

THE SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

for Professional
Services



Second Edition

The Social Media Guide for Professional Services, Second Edition

Copyright © 2018

Published by Hinge

1851 Alexander Bell Drive, Suite 350
Reston, Virginia 20191

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Design by Hinge.

Visit our website at www.hingemarketing.com

About This Guide

What?

An essential guide to social media marketing for the professional services.

Why?

Social media is here to stay. Your clients and prospects are already using it. It offers a trove of valuable information to be mined. Don't be late to the party.

Who created it?

This guide was prepared by Hinge, a leader in branding and marketing for professional services firms.

How can Hinge help?

Hinge provides a comprehensive suite of programs to help firms and professionals become more visible, enhance their reputations and drive exceptional growth:

Visible Firm® Program

Develop a powerful marketing platform to engage your audiences and build your visibility. Based on the most extensive research into high-growth firms ever conducted, the Visible Firm® Program will deliver more referrals, higher profits and faster growth.

Branding Program

Build a game-changing brand strategy and visual identity. Get a suite of powerful branding tools that will differentiate your firm, provide clear, compelling messages for each of your target audiences and carry your firm's reputation confidently into the marketplace.

High-Performance Website Program

Turn your website into a visually gorgeous, lead-generating machine. Designed from the ground up to attract the right visitors from search engines, a high performance site uses educational content, smart offers, and custom features to engage and convert qualified leads.

Visible Expert® Program

Turn your experts into recognized industry leaders. Get the tools and strategy required to build personal reputation and visibility in the marketplace.

Table of Contents

4 INTRODUCTION

6 DEVELOP YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

CHAPTER 1: Cocktails and More: Why We Love Social Media for Professional Services

CHAPTER 2: Developing your Social Media Strategy

CHAPTER 3: Comparing Social Media Platforms for Professional Services Firms

21 IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY

CHAPTER 4: Social Media Etiquette

CHAPTER 5: Developing a Social Media Calendar

CHAPTER 6: What to Expect from a Social Media Workshop

CHAPTER 7: Pros & Cons of Social Media Automation

34 CONCLUSION

35 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

36 ABOUT HINGE

Introduction

Once upon a time, not so long ago, professional services marketing was all about networking. The key question was this: “How many clients and referral sources can I develop a personal relationship with?”

Today, personal relationships, reputation, and referrals are still important. But how you develop them has changed. The rise of social media has created a whole new set of options for professional services marketers. You can now network with potential clients, referral sources, or teaming partners from around the world or around town. And because this networking can be asynchronous, you can do it at any time.

Many firms are struggling with this new reality. Is social media a threat — one in which competitors can poach your best people and offhand comments present liability risks? Or is it an opportunity to reach new markets and recruit the very best people?

In fact, both scenarios are very real possibilities.

True competitive advantage will go to those firms that learn to harness the power of social media while avoiding its risks. That’s what this guide is designed to do.

The rise of social media has created a whole new set of options for professional services marketers.



DEVELOP YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

CHAPTER 1:

Cocktails and More: Why We Love Social Media for Professional Services

“Why should we bother with social media?” We frequently hear professional services firms repeating some version of this question. But neglecting social media is a mistake. For professional services firms, social media is a workhorse that can play a wide variety of roles.

THE 5 ROLES OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

1. Networking

Social media’s original intended role, as an online networking system, is still important for professional services firms. Treat Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook as an online cocktail party — a way to meet new people and develop important business and client relationships — but without the hangover. And, just like a cocktail party, social media is highly reciprocal. People expect replies to their tweets, comments, and questions, and there is an expectation that you will share other people’s content as well as your own.

2. Content Promotion

Social media is one of the easiest and cheapest ways to promote your firm’s content. Creating a social media marketing strategy to promote your content via different channels will help build your reputation and visibility — i.e., your brand.

- **Twitter:** Twitter functions as an industry-specific micro-blog community, so it’s a natural place to share blog posts and company updates. Twitter offers an easy way to promote your company’s blog posts, news, and ebooks. You simply include links to your articles, along with short taglines describing their importance.
- **LinkedIn:** LinkedIn offers a number of options for content promotion. Use your corporate LinkedIn page to post blog posts, ebooks, and promotions. And join industry groups where you can contribute to the

Treat Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook as an online cocktail party.



discussion, using your content to educate consumers and peers. Free apps that automatically post your blog posts to your LinkedIn profile make it even easier.

A word of warning on content promotion, though — it's important not to overdo self-promotion. Social media is reciprocal, and you need to balance self-promotion with the sharing of important content created by other industry thought leaders. While there seems to be no widely accepted standard for how much of others' content to share, there is a bias toward education. Leave your marketing collateral on your website. Educate, don't hard sell.

3. SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

Social media has become a valuable way to boost SEO. While there is no solid evidence that search engines are using social media popularity as a gauge of a page's authority — that would quickly become a target for manipulation — social media can play a critical role in building the visibility of your content, which in turn helps your SEO. When you share content widely you attract “natural” links, which have a very clear impact on page authority. So boosting your social media presence should also help your pages rank higher in search results. Another hidden benefit of social media is that its content is searchable — at least for Twitter and LinkedIn. That means that your tweet, linking back to your website's blog, can be found by someone doing a simple Google search — a free opportunity to gain website traffic.

Social media has become a valuable way to boost SEO.

4. Research

Social media is a great way to do research. Before you meet with a new client, interview someone for a case study, or hire a new employee, you should check out their social media streams. Regardless of whether it is a corporation or an individual, you will learn a lot about their personality, authority, reputation, and visibility. Social media is also an easy way to research marketplace trends and engage with the competition, keeping you abreast of their initiatives and, perhaps, allowing for advantageous collaboration. This concept of market intelligence is sometimes referred to as *social listening*.

5. Recruiting

Social media is a natural recruitment tool, whether you are looking for new employees or seeking out business partners. LinkedIn and Facebook let you post highly targeted jobs focusing on users with certain resumé attributes, and provides real-time analytics showing, among other things, who has viewed the post. And of course LinkedIn is well known as a good place to search for a new position or to find the right talent.



SOCIAL MEDIA GAINS OUR RESPECT

For professional services, social media has gained our respect in its ability to play a variety of roles. Like other channels, social media works best when you have a deliberate utilization strategy in place and someone dedicated to fostering the relationships that will naturally occur. We recommend that you give social media a role in your content marketing and brand building strategy.

Developing Your Social Media Strategy

Why do you want to use social media? What are you trying to accomplish? Here is a hint. If the answer is that everyone else is doing it, you're not likely to be very successful.

If you are serious about making social media work for your firm, the place to start is with a social media strategy. In this chapter, we'll step you through how to do it the right way.

1. Determine the business purpose of your social media program

As we found out in Chapter 1, there are a lot of good reasons to develop a social media strategy. The question is, which ones are relevant to your situation?

- Do you need to develop new relationships with your target audience or influencers? Think of this goal as traditional networking via a new communications channel.
- Do you need to promote your educational content and spread new ideas? Social media is a fast and efficient way to reach key audiences.
- Do you want to attract more visitors to your website? Social media activity is becoming an important way to gain valuable natural links that tell search engines that your content is valuable. Think SEO.
- Do you need to research your prospects or competitors? Use social media to get the collective scoop. Find out who works there, what issues they have, how the marketplace views them, and many other pieces of information.
- Do you need to recruit new employees? They will definitely be checking you out on social media, so you better be ready. Conversely, it can be used to find just the type of employee you are looking for.
- It's important to get the executive, legal, creative, and web teams aligned in the very beginning. Collaboration is crucial to your firm's social media strategy. Everybody needs to be on the same page to allow for collaboration.

When you have a firm fix on which goals are most important and their relative priority, you are ready to take the next step.

Which goals are relevant to your situation?

2. Specify and research your target audiences

When choosing a target audience for your social media campaign, don't be too narrow. Remember that in most complex B2B sales there is rarely just a single decision-maker involved. Many decision-makers rely on advice from peers or outside consultants, as well as the usual trusted advisors. So it's a good idea to widen your scope to include all of those potential influencers.

Here are a few common audience segments. Can you think of others that apply to your firm?

- **Clients** - Consider 1) the roles/positions within the organizations you serve, and 2) the individual industries you serve.
- **Referral Sources** - These could be complementary industries (think lawyers and accountants), existing clients, past clients, and non-clients who may have been exposed to your expertise (through public speaking or written content, for instance).
- **Industry Influencers** - These might be the media or Visible Experts in your industry.

Once you know whom you are trying to reach, it's time to figure out where they are located online. This can be done through formal research — systematically polling an audience, online monitoring, etc. — or less formally, by simply looking online. Try looking at LinkedIn profiles to see which groups attract your target audience. Many executives routinely include their Twitter handle or LinkedIn profile in their signature block. Remember, your objective is to be where they are.

3. Select the appropriate social media platform(s)

Should we be on Facebook? What about YouTube? And everyone's been talking about LinkedIn. Many folks start by selecting the channel first, and then try to figure out what their goal should be. Bad idea. Instead, identify where you need to go to reach your audience first. That will determine your social media channel(s). And remember: *you don't need to do it all*. Better to focus on a single promising channel than spread yourself too thin.

Sometimes it makes sense to be on multiple social media platforms. The channels are unique and require different strategies, so you should consider the characteristics of the different platforms as part of your decision process. (Don't worry, we've got that covered in Chapter 3).

If you are in doubt, start small and build from there. If your social media strategy is focused on B2B, starting with LinkedIn is a safe bet. Twitter and YouTube are also good fits for most B2B situations. For those in the A/E/C world, Pinterest may give you some valuable exposure. If you are trying to reach



non-profits, consumers, or young hires, Facebook is typically a good addition. And don't forget the more specialized private social forums that are common within many industries.

4. Pinpoint program goals and measures

Once you have selected your social media channels, it's time to focus on specific program goals. Why not set program goals earlier? The simple answer is that many of the goals and available measures are very platform-specific. For instance, it would be impossible to measure retweets on LinkedIn.

Program goals and measures generally fall into three broad categories:

- **Activity.** These goals should focus on what you do. For example: How many online discussions did you start? How many tweets are you posting daily? How many videos did you publish last month? The point of these program goals is to track implementation. Here is the harsh reality — if you don't do it on a routine basis, it won't work. Having a specific goal and measurement in place simply makes it more likely that your strategy will be accomplished.
- **Reach.** These goals measure the reach and scope of your activity. You don't want to send information out into a black hole; you want people to engage with your information, share it, and become interested in your firm. These measurements will let you know if consumers are responding. Your metrics for this goal include tracking followers, fans, likes, comments, or retweets.
- **Results.** Is your social media strategy producing the results you seek? Are you getting the new business leads you wanted? Has your industry visibility improved? Have you found the new recruits you need? Fortunately, marketing automation technology has dramatically improved your ability to track these measures. Tools like Google Analytics allow you to easily track website traffic and new leads coming from social media, and other tools are available that can track results driven by multiple interactions.

5. Develop implementation tactics

The great part about social media is that it's easy to get help. Every day, social media experts are on social media sharing ideas and tips about — you guessed it — social media. Have a question? All you have to do is ask. This informal system is a built-in mechanism for improving your social media skills, and an invaluable aid for a do-it-yourself strategy.

But DIY isn't the right strategy for all situations. If you have a compelling business reason for developing a social media strategy, you might not want to leave it to self-help alone.



These days, there are two viable alternatives to self-help. The first is to employ a social media consultant to help set up your program and policies. This person would train in-house team members, monitor the program, and provide constant support and troubleshooting. The advantages are obvious. This tactic allows you to shorten the learning curve while still relying on inside resources to do the bulk of the implementation.

The second approach is to outsource some roles, or even the entire program. This approach is especially appealing when you have very busy professionals with little available time. It can be more effective and less expensive than taking staff off of billable work. The downside is that the culture of social media revolves around authenticity, which typically implies the active engagement of your staff. This has led to the emergence of hybrid approaches where some functions are outsourced and others are supplemented with available in-house resources.

6. Troubleshooting

Whichever approach you take to developing and implementing your social media strategy, keep this point in mind: a flawed strategy, no matter how enthusiastically implemented, will not produce the desired results. Neither will a brilliant strategy that is only partially implemented. Consistency matters — to see results, you have to stick with the program.

Suppose you are not seeing the results that you have planned for. What do you do? That's where troubleshooting comes into play. If you have been measuring the effects of your program you will be in an excellent position to determine where the problem lies and what you may be able to do about it.

Start with implementation. Did it actually happen? Did you get the desired increase in visibility? Did the program translate into the business outcomes you were seeking? By following this chain of actions and impacts you can often catch an obvious problem. Correctly diagnosing the problem will usually get you to an effective solution.

The next chapter will focus on the specifics of the more popular social media platforms.



CHAPTER 3:

Comparing Social Media Platforms for Professional Services Firms

Using social media to market your firm can be both overwhelming and resource intensive. It's easy to get spread too thin. With almost endless options for networking online, it's important to develop a focused strategy.

One of your first decisions will be to determine which social platforms are worth pursuing and how much effort to dedicate to each.

Your firm's choice of social media platform will be guided by your industry. There's a good chance your industry has a handful of community websites or forums made for people just like you. However, most businesses put the lion's share of their efforts into building up a presence on well-known mainstream social networks like Facebook and LinkedIn. Why? Because that's where most people spend their time online. After all, just like a conference or networking event, a networking website is only useful if people show up.

So which of the big social sites make sense for your firm? The following chapter is a breakdown of what we consider to be the most popular social media sites for professional services marketing. The strategy used by many successful firms is to establish a basic presence on several of these platforms, while focusing their resources heavily on just one or two for consistent interaction and real networking.

A networking website is only useful if people show up.





LINKEDIN

Overview of Characteristics

Many consider LinkedIn to be the social network for professional services. With a population of educated executives and business people, this social network has much more of a professional feel than Facebook.

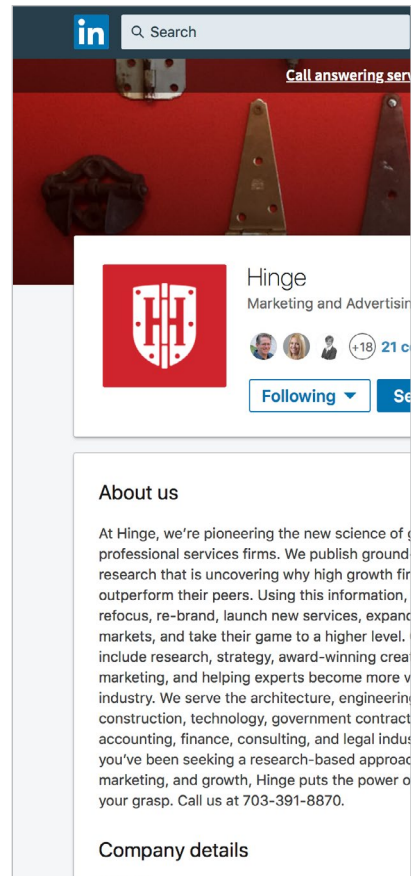
LinkedIn is probably most well known for its network of personal professional profiles, the equivalent of online resumes. LinkedIn's search and sorting functionality make finding specific skills and talent easier than traditional recruiting means, and recruiters and job seekers will often use the platform as a way to start a conversation. LinkedIn also offers users the chance to digitally introduce themselves to friends-of-friends, making it great for creating business relationships. Not to be overlooked, however, are LinkedIn's groups, question and answer forum, and company pages.

Best Uses for Professional Services Firms

LinkedIn allows you to establish a company page, which is essentially a profile of your firm. Your page will have a main stage area with a cover photo, an About Us section where you can describe your firm, and a section to list salient details about your business. LinkedIn users can follow your company and receive blog posts and updates in their feeds as you push them out — another great, free way to share your content. Maintaining a professional presence on your company page builds credibility, much like your company website.

While arguably less effective than in the past, LinkedIn groups can be a useful way to network and carry on discussions with others in your industry. When they aren't overwhelmed by sales pitches, these niche communities can be useful places to grow your authority and reputation by sharing new articles and ideas and by engaging with community members. By consistently interacting with members of your group and debating hot issues, firms and executives can establish themselves as industry thought leaders. Groups can also be good places to research markets, firms and individual members. You can even start your own group to demonstrate your leadership in a particular area. This is exactly what Hinge did when we established the [Professional Services Executive Forum](http://www.linkedin.com/groups/3828540)¹.

Of course, LinkedIn is also an effective place to recruit new talent. In fact, there is a section of the platform dedicated to this very purpose. For job seekers, the tool allows you to see how you are connected to other individuals. For instance, you can see if a friend-of-a-friend knows someone at the company you are trying to work for. Having that connection can help you secure an introduction and, hopefully, an interview.



Consistent interaction with your group members can help you become an industry thought leader.

¹ www.linkedin.com/groups/3828540

Limitations

Facebook's strength — rich media — also happens to be LinkedIn's limitation. Some may consider this a limitation, while others will argue it is a plus. After all, LinkedIn is supposed to be all business. Another limitation is reach. Of the social media big three, Twitter has the fewest number of users, at about 336 million, compared to LinkedIn's estimated 546 million and Facebook's whopping 2.23 billion. One could argue, however, that LinkedIn has a stronger focus — its users are typically older and business-oriented, making them much better contacts for professional services firms.

ONLINE COURSE

Mastering Social Media



Most firms are approaching social media all wrong, or they aren't using it all. In this course, learn how to build a social media program that makes your firm's expertise far more visible and desirable.

What You'll Learn:

- How to use social media to research your target audience and competitors
- How to select the right social platforms for your business
- How to set goals and track metrics in your social media strategy
- Specific techniques you can use to build visibility and make the most of your social media team
- How to create a powerful social media strategy that's right for your organization

[Learn More and Register](#)



FACEBOOK

Overview of Characteristics

Facebook is the most popular social network in the world — by far. With a casual feel and a personal focus, it is intended to connect you with friends, family, and other acquaintances that you've met offline. Unlike professional social networks like LinkedIn, Facebook is great for

keeping up with friends' personal lives and hobbies.

That said, most businesses have a Facebook page, and many use the platform to engage with customers. Contests, live event videos, polls, and announcements are just a few of the ways that companies engage with followers. It is also an ideal platform to promote your firm's internal culture to prospective employees.

Best Uses for Professional Services Firms

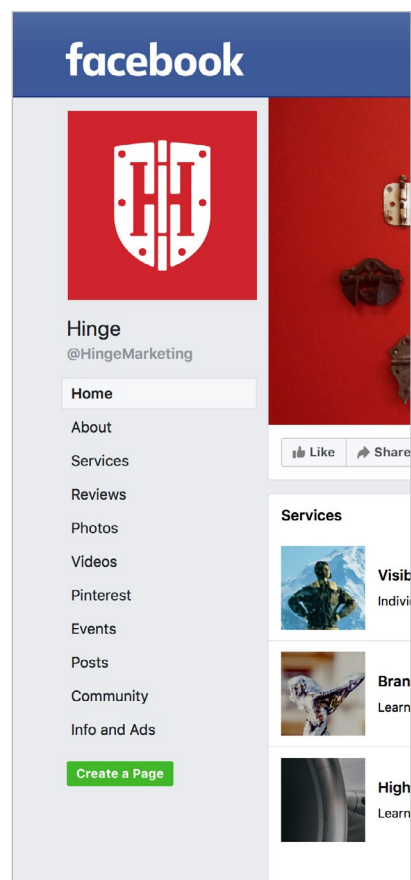
A powerful recruiting tool, Facebook allows you to capture your company culture visually using photos and videos. Here are some things you might post:

- Video tour of the office
- Interviews of team members
- Special events like birthdays or new company milestones
- Photos of office pets
- News and events announcements and follow-up
- Job openings at your firm

Facebook is also a robust advertising platform — one that reaches an enormous audience and generally charges less than competing platforms — so it can be a terrific place to advertise premium content and generate leads. With a rich set of targeting filters, Facebook gives you the control to [target your audience as broadly or finely as you like²](https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2016/06/27/facebook-ad-targeting-options-infographic).

Limitations

Firms will often share educational content on Facebook, but because most people think of Facebook as a personal tool you must be careful not to overwhelm followers with business pitches and materials. It is a light and friendly community — people come to Facebook to be entertained and to get away from work for a few minutes (or hours). So choose your business-related interactions carefully on Facebook and don't come across too strong.



Facebook is a helpful recruiting tool for services firms.

² www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2016/06/27/facebook-ad-targeting-options-infographic



TWITTER

Overview of Characteristics

Like Facebook, Twitter has a wide range of users and no real target demographic. High school students, tech startups, college professors, politicians and many others are using this platform to generate mini conversations on a wide variety of topics (each tweet can be up to 280 characters in length). Whether or not you will benefit

from the content you find on Twitter will depend on whom you follow and how you manage the gush of information pouring into your feeds.

The tool is used to connect strangers who are interested in similar topics, enabling them to strike up conversations out of thin air. Do you want to ask a question of an influencer in your industry? Send him a tweet and you'll often have a better chance of a response than email. And, unlike email, most Twitter conversations are public, allowing others to chime in with their thoughts, making it easy to expand your network. Twitter can become overwhelming quickly with so many messages to take in at once. By using Twitter Lists, you can organize the people you follow into groups, manage your feeds, and quickly find the information you are looking for.

Best Uses for Professional Services Firms

Twitter is a terrific way to connect with other leaders in your industry. Chances are there are influential players in your industry that have quite a following on Twitter. Being on this platform is a way to connect casually and get on these people's radars. Twitter can be a great tool for compiling pipelines of influencers, bloggers, thought leaders, and potential partners. When it comes to marketing online, being friendly with well-known personalities will help you spread your messages.

Additionally, Twitter is a highly popular platform for sharing thought leadership content. If your firm has a blog and you are looking for more visibility, tweeting out the link can be the first step to driving more traffic to your site. However, like all of social media, Twitter is highly reciprocal. You need to make sure that you are sharing others' content (by retweeting other people's tweets and blog posts, for example), and not just sharing your own.

Limitations

Twitter is very effective when a user is highly focused on one subject. This makes it great for industry networking, as your whole audience is interested in, and should be talking about, the same kind of things. Twitter becomes more difficult when you try to reach multiple audiences, as they may not all be interested in your topic. However, this limitation is more of a problem for people trying to use Twitter to mix both business and pleasure — your cycling group is probably not interested in stuff happening at your



Twitter is a terrific way to connect with other leaders in your industry.

office, and vice-versa. If you're a B2B firm looking to leverage Twitter for professional reasons, this should not be an issue. Just like your corporate blog, make sure you are posting about topics that are relevant to your audience, and you will be fine.

The inability to have a long conversation is another limitation of Twitter. Whereas in LinkedIn groups you can write paragraphs of text in response to another member's posting, on Twitter you are limited to a few lines of text per comment. Yes, this is also the point of this micro-blogging platform. But for professional services executives, 280 characters is often not enough. Instead of using this tool to have full-blown conversations, use it to connect, spread content, and build initial relationships that can be expanded elsewhere.



PINTEREST

Overview of Characteristics

Pinterest is a visually oriented community that is based almost entirely on posting images. The concept is modeled after a real-life bulletin board where users can “pin” images that then show up in other users’ feeds. Compared to traditional social feeds, this method has more of a creative, free-flowing, collage feel to it.

With 175 million users and over a billion Pinterest boards, the platform has gained significant attention and a large user base of niche communities sharing anything from wedding ideas to tattoo designs. Like Facebook, it has a personal feel to it. Pinterest is most appropriate for applications that have a strong visual component.

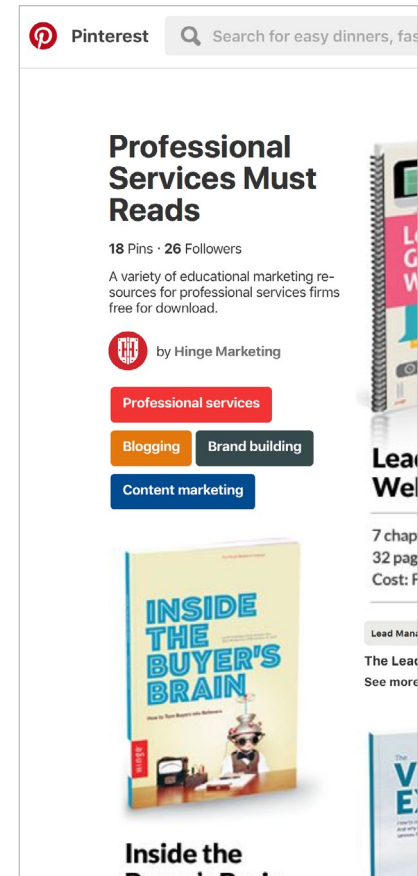
Best Uses for Professional Services Firms

For many firms, this platform is not worth the time investment. However, if your industry is visually oriented and has products to show off, Pinterest may be something to consider. Architects, for instance, often use Pinterest as a place to show off their work and look for inspiring new ideas from others in their industry. Many professionals create pin boards that serve as their online portfolios. This strategy is a great way to get your work in front of a large audience.

Limitations

The platform’s dominant audience is female (a whopping 81% of its users are women). And these women are using Pinterest less for business than for personal hobbies. Although firms can share infographics and other engaging visuals, it’s not an appropriate social network for promoting whitepapers, blog posts or other idea-based content.

Additionally, because the tool is image-based, it’s more difficult to have a conversation and to establish business relationships. For that type of social networking, look to LinkedIn.



If your industry is visually oriented and has products to show off, Pinterest may be a platform to consider.



YOUTUBE

Overview of Characteristics

YouTube has become the best social network to share multimedia content such as videos and narrated slide presentations. As a Google-owned network, it has also become a key network for video-based search engine optimization.

Attracting roughly a third of the Internet's users, YouTube is the second largest search engine in the world. With more than 1.5 billion active users each month, it provides professional services firms the opportunity to share engaging content with a broad audience. Organizations frequently use YouTube as an aggregator and a location to host evergreen content that will continue to drive qualified traffic over time. Video can be an ideal way to educate people, allowing firms to communicate complex information in an easily sharable format.

Best Uses for Professional Services Firms

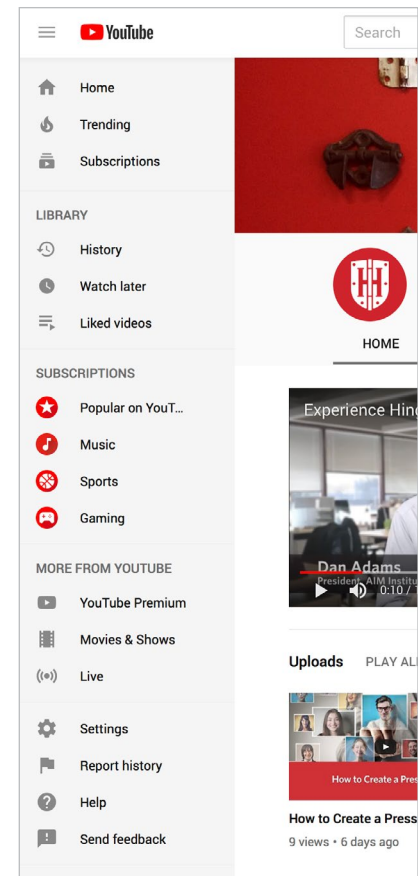
Organizations across all industries use YouTube as a hub to distribute multimedia content. Many professional services firms choose to host all their videos on their company profile pages, called channels. Then they share links to those videos on other social platforms. YouTube also allows you to embed videos into other content environments, including blog posts, LinkedIn posts and Facebook. Videos can also be pinned to Pinterest boards to provide the opportunity to drive more traffic back to a firm's profile.

YouTube content can be organized into topical playlists. For instance, a firm might build a playlist around its core service, another around interviews and a third around event coverage. More than a marketing platform, YouTube is one of the most valuable networks for sharing educational content and establishing a firm's thought leadership. You might publish short "how-to" videos or recordings of educational webinars. Many people — especially younger professionals — prefer watching a video to reading a whitepaper.

Much like other social networks, your YouTube audience can follow your content over time by subscribing to your channels and playlists. Users can also "like" an individual video much like other social media posts. A like acts as a vote of confidence, pushing your content closer to the top when other users search on your topic. YouTube also makes it easy for people to share and repost links across all the major social networks.

Limitations

YouTube is not the best environment to have a conversation. Sure, users can post comments below the video, but ongoing conversations are unusual. Also, firms must customize their channels as much as possible to avoid being lost in the crowd. And perhaps most challenging of all, a firm must consistently create compelling, unique, and relevant videos to acquire and retain a loyal audience. Another cat video won't do the trick.



YouTube is one of the most valuable networks for sharing educational content and establishing a firm's thought leadership.

IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY

CHAPTER 4:

Social Media Etiquette

We shake hands. We say please and thank you. We send thank you notes or emails. Etiquette is something we learn fairly early in our lives. But when a whole new modality of interaction is created, like social media, where is Miss Manners to teach us the social graces?

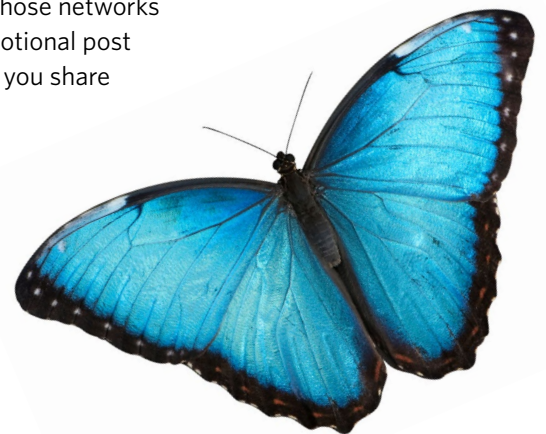
And it's not just how you tweet, it's what you tweet. If you're looking for a starting place, our free [Content Marketing Guide](https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/content-marketing-guide-for-professional-services-firms-vps)³ is an excellent primer for beginning a content-driven social media presence.

Social media has developed its own mini-society and it adheres to a certain customary code of polite and accepted behavior. Those who flout the traditions of etiquette risk annoying and alienating their fellow social media participants — the opposite intended effect of their strategy. Here are a few social and cultural tips to help you avoid some common faux pas.

1. Be a Social Butterfly, Not a Salesman

It's tempting to use social media as a free way to market your own material, but no one likes (or follows) a self-promoter. Share your material, but balance it by sharing interesting content from others (especially those whose networks you want to tap into). A good guideline is to balance every promotional post with four from another source. And as a collateral benefit, when you share others' material, they will be more likely to do the same for you.

Balance every promotional post with four from another source.



³ <https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/content-marketing-guide-for-professional-services-firms-vps>

2. RSVP

Who wants to be ignored? When you receive a [LinkedIn invitation](#)⁴ to connect, or when you gain a new follower, remember to respond. You'll easily be able to distinguish the spam from the real users. Take a quick glance at the person's profile, and then make the decision to follow them back, or to accept the invitation. If they took the time to seek you out on social media, they may be a valuable network connection or a business lead. Don't ignore them! Social media is highly reciprocal, and it only works if you engage with others — answering their social overtures is the first step.

3. Dnt abbrv al ur wrds

Twitter's 280 characters can be limiting, but resist the urge to abbreviate every word. And just because social media is a more casual medium doesn't mean that people will look past spelling and grammatical errors. People are reading your tweets and posts and relating the content and quality to your business — make it count.

4. Think Before You Tweet

Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn are all places where anonymous trolls like to stir the pot, trying to provoke a storm. Rise above the temptation to respond to offensive comments with a quip, a snide remark, or a joke. Once your post hits the Internet, it is hard to take it back. In fact, it is nearly impossible. Everything you post may be traceable, even if you delete it. Some monitoring tools monitor social networks in real time and can search well into the past. Always consider the tone your post could take before you click send.



⁴ https://hingemarketing.com/blog/story/on_turning_500_linkedin_marketing_strategy_revisited

CHAPTER 5:

Developing a Social Media Calendar

It may sound obvious, but even the best social media strategy is nothing if it never actually gets implemented. A professional services firm can move fast, and it's easy for important things to get lost in the shuffle.

Don't let social media be one of them. It's critical for firms to map out their social media strategies, down to the specific steps you will take to carry it out. It might sound silly, or even rudimentary, but creating a social media activity calendar will ultimately lead your team to success. Many firms don't bother with a calendar, and they have the erratic output to prove it.

So what goes into a social media calendar, you ask? We're here to tell you.

COMMITMENT

Okay, so this isn't really a tangible item, but it will be key to keeping your social media strategy alive. Whichever channels your firm identified as important and relevant for your industry, stay committed to them — no excuses! Social media is a great tool for building credibility and establishing your firm as a trusted source of information. Like anything else, there is a learning curve, so it may take a little while to see results. As you establish a rhythm to your posts, your audience will begin to expect posts and updates at particular times. If you lose momentum, you'll lose your audience, as well.

FORM YOUR TEAM

Another important item on your to-do list will be to identify your social media team. You'll need to select people who feel confident using social media, who have an enthusiasm for content and promotion, and who have a desire to share valuable information with others. You won't need an army, but you'll need a handful of good soldiers. Once you've identified your team, establish exactly what they will be held accountable for and how that will be measured. This way, they will have a clear picture of what is expected of them.



If you lose momentum, you'll lose your audience, as well.

CREATING THE CALENDAR

It's not a complex process, but building out your social media activity calendar will take some thought and strategy.

A few best practices:

- **Channel champions:** Assign one person on your team to focus on a particular channel — your channel champion. This will lead to fewer redundancies in posts, a more consistent tone, and will help your team to not become too overwhelmed. It's perfectly okay to assign one person to multiple channels, so long as he or she has the time to put toward each one.
- **Build tasks into schedules:** It's likely that social media is not the only thing your social media team is responsible for on a day-to-day basis. And it's easy for client work to take over and throw your social media strategy off-track. So set up your social media team's tasks as a project. Make sure to give them enough time — somewhere between 2 to 3 hours per channel, per week — so that they can produce sufficient activity and you can start to see results.
- **Always be helpful:** The fastest way to build a powerful reputation online is to be a problem solver and teacher. When you share content, make sure it's educational — not a self-promotional sales pitch. And as much as you can, offer your advice to people who have questions in your area of expertise. Your knowledge and generosity will create loyal followers.
- **Continuous monitoring:** One of social media's main objectives is to start conversations and build relationships with fellow industry peers and social media gurus. So go and converse, I say! You'll need to monitor your LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook profiles frequently to see if comments are being made or questions are being asked. Reciprocity and promptness are key!

Assign one person on your team to focus on a particular channel — your channel champion.

To give you an idea of what a social media calendar could look like, here's an example. The sample calendar on the next page was created based on the assumption that the firm is publishing two blog posts a week, produces a piece of stock content once a quarter, and holds a webinar once a quarter. One last thing to keep in mind is that this calendar is an example of what your *firm's* social media activities should be, not what individual employees should be doing through their personal accounts. Although the nature of posts are somewhat similar for both company and personal accounts, the number of posts for individuals is slightly lower.

SOCIAL MEDIA CALENDAR

	Twitter 	LinkedIn 	Facebook 	YouTube 
MONDAY	Firm blog post tweet	Firm blog post	Firm blog post	Firm video post
	4 industry-specific articles		Monitor and respond to discussions	
	Monitor and respond to discussions			
TUESDAY	Non-firm multimedia tweet		Firm culture post	
	4 industry-specific articles		Monitor and respond to discussions	
	Monitor and respond to discussions			
WEDNESDAY	Firm blog post tweet	Firm blog post	Firm blog post	Monitor and respond to discussions
	4 industry-specific articles		Monitor and respond to discussions	
	Monitor and respond to discussions			
THURSDAY	Non-firm multimedia tweet		Firm culture post	
	4 industry-specific articles		Monitor and respond to discussions	
	Monitor and respond to discussions			
FRIDAY	Firm blog post tweet	Firm blog post	Firm blog post	Monitor and respond to discussions
	4 industry-specific articles	Content post (webinar, guide or book)	Post webinar as an event	
	Content tweet (webinar, guide or book)	Feature webinar link on LinkedIn	Content post (webinar, guide or book)	
	Monitor and respond to discussions		Monitor and respond to discussions	

Some important things to point out:

- **For each social channel, attach a staff member's name:** Again, think about accountability here. If people see their names associated with something, they're more likely to actually do it!
- **Provide day-to-day activities:** Don't make your team guess. Explicitly list the types of posts your social media team will need to complete.
- **Double commitment:** Your commitment not only applies to social media activity, but to your content as well — blog posts, guest blog posts, whitepapers, etc. The amount of unique content that your firm is producing will also play a large role in creating your social sharing frequency.

There are several online tools that can help you manage and schedule your social media tasks. HootSuite and Buffer are two of the more popular ones, and they can help alleviate the intimidating feeling of completing social media tasks. You'll be amazed at what you can do with just 30 minutes a day! We will cover these and other tools in more detail in chapter 7.

You'll be amazed
at what you can
do with just 30
minutes a day!

What's it take to increase your firm's visibility?



Request a free Marketplace Visibility Consultation and find out.

[Request a free consultation](#)

703 391 8870 | hingemarketing.com

What to Expect from a Social Media Workshop

Taking a social media workshop can be a great way to jumpstart your firm's social media program. The goal is to quickly teach your team the basics so they can hit the ground running and start building your social visibility on the web.

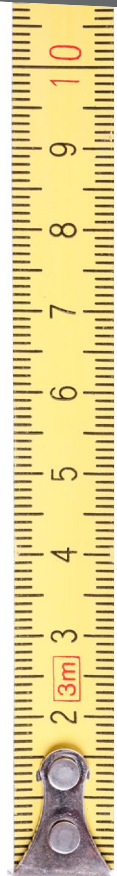
It's important to note that not all social media workshops are created equal. Look for a teacher who can cover all of the foundational pieces in a short period of time. Here are eight topic areas the workshop should cover:

1. **Overview of Importance:** It's a good idea to begin a workshop by answering the "why." There are likely members of your team that aren't fully convinced that spending time on social media is worth it.
2. **High Level Approach:** A good social media workshop will tailor each lesson to fit the specific needs of your firm. Setting the right strategy will get your team aligned from the start.
3. **Understanding Primary Tools:** Your tools will be dictated by your strategy. The workshop should go into detail describing each major tool, how it's used, and tips for success. In professional services this typically includes a look at LinkedIn and Twitter. Depending on your needs, Facebook, YouTube, and Pinterest might come into play, as well.
4. **Understanding Niche Tools:** In many industries there are niche social networks that can be highly effective for targeting new connections. For instance, www.lawyrs.net is a social network just for the legal community. Each industry has one or more specialized networks that might make sense for you. Your workshop leader should spend some time explaining the benefits of niche sites in your industry and how they differ from mainstream sites.

Look for a teacher who can cover all of the foundational pieces in a short period of time.

5. **Tips on Growing Your Networks:** When you start out in social media, you may struggle at first to build your audience and get people to notice to your firm. In the beginning you will have few connections and no clout. Your initial efforts should be focused on increasing your followers and subscribers until you have a small but loyal audience. Within your workshop, ask for tips on growing your network. How can your firm increase its Twitter followers? How can you drive more members into your LinkedIn group?
6. **Tips for Interaction and Management:** The social media workshop should spend ample time explaining the nitty-gritty, day-to-day management of the tools. By the end of the discussion, your team should feel comfortable contributing on these platforms and know how to nurture relationships over time.
7. **Daily Schedule:** A schedule should be discussed on a high level, at least. It's important for your team to have a sense of how long to spend working on each network and when to call it quits for the day.
8. **Measuring Success:** Social media can become a time sink with no reward if you aren't carefully measuring the right qualitative and quantitative key performance indicators. The workshop should review the most important metrics to track, how they affect your web presence, and why your social media progress is helping your firm.

Although a social media workshop may not transform your marketing team into mavens overnight, it will get the ball rolling. With a solid understanding of the fundamentals listed above, you'll have what you need to start creating online buzz for your firm.



CHAPTER 7:

Pros & Cons of Social Media Automation

One thing is certain: social media is here to stay, and firms are building it into their marketing plans and budgets.

But managing your social media presence can be exhausting, and it is almost impossible to be on multiple platforms at all times. The good news is that now you don't need to be! Social media automation allows you to schedule posts and updates to all your platforms, instead of manually posting each one individually.

Sounds great, doesn't it? Unfortunately, it is also way too easy to abuse automation. If you use it improperly you will spam your audiences and spoil and credibility you have built. This chapter will shine some light on the pros and cons of automation and help you avoid common mistakes.

Social media automation allows you to schedule posts and updates to all your platforms.

PROS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AUTOMATION

1. Easy-to-use tools

Today, there are many user-friendly tools available to help you schedule your content promotion and distribution. The two most commonly used tools are HootSuite and Buffer. Both are flexible platforms that provide great data — and they are used by many prominent brands.

[HootSuite's](https://hootsuite.com)⁵ free version allows you to manage up to 10 social profiles and offers unlimited scheduling. It's a great tool to save time and collect useful data.

[Buffer](https://buffer.com)⁶ takes a slightly different approach. First you set up your “buffering patterns,” or default schedules for your posts. Then as you add content to the queue, Buffer will post it into the next available slot, on schedule.

Both apps offer inexpensive upgrades to professional versions that are well worth considering for any firm with multiple users.

⁵ <https://hootsuite.com>

⁶ <https://buffer.com>

2. Consistency

Dedicating time to social media has been an issue for many professional services firms. Even when you have a clear strategy in place, consistency can be hard to achieve. That's why so many social media profiles are empty or deserted.

It's understandable why few firms are truly successful at implementing their strategies. If you are anything like Hinge, you are very busy. It is difficult to keep your audience consistently engaged. That's why pre-scheduling the updates through automation can really save the day!

3. Nailing social timing

Timing is everything in social media. Social automation gives you complete control over how often and when your posts go out. If you would like to learn more about how to schedule your posts, check out this excellent [article on social timing by Neil Patel](https://neilpatel.com/blog/science-of-social-timing/)⁷. Keep in mind, however, that these are general guidelines for all audiences. You may need to adjust your timing to fit the peculiarities of your firm or audiences. To determine when your audience is most likely to engage with your posts, conduct some experiments — post at different times of the day and at different intervals. Then monitor your analytics to see when you get the most activity.

4. Collaboration with your team

Some of the available tools allow multiple users to collaborate through the same system. That makes perfect sense, as many firms have several social media contributors. You have to know what your team members are sharing and what they have scheduled to eliminate repetition and to deliver a clear and consistent online voice. This is where a social media calendar or plan will pay dividends.

Timing is everything in social media.

⁷ <https://neilpatel.com/blog/science-of-social-timing/>



CONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AUTOMATION

1. Automation fuels self-indulgence

There is an epidemic of narcissism on social media, and the ability to schedule and automate posts only feeds the problem. While many brands like to talk about themselves, they often forget that social media is not the same as running an advertisement.

While one of your social media goals is to expose your brand to a larger market, that is not a license to flood these platforms with endless self-promotion. Instead, heed social media etiquette (see Chapter 4) and deliver the kind of experience your followers want. If you reflexively put yourself in your audience's shoes, you will be fine.

2. Same content, different platform

Ever see this appear on Facebook or LinkedIn?

RT @TwitterHandle #InsertHashtagFail

This post is written in the specific language of a tweet, and it doesn't belong on Facebook or LinkedIn. But it happens because Hootsuite, TweetDeck, SocialOomps, and other applications will let you simultaneously post to Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Remember, the various social platforms serve different strategic purposes, and should have different content. And they should be scheduled with different frequencies.

For example, people are more tolerant of frequent posts on Twitter than they are on Facebook. Not to mention, mindless duplication of content across all channels is a clear sign of laziness and lack of sensitivity to your followers.

To avoid this problem, determine the right strategy for each social media platform. Think about your audience, your strategy, and your goals for each platform. How often do people want to see updates from you on Twitter? What kind of information will you share on Facebook? What's appropriate for LinkedIn? For the most part, your strategy should be driven by common sense.



Twitter handles are used to call out usernames in Tweets. Like this: "Hello, @HingeMarketing!" It also turns into a link to a Twitter profile.



Hashtags are key words or phrases that are used on social media to tag a certain topic of interest. These tags are searchable and allow the user to follow and join relevant conversations.

3. Boring robot language

We have all seen them — dry, repetitive tweets and status updates that feel robotic. That's because automated posts, generated in bulk in advance, can lack creativity and energy.

So even if you are creating most of your posts ahead of time, strive hard to keep your language and content fresh-sounding and vibrant. Your followers are real people. You are a real person! Add personality, spice, and wit to your updates. Change it up. Be exciting and interesting to read.

4. Being late to the party

Another downside to pre-scheduling your social updates is missing the social media party. Social media is a great source of news, emerging trends, ideas, and inspiration, not to mention networking! So many firms set their tweets/updates/posts to run and forget about checking social media until the next batch needs to be scheduled. This means they miss opportunities to write about something topical or respond to a big news event. What a waste of potential!

To prevent this from happening, build time into your schedule to browse your industry's social media space daily. Create a list of top industry influencers on Twitter, participate in relevant LinkedIn Groups, and monitor your competition on Facebook. To save even more time, you can also create alerts for select topics and influencers. Stay current and relevant. Remember, we are living the digital revolution — and it moves mighty fast.

The bottom line? Social media automation is a time-saver. It can be a great tool for your firm, provided that you use it strategically and conscientiously — and never forget that nothing worthwhile can be entirely automated.



Use automation
with your strategy
in mind, and in an
elegant way.



Conclusion

Social media marketing has become an increasingly important tool in the professional services marketer's toolbox, and it's here to stay.

While it cannot do everything, it can do many things very well. From researching new markets to lead generation and brand building, social media is a powerful, multifunction tool.

Today, social media is an essential component of any content-based marketing program. More and more professional services firms are jumping into social media with both feet because it helps them reach a wide audience at a relatively low cost. If you are not there, you can bet that your competitors will be.

In today's marketing environment, you have to be where your clients and referral sources are. And these days, that increasingly means social media.



Additional Resources

Online Marketing for Professional Services

https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/online_marketing_for_professional_services

The Visible Firm® Guide

<https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/the-visible-firm-executive-guide>

The Hinge Rebranding Guide

https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/the_hinge_rebranding_kit

Content Marketing Guide for Professional Services Firms

<https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/content-marketing-guide-for-professional-services-firms-vps>

Becoming a Visible Expert®: A Guide for Professional Services Executives

https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/becoming_a_visible_expert_a_guide_for_professional_services_executives

The Social Media Guide for Professional Services

<https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/the-social-media-guide-for-professional-services>

Hinge's Professional Services Guide to Research

https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/hinges_professional_services_guide_to_research

About Hinge

Hinge specializes in branding and marketing for professional services firms. We are a leader in helping firms grow faster and maximize value.

Our comprehensive offerings include research and strategy, brand building, award-winning creative, high-performance websites and marketing outsourcing. And at **Hinge University**, your team can learn all the marketing skills and strategies they need to take your firm to a higher level of performance.

In addition, Hinge conducts groundbreaking research on professional service companies. We have identified a group of firms that grow 9X faster and are 50% more profitable yet spend less than average to get new business. We can show you how they do it and implement their strategies in your firm.

To view our full library of research reports, whitepapers, webinars and articles, please visit www.hingemarketing.com/library.

www.hingemarketing.com

703 391 8870
1851 Alexander Bell Drive, Suite 350
Reston, VA 22191

Help us make this guide even better.

We want to hear from you. If you have any suggestions to improve this resource, please drop us a line: info@hingemarketing.com.

Thank you!



How We Can Help

Visible Firm® Program

Designed to deliver more referrals, higher profits and faster growth, the Visible Firm® Program will build a powerful marketing platform to engage your audiences and build your visibility. Based on the most extensive research into high-growth firms ever conducted, the Visible Firm® Program will ground your marketing in science and leverage your firm's expertise to draw in the right audiences.

Branding Program

Our Branding Program is designed to carry your firm's reputation confidently into the marketplace by giving you a suite of powerful branding tools. Based on extensive research and analysis, our branding strategies increase your firm's credibility and visibility in your industry. The services will also differentiate your firm and provide clear, compelling messages for each of your target audiences.

High-Performance Website Program

The High-Performance Website Program makes your website into a lead-generating machine — bundling a gorgeous new design with a suite of powerful online tools. Designed from the ground up to attract the right visitors from search engines, a high performance site uses educational content, smart offers, and custom features to engage and convert qualified leads.

Visible Expert® Program

Designed to help individuals cultivate an authoritative online presence in their area of expertise, the Visible Expert® Program delivers the tools and strategy required to build personal reputation and visibility in the marketplace. Based on extensive research, the Visible Expert® Program helps experts become recognized industry leaders.

For more information, call 703 391 8870 or email us at info@hingemarketing.com.

To find out how Hinge can help your professional services firm experience faster growth, contact us!

Hinge

1851 Alexander Bell Drive
Suite 350
Reston, VA 20191

703 391 8870
info@hingemarketing.com

ONLINE COURSE

Mastering Social Media



Most firms are approaching social media all wrong, or they aren't using it all. In this course, learn how to build a social media program that makes your firm's expertise far more visible and desirable.

What You'll Learn:

- How to use social media to research your target audience and competitors
- How to select the right social platforms for your business
- How to set goals and track metrics in your social media strategy
- Specific techniques you can use to build visibility and make the most of your social media team
- How to create a powerful social media strategy that's right for your organization

[Learn More and Register](#)

What's it take to increase your firm's visibility?



Request a free Marketplace Visibility Consultation and find out.

[Request a free consultation](#)

703 391 8870 | hingemarketing.com