

# Social media – have you joined the revolution?

Got Facebook? On Twitter? CAM Coach **Mark Shields** explains why all practitioners need to get involved.

These days it is practically impossible to ignore social media. It has grown with unprecedented speed in recent years, with most people at least dipping a toe into the water with a Facebook account for keeping in touch with friends and family. But the social media revolution is gaining momentum month by month and as practitioners we need to jump aboard this social media train and not be left waiting at the station.

Did you know that:

- 25% of online consumer time is spent on social media sites.
- Facebook and Twitter are the most used sites.
- People in the UK are second only to the Dutch as the most prolific users of Facebook and Twitter in Europe: half of all adults in the UK use these two social media giants.
- Around two-thirds of adults aged 35 to 55 are using social networks online – and almost a fifth of over-65s are on them.

So, what's so special about social media? They have created a more direct route for practitioners to reach out to potential clients and build relationships with existing clients (should they wish to be public), as well as helping to create new professional networks.

All CAM practitioners should take advantage of the different types of social media marketing opportunities, because first and foremost they are free. Secondly, they can increase your brand awareness by directly reaching your target market and demographic. It is also a great way to increase traffic to your website, and finally, it gives you the chance to educate your audience, which builds your credibility and may result in them using your services.

Everyone has their preferred type of social media platform, however it is sensible to use several in connection with each other to produce a more powerful message. For example, if you can produce an educational video on an aspect of your work and post it on YouTube, you can then tweet a link to the video on Twitter or post a link on Facebook. Your followers will then be able to "comment", "like" or "re-tweet" to all of their followers, which starts the "viral" spread of your information.

## Getting started

First you need to decide what your goals are. Perhaps your targets are to increase your

follower numbers, gain referrals through social media and direct more traffic through to your website. But don't forget you can also use social media to keep track of the latest research and what industry leaders in your field are saying.

Twitter allows you to post short updates or "tweets" of up to 140 characters and follow the updates of anyone that interests you. You can target your tweets direct to your chosen market in your particular area of the country. This puts the word out about what you are doing in your practice, which can help you build up a following in your area.

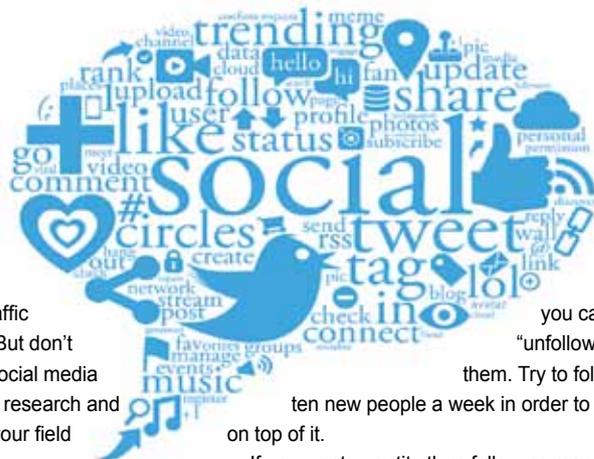
You need to ensure that every tweet reinforces your goal, but you don't want to look desperate, so make sure you offer a variety of interesting facts, figures, pictures, links, videos and so on – it's not all about you!

Watch what other people in your industry tweet and model their technique, as it takes some practice to hit the spot when you only have 140 characters to play with.

There are many tools within Twitter that can be used to target your audience. Putting a hashtag – # – before a word helps you to create a particular subject, news story, research or event that interests an audience. For example, during the opening ceremony of the London Olympics, the topic #openingceremony was used. By posting a tweet with #openingceremony in it, your tweet would be seen under that topic group. You could use something relevant to your business.

Everybody wants huge amounts of followers, but I think it is more about quality of followers rather than quantity. To start building followers, search for people using the "Discover" tab. Type, for example #Brighton to find tweets related to Brighton. They will usually be other businesses in that area. If you want to gain referrals from a gym in Brighton, for example, a first step is to start following them; then look out for an appropriate opportunity to comment on one of their tweets or Facebook posts.

Keep an eye on who follows you back. My rule of thumb is that if you follow someone and they do not follow you back then a week later



you can "unfollow" them. Try to follow ten new people a week in order to keep on top of it.

If you want quantity then follow as many people as you like, but make sure they are relevant to your target market. Some will follow back but not all. You can tell the avid tweeters by the number of tweets they have in their tweet trail.

Ideally what you are aiming for is a solid base of followers who are interested in what you have to say and share it with their followers.

To see an example of how it is done, have a look at [www.twitter.com/LifePracticeUK](http://www.twitter.com/LifePracticeUK).

## Don't spam

Twitter is about relationship-building and building some rapport with like-minded parties. If you have never interacted with them before it is best not to ask for re-tweets or referrals. Try to build up some dialogue with individuals first.

Direct messages or DMs are a great way to personalise a message solely to a particular follower. Only they can see it. However anyone sending a message to you suggesting that someone is saying something bad about you and inviting you to click on a link is more than likely an attempt to hack into your account. If the message looks a little odd, do not click the link.

Think before you post and ask yourself these questions.

- Does it re-enforce my business goals?
- Is it interesting or relevant?
- Am I violating client confidentiality?

Remember: anything that you post remains on the internet forever and can be easily shared with others.



## About the author

**Mark Shields**, life coach, author, media expert and motivational speaker, is director of The Life Practice ([www.lifepractice.co.uk](http://www.lifepractice.co.uk); 01462 451473) and co-author with CAM editor Simon Martin of the new book *The CAM Coach*. For more info on CAM Coach workshops or to buy the book visit [www.thecamcoach.com](http://www.thecamcoach.com).