

# Your guide to social selling

*Essential steps small businesses can take to become savvy social sellers.*

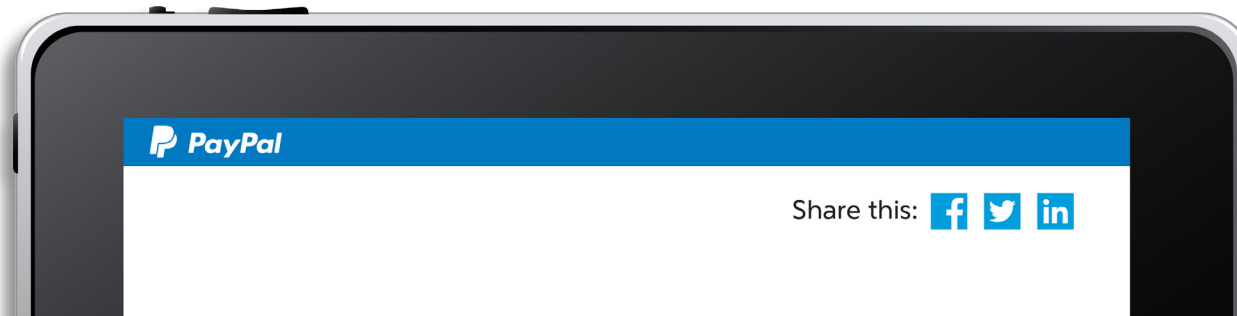
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You've created a strong following for your business through clever Facebook posts and lively tweets, and you may have a popular blog that generates plenty of comments. You've done a little bit (or a lot) of SEO or SEM on your website. But are you turning your followers into customers?

For many small businesses, social selling is the next step in implementing a robust and up-to-date sales strategy. The audience is already there, interacting with you and attracted to your brand. So, it's time to take the leap and transform likes and retweets into revenue. **Follow these 8 steps and you'll be a social selling expert in no time.**



# Here's a quick cheat sheet:

- 1 Build relationships, then a sales channel.**  
Develop a following and then know when you're ready to take the leap into social selling.
- 2 Create a store where your customers are.**  
Know where your followers, both current and potential, are likely to visit, and develop a social selling presence there.
- 3 Go shopping for a storefront app.**  
Pick the best app for your needs.
- 4 Beta test your social selling channel.**  
Test out your storefront before announcing it to followers.
- 5 Create enticing offers – and make sure they're unique.**  
Follow a few simple tips to boost your promotion savvy.
- 6 Include and encourage customer reviews.**  
Build a stronger following by letting your customers' voices be heard.
- 7 Drive all social media traffic to your store.**  
Keep customers coming to your online storefront with some basic strategies.
- 8 Track your progress.**  
Know when social selling is working and whether your campaigns are successful.





**1. Build relationships first,  
then create a sales channel.**



# Know when you're ready to take the leap into social selling.

For many enterprises, even one-person companies, relationship building is a major business driver, and as those Facebook likes and Twitter numbers grow, it makes sense to draw on those relationships to boost sales efforts.

“Companies that are doing social selling well are building relationships – they’re creating community down to a one-on-one level,” says Jesse Ness, senior manager of marketing at [Ecwid](#), which provides an e-commerce shopping cart plug-in for Facebook and other websites. “They don’t use social media to be selling all the

time. Instead, they’re having conversations and then providing an opportunity for those participants to buy.”

[PayPal's](#) head of social media David Peck says, “First and foremost, social media helps you build up a loyal fan base and create long-term relationships. Only then can it provide an opportunity to turn fans into customers – and customers into repeat business.”

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Jesse Ness  
Senior Manager of Marketing, Ecwid

## SIGNS YOU'RE READY FOR SOCIAL SELLING:

1. Social media followers often ask how they can buy your products or services or contribute to your cause.
2. Your work time increasingly involves handling orders via Facebook messages or tweets.
3. Customers at your brick-and-mortar store or your website comment on deals you've mentioned online.
4. You're expanding a product line or increasing the amount you're ready to sell.
5. Your buzz is mounting through relationship building and media coverage.





**2. Create a store where  
your customers are.**



# Develop a social selling presence where your followers, both current and potential, are.

When asked the secret of his success, hockey great Wayne Gretzky responded, “A great hockey player plays where the puck is **going to be**.” Part of the major benefit of including a store on Facebook or a company blog is that customers are already on that page to peruse content, so conversion into sales is that much easier.

When potential customers are asked to navigate away from a page – for example, to leave a Facebook page and go to an online store – you always risk losing them as they click away.

“Know where your audience is most engaged, and sell there.”

David Peck  
Head of Social Media, PayPal

Instead, set up a storefront that’s on the Facebook page or blog where they’re already interacting with your business.

“Know where your audience is most engaged, and sell there.” says PayPal’s David Peck.

If your audience is gravitating toward a particular site or sites, then you should, too. For example, if you’re hoping to sell your newest cooking gadget to 30-something women, it makes sense to concentrate on Pinterest.

## FINDING YOUR AUDIENCE:

- **Use tools** provided by each of the social platforms to craft your posts and weed out those that aren’t engaging. For example, business pages on Facebook have an Insights section that gives information on popular posts, engaged users, and the virality of each post.
- **Pay attention** to any links or content shared by users and visit those Twitter or Facebook pages. Become a follower of relevant companies and comment on their posts.
- **Research** similar companies and take note of their sales efforts: Do they sell through Facebook storefronts? Do they jump on new developments like Pinterest’s promoted pins?





**3. Go shopping for a storefront app.**





## Pick the best app for your needs.

Creating a storefront in social media spaces is simple and quick, and there are multiple apps that do most of the work for you.

For example, [Ecwid](#) lets users install and set up a store with just a few clicks. Plus, the app offers storefront translations for multiple languages, support for several payment methods, and automatic syncing between a company's Facebook store, mobile site, and website.

[Cashie Commerce](#), which enables quick setup of social, mobile, and online stores and supplies online "shopping cart" technology, allows businesses to sell across multiple platforms such as

WordPress, Facebook, blogs, and mobile devices. Cashie Commerce also offers easy export of customer data into services like QuickBooks for accounting or Stamps.com for printing shipping labels.

“Social commerce tools need to be extremely simple and easy to use. Small merchants want a solution that gets them up and running in about five minutes.”

Sridhar Nagarajan  
Head of Strategy and Marketing, Ecwid

Other apps include Storefront Social, Boosket, Storenvy, and many others. Let the app developers handle the technological complexities so you can concentrate instead on refining your social selling techniques.

“Social commerce tools need to be extremely simple and easy to use,” says Sridhar Nagarajan, head of strategy and marketing at [Ecwid](#). “Small merchants want a solution that gets them up and running in about five minutes.”

**CHOOSING THE RIGHT  
APP FOR YOUR BUSINESS.**



## Choosing the right app for your business.

### Here's what to look for when selecting a storefront app:

- **Free trial period:** A free trial lets you evaluate the look and feel of a particular storefront, without investment or commitment.
- **Low or no transaction fees:** Many apps require only a flat fee and have multiple tiered plans tailored to smaller businesses, so your costs will be more predictable.
- **Multiple layouts:** An online store selling merchandise for a craft brewery shouldn't look the same as one that offers office supplies; the audiences are different, so the layouts should be, too.
- **Centralized inventory management:** Making sure that your inventory is controlled across multiple stores (website, eBay, Facebook, etc.) is crucial for better product management.
- **Expansion potential:** As your business grows and thrives, your online store should be able to expand easily, as well, by letting you add new product categories, new service offerings, and other new content.
- **Multiple ways to pay:** More options often lead to more sales. Look for an app that lets you include several payment methods, such as credit cards and PayPal.
- **Easy product and information upload:** Adding products or services to a store should be super simple, so find an app that lets you upload files or input products and services manually. Nonprofits should be able to upload information about campaigns, events, or products just as easily as a retailer.





**4. Beta test your social selling channel.**



# Test out your storefront before announcing it to followers.

As [PayPal's](#) David Peck says, "Social selling is tough. It won't happen on your first try." A major misstep for many businesses is quitting too early because they don't see results immediately. Be diligent, creative, and most of all, patient. As you build your online relationships and refine your tools, the results will follow.

A good method for kicking off a new sales channel is to test out the storefront before announcing it to followers. The time to catch glitches and usability issues is early

on – before customers are coming to your store. [Ecwid's](#) Setup Wizard enables you to preview your storefront and place a test order to ensure a smooth launch.

Double-check the customer experience by approaching your online store or other sales channel as if you're a customer. Come to the storefront through a personal (rather than business) social media account and then make a purchase. Don't feel you have to go it alone. Enlist friends, colleagues, and family members to try

the social selling channel and ask for feedback. We recommend getting three to five different opinions.

“Social selling is tough. It won't happen on your first try.”

David Peck  
Head of Social Media, PayPal

## FIND YOUR STORE'S STICKING POINTS:

- Is the sales process streamlined or clumsy?
- If you navigate away from the page and then come back, are the items still in your shopping cart? If you don't click back in, does it generate an email or other trigger that reminds you about completing your order?
- Does the payment go through properly or is there a delay?
- Do you receive a confirmation email or other follow-up message?
- If you submit a return, does it show up in your inventory correctly?

All of these questions and more should crop up as you're working through the trial period of an app, making it easier to compare one app with another.





**5. Create enticing offers – and make sure they're unique.**



# Follow a few simple tips to boost your promotion savvy.

[PayPal's](#) David Peck notes that there's an easy rule for successful social selling: Make sure your offer to the customer is unique and valuable to them. "A simple rule of thumb is 'first, best, or only,'" he says. "If your offer is not one of those, don't post it. Remember, you are in their personal space, so if you want them to buy something, make sure they feel special."

Discounts and limited-time offers are just as enticing in the online realm as they

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are in a physical store, so make sure your app allows you to highlight certain products or emphasize sales, says Neil Beadle, VP of product at [Cashie Commerce](#).

"Promotions and discounts are very useful for marketing products, and they can have a huge viral element if you share them across multiple social platforms, like Twitter and Pinterest," Beadle says.

## THREE PROMOTIONAL TACTICS:

1. Use a sales promotion as a Facebook or Twitter cover photo. For example, your image might include an item on sale or a fun graphic about how time is running out to buy. If you have a nonprofit, you might feature a volunteer holding a sign that announces a big event or wearing one of the organization's t-shirts that are for sale in the online store.
2. Go cross-platform by announcing the offer on your company's blog, Facebook page, Twitter feed, and Pinterest board. Put the Facebook cover photo on Instagram to create more buzz.
3. Use a "secret discount code" in a status update to make followers feel rewarded for paying attention.





**6. Include and encourage customer reviews.**



# Build a stronger following by letting your customers' voices be heard.

Social media is driven by people sharing their opinions, and that natural tendency to weigh in is easily harnessed within an online store.

Although some businesses and organizations are hesitant to use customer reviews for fear of seeing negative feedback, many who've taken the leap have seen significant benefits rather than continuous griping. It can also highlight your quick response in case of negative feedback.

Adding a customer review field or a star rating system can provide a boost for

products or services that may have been overlooked. The more specific feedback, the better. Also, thanks to the ubiquity of online customer reviews, many shoppers now expect that info to be handy.

"Customer reviews make a huge impact when it comes to purchase decisions," Anjali Cameron, marketing lead at Cashie Commerce, says.

"We've all seen them on Amazon, so why not for a smaller e-commerce shop? It really builds loyalty and engagement."

“Customer reviews make a huge impact when it comes to purchase decisions.”

Anjali Cameron  
Marketing Lead, Cashie Commerce

## GENERATE MORE BUZZ FROM CUSTOMER REVIEWS:

- In order confirmation emails, provide a link to a review page.
- Encourage customer reviews by offering random giveaways or prizes.
- Set up an automatic email follow-up a week after a product is due for delivery or a service is performed. This gives the customer time to try out the product and prompts them to leave a review while the experience is fresh.
- Highlight reviews on Facebook and Twitter by turning them into status updates and include a company reply in the comments field.
- Create a rating system for each product. You can often do this easily within a storefront app. Talk to your app vendor about customizing the ratings based on your business; for example, a cosmetics business might use lipstick icons to measure customer happiness instead of stars.





**7. Drive all social media traffic to your store.**





# **Keep customers coming to your online storefront with some basic strategies.**

Once your storefront is up and running, concentrate on getting more customers beyond those already visiting the Facebook page, blog, or other social space.

Similar to using multiple social media sites to highlight deals, generate interest by announcing new products

or “members only” specials on Twitter or Facebook, write a series of blog posts about what’s new and include a link to the store, or ask an industry influencer (blogger or media) to review your product or business and have write-ups include a link back to your store.

## **KEEP A STEADY STREAM OF CUSTOMERS:**

- Include a link to the store in every company email and in your Facebook and Twitter profiles.
- Send periodic emails to past customers highlighting current specials and giving them “secret discount codes” to reward them for shopping.
- Purchase online ad space on social media sites on a limited basis to see if it drives traffic to the store; if it does, consider investing more heavily in online ads.
- Share customer photos on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram; ask permission to tag them, which will entice their friends to check out your business.
- Occasionally offer freebies – complimentary products always spike interest and can be handed out on a very limited basis. For example, offering 10 free “gift items” could result in hundreds of new likes for a Facebook page.



8. Track your progress.



**Know  
when  
social  
selling is  
working  
and  
whether  
your  
campaigns  
are  
successful.**

Increasing your sales is stellar, but how do you know if social selling is really working?

“Most social experiences are retention opportunities, not acquisition opportunities,” PayPal’s Peck says. “This subtle

point often gets lost. Manage your Facebook posts and your tweets just as you would manage an email campaign. Collect the data in your customer data warehouse in the same fashion.”

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## TOOLS FOR TRACKING MULTIPLE SOCIAL SELLING CAMPAIGNS.

When there are several social selling strategies employed at the same time, it can be challenging to keep on top of the metrics. Here are some tools that can help:

- **Adobe Digital Marketing Suite:** This blend of products allows you to optimize online marketing initiatives, measure key performance indicators, and be more efficient.
- **Google Analytics:** These measurement tools let you measure sales and conversions and also give you insight into how visitors use your site, which could prompt fresh approaches in your selling strategies.
- **Bluefin Labs:** Acquired by Twitter in 2013, this social analytics provider uses social media chatter to measure viewer engagement with TV shows and ads, offering analysis of online marketing campaigns.
- **Your app developer:** Most of the storefront app creators, such as Cashie Commerce and Ecwid, build analytics into the applications, so users can keep on top of which features are working and how sales are being generated.





## ***You're on your way!***

Social media boasts powerful tools for communication, particularly between a business and its customers. Embarking on a social selling strategy takes those connections to the next level, without extensive marketing campaigns or major ad budgets.

After all, your customers are already fans of your business, so why send them elsewhere to snap up some of your products or services? Get them engaged, and they'll get clicking.

**SEE OTHER SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS  
IDEAS ON THE NEXT PAGE.**



#### BORROW THESE IDEAS:

Author [Shannon Hayes](#) specializes in homesteading and sustainability topics, so her blog often features charming stories about her farm in upstate New York. In promoting her books and farm products, she sells directly to her readers instead of sending them to an online bookseller.

#### WHAT SHE'S DOING RIGHT:

- Her website has tabs dedicated to her books and available products. Plus, each description has a prominent “Buy Now” button that leads to an online order form.
- In her product descriptions, she appeals to her audience with a personal tone similar to her blog postings. For example, in selling soaps, she jokingly notes that they can last longer than some marriages.
- Her online store is stripped down and straightforward in terms of functionality, which complements her writing style and emphasis on “the simple life.”

Sacramento-based design and marketing shop [One Day Graphics](#) is able to expand its geographic reach far beyond the city of Sacramento, thanks to social selling.

#### WHAT THEY'RE DOING RIGHT:

- The company's bold designs inform the look of both its online store on the One Day Graphics website and its Facebook storefront, creating cohesion between the two selling channels.
- Even though graphic design can involve a significant level of detail, the company's online store channels use drop-down menus and easy-to-use templates to make ordering easy.
- Turnaround time on orders is clear and prominent.
- Although each graphic design job is customized, One Day Graphics often shows off its current work in Facebook posts so customers can get an idea of the range of design services available.

# Meet the experts.

## David Peck

Head of Social Media, [PayPal](#)

An early champion of the power of social media, Peck has been active in online communities for more than a decade. The author of the book “Think Before you Engage: 100 Questions to Ask Before Starting a Social Media Marketing Campaign,” Peck has helped build online communities and develop social media strategy for Coca-Cola, Wells Fargo, The Grammys, NPR, and many others. As PayPal’s head of social media, he is focused on defining the company’s voice in social media and creating stronger connections to customers through online communities.

## Ecwid

[Ecwid](#) is a full-featured, cloud-based e-commerce platform that allows SMBs to create professional online stores and embed them into any existing Web, mobile, or social site. Ecwid has more than 600,000 registered merchants in 175 countries and is available in 45 languages. The Ecwid Facebook app is the leading shopping cart application on Facebook with more than 40,000 Facebook stores globally, and it’s used by more than 300,000 monthly active users.

## Cashie Commerce

[Cashie Commerce](#) is the fastest way to create and run a successful online store. Companies of all sizes depend on Cashie Commerce for an easy-to-use platform that assists with online sales strategies for multiple storefronts, including Facebook, mobile, and WordPress.

