

Social climbing

It's time to #springclean your social media sites and recognise the massive boost this can bring to your business. Dust off those old websites, polish up your presence on LinkedIn and invite thousands of neighbours to admire your show homes on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook and shop windows on the likes of Amazon.

As Graham Warren, business development director at clothes care specialist Caraselle Direct, says: "My mind goes into overdrive with this topic as so many drycleaners are completely missing the best, most effective marketing tools ever made available to us, and most of it absolutely free.

The reality is most Brits spend an average of 35 minutes per day now on Facebook as part of a worldwide daily audience of some 2.6 billion people.

There are 23 million Brits on LinkedIn now. When you next drive to work look at just how many people are walking

Janice Raycroft shares some hints and tips about how to boost your presence online



along the street on their mobiles, reading messages, watching videos or shopping. It's a new level of multi-tasking. You need to be in that mix."

Many potential customers will now actually think it 'odd' if you have a limited social media presence and suspect there is something wrong with your business, particularly as so many of their buying choices are driven by online recommendations – such as star systems – and testimonials.

Jonathan Beach, managing director at Drystream, points out: "Years ago, customers would revert to telephone directories like Yellow Pages to find drycleaners in their area, but Yellow Pages has just issued the

very last of its physical directory publications, so that information source has ended."

It's essential to have and maintain a good social media presence, he says, whether you are serving the general public or mostly customers within our industry.

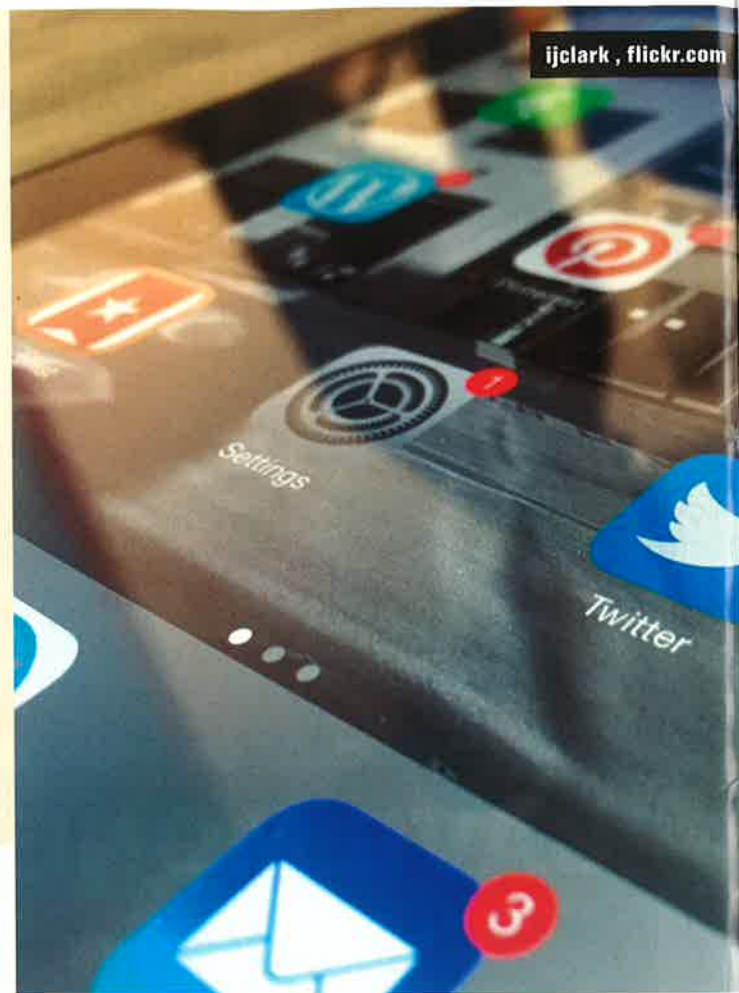
"At DryStream we invest in internet marketing, Facebook and Twitter to attract drycleaners and launderers to our business. Our tweets tell drycleaners about what's going on in our part of the industry and we often make special offers to those who follow us. See for yourself at @drystreamepos.

On Facebook we show details of recent installations, technology news and product information.

So, if you're into social media to market your business you can follow DryStream on Facebook and Twitter to keep up to date and take advantage of special offers."

John Haden of Laundry Engineering Services (LES) shares this view: "Our experience of using LinkedIn, in particular, has been of great benefit. As a service provider to the laundry industry we have had many new contacts generated through LinkedIn. We find the key here is to regularly engage with our customers by posting content through pictures and general updates regarding current and future activities. Through LinkedIn we have generated a working partnership with a company on the other side of the world in New Zealand, Bundle Laundry."

And that's what it's actually all about – maximising the money you can make from an online presence. Luring new custom this way is essential, even more so now that passing high street style trade has diminished.



Social media tips

Who's in charge?

It's easy for our busy smaller and family businesses to put off making the most of a social media presence. Common fears

are that it will take up too much time, might cost money, worries about what technical skills are needed, or even a simple lack

of interest by those currently in charge of the day-to-day operation.

But we bet that within most family businesses there will be someone with the knowledge and talent to make it happen or transform an existing website. It's an excellent way to introduce younger members of the family circle to an industry they might be shying away from because it's not as 'sexy' as other sectors.

If they are boasting about their thousands of followers on a personal Twitter account, set them the challenge of doing the same for the family business for a small bonus!

Not that we're being ageist here – if older family members would like to take a back seat and enjoy new projects, they too can find a valuable new role without any of the 'heavy lifting'. It's

also perfect for anyone, perhaps with young children or other family commitments, as it can be managed with hours to suit from any location.

Follow free online guides to getting a response, start with Twitter and Facebook, and talk to suppliers and others in the industry who have online services that impress you.

This is also easily shared work, although some businesses farm out the work of keeping their online sites lively. Freelance social media editors who know all the tricks and keywords for increasing visits to your website and other media often work for hourly rates. So a smaller business could book them for even a few hours a month to back up own their activities, helping to boost resulting revenue streams from new customers.



matt madd, flickr.com

