



The Work of Being Seen

Build a useful presence, earn trust, and learn from what works

Show up with purpose.

SHAD EDDIE MONGRUE

Free preview · Introduction and Chapter 1

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BOOK

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*Build a useful presence, earn trust, and learn from what
works*

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Every statistic, study finding and documented example is numbered and listed in the Sources, with a link to the page it came from. Each was checked word for word against its source in October 2026. Stories marked "composite example" are illustrations drawn from common situations; their names and details are not real people. Stories marked "documented example" come from the cited sources.

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An Invitation

Social media can feel like a crowded room where everyone brought a microphone. It can also be a place where someone finally finds the answer, example, or service they were looking for. The difference is not always a clever trick or a perfectly polished post. Often it begins with a simple question: What can you offer that would make another person's day a little easier?

That question is why I believe social media marketing deserves more than a passing glance. It brings creative work and practical service together. You make something—a clear explanation, a useful demonstration, an invitation—and put it where people might find it. Then you pay attention. What did they ask? What did they misunderstand? What helped them take a next step? The work is not just to be seen. It is to become more useful with what you learn.

There are practical reasons to take this work seriously, without pretending it is magic. In a 2024 survey of consumers who followed at least five brands on social media, 81% said social media drives them to make impulse purchases.^{1,2} That is a reason to think carefully about the messages people encounter, not a promise that a post will make anyone buy. About half of surveyed consumers said original content makes their favorite brands stand out on social media.¹ Originality matters, but it does not mean you must perform a new personality every week. It can mean showing your work in a way that is recognizably yours.

The conversation matters, too. In that 2024 research, 73% of surveyed consumers said they would buy from a competitor if a brand did not respond on social media.¹ A survey answer is not a guarantee of what any one person will do. Still, it is a useful reminder that showing up includes listening and following through. A profile that only broadcasts can miss the very questions that would help it serve people better.

You do not have to be everywhere to make a thoughtful choice about where to begin. In Pew Research Center's 2025 survey of U.S. adults, 84% said they use YouTube, 71% Facebook, and half Instagram; 37% said they use TikTok.³ Those figures describe platform use, not where your particular customers are or what they want. Your audience, goals, time, and comfort matter. The sensible starting point is not chasing every platform. It is finding a place where the people you hope to help can meet the kind of work you can sustain.

The Work of Being Seen is an invitation to build that kind of presence with care. You will plan content, make offers honestly, hold conversations, and use evidence to improve—not to turn every person into a target or every post into a sales pitch. Some experiments will land; others will teach you what to change. Results vary, and steady work does not guarantee growth. But the practice can still be worthwhile: you can make useful things easier to find, treat people with respect, and get better at serving them.

Reasons to fall in love with this subject

- **It gives creativity somewhere to go** An idea becomes more than a note in your phone when you shape it for someone who might need it. A baker could explain how to store a loaf, a neighborhood repair shop could show what to check before calling, and a consultant could make a confusing term easier to understand. Those are not grand productions. They are small acts of useful creativity. Social media gives you a place to try a voice, a format, and an idea, then learn how each feels to make and receive.
- **It makes listening part of the work** Marketing does not have to begin with guessing what people want. You can notice the questions people ask, the words they use, and the points where they get stuck. That listening can improve a post, a service, or the way you explain an offer. It also helps keep your audience human in your mind. People are not a demographic puzzle to solve; they have real circumstances, limited time, and different reasons for paying attention.
- **It can build trust through follow-through** Trust is not a filter you apply to a photo. It grows through small choices: answering clearly, correcting a mistake, setting expectations, and not claiming more than you can deliver. Those choices may not look flashy, but they make a presence more dependable. You can be warm without being overfamiliar and persuasive without being pushy. The goal is not to sound perfect. It is to make it easier for people to understand what you do and decide whether it is right for them.
- **It rewards useful originality** Original content does not require a dance, a hot take, or a daily reinvention of your brand. It can be your own explanation, a behind-the-scenes demonstration, a thoughtful answer, or a story that makes a process clearer. The survey finding that about half of consumers say original content helps their favorite brands stand out offers a reason to

make room for your perspective.¹ The useful question is not, How can I be unlike everyone? It is, What can I show or explain in a way that helps?

- **It turns experiments into learning** A post can be an experiment without becoming a verdict on your talent. You can choose one goal, try a format, and see what signals appear. A thoughtful reply, a click, a saved post, or a sale may each tell you something different—and none tells the whole story by itself. Learning to interpret those signals makes marketing less mysterious. You can keep what helps, change what does not, and avoid rebuilding your whole plan around one unusually busy afternoon.
- **It can be a practice, not a performance** You are allowed to build a presence at a pace that fits your real life. A repeatable rhythm can leave room for work, family, rest, and the occasional post that does not need to become a masterpiece. Social media can ask for constant attention if you let it; this book helps you make deliberate choices about when and why you show up. The satisfying part is not being online all the time. It is knowing what you are there to do.

BY THE END OF THIS BOOK, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO

- Choose a social media goal that connects to a real contribution you want to make.
- Describe the people you hope to help by paying attention to their questions and contexts.
- Write a clear value proposition and make your profile support it.
- Plan a sustainable mix of teaching, demonstrating, conversation, and offers.
- Shape a post for its format, with one central idea and a useful ending.
- Respond to people with care, invite participation, and handle criticism respectfully.
- Match measures to goals and explain what a result can—and cannot—tell you.
- Build a practical cycle for planning, publishing, listening, reviewing, and adjusting.

How to use this book

You can read the chapters in order, because they move from purpose and audience to content, conversation, offers, measurement, and care. Or you can start with the question closest to your current work. If your profile is unclear, begin with the promise you want to make. If you are posting without knowing what to learn, turn to the chapter on signals. The book is a guide, not a test; you do not need to master every platform feature before you begin.

Keep a notebook or a simple document nearby. As you read, write down the people you hope to serve, the questions you hear, and a few content ideas that would answer them. Choose a small experiment you can realistically complete. For example, try a different opening on your next useful post, or set aside time to reply to comments with care. Keep the experiment modest enough that you can learn from it without treating a quiet result as a personal failure.

Return to your notes as you work through the chapters. Ask what you intended, what happened, and what you would change next time. The point is not to measure every breath your business takes. It is to use information that helps you make a better decision. By the end, you can shape a realistic learning path around your goals and capacity, rather than borrowing someone else's posting schedule and hoping it fits.

HOW THIS BOOK HANDLES EVIDENCE

This book treats evidence as helpful but limited. Numbered citations point to the facts behind claims, and survey responses are described as responses—not guarantees or proof of what every person will do. Examples identified as documented use only the supplied facts; composite examples are fictional illustrations and are not reports of real people or outcomes. Social media practices and platform features change, and results vary with audience, offer, context, and execution. This is educational material, not a promise of business results or personal professional advice.

Why Showing Up Can Matter

A COMPOSITE EXAMPLE · NAMES AND DETAILS ARE ILLUSTRATIVE

Nia opens her phone while waiting for the kettle to boil. A post from a local repair shop catches her eye: a clear photo of a loose chair leg, two sentences about how to check the joint, and an invitation to ask a question before deciding whether to bring anything in. She saves it. A week later, when a shelf starts wobbling, she remembers the shop—not because it shouted the loudest, but because it was useful at the right moment.

The shop is fictional, and the scene is ordinary on purpose. Social media is woven into small pauses like this: looking for an answer, noticing a new idea, or deciding whether a business seems worth approaching. A post can help someone discover you. A reply can make the next step feel easier. Neither one guarantees a sale or lasting trust. But together, they create a chance to be helpful before you ask anyone to buy.

That is a better starting point than chasing attention for its own sake. You do not need to become a full-time entertainer. You need to understand whom you hope to serve, what would genuinely help them, and how to show up in a way you can sustain.

Attention is a doorway, not the destination

A social post can introduce your work to someone who has never heard of you. It can also help a person understand what you do before they decide whether to follow, ask a question, visit your site, or move on. This is useful because people do not always go looking for a business at the exact moment they need it. They may come across a practical tip today and remember your name later.

But being seen is not the same as being trusted, and a large number of views does not tell you whether the right people found what they needed. Attention is a beginning. The meaningful question is what you do with it: Is your message clear? Does it answer a real question? Can a person take a sensible next step without being pressured?

A useful post might explain how to choose between two options, show what a service includes, or point out a common mistake without making readers feel foolish. It could also simply share a small, honest observation from your area of work. The goal is not to make every post profound. It is to make your presence worth encountering.

Choose the people, not just the platform

It is tempting to begin with, “Which platform should I use?” A more helpful first question is, “Who am I trying to help, and where might they look for useful information?” Platform popularity can offer context, but it cannot tell you where your particular audience spends time or what they need from you.

In a 2025 survey, 84% of U.S. adults said they use YouTube, 71% said they use Facebook, half said they use Instagram, and 37% reported using TikTok³. Those figures describe broad adult use, not the habits of every community, customer, or profession. Your intended audience may be more active on one platform, several platforms, or somewhere else entirely.

Make your audience concrete without turning people into stereotypes. Instead of assuming that a certain age group wants a certain style, listen for the questions people actually ask. Notice what is confusing, what they are trying to decide, and what constraints they mention. A parent looking for a nearby activity, a new business owner comparing services, and a colleague seeking a tool may all need different explanations, even if they follow the same account.

You can begin small. Write down a few real questions you have heard from customers, peers, or people in your community. If you are still learning what people need, say so, ask respectfully, and pay attention to the answers. Listening is not a delay before marketing starts. It is part of the work.

Let usefulness earn the next conversation

People can learn to recognize the difference between a presence that offers something and one that only asks for something. That does not mean you must hide your offers. It means the relationship should not depend on turning every interaction into a pitch. Teach, demonstrate, invite a question, and make an offer when it fits.

Originality can help make your presence recognizable. It does not require a dazzling idea every day. Your original contribution might be a clear explanation in your own voice, a behind-the-scenes demonstration, or a thoughtful answer to a recurring question. About half of surveyed consumers said original

content makes their favorite brands stand out on social media¹. Treat that as a reason to be distinct and useful, not as a demand to perform constantly.

Conversation is another part of the value. A timely, respectful reply can help someone understand what you offer or clarify what you meant. It can also show that a real person is paying attention. In Sprout Social's 2024 survey, 73% of surveyed consumers said they would buy from a competitor if a brand did not respond on social media¹. That reported intention is worth taking seriously, but it is not a promise that every reply will produce a purchase.

Set expectations you can keep. If you cannot answer messages all day, do not imply that you can. A simple note about when you usually respond is more honest than a promise of instant service. And if a question needs private or sensitive information, move the conversation to an appropriate channel rather than asking someone to disclose it publicly.

Decide what you want your presence to contribute

Before you plan a stream of posts, finish this sentence: "I want people to be better able to..." Perhaps you want them to compare choices, learn a skill, find a service, feel less stuck, or make an informed decision. Your answer does not need to sound like a mission statement printed on a mug. It needs to help you decide what belongs in your feed and what does not.

Then name the people you hope to help and the situation they are in. Be specific enough to guide your choices, but flexible enough to keep learning. "People who want help organizing a small workspace" gives you more to work with than "everyone who likes organization." It points toward practical content: how to sort supplies, what to keep close, and what to try when space is limited.

A useful presence also has limits. You are not responsible for answering every question on the internet or being available at every hour. You can correct a mistake, clarify a claim, and say when you do not know. Those choices may feel less polished than pretending to have every answer, but they make it easier for people to understand what they can rely on you for.

Write a short promise you can keep: what you offer, whom it helps, and what someone can reasonably expect from following you. Use it as a compass, not a cage. As you listen and learn, your understanding may change. Showing up thoughtfully means being willing to adjust while staying honest about what you can provide.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Research spotlight

Sprout Social reported that 81% of surveyed consumers said social media drives them to make impulse purchases¹. Its 2024 research included 4,044 consumers who followed at least five brands on social media; the surveys were conducted September 13 through September 27, 2024². That finding offers a useful reminder: social content can influence what people consider buying, sometimes quickly. It does not prove that a particular post caused a purchase, that impulse buying is a good outcome for the customer, or that every business will see the same result. The survey reports what participants said, not a guaranteed forecast for your account. For thoughtful marketing, use the finding as a reason to make your messages clear and your offers honest. Do not use it as permission to create pressure or manufacture urgency. A person's ability to make a considered choice matters more than getting a quick response.

A life example

A DOCUMENTED EXAMPLE

A campaign built for more than a post

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention launched its Tips from Former Smokers campaign in March 2012 as a national campaign featuring people experiencing long-term health consequences of smoking⁴. Its social media goals included engaging audiences, encouraging people to share campaign messages, helping people quit and stay quit, and preventing young people from starting to smoke⁵.

That combination offers a useful lesson about purpose. The social presence was not described as a goal in itself. It was part of a broader effort to extend the campaign's message and invite engagement. The campaign toolkit cautioned that social media is not often sufficient as a standalone outreach solution, while noting that it can expand a campaign's reach and extend dialogue⁵.

Researchers later analyzed campaign-related tweets obtained through the Twitter Firehose. Among relevant tweets, 87% showed evidence of message acceptance and 7% showed evidence of message rejection⁴. Those figures describe the tweets analyzed; they do not establish how every audience

member responded or prove the campaign's effect on individual behavior. Still, the example illustrates a practical principle: decide what your communication is meant to contribute, make room for a response, and treat social media as one part of service—not the whole service.

TRY THIS

Write your reason for showing up

Set aside a little time to draft a useful promise for your social presence, then check whether it reflects the people you actually want to serve.

1. Write down one kind of person or group you hope to help. Describe a need or situation, not a stereotype.
2. List three questions someone in that situation might genuinely ask. Use questions you have heard when possible; mark guesses as guesses.
3. Finish the sentence, "I want people to be better able to..." Choose a contribution you can realistically make.
4. Draft a one-sentence promise: "I share ___ to help ___ with ___." Keep it plain enough that a new visitor can understand it.
5. Check the promise for overreach. Remove guarantees, exaggerated claims, or services you cannot reliably provide.
6. Ask one person from the audience you hope to serve whether the promise sounds clear and useful. Listen for what they misunderstand, then revise.

Myths and honest truths

- **Myth:** If a post gets lots of attention, it must be working. **Truth:** Attention can help people discover you, but it does not show by itself whether the right people found useful information or took a meaningful next step.
- **Myth:** You need to post everywhere and be available all the time. **Truth:** A manageable presence on platforms that make sense for the people you hope to serve can be more useful than an exhausting schedule you cannot maintain.
- **Myth:** Every post should sell something to justify the effort. **Truth:** Teaching, demonstrating, and inviting conversation can serve your audience

and build familiarity. Offers belong too, but they do not need to dominate every interaction.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Attention can open a door, but usefulness and honest follow-through give people a reason to stay.
- Choose platforms by learning about the people you hope to serve, not by popularity alone.
- Original content can help your presence stand out without requiring constant performance.
- Make a promise that is specific enough to guide you and modest enough to keep.
- Treat social media as one part of a larger way to help people, not as the entire relationship.

REFLECT

- 1. Whom do you hope to help, and what do you know about the questions they actually ask?*
- 2. What could someone learn or do because you showed up today?*
- 3. What promise can you make about your presence and still keep when work gets busy?*

Nine more chapters are waiting

You've read the Introduction and Chapter 1. The full 92-page book continues with:

- CH. 2 Find the People You Can Help
- CH. 3 Make a Promise You Can Keep
- CH. 4 Build a Content Rhythm
- CH. 5 Tell Stories in Small Screens
- CH. 6 Turn Conversation Into Connection
- CH. 7 Offer Without Overpromising
- CH. 8 Read the Signals, Not Just the Likes
- CH. 9 Protect Trust When Things Go Wrong
- CH. 10 Make It a Practice, Not a Sprint

Plus the research analysis "What the Evidence Says", a 30-day practice plan, a glossary, and every source with full research credits.

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Sources for these chapters

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