By now you’ve heard the hype. Social media is all the rage, and businesses are jumping on the bandwagon as fast as humanly possible. In fact, I’d be willing to bet that your company has a Twitter account and a Facebook page or has plans to do so in the near future.

But what now? Is just having a presence on the social networks enough? What can you do to reach potential clients effectively?

Here are five simple rules to help you find and, more important, engage your prospects using social media.

**No. 1: Know why you’re there**
This is a big one, and most companies don’t have an answer aside from “our competition is doing it” or “we hired a consultant and she said we should.” That’s not a reason, though, and it’s certainly not reason enough for potential clients to bother seeking you out.

The most important thing to remember about using social networks for business is that they weren’t designed to be used for business. They’re social networks, after all. So if you’re going to participate, don’t look at them as just another form of broadcast media. Instead, figure out how to “get social” with these sites. Make them fun, engaging and interesting to your target market! Otherwise don’t bother—you’ll do more harm than good to your brand if your conversation is only going one direction.

**No 2: Show up**
The number of abandoned Facebook and Twitter accounts is staggering. Countless companies have created profiles, left a status update or two and then never logged in again. Why? Because they were expecting a quick fix and weren’t willing to stick it out.

A good social media business strategy is going to take a solid three to six months of regular attention and interaction to get results. If you’re not willing to consistently put in the time, don’t bother opening the account. Again, you do more harm than good by having a Facebook page with cobwebs on it.

**No 3: Be you**
In other words, your company has a personality—show it! Don’t get so caught up in putting on your professional face that you don’t let your clients and prospects see the real you. As we get deeper into the conceptual age, more people want to know who they’re doing business with. They want to know that you are more than just another faceless corporation. They want to see the human side of your business. So don’t be afraid to let it show! And speaking of fear...

**No. 4: Get over your fear**
One of the biggest obstacles to using social networks and social media for your business is fear—fear of looking bad, fear of letting employees participate in the conversation, fear that someone is going to say something bad about your company. My advice? Get over it!

All of these fears boil down to one basic fear: the fear that you will somehow lose control of the conversation. So maybe this will make you feel better—you never were in control of the conversation to begin with! In an age where anyone and everyone can hop on Yelp and write a review of your business in seconds, your only strategy should be to be so amazing, to offer such great products and services, that those reviews are all positive. And, just for emphasis...

**No 5: Be amazing**
Selling products that are just OK and delivering them with lackluster service just doesn’t cut it anymore. If you want to be successful today, you have to be amazing. That’s especially true when you’re online, where attention spans are even shorter. Your online presence has to have a “Wow Factor.” And just how do you “wow” your prospects online?

Make it about them. Stop talking about yourself and your products and start finding out what’s interesting to your prospects. In a sea of self-promoters, your interest in your prospects will be a refreshing change of pace!