

## Tips to overcome SMFS

**If Social Media Fatigue Syndrome has you down, here's how to get over it.**

By: [Lynn Parker](#) | 08/25/2009

If you're not a digital native, you're probably overwhelmed by the challenges of social media. And if you're like me, you're experiencing a touch of SMFS--social media fatigue syndrome. But there's a clear path to leveraging social media that promises--if not an immediate cure--management of the chronic condition.

The truth is, you can't afford SMFS. As one of the least expensive ways to promote your business, social media has a key role to play as part of your overall marketing mix. But more than that, it helps you do business differently. It can help you connect on a more personal level with your key prospects to raise awareness, develop deeper relationships, change perceptions and spread your message.

Don't apply it in isolation, though, because you'll waste a lot of time. Think about it as a tool to help you create a social brand--one that listens, engages and relates more closely to its customers to create greater brand champions. Implementing a successful social media strategy requires some strategic thinking and a clear plan. It also requires knowing what your brand promise is, so that you can live it online. Here are eight steps to follow to relieve SMFS.

1. **Get clear about your purpose.** Social media is . . . well, social. It's about building community, which means you have to earn the trust of those you want to interact with. Do you want to cultivate thought leadership or create a network of people who test and respond to your new ideas? You need to have a goal, whatever it is.
2. **Seek out your key audiences online** and, once you find them, listen. By visiting blogs, Twitter, Facebook and other key social media sites geared toward your industry, you can see the conversations people are having and gain insight into their current perceptions. In listening to their ideas, you'll find more ways to deliver value. Are they talking about your brand? What are they saying?
3. **Monitor conversations.** Once you know where your audiences are, it's essential to stay involved by regularly monitoring what's being said. You can set up tools--such as Google Alerts or Technorati Favorites--that allow you to track these conversations effectively on a daily basis.
4. **Join the conversation.** But remember, this is about demonstrating your brand promise and being authentic. It's not a monologue but a dialogue, so you have to act the same way online as you would in an offline relationship: honest and transparent to encourage people to share their thoughts. Engaging in two-way dialogue allows you to correct misinformation, raise interest and cultivate relationships.
5. **Drive involvement.** This is the hard part. You want people interacting with you, not just reading your content. So you need to provide opportunities for participation. You can do this through

collecting user-generated content, participating in interactive polls and contests, or moderating conversations. Develop a strategy for acknowledging and rewarding users' efforts and persistently seek new ways to drive engagement. That way, you strengthen users' bond to the brand and the brand community and, ultimately, create brand champions.

6. **Crowdsource.** Repurpose content that your followers, fans and blog posters generate. For example, you might use applications such as the Discussion Board on Facebook to initiate conversations around something specific to your business, and then repurpose this feedback to create more content--such as blog posts--to increase awareness and shape perceptions.
7. **Measure.** You've listened, shared, connected and engaged--but is it working? Putting measurements in place will help you track success back to your specific tactics. Aside from traditional measurement strategies (page visits, visit duration, new users, comments, links and referrals), you should also track your return on involvement. This means tracking actual engagement: response to questions, willingness to stay engaged over time and dialog between your organization and consumers. For a small business it's typically a qualitative measurement: Are you seeing more retweets, are you getting more questions/responses? After all, the goal of social media is to drive deeper engagement with your customers. Doing so will increase brand awareness, reinforce your brand promise, build loyalty, capture valuable customer insights, build your internal brand and contribute to new business opportunities.
8. **Re-evaluate your commitment.** Once you know the landscape, decide how much time is reasonably needed to accomplish your goals and assign the work to one or more people. The idea is to target your efforts where they'll be most effective and ignore the rest. Don't undercut your efforts by giving too little time--and give it time to work. Just like with any community, it takes personal investment to make it meaningful.

See, that wasn't so bad, was it? Is your SMFS improving?

*Lynn Parker is co-founder of [Parker LePla](#), a brand strategy consulting firm in Seattle. She's also the author of [The Reluctant Entrepreneur](#), and co-author of [Integrated Branding](#) and [Brand Driven](#).*