

Top 10 Reasons Social Media is Important for Search Engine and Website Traffic

Search engine optimization and ways of driving website traffic have changed dramatically over the last few years. It used to be all about the algorithms. Then Google's all-powerful algorithms were over-ridden by the phenomenon of social search as social media developed, grew and exploded into the collective consciousness.

Google fought back, creating, scrapping, re-creating and refining its own social media platforms and apps to compete with its major competitor, Facebook. In fact, the two giants are running neck and neck, miles above every other social network. Facebook holds # 2 ranking – both at home and globally, according to Alexa.com.

The emphasis Google has been putting on its own social networks should give us the biggest clue why social media is important for search engine and website traffic.

Namely, it works.

1. Social Media Keeps Up with – and Enables – Trends

What's the one consistent fact about internet culture, social platforms and technology nowadays? It's always in a state of change. And one fact that is quickly becoming self-evident: Whichever social network can adapt to the cultural mindset the quickest draws the biggest audience.

Have you ever seen documentaries that show how certain fish not only [school together](#), but move as one fluid entity, shifting this way and that as if they possess one mind? Well, social networks in today's cultural climate operate exactly like that.



These networks go with the flow and are not manipulated by algorithms. In fact, algorithms are being feverishly adapted to keep up with popular online connection practices and habits.

Both social media developers and Google programmers know this. Changes in algorithmic practices have resulted in a shift away from rigid formulae to the phenomenon we all know by now as “social search”. If even Google is rushing to follow social platform leads, that’s a powerful message about the importance of social media.

2. Social Sharing is the New SEO

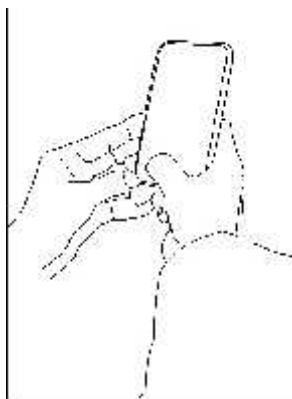
What makes Google sit up nowadays is the **sharing capacity** and performance of a site – not backlinks. In fact, Google now penalizes backlinks from exact anchor text, boosting sites in the ranks if their content is fresh, original, authoritative, comprehensive, spam-free – and above all, **shared**.

Want to rocket up in search rankings the easy way? Follow the example of top-ranking sites such as [Social Media Examiner](#) here and install the Google+ “+1” button, as well as the “g+” follow icon.



And do install share buttons for the other major players – Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter and LinkedIn.

3. Social Networks are where People Spend Their Time



Hanging out on social networks has become as common in this era as watching “I Love Lucy” on TV was in the 1950s. If you aren’t sure what “I Love Lucy” is, at least now that times certainly have changed. It’s what people did, back then, to unwind after their work day.

Nowadays thanks to [mobile phones](#), people don’t have to wait until “after work”: They can – and do – quickly check Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter feeds any time, day or night.

In fact, [Mashable](#) published an infographic in November, 2012, showing that “social media accounts for 18% of time spent online”. (But did you know that fastest growing segments are “males of all ages and people over 55”?)

People now habitually ask friends for opinions, check in at local businesses, complain about poor service – and visit websites promoted through social ads and social media Business Pages.

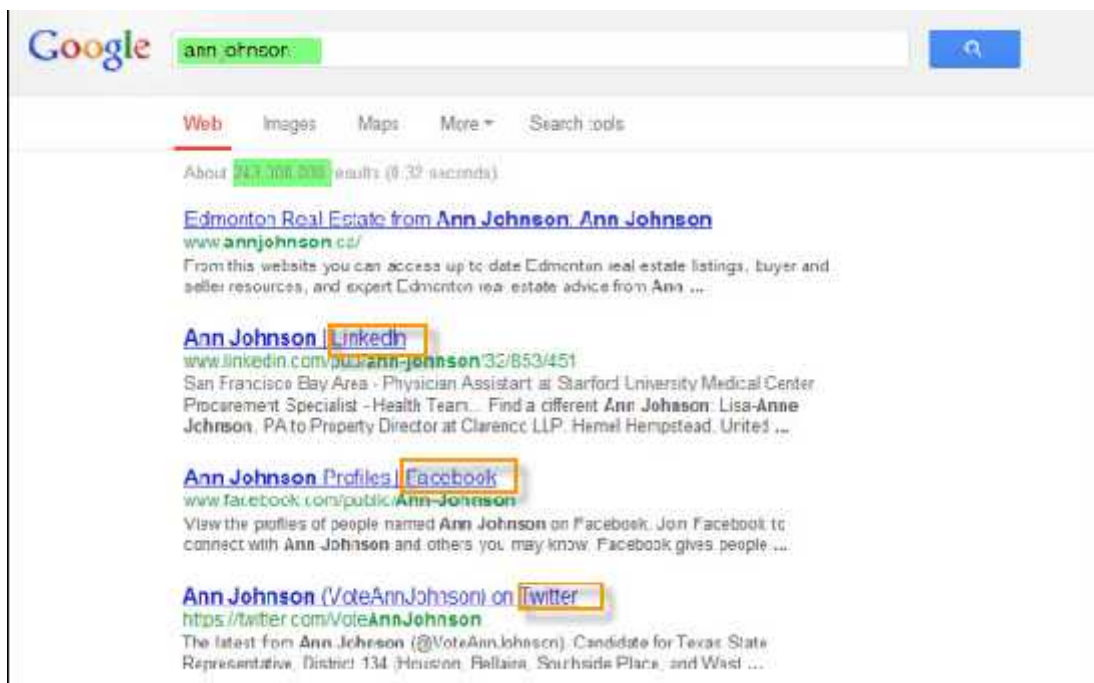
4. Social Networking Improves Your Google Rank

There are two things you must do, to quickly advance in Google's search rankings. Number one is purchase a domain in your own name (if that is not already taken). Next, join the top social networks and optimize your profile within each one.

Why?

Let's take an extremely common name – say, “Ann Johnson” – and type it into Google's search bar. We have 243,000,000 results. And out of that 243,000,000, which results come up in the top four positions?

Let's take a look...



Top place goes to the Ann Johnson who was lucky enough to secure her namesake domain – www.annjohnson.ca.

Second, third and fourth results belong to Ann Johnsons who have profiles on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. That's a great example of **leveraging the power of strong social sites** – and the particular Ann Johnsons featured here didn't just sign up and create any old profile.

They **optimized** their profiles, right down to the “Twitter” Ann Johnson creating a custom URL, “https://twitter.com/VoteAnnJohnson”.

(It's more than probable that “https://twitter.com/AnnJohnson” was already taken, so she got creative and used a keyword –i.e. “vote” – relevant to her Twitter goal.

5. Social Media Arouses Curiosity – and Sharing

If you are wondering how to make sure your content is frequently or virally shared (which can increase the value of your profile to Google over the profile of someone else who has the same name), then it's time to pause before you press the "post" button.

The million-dollar question to ask yourself is...

- "Is this content share-able?"



If you don't know what "share-able" constitutes, take a look at:

- Posts that reap a storm of comments and shares from your target niche
- Types of posts that gather more shares in your niche: A particular website's? An incendiary topic? A frustrating challenge? Cute kitten photos? Shabby-chic décor? Your YouTube Videos? Photographs? Instagram shares?

And above all, if people like your content, they share links to your site.

Dynamic, interactive and emotion-catching content is definitely one of the top ten reasons social media has become important to your search engine ranking

6. Social "Rich Media" Apps Make Your Content More Share-able

One of the biggest advantages social media endows, when it comes to driving traffic to your website, is in the number of rich media apps they allow you to easily install; as in videos, photos, links and sound clips.



This brings not only a degree of interactivity to your site – always a good thing when it comes to share appeal – but helps your site stand out and grab attention.

Not only that, but you don't have to pay for developers or spend hours slaving over code: The social networks have done all that for you.

Take, for example, [Twitter cards](#). These go in your website HTML so that when readers tweet or retweet your content, they don't just tweet the link; they tweet your rich media too, as Adam Burrell shows in our example, left.

Not only does this drive traffic to your site, it gives you complete control on how it is presented. To install the snippet of code for Twitter cards, visit the [Twitter developers link](#).

Best of all, you can easily add Twitter cards through a dashboard-searchable [WordPress plugin](#).

7. Social Networks are Developing More Rich Media Resources All the Time

If there's one thing social networks and developers do brilliantly, it's creating apps designed to outdo the competition, send people to your website – helping you show up at the top of search results.



For example, not only does Twitter offer Twitter cards for your website, they sweetened your links by incorporating rich media into their own platform so you can instantly add a photo or location to your tweet.

8. Social Networks are Competitive

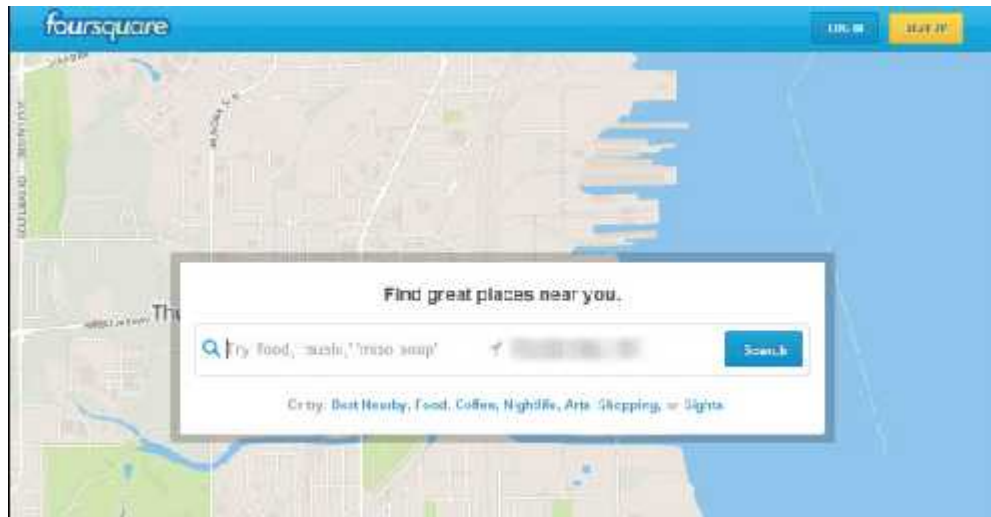
And that's good news for you! The major players have the big bucks, staff, experts and resources to spy on and analyze each other's results. If you see a strategy such as rich media copied from one network by another, you can pretty much bet it's a viable traffic-generation and engagement strategy – particularly when development competition seems to be fierce.

Another tip: When people start blogging about a strategy or app and creating [SlideShare presentations](#), you know that one is here to stay. (Till the next one comes along, that is...)



9. Social Networks Drive Online Traffic to Local Businesses

This should come as no surprise to anyone, but for local businesses who create online presences (as more and more of your competitors are doing nowadays) social media such as location apps (e.g. [Foursquare](#)) can really give an edge.



Apps such as these prompt people to “check in” and announce where they are via mobiles. And people seem to love to do this!

10. Reviews Drive Traffic

If you have a local business, social apps and networks are invaluable for providing your customers or clients with the opportunity to easily post reviews – particularly via Google+ Local.



Claim and optimize your Google+ Local space to attract people to *your* website or business, instead of your competitors'. And one side effect will be that you attract **targeted customers or clients** who never would have found you, any other way.

Location, reviews, recommendations, "Likes" and photos or videos of your products or business – and most of all, the opportunity to let a wide market hear your unique "voice" – make social media not only important for driving traffic to your website, but vital to search engine rankings and results.



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