

Why Social Media Is Important



By Mark Luckey, Travel Business Consultant

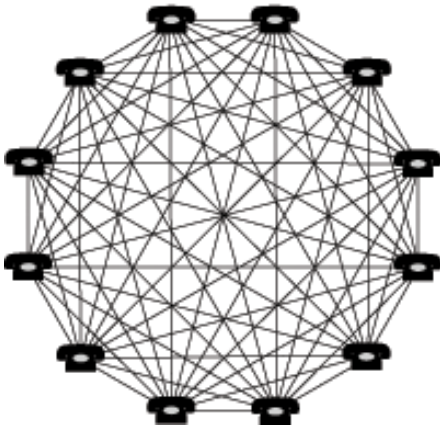
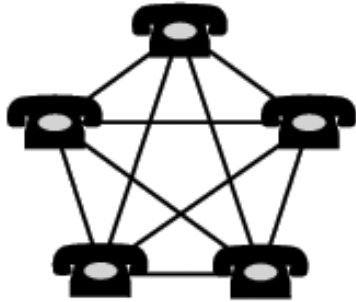
Clever technology is helping, but it's more about our humanity that is driving the relentless force which is social media. So why should travel agents care? Social media is the channel of choice for online socialising.

Humans want interaction and communication, its fundamental to our existence. It makes us feel part of something and social media is now at our fingertips. 750 Million Facebook users can't be wrong.

The fundamental change in "web 2.0" is evolution of the online "conversation" facilitated through social media sites. Suddenly, online communication is dynamic, un-moderated, multi directional and truly democratic. Conversations can start without you, go viral and include a global audience, within minutes, on a topic on which you are an expert. As far as listening goes, Web 2.0 generates valuable market statistics.

Got travel expertise? Not involved in communications online? Then you are missing opportunities.

The conversations taking place in social media are explained by Metcalfe's law, where $C = n(n-1)/2$ in English, it says that the more people that exist in a network, the more conversations that can take place. See below for an illustration.



These conversations lead to hits on your website, with over two thirds of traffic driven to websites originating from social media pages. It's the death of pay per click advertising.

Jake Hower from Pan Australia Travel in Melbourne says “Our online strategy aims to network, build trust and lead generation, using the major social networks.....rather than the shopfront, water cooler or the Chamber of Commerce, the conversation is taking place on Facebook.”

So for agents to participate in modern day conversations and widen their communication and marketing funnel they should

- Start with a strategy that builds their presence
- Participate
- Comment on blogs, trip advisor ratings and destination
- see what your competitors are and are not doing
- Tune your social media mix

Why is it important to be part of “conversations”? Look out for our next article on “The New Word of Mouth”.