Scheduling Appointments Using Social Media
The New Social Media Must: Integrated Appointment Scheduling

Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are playing an increasingly important role in people's lives. In 2014, Pew Research reported that 70% of Facebook users visited the site on a daily basis.¹ And according to consumer intelligence firm Vision Critical, 75% of the 18-34 demographic checks in multiple times a day.²

For businesses, social media sites can be just as effective as their own websites for generating sales and attracting new customers. Let's look at a few statistics:

- A study by Social Media Today reports that 71% of consumers are more likely to purchase a product or service recommended on social media.

- Mediabistro found that 74% of brand marketers who invested six hours per week in social media content development saw a resulting increase in website traffic.

- A shopper study by Blackhawk Engagement Solutions found that 66% of consumers are following brands through social media.
Little has changed since psychologist Barry Schwartz published *The Paradox of Choice* a little over a decade ago. Consumers are still looking for ways to whittle down the number of options for every purchase they make. One thing that has changed, though, is social media's influence on the purchase decision.

Social media provides us with a way to find companies that align with our personal tastes and needs. And that can be a pretty compelling point of differentiation. If you feel passionately about a particular cause, you can easily find businesses on Twitter or Facebook that are talking loud and proud about their ecological business practices, for example.

In recent years, social media platforms have evolved to become more business-friendly. For example, most social media services now provide options for public business pages that allow companies to integrate their own marketing tools, like email signup forms, ticket purchases, and appointment booking.

**Leveraging social media to boost bookings**

As soon as your customers have found your company's official social media pages, they'll be looking for ways to benefit from following you. After all, we live in a society that wants instant gratification, rewards for loyalty, and easy access to services. And your customers who are online are especially particular about the convenience of doing business online.

Once you create social media profiles for your company, you change the way you'll plan marketing campaigns from that point on. Promoting your services and offers should include updates to your social media accounts. And you'll want to give people the option to take advantage of those offers immediately.

All social media accounts allow you to post links, and many (like Facebook) have the option to include a “Book Now” button right on your business page. This simple addition to your online presence has the power to turn the casual visitor into a new customer.

“Facebook drives about 60 percent of all social referral traffic to retail websites, and half of all social media-driven purchasing happens within one week of sharing, Tweeting, liking or favoriting a product.”

— Mediabistro 2014
In a survey by Invesp, 41% of respondents purchased an item that they didn't know existed until they discovered it on social media. If your service is “discovered” by a prospect on social media, it makes sense for him to have the option to act right away. If he has to remember to go to your website, or to call you later, you risk losing it all — the appointment, the customer, and the sale.

**Here’s why:** Even if you offer online booking services through your website, **many people simply won’t leave their social media browsing session to navigate to your website and book an appointment.** Offering the option of scheduling directly from your social media page allows your would-be customer to go from “I’ll have to remember to book an appointment” to “Glad I booked my appointment before I forgot!”

**Social media helps you build trust**

Social media differs from more traditional marketing methods in that it makes the business or organization appear more human, more approachable. Continuous posting of fresh content on social media sites shows your audience that you are committed to keeping them updated. It can create an instant connection that, over time, helps develop trust. It can’t be overemphasized, though, that we’re talking about content posted on a company’s social media site, and not banner ads that may appear on social media. Ads are a soliloquy. Building trust via social content requires a two-way conversation.

It’s also important to note that you must have resources dedicated to your social media presence if you expect to build trust. You don’t necessarily have to hire new staff who are 100% dedicated to it, but monitoring your pages and responding to customer complaints, inquiries, and comments has to be part of someone’s job description. Miss just a few of those opportunities to engage with your customers, and you can forget building trust.

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**When asked which channel they trusted most as a source of information from a brand, responders to a 2015 survey ranked Facebook higher than print newspapers, television, and news websites.**

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Integrating social media and appointment scheduling

Appointment scheduling software is a Software as a Service (SaaS) application that completely automates the scheduling process. It allows individuals to self-schedule online at their convenience, eliminating the back-and-forth hassle of scheduling by phone or email.

As a cloud-based technology, appointment scheduling software is a perfect fit for social media sites. The software typically provides a company with its own unique booking link, which takes individuals directly to its online calendar. Some also provide button links, which might say “Book Now” or “Schedule Now.” Either the link or button can be added to the company's social media pages.

Among the benefits of adding a scheduling link on a social media page:

- Allow prospects to instantly book an appointment or reservation right from the social media page, without having to navigate to a business or organization website, pick up the phone, send an email, or book in person.

- Capture “spontaneous” purchases made by customers viewing a discount or promotion.

- Permit customers to book appointments or reservations at any hour of the day, which offers a level of convenience that demonstrates respect for your customers’ time.

- Gain additional online exposure, especially if the social media page draws more traffic than your business website.

- Book more appointments with little to no additional effort.
Conclusion

The evolving role of social media in commerce is undeniably affecting the way businesses plan their marketing budgets. Those that take advantage of the opportunities social media offers have the potential to operate more profitably and efficiently.

As with any marketing buy, there's no guarantee with social media. But the risk is low, and the potential gains are huge. It provides a unique opportunity to engage your prospects and customers in an environment that's already part of their daily routine. When you add in the dimension of making it convenient for them to do business with you, you get so much more for your marketing dollar than just an appointment. You build goodwill.

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About Kendall E. Matthews

Vice President of Global Marketing and user of “The Force.” I’ve been a growth hacker since 1995, producing like a ZILLION inquiry leads (ok . . . a couple hundred thousand). Also good at taking 2 pm naps.

About AppointmentPlus

AppointmentPlus scheduling software is a configurable, rules-based, pure SaaS product. Our software — combined with our deep product integration knowledge, customer experience focus, and amazing ability to both analyze synergies and synergize analogies — has made us the vendor of choice for many Fortune 500 companies.

Just want to talk directly to a Scheduling Software Expert?
In 15 minutes, we can help you find the plan that’s right for your team.

Call 800.988.0061 or Schedule a consultation

References:

2. Lena Lam, Cheryl Loh, Alexandra Samuel, & David Sevitt, "From Social to Sale: 8 Questions to Ask Your Customers." Vision Critical.