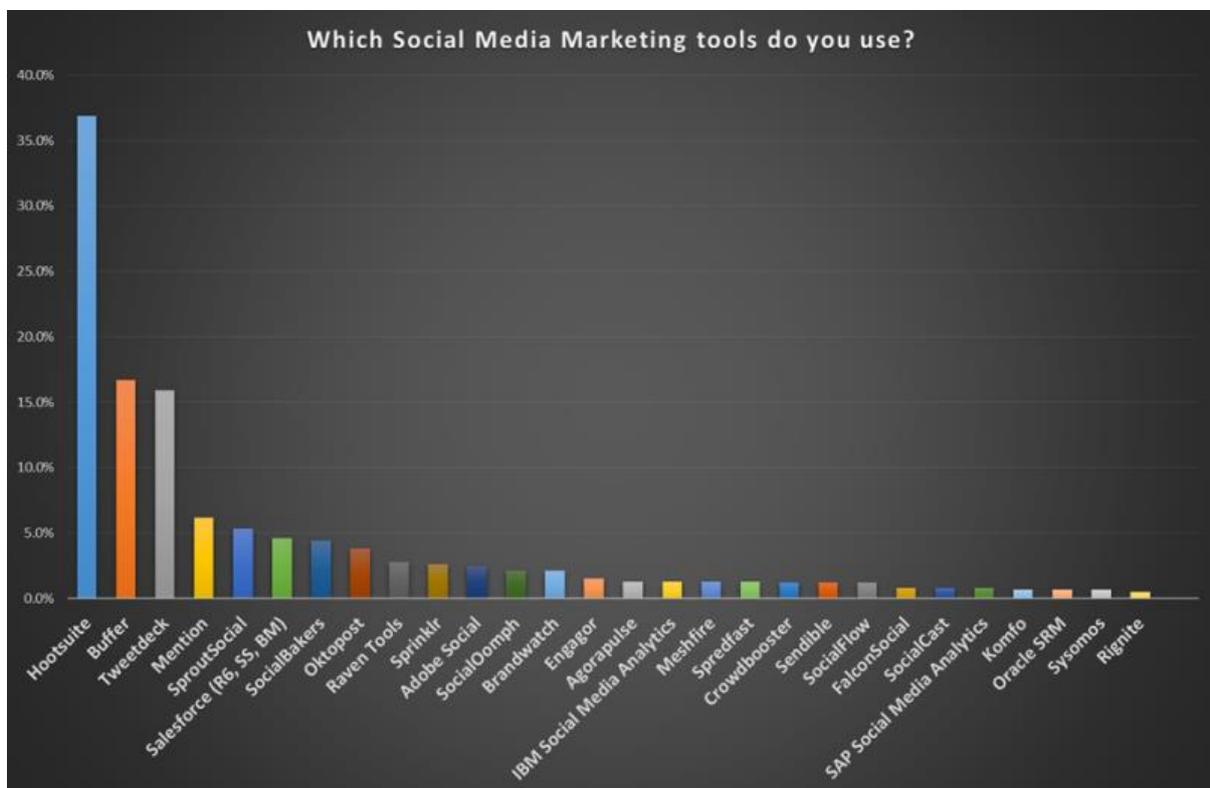


24 - Social Media Marketing part 7 – Automating social media

Keeping all your social media marketing up to date can be a lot of work if you have to monitor and update a dozen social media accounts with multiple posts per day. Generally the content shared on the networks will be the same content, so having some sort of automation strategy will save you a lot of time and effort.

Thankfully, there are a quite a few options for keeping your social media updated. Googling the phrase 'social media management tools' just got me 276 billion results. The choice of which tool you should use depends on your budget and which social platforms you need to support. The graph below summarises the market share of the major players in the market.



VB | INSIGHT

SOURCE: SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT: TOOLS, TACTICS ... AND HOW TO WIN
SEE MORE AT INSIGHT.VENTUREBEAT.COM

Fig 24: Most popular social media automation tools

Hootsuite

By far the most popular tool is Hootsuite. You can get started using Hootsuite for free if you only want to try it out. The free account lets you link up to 3 social media accounts and supports Facebook pages (although you have to link to your normal FB account first but you can remove it

after you've added the Facebook page) and LinkedIn company pages. The paid for accounts support up to 100 social profiles across different social networks. Hootsuite has a very helpful tutorial that assists you in setting up your account and get you started using the system.

Once you have your Hootsuite account up and running, you can then publish content to all your linked social media at once. When you add links in the posts, Hootsuite allows you to use a URL shortener to convert them to <http://ow.ly> links. You could add links without the shortened version, but using the converted links will allow you to view analytics about how many clicks you got on each link and which network the clicks came from.

Another handy use for these kinds of tools is that most of them support scheduled posts. If you wanted to time a post with a particular media event, you just set the post up as normal and instead of clicking on 'send now' click on the calendar icon above it, then select what date and time you want to send the message for optimal impact.

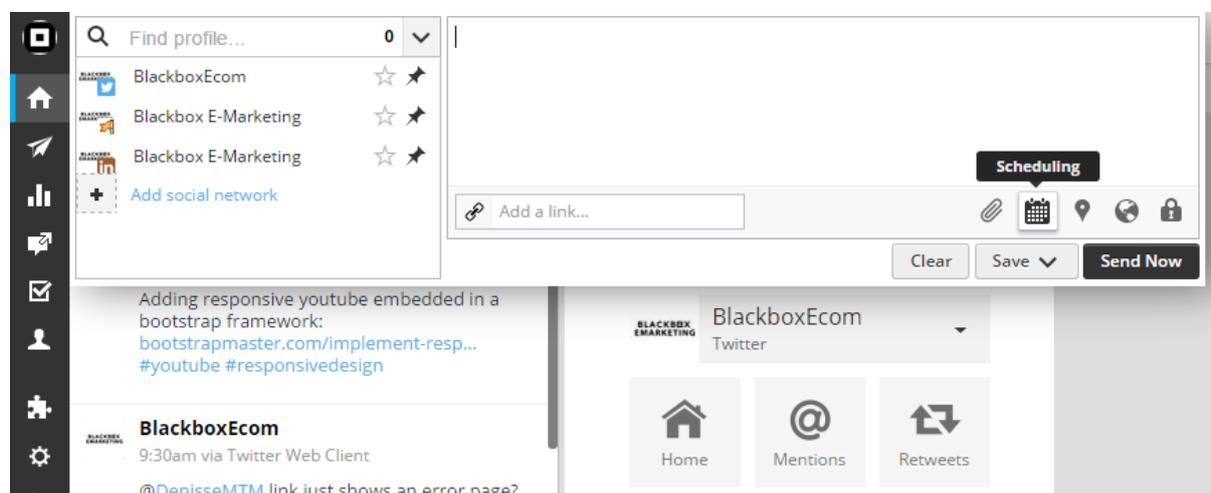


Fig 25: Publishing new content in Hootsuite

To monitor social media activity, the system makes use of 'streams'. Streams are lists of posts that you might be interested in - so you could monitor any mentions of your company, or specific keywords or hashtags, then when you find any interesting posts, you can share these on your platforms or to contact the individual who mentioned your company. Each stream can monitor up to 3 keywords, but you can have several streams running at once in different tabs. Setting up your streams takes a bit of work at first, so it's a good idea to have a clear idea about what streams should be monitored. For example, you could set up a tab that just looks at mentions for yourself, then maybe another tab with mentions of competitors, then maybe a 3rd tab for monitoring wider industry news.

After you have made a few posts using Hootsuite, you can view the statistics on engagement, and the system lets you create great looking reports. Some of the reports are not available in the free version, but there are enough of them to satisfy most marketing directors.

Hootsuite is a very powerful platform and it would probably take a book in itself to go through all the possible features, but it does have some limitations. One of such is the fact that you cannot tag people in Facebook posts. You will have to go straight to Facebook to do this.

Twitterfeed

If you already have a blog and want to automatically publish this content into your social media feeds then there is another great tool called Twitterfeed (twitterfeed.com). This is a free service that reads your website's RSS feed, then automatically publishes that content to LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. The beauty of Twitterfeed is that you only have to set it up once and then you can forget about it. Most CMS systems automatically generate RSS feeds from blogs, and online blogging websites will also publish this, but if your blog does not create RSS feeds automatically, then you can use online services to create a feed. This is a bit more work than using automatic WordPress or blogger.com RSS generators, so if you have not already set up a blog, consider using those systems that publish RSS feeds.

Social Media Management tools can save you a lot of time if you do a lot of social networking with your business. If you are one of those businesses that shy away from social media, then you are missing out on a lot of potential clients. While you are avoiding Facebook and twitter, you can be sure that your competitors are already getting fans and followers.