

The Online Visibility Crisis

Why Smart Business Owners Are In A Race
To Embrace Social And Content Marketing
Now (Or Risk Their Business Virtually 'Disap-
pearing' Online Within The Next 2-5 Years)

Steve Shaw

Published by:
Takanomi Limited, registered office: 31 St Saviourgate York YO1 8NQ United Kingdom

Copyright © 2014 Takanomi Limited, York, United Kingdom
All rights reserved.

Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) in any language, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner, except that you are expressly authorized to pass this report in its entirety and without modification to others, so that they too may gain from the valuable information contained herein.

While the author and publisher of this course have made their best effort to ensure it is useful, informative and valuable, the author and publisher make no representation or warranties with regard to the accuracy, applicability, or completeness of the contents of this course; furthermore, they do not accept any liability for any direct or indirect losses or damages arising directly or indirectly through the use of any material or information contained within this course.

Your level of success in attaining the results claimed in this course and related materials depends on the time you devote to the ideas and techniques mentioned. Since these factors differ according to individuals, we cannot guarantee your success or income level, nor are we responsible for any of your actions.

The author and publisher are not responsible for nor do they warrant the performance of any websites linked to from, or recommended in, this report, nor have the owners of those websites authorized, sponsored, endorsed or approved this publication.

All product names, copyrights and trademarks belong to their respective owners, and none of these owners have authorized, sponsored, endorsed or approved this publication. The author has received no remuneration of any kind in return for including any company, website or product mentioned in this course.

You should assume that where links are provided to third-party resources or recommendations made, that the author and publisher stands to materially gain from such recommendations. You should always do your own diligent research before purchasing any product or service online.



You are expressly authorized to pass this report in its entirety and without modification to others so that they can benefit too.

If you got this report because someone else passed it on to you, make sure you don't miss out on the full series - just go to:

<http://vwriter.com/cmmoptin.php>

Dear Fellow Business Owner,

Small business owners the world over are in crisis, stuck between a rock and a hard place.

On the one hand, they're supposed to be active, present and building large followings on the major social media sites like:

- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Google+

(Not to mention YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, SlideShare, and others.)

And on the other hand, they simply don't have the time or resources to be everywhere they need to be to succeed in today's business environment.

After all, they do have a business to run. How can they find several hours a day to Tweet, to post to LinkedIn, to update Facebook, to 'engage', to formulate their 'content strategy', create videos, presentations, and everything else they now have to do arghhhhh!!!

Yet by not doing so, they face an *online visibility crisis*: a future of ever-decreasing online visibility in an increasingly socially-connected and content-rich world, and an increasing struggle to reach their potential prospects and customers on the platforms where they spend the majority of their time.

Does any of the above ring a bell with you?

So what's the small business owner supposed to do?

As this report will show, doing *nothing* is clearly not an option.

Failure to fully embrace social and content marketing in your business *now* risks your business virtually 'disappearing' online within the next 2 to 5 years.

Companies the world over are investing increasing amounts in their social media activities and in content marketing, building up strong profiles and high visibility.

SEO is increasingly intertwined with such activities as well, with search engine visibility ever-more dependent on your online authority, credibility and reputation.

Stick your head in the sand, deny it's happening, and do nothing, and you risk finding your business left behind, drowned out and largely invisible and irrelevant to the potential customers you need to connect with. That's a recipe for disaster.

But there is hope. There is a practical way forward.

And in this important - if not, critical - series of three short reports, I'll be showing you how.

In this first report, I'll be covering:

- What the *online visibility crisis* is, what caused it, and why the time to act is now.
- Why social media and other content channels are no longer just a '*nice to have if you the time*' phenomenon, but critical for the long-term viability of your business.
- How, for this very reason, smart business owners the world over are in a race to embrace social media and content marketing to ensure their own survival and profitability.

In short, *why you should sit up and take notice, now.*

And in the next two reports, I'll go on to cover exactly *what* to do about it for your own business, and *how* - and all in an easily achievable way for the average small business owner.

So in the second report, I reveal the 'Be Everywhere' strategy. This gives you a powerful formula for building online visibility, growing traffic, and attracting new prospects and leads for your business. And it's all designed for the new online reality.

It's exactly the same formula I'm putting into place for my own business over the next 12 months, and is based both on my own online experience of over a decade, feedback from customers for my business, and extensive research, observation and consultation with marketing experts around the globe on 'what's working now'.

When you see it for yourself, you'll understand just how effective putting in place such a strategy would be.

But that doesn't mean it's easy. Creating a successful business never is, and this isn't a *get rich quick* solution. As you're no doubt already aware, success involves hard work, tenacity, commitment and sacrifice.

Despite that, there's still only so many hours in the day. We all need sleep, to exercise and to rest, to go on vacation, and to spend time with our families. And of course to maintain our health, without which we wouldn't be able to run our businesses and support our families. Let's not forget, there's a life *outside* business too.

So the solution to all of this still needs to be *practical* for the average small business owner, keen to ensure their success over the next few years at least, to put into place.

That's exactly what I'll be covering in the third and final report in the series, that tells you *how* to implement the strategy into your own business. It reveals how the average small business owner can "Be Everywhere" while still having time to run their business and go on vacation.

And I promise you'll love this. Not just love it, but when you see the potential of what I'll be sharing with you, it will blow your mind. It puts *you* and your business on a level playing field with the big businesses with the big bucks and big staffing levels. It's likely to be the most important information you'll come across all year, and could define the next decade for your business.

Just make sure you don't miss it.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steve Shaw". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Steve Shaw

About Steve Shaw

Steve Shaw has ran an online business since 2001. He started out creating popular software products for prominent marketers like Jonathan Mizel and Ryan Deiss.

He rapidly moved into creating and marketing his own software products, including a product that helped business owners add popup windows to their websites. For a relatively short period, using popups on your website was a very effective marketing technique. For example, they could help build opt-in lists.

But they were kind of annoying! Their increasingly widespread usage led to browsers building in popup blockers, which are still a part of browsers now. Popups that appear within the web page you're viewing (rather than as a new browser window) are still used frequently by marketers and business owners today, an echo of this earlier technique.

In 2003, he launched SubmitYourArticle.com, the article submission service. SubmitYourArticle.com was the first automated article marketing system in the world, and served thousands of business owners from around the world, helping them achieve top rankings for their sites and build traffic and authority. It also spawned many imitators and competing similar services.

Article marketing became so prolific, and unfortunately so swamped with spam content, that it eventually forced major algorithm changes from Google that diminished the benefits of article submissions for legitimate business owners.

Those changes among others helped create the *online visibility crisis* that's referred to in this report, and helped encourage the *race to embrace* social and content marketing strategies as a sustainable, long-term alternative.

(The added benefit of such strategies, as will be explained further, is that they ensure a business is far less dependent on SEO and Google's latest algorithm for their survival.)

With over a decade's worth of 'in the trenches' online experience, including masterminding with top business owners and marketers in both the US and the UK, Steve's real passion lies in developing automated online-based systems that take advantage of the power of the Internet to help business owners market their businesses effectively.

He lives in the heart of rural North Yorkshire in England with his wife and four children aged between 4 and 14. Oh, and a cat called Idgey, named after the character in *Fried Green Tomatoes*.

The Online Visibility Crisis

Let's face it. It used to be far easier to make your business visible online, and attract traffic, leads and sales.

In the *good old days*, you'd submit articles to a few article directories, keep active in a few forums, tweak your site's meta tags here and there, and find yourself at the top of the search engines where customers could come along and find you.

You'd build your email list, keep sending out emails, and they'd keep finding you and purchasing from you.

Okay, that's over-simplifying it a little. But you get the idea.

So what's changed?

There are three main factors as listed here that have caused drastic drops in online visibility for many small businesses at present - I'll address each in turn:

- Attention Spread
- The Declining Relevance - and Increasing *Danger* - of Email
- The Death of 'Old School' SEO

Attention Spread

There's now so much more *competition* for the attention of your prospect.

They're bombarded by thousands of messages a day when online.

They flit between a number of different online portals in which their online lives are both created and exist, and on which they increasingly depend.

There's so much more *noise*, it's far harder to be heard above the din.

Even SEO is not as important as it used to be. Your prospect is no longer wholly dependent on Google to find the information they need. Even if you do have a high ranking, they may not come across you or know you exist.

As an alternative to searching on Google, they'll ask around or search on social media. Or they may just see what they need via other posts and updates.

And it's far harder for you to be found by your potential prospects if you don't have a presence where they like to congregate.

They're spending such huge amounts of time on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social platforms that *if you're not there, you largely don't exist*.

In case you're in any doubt as to where your marketplace spend their time, here are just a few figures to make you sit up and take notice:

- Facebook had 829 million daily active users on average in June 2014
- Twitter has over 250 million active users and is the world's second largest social platform
- LinkedIn has over 300 million registered users

The online environment is also becoming more *tribal*. If you're not active on Twitter like your prospects increasingly are, you can't engage and communicate with them, build a relationship and take the sale.

Same with Facebook. Same with LinkedIn. *You're not one of them. You're out of the loop. You'll just be ignored as irrelevant to their lives.*

It's becoming ever more vital to be part of the crowd and part of the conversation.

And think about this.

As today's younger generation, brought up with social media as an ingrained part of their lives, become the spenders in your marketplace, businesses that fail to connect with them via their preferred communication channels will lose market share, diminish and disappear.

Which leads me onto the next factor ...

The Declining Relevance - and Increasing *Danger* - Of Email

On a similar note, the younger generation of today are so used to communicating through social media that they find the use of email quirky, old-fashioned and largely irrelevant.

Need proof?

Here's a comment from someone aged 21 from way *back in 2011*. Now in their mid-20s, the declining relevance of email as a means of communication for your prospects is only going to get stronger:

*'Young people use [Facebook]. **They don't use email.** I'm 21 and my friends are all roughly the same age. They have a university email account they use for school. They have a personal email account, which they set up almost 10 years ago, and only use to sign up to sites. It is filled with thousands of unread notifications, friend requests, and spam messages. They never check it.*

*In the last 2 years anytime I meet someone new we don't exchange phone numbers or email addresses. They ask "Are you on Facebook?" and we connect there. This is becoming more and more common.'*¹

And from an article in the Boston Globe from 2013:

*"The absence of e-mail is particularly widespread among the younger members of the digerati. Young adults who grew up with social media often don't even know what they're missing, since e-mail was never their dominant tool for communication ... **email is [regarded] like a fax machine;** they use it only because someone in their sphere is holding onto the old technology."*²

Sure, email used to be a great way to keep in touch with your prospects and customers, keep your business front of mind, and keep your business *visible*.

It still works, and none of this intended to make you give up on it entirely - it's an intrinsic part of my own business.

But it's important to be aware of its decline and that it's not as powerful or as useful it used to be. It's time to add other means of communicating with your audience into the mix.

Ask yourself, is your business currently largely *dependent* on communicating via email with your prospects and customers?

If so, you'll be reaching a declining proportion of them effectively. It's worth asking whether your business would still be a viable proposition in 5 or 10 years time if that continued?

But it's not just declining relevance.

Email is also becoming more regulated and a more *dangerous* means of communication.

Forget to add the right information at the end of your emails or use a misleading subject line and you can fall foul of CAN-SPAM legislation in the US.

¹ <https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=3554466>

² <http://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2013/03/29/mail-gets-cold-shoulder/xWOVx0s9h8EXVs8t6MxrmO/story.html>

And from July 2014, Canada brought in a tough new 'anti-spam' law affecting anyone sending email to or from a Canadian computer, and threatening substantial fines (up to \$10 million) and even imprisonment of up to 5 years for offenders.

As a result of compliance with this law, many businesses have lost a huge number of subscribers they were previously able to communicate with.

According to one of Canada's biggest accounting firms, "We lost 90% of our list."³

It's not just in Canada either. I've heard of other businesses from elsewhere in the world who have 'cleansed' their lists in fear of this legislation and seen similar huge drops in the number of subscribers they're now able to email to.

If you're largely dependent on email and you lose a huge part of your list, you lose of course a huge part of your visibility as well.

By no longer turning up in someone's email box, *even if they don't open the email*, you're quickly forgotten and irrelevant.

There's no sign communicating via email is going to get any easier or less fraught with danger and difficulty.

On the other hand, add social media and content marketing into the mix, and your visibility is much enhanced, and the risk of disappearing off the radar for your potential prospect is much reduced.

And we haven't even touched on email deliverability issues, spam filters, and more! Other means of communicating effectively with customers and prospects is becoming essential for most businesses.

The Death of 'Old School' SEO

Of course, SEO itself is not 'dead'. SEO should be a core strategy in any business to gain maximum visibility for your business on Google and other search engines.

But the strategies have evolved significantly. 'Old school' SEO practices that were so commonly accepted as *good practice* no longer work like they did. Following major Google algorithm updates over the past couple years, they can even now be detrimental, which many businesses have unfortunately found out to their cost.

Some of these strategies include the following:

- Text spinning

³ <http://business.financialpost.com/2014/07/24/canadas-anti-spam-slashes-companys-email-lists/>

- Unnatural keyword linking
- Low quality content written largely for the search engines
- Keyword links from low quality websites

It's meant that many websites and small businesses relying on this type of SEO woke up one morning to find their rankings substantially reduced ... or even found their website had been thrown off Google entirely.

Of course, using strategies to achieve high rankings relatively easily was good while it lasted. But the real problem lay in how so many businesses allowed themselves to become almost completely dependent on such SEO for their online visibility.

In doing so, they gave up any control over their future. The survival of their business rested almost completely on whether or not Google's latest algorithm continued to support their own site staying at a particular ranking for a particular set of keywords.

A more sensible and sustainable strategy is to ensure the traffic you receive to your site from Google thanks to any SEO activities is only a certain proportion of the traffic you enjoy. It should just be one of the 'pillars' supporting your business ... but not the only or most significant one.

SEO is always liable to change, and anything you don't fully control should always be treated with a lot of caution.

Following the death of these 'old school' practices, which largely attempted to artificially manipulate rankings, it's now a lot harder for businesses to achieve the same level of visibility on Google. It's another reason such businesses are facing an *online visibility crisis*.

The good news however is that it's not impossible to achieve. You just have to be more of an 'authority' site and be more genuinely worthy of a particular ranking level.

One way to achieve this is through social media and content marketing activities, which SEO is now fully intertwined with. I examine it further below, and you'll see exactly how to integrate such an approach into your business in the next couple reports.

It's another reason why the race to embrace social and content marketing is in full swing.

So let's now look at that *race to embrace* in some more detail ...

The Race To Embrace Social And Content Marketing

"In order for your business to thrive, your business must be visible to consumers doing their online research and shopping. SEO work, social media marketing, and cross-selling between all communication channels are all absolutely crucial to increasing online visibility."

Travis Thorpe, *The Top 5 Reasons Small Businesses Fail*⁴, published in Inc.com

According to a 2014 Content Marketing Institute report on B2C marketing trends, based on data from literally thousands of businesses across the globe, 60% of B2C marketers are increasing the amount they invest in content marketing.⁵

A similar report for B2B shows a very similar figure for B2B marketers.⁶

Their research also shows that during 2013, small business marketers' use of social media platforms like Google+, SlideShare, Instagram and YouTube all rose substantially, with increases on the previous year of up to 250%.

The race is on.

You can only presume all this upward investment in social media and content marketing is a reflection of results already achieved, and therefore worthy of such increased investment.

But what exactly are the benefits?

Why are so many small businesses now taking social and content marketing much more seriously, and devoting large portions of their marketing budgets to such activities?

⁴ <http://www.inc.com/travis-thorpe/the-top-5-reasons-small-businesses-fail.html>

⁵ http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/B2C_Research_2014-withlinks.pdf

⁶ <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2013/10/2014-b2b-content-marketing-research/>

Search Engine Visibility

With 'old school' SEO practices out and discouraged, far more weight is now placed on social media 'signals' and links from quality, authoritative websites where the value of content can be easily judged.

For example, content on sites like SlideShare.net provides stats on readership and likeability, and is a clear indication as to the value (and therefore authority) of a particular piece of content that may link back to a particular website.

Similarly, links back to a site through social media channels help to further indicate the authority level of a particular website. Large followings and quality interactions within a related social media account help indicate the appeal and authority level of a related site. And so on.

In fact, content marketing and social media is now such an intrinsic part of SEO, you can't separate the two.

Trying to do SEO without a proper social and content marketing strategy is like trying to wrestle with both hands tied behind your back - you'll keep getting knocked down and thrown out the ring.

By fully embracing social media and content marketing - and this is a really important point - your visibility is no longer so dependent on the visibility of your website. You effectively immunize yourself against Google's algorithm updates, while at the same time improving your search engine visibility by a significant margin.

By having a wide range of content across authoritative websites, your online visibility greatly increases with so much more content available for people to locate and click through on. From there they can then connect with or find out more about your business.

It no longer matters so much whether your own site is ranked in a particular position. There are so many routes and channels through which people can find your business and content relating or pointing to it, that it dilutes the importance of the ranking of your own site. Your traffic is flowing from multiple sources.

And it's often far easier to have your content ranked well on the search engines when it appears on one of these sites, than to try to rank the same content on your own site.

The authority of the site in question transfers some of that authority to *your* content, helping it rank well. Plus you get the added long-term benefit of such content helping to create authority for your own site too.

Also, all your content on various channels increases your brand recognition over time, and this in itself can lead to higher click-throughs from your listings in search engines. The higher click-throughs send a positive signal to the search engine - effectively telling

them your content is highly relevant for the search query in question - which can thereby increase your ranking over time too.

Think about it. How many times have you scanned the search results only to see a website you recognized, and found yourself clicking through as a result even though it may not have been listed at #1 position?

Finally, you're effectively *immunized* from Google's algorithm updates, that have previously had such disastrous results for other businesses in the past.

Firstly, it's highly unlikely a business in this position, far from dependent on the ranking of its own site, would suffer much from a ranking drop.

Secondly, with SEO so intrinsically related to social media and content marketing anyway, its far less likely your site would suffer in an algorithm update anyway. Your activities are building the authority of your site, creating the type of popular web property Google is keen to rank accordingly.

With all these benefits for search engine visibility, it's hardly surprising that such a big shift towards social media and content marketing is occurring.

Oh, and if you're in any doubt as to the effect of social media on your search engine rankings, SEO scammers haven't gone away. They are now using social media as 'the new black hat'⁷, trying to scam their way to the top and again manipulate Google with fake followers, fake social media accounts and other such dubious strategies.

At least until they again find themselves in Google's trash can.

Not the best approach, but we'll leave them to their darkened basements, battling in vain against thousands of PhDs from Stanford and Harvard.

Increased Channels of Communication

The more places you are connected to your customers and fans, the more places you have permission to contact them, the greater the chances that you will actually be able to contact them somehow, somewhere.

Jay Baer, Convince&Convert⁸ (Digital Marketing Advisors)

⁷ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnrampton/2014/07/21/social-media-is-the-new-blackhat/>

⁸

<http://www.convinceandconvert.com/social-media-strategy/why-it-might-be-time-to-completely-change-your-social-media-strategy/>

We talked about email and its decreasing relevance earlier, and mentioned how important it was to develop additional means of communication. As stated, wholly relying on email for communication with prospects and customers is becoming *dangerous*.

Embracing social media and content marketing opens up brand new channels of communication, and means you have multiple such means at your disposal.

It strengthens your business, makes it more profitable, makes you easier to connect with, and makes you less vulnerable to changes in email communication law and deliverability problems.

You're also ready to start appearing *where your customers and prospects are already communicating*. You become part of the conversation.

Traffic

Perhaps you've heard the advice sometimes referred to in business to *go where the fish are*.

That's exactly what social media *is* ... it's where the fish - *your* fish - are swimming. It's where a significant proportion of your marketplace are spending a significant proportion of their time.

By joining the crowd and becoming part of the conversation, they can Tweet you, Like you or refer you to others on Facebook, to communicate with you on LinkedIn, and so on. All of which helps to start build your traffic.

And as your followers and fans grow, so you can share content with them, news about your website, your latest promotion, and so on, and encourage click-throughs and traffic to your site.

But does it really ... *work*?

Can Twitter for example really drive traffic to a website? Mmm, let's see ...

"Throughout August, my personal blog received 5x more traffic from Twitter than any other referral source ..."

Adam Connell, TweakYourBiz.com⁹

⁹ <http://tweakyourbiz.com/marketing/2013/09/28/7-easy-ways-get-traffic-twitter/>

"... everything started with posting links on Twitter ... Because I was able to generate traffic to my little blog using just a few tweets, I saw a huge influx of activity on the site, and I gained a pretty healthy following in one night."

Schyler Martin, Wojdylo Social Media¹⁰

"Twitter is Kim's [Kim Garst, CEO of Boom Social] number-one traffic source. She has leveraged the same content for her clients and increased their traffic by 100-400%"

SocialMediaExaminer.com¹¹

There are plenty more examples online, and if still in doubt, ask around some more.

If Twitter *didn't* drive traffic, promoting Tweets through their paid ad program wouldn't be successful. Instead their ad revenue share (of the total spend on social advertising) is set to double by 2015¹².

And that's not to mention all the other social networks.

Shareaholic did a recent study¹³ where they tracked over 300,000 sites over the course of four months. The study found that up to 30% of traffic referrals came from various social media sites.

Furthermore:

"In a recent study by digital marketing software provider, Optify, found that social media generates 40 percent of overall traffic to business-to-business websites."

Forbes.com¹⁴

This is *direct* traffic, so traffic coming direct from social media sites.

In addition, I've already mentioned the benefits of enhanced search engine visibility. With your increased search engine listings thanks to your social and content marketing activities, you get to enjoy *indirect traffic* benefits as well.

¹⁰ <http://wojdylosocialmedia.com/generate-website-traffic-twitter-social-media/>

¹¹ <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/twitter-traffic-how-to-double-your-traffic-to-your-content-with-twitter>

¹² http://www.mediabistro.com/alltwitter/twitter-facebook-ad-revenues_b53134#more-53134

¹³ <https://blog.shareaholic.com/social-media-traffic-trends-04-2014/>

¹⁴

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/tjmccue/2013/01/29/twitter-generates-leads-9-to-1-times-more-than-facebook-and-linkedin/>

Prospects and Sales

“Social media may have been thought of as a fad even up to 2-3 years ago, but it is apparent now that networks like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter can be major sales drivers for small businesses”

SmallBizTrends.com, May 2014¹⁵

Another benefit of embracing content marketing and social media, is of course sales increases. Here are just a couple of examples:

- A printing company used social media to produce direct sales and to enhance other sales activity, enjoying a rise in sales of 46%¹⁶
- A winery used social media to help increase membership sales by 39% in the course of 12 months, and increase membership retention to over 99%¹⁷

Many companies use social media as an intrinsic part of their sales process, including attracting leads, assisting communication, and closing the sale.

“IBM reported that they saw a stunning 400% surge in their sales after implementing their social selling pilot program.”

Ryan Holmes, Hootsuite CEO¹⁸

And a recent report from the Content Marketing Institute highlighted that three quarters of the thousands of businesses they surveyed, cited lead generation as their top goal for their content marketing activities.¹⁹

If you're driving traffic from social media and content marketing sources to your website, it's fairly targeted and, if you're approaching social media in the right way, based on a good relationship with your prospect.

But it's not just about direct traffic generation. You can also use social media to connect with and communicate in a fairly personable way with the prospect, and help close the sale.

¹⁵ <http://smallbiztrends.com/2014/03/drive-sales-through-social-media-facebook-linkedin-twitter.html>

¹⁶

<http://digitalprinting.blogs.xerox.com/2014/02/27/how-social-media-increased-one-print-companys-sales-by-46/#.U9QMTEiawaE>

¹⁷ <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-a-winery-uses-social-media-to-increase-sales-and-brand-loyalty/>

¹⁸

<https://www.linkedin.com/today/post/article/20130730151323-2967511-tips-on-using-social-media-as-your-secret-sale-s-weapon>

¹⁹ <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2013/10/2014-b2b-content-marketing-research/>

And that of course is a lot more difficult to do effectively if you don't have an existing, engaging presence on the platform in question.

Sales increases also come through social proof, as indicated by social media. Prospects arriving at your website are increasingly likely to research your business using the social networks, and a business is far more credible when they have an active presence with a healthy following. It increases your credibility and as a result improves sales conversion rates.

"Twitter is the strongest social media channel for generating business-to-business (B2B) leads, outperforming Facebook and LinkedIn 9-to-1 with 82 percent of social media leads coming from Twitter."

Forbes.com²⁰

And more ...

The above indicates some of the main reasons why businesses are in a race to embrace social media and content marketing, but it's by no means exhaustive. Other benefits include the following²¹:

- Brand awareness
- Customer acquisition
- Thought leadership
- Engagement
- Customer retention/loyalty

²⁰

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/tjmccue/2013/01/29/twitter-generates-leads-9-to-1-times-more-than-facebook-and-linkedin/>

²¹ <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2013/10/2014-b2b-content-marketing-research/>

To Conclude

So you've seen the *online visibility crisis* currently affecting small businesses, and the dangers that it has for *your* business over the next 2 to 5 years, if it's not affecting you already (which I strongly suspect it will be).

I've also illustrated how embracing social and content marketing and fully integrating it into your business can reverse that completely, and ensure your business is in a strong position going forward.

So all the benefits are clear, and most businesses understand them. But the practicality of taking advantage of those benefits is a continual challenge.

For example, in a recent survey I conducted relating to Twitter:

- Nearly 85% of businesses believed Twitter to be a platform where they could find new leads and prospects.
- Yet over 75% of them barely used it, it at all.

What was stopping them?

Time was the major factor, along with unfamiliarity with the platform and being unsure what to Tweet about.

Let's face it, you have a business to run. There are not enough hours in the day.

I've read stories of people on Twitter starting at 6am and finishing at 10pm every single day, just so they could incorporate social media into their business. That's no way to run a business, or to live ... and what happens when they finally fizzle and burn out?

And of course it's not just about time on Twitter. What about all the other platforms you're supposed to get your content out to as well?

That's not to mention that the whole new scene of content marketing and social media frenzy can seem daunting and overwhelming (and for many, that's an understatement).

For the average small business owner it's an impossible task. *Where can you even begin making an impact for your small business, when you're so hard-pushed for time as it is?*

So you're certainly not alone.

I've had these exact same challenges myself. I've tried numerous times to commit properly to and fully embrace social media and content marketing. Time - or rather, lack of it - has always got in the way.

So I've hammered out systems and strategies to allow me to take full advantage, while not adding several hours to my days that I didn't have available, and allowed me to continue to run my business as I needed to.

I've already begun to use them and integrate them into my business, and they're already working like magic. *But it's just the beginning.*

Doing nothing and ignoring what social and content marketing offers is no longer an option.

In doing so, you allow other businesses including competitors to race ahead, develop a strong presence on all these different channels and grow their online visibility. The risk is you end up so far behind, you slip out of sight completely, irrelevant and forgotten.

So where do you begin? What can you do?

In the next couple of special reports in this series, I'll be telling you exactly *what* to do, and *how* to achieve it within your own business in a way that's within reach of the average small business.

As stated, these are the exact same systems and strategies I'm beginning to incorporate into my own business too.

They're based on over ten years of online experience 'in the trenches' of SEO, content creation and distribution, interacting with thousands of business owners from around the world, mentoring and masterminding with some of the top business and marketing minds from both the US and the UK, and my own extensive research on *what's working now*.

The time to move is *right now ... and I'm with you for the journey.*

So stay tuned. You'll love the next report and immediately recognize the sheer power it gives your business to *be everywhere*.