngine, which describes itself as the "right service at the right time" for small businesses in 2012. SocialEngine lets you essentially create your social network and determine how many features you want on it. It does come at a premium of \$299, however.

Is it the right time to get into social media? It has been the right time for awhile and if you're not in the game, then your behind. Social media can be the best advertising for your small business and it doesn't cost a dime.

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