



## **“Using Social Media To Market And Grow Your Business”**

**André Larabie**

**S**ocial media refers to websites that allow people to congregate, interact, and communicate digitally using the Internet and web browser programs.

Social media sites include places such as MySpace, Facebook, and others, websites that have been specifically designed for members with a common interest. Social media sites are broadly defined, and this term can also include other, more simple (and subtle) places for people to communicate or collaborate.

A store website such as walmart.com can be viewed as a social media with limited membership abilities. Although members can do only a small fraction of communicating and collaborating, nonetheless, it can be important from a marketing perspective.

For example, Wal-Mart customers can leave feedback about products and experiences they have had with those products. Although this is a limited amount of communication, it is something that affects the marketing equation. Specifically, when a customer leaves a rating on a product, others will see this rating and it will thus affect prospective buyer decision-making.

Each product might have an average “customer rating,” which is a number between 1 and 5, and an area for owners of the item to leave comments.

Believe it or not, there are companies that provide the service of visiting such sites and entering positive comments about products. You can hire



one of these companies and pay them per entry to visit product review websites and enter positive information about your product or service. Although this might seem like some type of fraud, it is so new that laws are not in place to regulate it and it is likely that your competitors are possibly doing it.

In fact, the same companies that enter positive information about your products will also enter negative information about your competitor's products and services.

In any case, you should analyze your particular business and see if it can accommodate a social media site.

It is truly a brave new world. This is only one area of the Internet that affects marketing like never before in the history of business. Note that social media is broad enough to be the subject of an entire book, and for a more detailed treatment, you should search out those books.