

Sample Chapter!

the new
relationship
marketing



How to Build a
Large, Loyal, and Profitable Network
Using the Social Web

mari smith

Foreword by **GUY KAWASAKI**, author of *Enchantment*



Greetings! I'm glad to meet you. Thank you for downloading this sample chapter of my brand new book! I hope you enjoy the content.

I wrote this book in 2011 with a specific intent to make the content as evergreen as possible. Much of the content still does indeed stand the test of time. *Especially* this chapter – one of my personal favorites – on honing your soft skills. To purchase the book in any format, head over to [Amazon](#).

CHEERS!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mari" with a stylized flourish underneath.

Chapter 2

The New Business Skills

Everyone Needs

Social Media is about sociology and psychology more than technology.

—Brian Solis, author *Engage*

Developing and exhibiting the abilities known as “soft skills” has always been an important aspect of business success. And nowadays, with social networking at the hub of our business world, these qualities are more important than ever.

But what exactly *are* these *soft skills*? Here’s the definition from Wikipedia.org:

Soft skills is a sociological term relating to a person’s “EQ” (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication,

language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that characterize relationships with other people. Soft skills complement hard skills (part of a person's IQ), which are the occupational requirements of a job and many other activities.

So in essence, soft skills are the aptitudes you use to build relationships with other people—something that's incredibly important in establishing social networking connections.

Build Empathy

Many online communications—in both a personal and business context—are fragmented, fleeting, and hasty; some even tend to ignore human emotions on both ends of the message. Interactions like text messaging, Twitter with its 140 character limit, status updates, and the hundreds of brief e-mails we receive daily require us to pay attention and read between the lines to discern what's important—but often left unsaid.

We need empathy in the business world now more than ever, because people are being far more open with everything they share in public through social sites. Expressing empathy allow us to draw

others out, show that we care, open up new opportunities to serve our marketplace, and enhance our reputation as quality people and companies.

Business is essentially much more human than it's ever been in history. When you look and listen closely, you'll discover that most everyone at the core has very similar wants and needs—to be heard and understood, to belong, to know that they matter, and to make a difference.

The following are a few seemingly simple but incredibly effective ways to build more empathy:

- *Use people's first names.* This is something I mention several times in this book—because it's *that* important. A person's name is the sweetest sounding word in their entire vocabulary, and it's a huge part of their identity. When you use a person's first name in a natural way while communicating with them, you'll instantly build more rapport and empathy.
- *Find out people's first names.* Sometimes individuals inadvertently don't reveal their first name on their social profiles—they may use a nickname or brand/business name. This is particularly true of Facebook pages that write

on other pages. (Please see the Quick Tip that follows this list.) Do a quick Google search and/or click through to the person’s website or blog and look for the “About” or “Contact” section; you’ll often find the person’s first name this way.

- *Find out just one fact about the person.* Mention it to them in a natural way. It could have something to do with their profession, education, “likes,” hobbies, or some other facet of their personality or preferences. Check their bio on Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn (depending on where you’re interacting), or try a quick Google search to gather a bit more information about them.

Quick Tip

When you are writing on other Facebook pages as your page—and your page is in the name of your business versus your actual name—always sign off your posts/comments with your first name. People would almost always rather interact with a person than a company, and this allows others to better engage with you.

Paying attention to someone’s communication style and spending just a second or two longer with each person online allows

you to significantly increase the depth of genuine rapport you have with your network. For example, if I'm not yet familiar with the person when replying to a tweet on Twitter, I take one or two extra clicks to quickly scan their bio before hitting the "Tweet" button. For example, in the following screenshots (Figures 2.1 and 2.2), you can see my tweet to Owen asking if he is a "fellow Canuck" (a term we Canadians use to describe ourselves). Before sending my tweet to Owen, I glanced at his Twitter profile and saw that his city is listed as Vancouver, British Columbia. Now, he may be *from* anywhere in the world, but currently he lives in Canada—something I would ordinarily have no way of knowing. But, if he were a native, he would know exactly where Kootenay Lake is (about 500 miles inland from Vancouver), which is where I spent my childhood.



Figure 2.1 Owen Clark's (@ByzhubOwen) Twitter bio



Figure 2.2 Owen's tweet back to me

Even though my tweet seems short and simple, I put a fair bit of thought into it before writing and posting by considering the following:

- I was responding to a previous tweet from Owen and started my reply with “thanks”—a very powerful word that you’ll want to use as frequently as possible. In fact, “thank you” is even better, as it has the word “you” in it too!
- I used Owen’s first name naturally.
- I found something in his bio that it appeared I had in common with him, and checked if this fact was true with a simple question.

- I shared a little about myself by letting him know where I spent my summers.

As you can see from Owen’s reply, he was impressed and replied with a wonderful warm message suggesting that we might meet up in person next time I was in the area.

Over time, you’ll become unconsciously competent with these habits too; the more you practice, the better you’ll become. (Keep reading for my Eight Rules for Electronic Communication.)

Express Genuine Care

The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said.

Peter F. Drucker

As important as it is to convey empathy, it’s equally vital to have genuine care at the core of your own motives, because this comes across to others. For example, you want to provide as much help and support as you can to anyone regardless of how influential or popular that person might be—in other words, you want to treat everyone as equals.

Gary Vaynerchuk, founder of Wine Library TV, is the epitome of genuine care. Gary has often been interviewed on national television and asked how he managed to monetize social media. His response was simple: “Because I care.” Though this statement completely baffled his interviewers, that’s essentially what Gary did. He would “hustle” and go the extra mile in all his online and offline endeavors.

Give to Others Without Having an Agenda

There’s a magical concept in social media that I call “social equity” and that some others have labeled “social capital.” This concept states that while you’re contributing value to everyone and anyone on a regular basis, you’re also gaining “credits” among your network and community at large. Sooner or later, you will be greatly rewarded from the collective whole. The people you helped will not necessarily be the ones who then reciprocate or buy from you; rather, the exact right prospect or media opportunity will come to

you. This notion is generally understood as the law of Karma or *law of reciprocity* in action.

Have an “Inclusive Attitude”

I can't hear what you're saying as who you are is so loud.

—Goethe

Having an inclusive, “win/win” attitude shows to others the essential place from which you come inside—your *intentions* in interacting with people. This kind of approach entails having and exhibiting a desire to add value and help others as much as you're helping yourself. Consider the quote from Goethe. It seems to say that other people can almost “feel” if—or when—you have a “hidden agenda” that involves getting something for yourself or trying to “trick” others into taking an action that's not in their best interests. In this situation, it won't matter how good your content is and how much you engage others—since they will likely be able to sense that you're watching out for you and no one else.

In his book, *Tribes*, author Seth Godin states that people can “smell the agenda of a leader.” I believe that all these online social

tools have forced us as a society to be more authentic and more transparent. Maybe “forced” is not the right word, necessarily, as surely everyone wants to be more real, right? What’s happening, though, is just as Seth describes, the moment someone has an agenda, people can tell. Of course, if you’re agenda is positive that’s a good thing and you want people to notice!

A couple years ago when Twitter was becoming more popular, I came across a guy who was aggressively building his Twitter following and connecting on what seemed like a very superficial level. His tweet stream was nothing but a barrage of one- or two- word tweets like “you too,” “what’s up?,” “Hey!,” etc. He would do the same on Facebook. Any time I was on the receiving end of these super short attempts at connection, I could feel this person’s agenda. He was going for sheer volume; his approach was motivated by numbers first, people second. It certainly appeared as though he was becoming Mr. Popular, but his real agenda was to enroll everyone in his network marketing (MLM) business. He just seemed to have no substance or anything of value to offer his community. On the other hand, there are those true leaders who manage to “scale their caring” as Gary Vaynerchuk says. Both he and Chris Brogan’s tweet streams are often filled with super short

tweets engaging large volumes of their followers in any given session. But they also share tremendously valuable content too and their agenda is different; the genuine care is evident. Gary and Chris are known names and have a reputation for being real. I like to think I'm in this category too.

Use Discernment

Drawing on my fine command of the English language, I said nothing.

—Robert Benchley

Your reputation is more crucial now than it has ever been. As such, you need to be particularly discerning about the people and brands (1) whose content you choose to share online, (2) with whom you choose to interact, and (3) with whom you choose to associate.

I have a somewhat wide-eyed belief that everyone is a good person at his or her core. Yes, even the most obnoxious and negative people; somewhere under that rough exterior is a well-intentioned individual who is either emotionally wounded or is going through a rough time.

However, you have to be strategic in business. If someone is particularly mean and negative, puts others down, foists their opinion on everyone, or throws their ego around, it just doesn't make sense to befriend such a person. It's best to just move on and ignore such behavior. Be careful not to react and lash back as I mention in number 8 of the 8 Rules for Electronic Communication section: because when emotions go up, intelligence goes down!

If you choose to engage someone who has somewhat of a bad reputation, onlookers might have a tendency to “tar you with the same brush.” It's important in cases such as these to truly hone and utilize your intuition or gut feeling. Take care when choosing what to share, and who to friend or follow.

Communicate Clearly and Concisely

One of the vital skills that Twitter has essentially forced us all to develop is the ability to communicate clearly and concisely. Because each message is limited to just 140 characters, you have to get your point across with fewer words *and* ensure that others don't

misconstrue or take the message out of context. Remember: Tweets are visible to the entire online world—and you never know when a potential client might be tuning in to a part of your conversation.

I recommend limiting your use of “text talk,” which is dialogues via text-messaging with creative use of abbreviations and alphanumeric characters. Text talk has become widely popular since the growth of SMS (short message service sent between mobile phones). Certainly, before we had smart phones with full QWERTY keyboards, text talk had its place. And that’s just the way that many kids, teens, and younger people communicate. But make no mistake: Text talk has no place in the business world.

I found this definition of text talk on UrbanDictionary.com rather amusingly accurate:

Widely un-understandable, it abbreviates as much as possible leaving a code which only the author can decrypt. Though it does help the author write it quickly, the recipient must undergo strenuous investigation to be able to reply in an equally confusing manner until the competition of confusion gets to such a point, that their grammatically incorrect minds explode a little more.

Everything you do sends a message, and communicates something about you to friends and followers. If your online social updates are riddled with typos, grammatical or factual errors, acronyms, jargon, “text talk,” or are just generally unclear, then you won’t stand out (at least, not in a positive way!). Your message will get drowned out along with all the other online noise. Plus, you’ll be unintentionally conveying to your prospective customers and community that you and your business are sloppy, fuzzy, and frenetic—which is the last thing you want! Keep reading; this book includes numerous and detailed guidelines for writing on social media and avoiding these communication pitfalls.

Messages fly by in the blink of an eye on social sites—Twitter, in particular. So, in our attention-based society, it’s important to limit your communication to a small number of interesting, powerful, and engaging messages that increase your chances of standing out.

Check Spelling and Grammar

I strongly recommend familiarizing yourself with commonly misspelled words and grammar errors. If you already know you’re excellent at spelling and grammar then that’s fine. However, it

wouldn't hurt to ask an editor or trusted friend to read over your tweets, Facebook updates and blog posts from time to time just to check for any oversights you may be making. With your blog posts, you may wish to enlist the services of an editor on an ongoing basis, to ensure quality. My friend, Michael (Mike) Stelzner, founder of the wildly popular online magazine, SocialMediaExaminer.com, filters all guest blog posts submitted for his site through *five* editors! He's built a stellar reputation for quality and turns down more guest writers for his website than he accepts. It pays off; Mike has built a substantial business in a little over 18 months and has become one of the top business blogs on the Internet.

I've included a couple of helpful infographics in this section; to see these images full size and in color, just go to www.relationshipmarketingbook.com/free.

The infographic in Figure 2.3 illustrates the 15 most misspelled words¹:

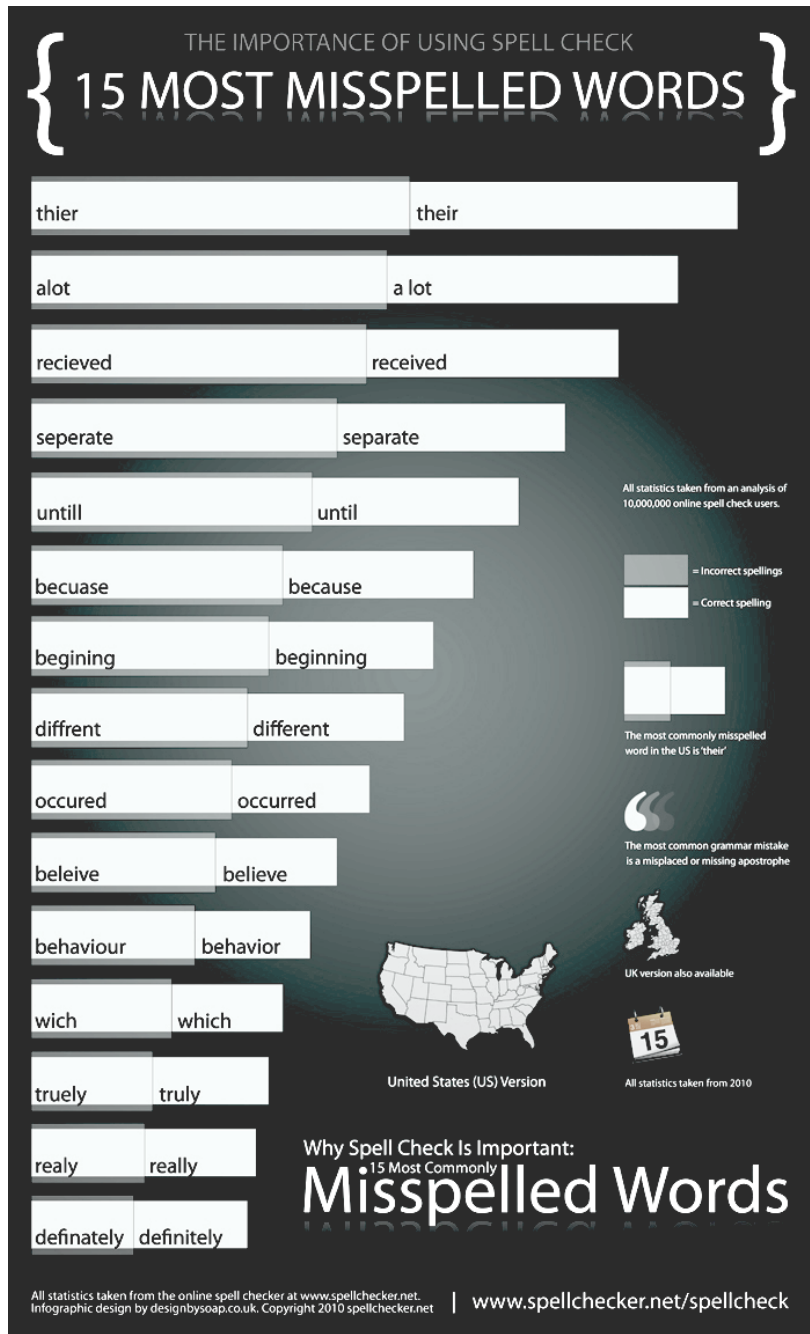


Figure 2.3 15 most misspelled words

And these are eight commonly misused words as featured in the infographic below by Onlineschooling.net²:

Compliment/complement
Accept/except
Emigrate/immigrate
Flair/flare
Fewer/less
It's/its
Flammable/inflammable
Lie/lay



Figure 2.4
misused words

Eight commonly

It always pays to hesitate a moment before pressing that send/post/update button. A typo could get misconstrued and/or have a negative impact on your reputation. Typically, though, those who know you well will forgive you for the occasional typo.

I attended an event recently where I tweeted golden nuggets from legendary author and motivational speaker, Brian Tracy. In my haste, I missed the last “s” on the word “assess” in the tweet shown in Figure 2.5 below. I usually see a significant number of retweets on many of my tweets, but I noticed not much was happening with this tweet. Then I saw a couple of my followers alert me that I might want to re-do the tweet with the correct spelling of “assess.” Oops! I quickly deleted the first tweet and replaced it with the right one.



Figure 2.5 Corrected tweet

Eight Rules for Electronic

Communication

Whenever you do a thing, act as if all the world were watching.

—Thomas Jefferson

To make sure you get heard and make effective connections with the right people online, do the following each time you post content online: Force yourself to hesitate for a second and apply as many of these following eight rules as you feel is appropriate.

1. *Replace any text talk with proper words.* For example: “btw every1 lmk wot dis means 2U—ur gr8!” Translation: “By the way, everyone let me know what this means to you—you are great!” (Actually, I do use “btw” fairly often, along with “LOL” for laughing out loud. But that’s about it.)
2. *Spell out acronyms.*
 - Never assume that everyone knows exactly what your acronym means. Of course, there are exceptions in particular industries. But my recommendation is to think about how someone who knows nothing about

your business—but could be a hot prospect—would read your message.

- Given Twitter only allows 140 characters for each update, there are many acceptable acronyms and abbreviations used on this site, including:
 - ab or abt = about
 - b4 = before
 - b/c = because
 - BTW = by the way
 - chk = check
 - cld = could
 - clk = click
 - deets = details
 - DM = direct message
 - EM/eml = email
 - F2F = face to face (as in meeting someone in person)
 - FTW = for the win
 - FWIW = for what it's worth
 - FYI = for your information
 - fwd = forward
 - IDK – I don't know
 - IKR – I know, right?
 - IM = instant message
 - IMHO = in my humble opinion (also IMO = in my opinion)
 - itz = it is
 - IRL = in real life (also RL = real life)
 - JK or j/k = just kidding
 - K = okay (also kk)
 - lmk = let me know
 - LOL = laughing out loud
 - LMAO = laughing my ass off
 - NP = no problem
 - n/m = nevermind
 - OH = overheard
 - OMG = oh my god/gosh

- OT = off topic
- peeps = people
- pple = people
- props = proper respect
- plz = please
- R = are
- RT / Retweet = when you repeat a tweet from someone else
- shld = should
- thx/tx = thanks
- TIA = thanks in advance
- TMI = too much information
- tweeks / tweepie = peeps / people (on Twitter)
- TY = thank you (also Tks/Thx)
- Tweetup = an in-person meet up of Twitter members
- U = you
- ur = your
- w or w/ = with
- wth = what the heck
- YW = you're welcome
- YVW = you're very welcome

3. *Keep your reading level at or below that of a high-school student.* There are many readability formulas available to check your level. Shorter sentences with plain English work best. See this resource for further information:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Readability>

4. *Read aloud if necessary.* Given the fact that most of us learned to read out loud as children, most people read by “silently reading aloud” in their head. Anytime you wish to double-check for clarity, just read your message out loud to

help you catch any edits you may need to make.

5. *Do the “contextual test.”* Before hitting that post button, check for possible “hidden” meanings in whatever it is you’ve written. For the most part, you’re going to know when something could have a double entendre. But I recommend just being alert of this filter and steering clear of any phrases/messages that could easily be taken the wrong way.
6. *Do the “ego test.”*
 - Sadly, the Internet is filled with “me, me, me” people—especially since social media has become so prevalent and everyone now has a platform for their voice. It can be tempting to let our egos take over, “toot our own horns,” “crush the competition,” or attempt to beat others down in an effort to make ourselves look good. But this behavior just attracts more ego-based people, and can drive potential customers and community members away.
 - Keep in mind that a display of excessive ego is essentially fear-based: fear of not getting ahead, fear of being left behind, fear of not being seen, even fear

of *being* seen! Once you're aware that these fears may be driving you and others around you, you can have much more compassion and empathy, and learn not to take things personally.

- Bottom line: *Don't spend too much time talking about yourself.* Spend most of your time talking to other about what interests *them*. Do your best to consider this “ego test” guideline and focus on creating a deep intent of adding value and building others up. You'll end up creating a warm, personable, approachable positioning in the marketplace, and establish a reputation as someone who is humble and treats everyone as equals. (Of course, this has to *authentically* reflect who you are!) More on reputation in Chapter 7.

7. *Do the “longevity test.”* There's a great line in the movie *The Social Network* (about the founding of Facebook) that says, “The Internet is not in pencil; it's in ink.” Keep this in mind, and imagine how you will feel about the message you're about to publish online, say, this time next year: Does it add value for others or is it all about you? Does it

lift others up or is it about lifting yourself up? Does it expand or contract?

8. *Run the message through a three-point filter.* For many years now, I've used this filter, which may be all you need to do before hitting that send button. Ask yourself:

- Would I be comfortable with this message being found in a Google search in years to come?
- Would I be comfortable with this message plastered on the front page of a major newspaper?
- Would my mother appreciate this message?

This quote by Erin Bury, Sprouter Community Manager, drives Rule #8 home: “Don’t say anything online that you wouldn’t want plastered on a billboard with your face on it.” As I mentioned earlier, I believe the wide-open, connected world we now live in forces us to be more transparent and authentic. To maintain total privacy, just do not share online or in public.

9 *Never respond to anything when you’re emotional.*

- There’s a great saying, “When emotions go up, intelligence goes down!”. The Internet is filled with cyber-bullies, trolls, spammers, plagiarizers, and

individuals who feel they have a right to say whatever they want, no matter how mean-spirited. If you ever face a negative situation in which you feel attacked, you actually have a tremendous opportunity to lead by example with grace, dignity, and compassion. See Chapter 11 for specific steps to dealing with trolls.

- *Never fight fire with fire on the Web.* Much like children who throw tantrums, most individuals who feel the need to attack others are simply seeking attention. If you respond at their level, you're essentially giving them what they want. And you may end up alienating a cross section of your own online community and target audience. For example—stop and think about the potential exposure you may be giving a negative person. Let's say you have 25,000 followers on Twitter and someone with 300 followers starts attacking you. The moment you engage that person publicly in your tweets, you're potentially exposing the attacker to your followers, *plus* the Internet at large—because, as I mentioned earlier, *all tweets are public*. More on handling attacks in Chapter 11.

Take Radical Responsibility

This skill is something that both individuals and large corporations alike would do well to adopt. If something goes awry in your business, step in and take full responsibility to quickly and efficiently correct it. The faster you're able to rectify a tricky situation—especially in the public eye—the more you'll enhance your reputation. See Chapter 11 for more on reputation management and handling negative situations.

Companies would do well to have a solid social media policy in place, which includes in-depth steps on how to handle negative comments on any of the online social networks as well as the company blog, etc.

In his latest book, *Onward: How Starbucks Fought for Its Life without Losing Its Soul*, author and Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz attributes many leadership keys to the transformation of his company, including:¹

- Listen with empathy and over-communicate with transparency.
- Tell your story, refusing to let others define you.
- Use authentic experiences to inspire.
- Stick to your values; they are your foundation.
- Hold people accountable but give them tools to succeed.
- Be responsible for what you see, hear, and do.

Chapter 2 Summary

- Begin implementing more "soft skills" in your marketing such as empathy, genuine care, giving without an agenda, and having an "inclusive attitude." You'll be amazed at how much more responsive your network becomes.
- Always double-check your spelling and grammar before publishing anything online. Ideally, stay away from overuse of acronyms, abbreviations and "text talk." Everything communicates, and you want to communicate a professional image that is in alignment with your brand.
- Shine the spotlight on your network of friends, fans, and followers. Build them up by engaging authentically. Avoid talking too much about yourself and your offers.

- Before pressing the send button, do the "longevity test" to ensure what you're sharing has long-term value that you're comfortable with it being out there.

Ensure your company has a written social media policy and adhere to it. Regardless of the size of your business, proper planning is always better than finding yourself having to put out a fire without a clear strategy. See the Resources section for a list of policy examples.