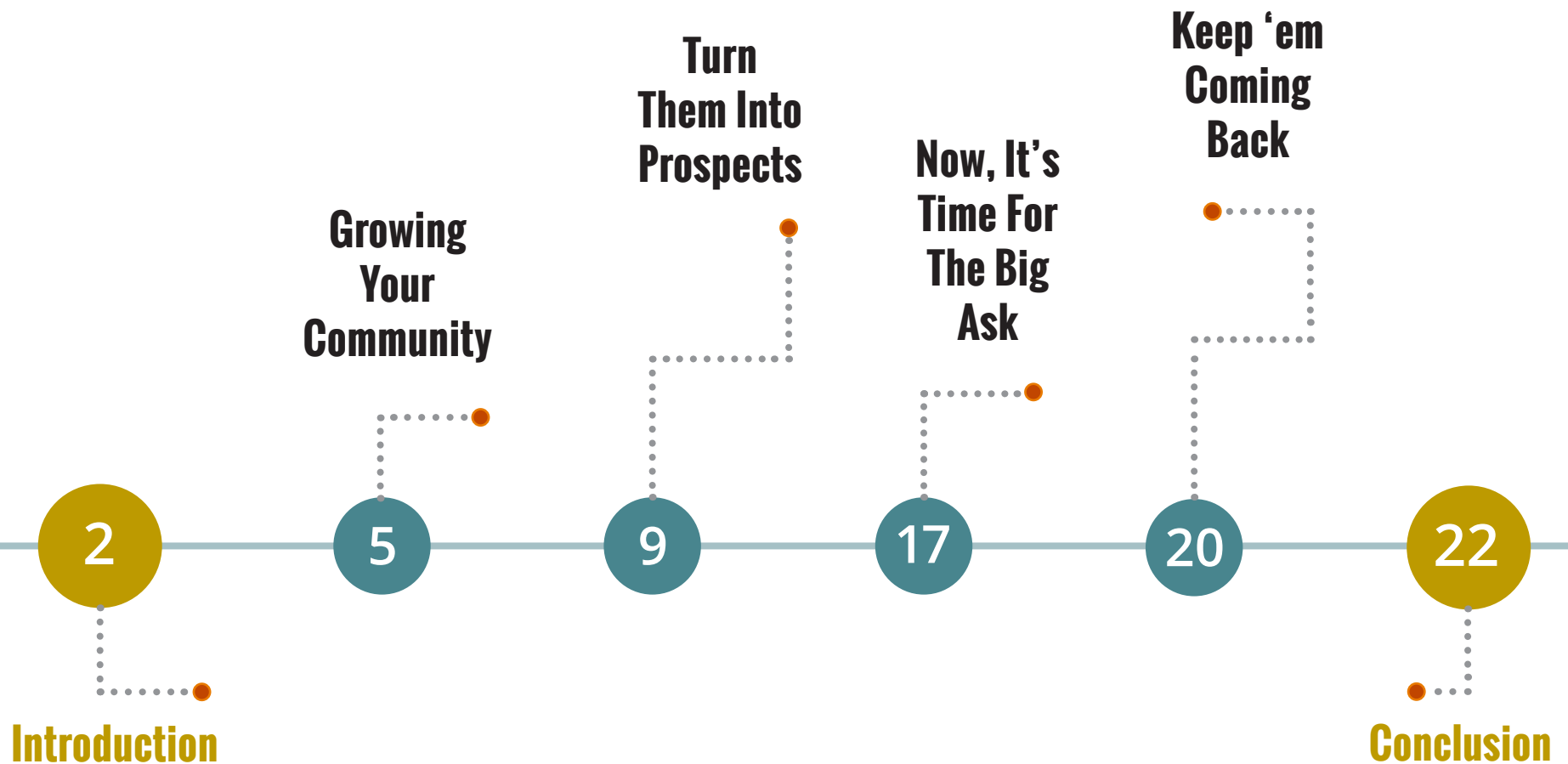


How to Use Social Media to Guide Customers Through the Sales Funnel



CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION

The sales funnel is something we all learn in Business and Marketing 101—people come in the top of the funnel and as they get closer to committing to a deal, they move toward the bottom. In this book we'll discuss how social media plays a part at each stage of the funnel and what goals businesses should be trying to achieve to move customers further down the path to conversion.

**Boost-
Case**



Don't call it a comeback

BoostCase will be back by popular (hypothetical) demand! Our favorite hypothetical company will be used throughout the book as an example of social media done right. This company sells smart phone cases and their top seller is a case with built-in antennae to boost cell service in weak areas. BoostCase really knows social media management and how to apply social media to marketing throughout the sales funnel.

INTRODUCTION

For this eBook, we'll be looking at how social can play a role in moving a customer from complete stranger to satisfied (and repeat) customer through these 4 stages of the sales funnel:

- 1 COMMUNITY** – Grow a community of people who've shown an interest in what you have to say, even if not yet what you have to sell.
- 2 PROSPECTS** – Build an ever-growing list of people in your target demographic who you can communicate with (read: market to).
- 3 CUSTOMERS** – This one is pretty self-explanatory, right?
- 4 CUSTOMER RETENTION** – Once you've sold to them once, you want to keep them as customers, get them to come back for more, and turn them into powerful referral generating engines.

Growing Your Community

At its core, social media truly is about building and connecting with a community. It's not called 'social' media by accident. A robust community of followers is not only good for your ego (who doesn't like big numbers?); it's good for your bottom line too, mainly because all of those followers are potential customers. Driving new business through social media is very much a game of numbers. Your goal should be to drive a percentage of your followers to make a purchase. So the larger and more targeted your social media following is, the more success you will have in driving sales. **First though, you've got to convince complete strangers to join your community** on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube.



If you've read our material before, you know that we are a fan of the expression "Content is King." It's time to be honest: we know it's a cliché. The thing is, it's also 100% correct, and especially at this stage of the sales funnel. Great content provides a compelling reason for a person to join your community, namely because they want to keep receiving the awesome content you share.

BoostCase Study

BoostCase posted a great article on their Facebook page about the best new free apps for iPhones. Titled “The 10 FREE Apps Most iPhone Users Don’t Have But Should,” this post captured an audience of iPhone users at the very top of the funnel. While these potential customers may not even be thinking about boosting their signal, BoostCase has their attention now and knows they are smart phone users. The post was shared by their fans and followers which led to an increase in their fan base. Let the marketing begin!



In addition to creating great content, you need to provide incentives for people to join your community. Remember to always tie the actions you want people to take back to how it benefits them. Having a “Follow” button on your blog doesn’t count (unless you’re targeting lemmings, in which case ‘Follow’ is an extremely effective “call to action”). You need a benefit-driven CTA like “Like us on Facebook for ‘Cool App Alerts!’” or “Follow us on Twitter for Daily Tips!”

RIGNITE INSIGHT:

In the BoostCase Study above,

when they posted their community-building article, they also should include a bold call-to-action: “Follow us on Facebook to get all the secrets for getting the most out of your smart phone!”



Great content can work wonders, but true community-building-masters (as prestigious a title as any we're familiar with) know to look for all the available tools they can use. In this case, that can mean integrating social into other forms of marketing. Consider these ideas for additional ways to build your community:

- **Advertise Your Community** – Use the built-in Facebook, Twitter and YouTube advertising tools to advertise your community and the benefits of joining.
- **Use Social Plus Online PR** – As you get articles and news coverage throughout the web, be sure to request a mention of your community with a link and CTA when possible so your community can reap the benefits of your PR outreach.
- **Tap Into Your Email List** – Cross-promote your social communities to your email subscribers and your customers. These are people that have already shown an interest in your company and may want to connect with you on social.
- **Encourage Social Sharing** – Keep in mind that each of your fans has their own network of followers that you can attract to your community. If you want to grow your network, you need to regularly encourage your fans to share your content.

As with each of the stages of the sales funnel, it's not enough to just get someone into your community. Once there, you need to nurture them and nudge them toward the next stage in the funnel. Fortunately, that's as easy as rinsing and repeating. Continue to create great content and your community will stay engaged and will continue to move down the funnel.

Turn Them Into Prospects

Pique Their Interest

You have a community made up of real, live followers! How do you turn those Facebook Friends and Twitter followers into customers? Remember, you don't "own" Facebook or Twitter (wouldn't that be nice?). They are what we call "rented" communities. So you want to convert your community into followers of something you do own, like your email marketing list.

The goal of capturing their email is to build a marketable database of subscribers that you can begin pushing further down the sales funnel with targeted marketing messages. And you can build your list by offering great content.

Ultimately, this is your first 'transaction' with a potential customer. You are trading them something they value (interesting content) for something you value—their contact information. You need to treat the material you create with the same attention and care that you use when creating your actual product.



Consider these options when creating content to drive email opt-in's:

- Educational videos
- Downloadable eGuides
- A “boot camp” article series like the **ones offered by Learnvest**
- Fun/useful images and graphics like the **wallpaper images offered by Old Spice**
- Tips and tricks like the **ones offered by Hungry Girl**
- Email subscriptions for future blog posts

Whatever option you choose, remember that it all must fit both your brand and the needs and interests of your target demographic.

The key to capturing email addresses is to gate the content that is really special.

Gating involves using a custom Facebook page or other applications to require the reader to give you their email address before they can read the material. This can be especially effective when a portion of the material is un-gated and acts as a sort of teaser (like the free samples in a grocery store... but with more lasting value).

A GREAT EXAMPLE OF THIS

is the eGuide released by a hypothetical North Carolina bank called “10 Tips for Vacations under \$500 from North

Carolina Moms.” It was a big hit with their target demographic: families on budgets. The reader could read the first two freely, but had to cough up their email address to get the other eight.



It is tempting at this point to think

**"I've got their email addresses,
now I'll tell them all about how great
our products are!"**

Don't be that company.

Remember, your carefully worded call to action told them to sign up for more information—more tips and pictures of cats posed like pin-ups. They didn't sign up to learn all about you and your products—yet.

At Rignite, we recommend that your content be an 80/20% split between informational content and promotional content. You don't have to write all 80% of that informational content yourself, though. You can curate external sources and aggregate news to make sure that you are providing useful information alongside your self-promotion.

80%
INFORMATION

20%
PROMOTION

Use Your Email List Wisely

You've built a community in social and you've gotten many of them interested in your content (and they're giving you their email address to get it). What's next? Now it's time to get them interested in your product or service.

You want to give your followers and email subscribers the opportunity to raise their hand and say they're interested in your product or service at every point that makes sense. You can accomplish this by sprinkling "bait" messaging into your ongoing email nurturing and social media campaigns. A few examples of this messaging are:

- Product previews: "Because you are a fan of ours on Facebook, we wanted to give you a chance to see our newest and fanciest product! Click here to check it out."
- Exclusive deals for fans/subscribers: "As a member of our Twitter family, you are entitled to a 15% discount on your next purchase!"
- Special deals in exchange for social action: "Do you like what you see? Share it with your friends and we'll give you 10% off the next time you buy."



10%



A good rule of thumb is to allow for 5% of the content in your emails to contain a hard sell offer (in the form of a banner, a sidebar, or a small blurb at the bottom of your newsletter). Sometimes people will immediately go from being a prospect on your email list to becoming a customer, and you want to make it easy for them to do so. Just leave that other 95% to the informational content that your audience will love you for.

BoostCase has done an excellent job of filling the top of their funnel with community members and has used gated content to get them on their email list. Now they want to nudge those folks into the active buying stage. **As part of their weekly 'Smartphone Tips' newsletter, they include a link to a sneak peak at their new line of Football Team-themed cases as well as an offer for 15% off the purchase.**

**BoostCase
Study**

Continue Nurturing The Lagards

Not everyone's gonna bite the bait on the first go 'round (or second, or third, or fourth). Just getting a simple click through on an offer is a step in the right direction. It's important that you keep them interested. At this point, your goal is to keep your products top of mind by giving them consistent opportunities to look at your products so that when they need (or just really, really want) what you sell, you're the first company they think of.



TURN THEM INTO PROSPECTS

Remember the time you searched for brand new running shoes and browsed for a few pairs online before moving on (certainly not to the site featuring those truffles, though)? Did you notice how, for the next few days, you seemed to see ads for running shoes on every site you went to? Welcome to the world of remarketing. Remarketing has been used by major brands like Zappos and Café Press for some time now, but for small to medium businesses, it's a largely overlooked option. Overlook it no more—integrating remarketing with your social marketing is the perfect way to get prospects back on the path to conversion when they've shown interest but then gone astray. You can even remarket to your customers on Facebook and double-down on your Facebook magic.



Creep Alert: Remarketing is one of those techniques that can very easily go from “Hey, that’s cool” to “Big Brother is watching me!” Be careful when you set up your remarketing campaigns that you include a frequency cap. You may think it’s great to have prospects see your marketing wherever they go, but they are unlikely to agree.

Now, It's Time For The Big Ask

Standing before you is a horde of carefully cultivated prospects that know all about you, your business, and your product. Now, it's time to actually get the sale.



Ultimately, the trick to using social to boost results at this stage of your funnel is finding offers and content that will drive potential consumers to purchase sooner than they might on their own. You attract customers by offering, offering, offering. (Notice we didn't say pushing, pushing, pushing – social media requires a more subtle approach.) While you need to keep a healthy mix of content (remember our 80/20 rule), it's important to remember that to get the sale, you have to ask for it.

NOW, IT'S TIME FOR THE BIG ASK



You can increase your chances of promoting an offer that will resonate with your target demographic by using your **social media management software** to monitor a VIP list of prospects. By tracking what they're interested in and/or what challenges they have, you can create a custom campaign that's sure to float their boat.

Now that you're armed with the knowledge of what resonates with your target audience, hit them up for a sales message on both social media and email. While your email list is a great source of prospects just waiting for the right time to become customers, some might skip that stage entirely and jump straight from your social channel to become customers. Make it easy for them to move through the funnel at whatever pace they need, and take as many (or ideally, as few) steps as necessary to get to that point of purchasing.

NOW, IT'S TIME FOR THE BIG ASK

BoostCase had been monitoring their hard lead VIP's and noticed that they were all chatting about upcoming summer vacations: camping, hiking, etc. Recognizing the opportunity, BoostCase implemented a marketing strategy that played off their biggest fear: losing cell service while on vacation.

They created a series of social messages that carried that theme:

- TRAVELING AND WORRIED ABOUT CELL PHONE SIGNALS ABROAD? CHECK OUT THE TRAVELER'S PACK.
- THERE'S NOTHING WORSE THAN TRAVERSING THAT CANYON AND NOT BEING ABLE TO CALL FRIENDS AND BRAG.
- HIKER'S DELIGHT SPECIAL. 10% OFF. TODAY ONLY!

The messages worked and people who were close to a sale suddenly became happy (and boosted) customers.

BoostCase Study



Keep'em Coming Back

Congratulations on your sale!

You have successfully turned a follower into a paying customer. You're done, right?

Not so fast.

The final step in the social media sales process is to retain that customer (and get them to buy again!). This stage is all about nurturing (you should buy them flowers, compliment their new bangs, and go with them to the ball game . . . ok, maybe not). You should, however, integrate customer service into every single communication mechanism.

An often overlooked opportunity for additional selling is in your transactional emails. For example, when you send a "Thank You for your Purchase" message, you can include a message like, "Stay tuned for more great deals! Follow us on Facebook to unlock our Fan ONLY specials."

RIGNITE INSIGHT: You can follow up, post transaction, with messages asking happy customers to share their experiences on your social platforms.



BoostCase Study

BoostCase knows that their best salespeople are happy customers. To try and take advantage of that, BoostCase started asking for referrals in their messaging to customers.

“Are you happy with your BoostCase? Refer a friend with the code XXXX and they will get a 15% discount on their purchase”

Not only does BoostCase get referrals, they're already driving the new prospects straight to the purchasing stage of the sales funnel. What's more, the referring customer has the advantage of being able to give something to their friends – and who doesn't like to give something away?

Rewarding repeated buying behavior is also a critical element to address. This is where loyalty programs come in. Not only do they drive repeat purchases, they also help to increase the average purchase size. With discount offers for certain amounts spent, like 20% off the next purchase of \$100 or more, you can incentivize a customer to spend more so they can reach the discount threshold. It's all about structuring offers and deals to get them back into the funnel so they buy again (and this time, bring their friends).



Using your social presence to drive customers through the sales funnel is critical for any small to medium-sized business serious about social media marketing. The good news is, if you have a good **social media management program**, you have all the insights you need. Customers these days are savvy and don't respond well to aggressive or creepy marketing. You need to cultivate a relationship and offer them what they want, when they want it. By putting your audience at the center of marketing efforts, you're sure to create a true win-win for your customers and your sales funnel.



And Now, It's Time For Our Big Ask

Now that we've provided you with valuable content (our 80%) to help you solve the challenges of turning social media followers into real live customers, here's the 5% space in our content that we are dedicating to asking you to give Rignite a spin!

With Rignite, you can:

- Manage multiple social accounts from one place
- Easily monitor and engage with customers on both social media and email
- Improve response times with team collaboration features
- See a full view of your customer's history—including relationship, social conversation, and case history
- Track and measure your social media results

Sign Up For A Free Trial Today!