

SPIRIT AUTHORS

VIRTUAL COACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCE



CLASS TRANSCRIPT

Module 2: Pre-Publication Marketing Musts

Week 2: Platform Building - Your Essential Checklist

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Instructions:

1. Listen either to the audio files or read this transcript to cover the lesson materials for the week.
2. This lesson is substantial. I highly recommend you do NOT work on the entire lesson in a single sitting, but rather do **only one or two audio files per day** (or equivalent text). MP3s are numbered 01, 02, etc., for your convenience.
3. When prompted in the text or the audio, stop reading/listening and take time to answer the enquiries. You may use the workbook to log your reflections.
4. THEN, enter your ideas, thoughts, reflections and other workings in the appropriate Forum in the "Learning Circle" on the Spirit Authors site.
5. After you have done this, READ other people's replies. Respond to them. Share your ideas and reflections.

To find the Forum, log onto your Spirit Authors account, and click "Forum" in your Dashboard. Then go to the Forum for your Module and Week of the course.

Module 2: Pre-Publication Marketing Musts

Week 2: Platform Building – Your Essential Checklist

LESSON SUMMARY (*Audio 1*)

In week 1 of this module, we looked at a new paradigm for marketing, how to identify your target audience, and ways to find your audience on the Internet. But what are the technical skills and materials you need to begin your promotional platform?

A good, solid promotional platform includes many key elements like blogging, RSS, autoresponders, leads generation, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Ning and online forums. But having all these things in place is not enough; you also need to know HOW to use them strategically and authentically so you get the results you want AND stay sane during the process.

If you've reached this point in your publishing journey and you are relatively new to online promotion, it's understandable if you feel overwhelmed by all the things you need to learn. You might also worry that you will "lose yourself" in the technology and start to become disconnected from your personal values.

Mastering the art of authentic online promotion is complex, and there's a steep learning curve when you are just starting out. But if you go through it one step at a time, you can save yourself the overwhelming task of trying to learn it all at once, and see yourself making measurable progress every week.

And that's what this week's lesson is about. The purpose of this lesson is to give you a checklist for the key components you will need in the coming months as you build your online platform, and to show you how to set them up so you are ready when we get into the details of how to use them. We'll also be talking about the principles of spirit-based promotion, so you can see how social networking can be used to express who you truly are.

Because this topic is technically complex, many of the details for configuring these online platforms and using them strategically will be discussed in the coming weeks. Throughout this module, you WILL be asked to complete a lot of "doing" challenges, so if you want to get the most out of these lessons, be sure you allow a few hours every week to complete the challenges.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE WEEK

1. Learn the key principles of spirit-based promotion
2. Learn the key components of a good online promotional platform
3. Design your online promotional platform
4. Set up the technical infrastructure for your platform

TOPIC 1 – PRINCIPLES OF SPIRIT-BASED MARKETING

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRIT-BASED MARKETING (*Audio 2*)

Spirit-based marketing is not just for the mind-body-spirit (MBS) market. *It is a way to do business.* However, in this module we are going to focus first and foremost with how to reach the MBS market in the broadest sense of the term (see the addendum of this transcript for a list of sub-genres I am including in the broader MBS category).

There are two reasons for this:

1. If we understand how to reach this particular market, we can learn the art of spirit-based marketing that much more easily and quickly, as these people already possess many of the qualities that respond well to spirit-based marketing.
2. If you are a MBS author, you probably fit this profile yourself! As a result, you might already have had negative experiences with marketing in the past, owing to the “old school” systems being focussed on values antithetical to your own. By adopting a new, spirit-based marketing approach, you will feel more in alignment with yourself. However, you might feel less confident about using this type of approach with the “masses” when you first start out. By focussing first on your “low hanging fruit” of the MBS market, you will feel more comfortable as you get started. Later, as you become more and more confident, you will find it easier and easier to apply spirit-based marketing in any business situation.

Who is the MBS market?

Let’s make a broad profile of the kinds of people in the MBS market. Here is a list of qualities and characteristics they tend to have as a group of people:

- **Spiritual but not necessarily connected to an organised religious group.**
MBS readers tend to be “seekers” and ask lots of questions.

- The up side is that they are naturally curious and open-minded.
 - The challenge is that they will already have done a lot of searching, and they are looking for something more than what they already know.
- **Sensitive and Intuitive.** MBS readers tend to have powerful emotions, and they value the human right to express their emotions freely.
 - The up side is that if you touch them deeply, they reciprocate with great love and loyalty.
 - The challenge is that if you come off as being aggressive, even if unintentionally, they might put you on their “ignore” list.
- **Tend to have one of two distinctively different attitudes towards money.** There tend to be two “camps” with regards to money in the MBS market, one which pushes money away, and one which aims to attract it with open arms.
 - The up side is that many MBS readers are now influenced by the Law of Attraction (LOA), especially with the widespread influence of *The Secret* and the writings of Esther Hicks. These kinds of readers have a strong desire to support you in your efforts (*if* you abide by the principles of the Law of Attraction) and do not have any difficulty talking about business, marketing or money.
 - The challenge will be with the other “group” of MBS readers, who tend to find the topic of money and marketing abhorrent. They hate any kind of selling and react very strongly if they sniff out any inference about business whatsoever.
- **Creative and imaginative.** Most MBS readers tend to be highly creative and imaginative.
 - The up side is that you have a lot of freedom to push the envelope within your writing style, because they will appreciate your uniqueness.
 - The challenge is that in order to grab their attention both in your writing AND in your marketing, you must also be highly creative and imaginative.

- **High ethical values.** Most MBS readers give a lot of thought to ethics and their personal values. This might include values surrounding equality, social justice, non-violence, health, compassion, ecology and other related issues.
 - The up side is that you probably share these values yourself, and you will find it easy to speak their language.
 - The challenge is that you must ensure your promotional materials respect these values every step of the way, lest people put you on their mental “blacklist” of people to avoid.

- **Emotionally intelligent.** Most MBS readers are *emotionally* intelligent. This doesn’t mean high IQ; it means high “EQ”. They can sense out falsehood easily.
 - The up side is that you are also probably very emotionally intelligent, so you can understand their perspective
 - The challenge is that you must be prepared to be EXTREMELY authentic and present in your communications, or people will detect something is not quite “right” about you.

- **They love inspiration.** It’s like food for their souls!
 - The up side is that you probably love to write inspirational material.
 - The challenge is that you’re going to need to write a LOT of it, and often!

- **They love connection.** In fact, these people thrive on it.
 - The up side is that you probably know how to connect really well.
 - The challenge is that you’re going to have to connect with LOTS of people, and sometimes it can be tough to keep all your communications straight.

Key Principles of Spirit-Based Promotion

Now that you know a little bit about your audience, and what the “up sides” and challenges will be, here are some key principles you should follow when creating your promotional platform in the MBS market. The formula is a 3:1 ratio of Give:Receive.

- **Give time**

- Show up: Don't just send a bunch of automated posts; log on and show you are really there.
- Be polite: Answer requests; if people write to you, reply.
- Put thought into it: Look like you've spent some time preparing things for your readers.

- **Give value**

- Things: Materials, free stuff (LOTS of free stuff).
- Thoughts: Advice, articles information (yours and others').
- Heart: Be generous with praise and support; cross promote, cite people.

- **Give self**

- Be transparent: say it like it is
- Be real: have fun, share your interests and inspiration
- Be present: More or less a reiteration of "showing up" above. If you are not present in your promotion, people will not connect with you. Connection is vital in spirit-based marketing. *Don't expect an assistant to do it all for you!*

- **Receive**

- ASK for testimonials and SAY thank you when you get them.
- ASK for help from people, and then TELL everyone else how great these people are and how they have helped you.
- ASK for names and emails from people and then GIVE them something of value in return (many times over).
- ASK for people to go to your website, etc., and GIVE them a reason to do so (more on this later when we talk about your leads generating offer).
- ASK for people to buy your book, download your offer, listen to your radio show and GIVE them a reason to be happy when they do what you have asked them to do.

Topic 2 next page→

TOPIC 2 – YOUR ONLINE PROMOTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

YOUR ONLINE PROMOTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE *(Audio 3)*

Terminology

Before we start speaking about your promotional infrastructure, let's define a few terms.

- **Promotional Platform.** This term means many things. It pertains to the strategy you will be using to reach people, as well as the amount of people in your following. Your platform includes a technical side and a strategic side. In this lesson, we are introducing the technical side of creating your platform. In later weeks, we will get more deeply into the technical fine-tuning of your platform and to developing strategies for using them effectively to reach your target audience.
- **Promotional Infrastructure.** Your "infrastructure" refers to all the technical bits and pieces you will need to have in place. Think of it as all the components of a big computer you will need to build in order for it to do what you want it to do. Below is your "checklist" of items you will need in your infrastructure in order to build a good, solid online promotional platform to reach your target audience.

Your Online Promotional Infrastructure Checklist

Building an online promotional infrastructure requires many technical elements, all of which work together in various ways. Ideally, you will want all of these elements in place to establish and build your platform, but do be patient. It will take time to get them all running smoothly and to understand how to use them effectively.

Here's a list of elements you will need to build your platform. As we go through them, ask yourself how many of these you already have in place. Just in case you don't know how and where to find all the resources you'll need in order to do these activities, I am including a pdf with links to suggested sites where you can find them. Look for [Mod-2-Week-2-resource-list.pdf](#)

- **A dedicated domain for your book.** Even if you already have a website for your business, you should have a separate domain for your book. Ideally, your domain name should include the title of your book. Sometimes your book title is already

taken as a domain, in which case you should try putting the word “book” in the domain name. Register your domain name MONTHS before your book comes out and get a hosting package so it appears online, even if there isn’t much to show. The reason for this is search engine optimisation (SEO). If your site is online for many months, it will appear higher in search engine searches. If you have nothing else prepared, just put up a page with a photo of you, a description of your book, a release date (or a close estimate) and some way for them to contact you (Tip: use a contact form instead of posting your email address on the site. It will cut down on spam!).

- **A Blog, preferably a self-hosted WordPress blog.** Ok, you’ve got your domain, but what are you going to put on it? To make the most of the promotional strategies you will be learning in this module (and later in Module 4), having an “old fashioned” static website will not be enough. A good blog will be the heartbeat of your promotional campaign, for many reasons you will be learning over the coming weeks. So when you go to set up your book website, don’t make it a “website” at all; make it a “blogsite”. A blogsite means it is a blog with a static landing page that provides key information. There are many reasons why you want your site to be a blog rather than a website WITH a blog. A key reason is again SEO. Good blogs show up higher in search engines than static websites. But the biggest reason (at least as far as I am concerned) is in how your blog, especially WordPress blogs with the vast range of great free plugins available, will integrate with your social networks. The combination makes a powerful driving force that underpins your entire promotional platform.
- **Integration.** To make your blog work for you, you’ll need to integrate it to your other networks. The key tool you need for integration is an RSS feed. To get a feed, you have to make one, or rather “burn” one as the jargon goes. Burning a feed is easy. Just go to <http://feedburner.com> and enter your blog URL. Take note, however, that it won’t burn the feed unless it sees a post at that address, so just put a “dummy” post that says “test” on it, and you can erase it after your feed is burned. Once you have your feed burned, you can use the URL of the feed itself (which is not the same as your blog URL) to put just about anywhere that says “RSS”. We’ll be talking more about how to set up and utilise your feed in the coming weeks, and how to use RSS effectively, but for now, put Feedburner down on your essential checklist.

- **Autoresponder system.** Your feed is a great way to get subscribers to your blog, but in order to build your list properly, you will also need a good auto-responder system to communicate with your subscribers via newsletters and other leads generating offers that we will discuss at the end of this lesson. An autoresponder is basically an online email delivery service. You can send newsletter broadcasts, and you can also send timed delivery of content to subscribers. To receive your materials, they need to “opt in” to your mailing list (I’m sure you’ve done this many times yourself). The autoresponder system creates those “opt in” forms for you, collects your subscribers’ names into a database and sends your broadcasts when you tell them to be sent. If you do not yet have an autoresponder, you will definitely need to get one. Autoresponder services charge an annual fee for using their services. Prices vary. The top autoresponders are AWeber (<http://aweber.com>), GetResponse (<http://getresponse.com>; that is the one I have used for 4 years) and Constant Contact (<http://constantcontact.com>). The resource list for this week has links to all these providers, as well as all the social networks below. We’ll be talking about how to autoresponders effectively in Week 3.

- **Social networks (primary).** Ok, you’ve got your site; you’ve got your blog; you’ve got your feed; you’ve got your autoresponder. Those are like your engine in your vehicle. Now, where do you want to go? Who do you want to see? It’s time to set up your social networks. In this course, we’ll be dealing with four primary social networks as essential in your checklist:
 - **Twitter.** The 140 character micro-blogging wunderkind of social networking. I love Twitter, and it has transformed my business. We’ll be spending a whole week of strategising with Twitter, but for right now, put it on your essential checklist, if you are not already on there. And if you are, get ready for some strategies over the coming months that will put you over the edge with Twitter. Set up your account at <http://twitter.com>.

 - **Facebook.** A deeper, friendlier place to be than Twitter. Twitter is fast-paced, fun and highly viral (tip: viral SIMPLY means things spread fast; it has nothing to do with computer viruses). Facebook allows you to create more complex identities for yourself or your business. Again, we’ll be going into detail of how

to use Facebook effectively for your writing in the coming weeks, but for now, you need to make sure you have a Facebook personal profile AND a Facebook fan page for your book. Set up your accounts at <http://facebook.com>.

- **LinkedIn.** LinkedIn is a more professional network than Facebook. You cannot “sell” on linked in, but that does not mean you cannot socialise or establish your professional credibility in other ways. The most effective networking tools LinkedIn has to offer are its groups and its Q&A section. If you don’t have a profile in LinkedIn set up, do it NOW. Find your current friends and contacts on there and join some groups that target your audience. We’ll get into the nitty gritty of LinkedIn in the coming weeks. Set up your account at <http://linkedin.com>
- **Ning.** Ning is not a single network, but a network of networks. You can create a network JUST for your book. I have one for *The Garden of the Soul*. My daughter has one for her publishing company. But there are some mega-networks on Ning that are ALL reaching your target audience. There are also book networks as well, where you can find lots of help and information. In our resources for the week, I’ll be giving you several places to start with Ning. To set up your own social network on Ning, go to <http://ning.com>, but as running your own site takes some work and planning, I strongly suggest you first join and become acquainted with other networks on Ning first so you can get a feeling for what they have to offer.
- **Social networks (additional).** There are simply so many other options, it makes it mind boggling if you try to get you head around them all too quickly
 - **YouTube** for video postings. <http://youtube.com>
 - **BlogTalkRadio** and other online radio networks. <http://blogtalkradio.com>
 - **Plaxo**, which is actually a great place to manage your contacts. <http://plaxo.com>
 - **MySpace**, which seems to be more for musicians these days, and has been overshadowed by Facebook for most authors. <http://myspace.com>
 - **Blip and Last.fm**, if you happen to be a music lover, and would like to share your tastes with others <http://blip.fm> and <http://last.fm>

- **Forums/professional networks**, such as coaching networks, entrepreneurial networks, special interest networks, etc. Some of these are private hosted, while others might be on Yahoo or Google groups.
 - **Special niche networks**, such as the “Jason Network” for the spiritually minded.
 - **Author/reader networks** (apart from Ning), such as Authonomy, Goodreads, BookBuzr (I love them!).
 - **Amazon discussion groups**. These are places where you can find potential readers for your book. It takes a lot of work, but some authors like using these groups to get in touch with their audience.
- **Leads generating offers/system**. The last “must have” you need in your promotional platform is some sort of leads generating offer and a system to deliver it to the public. This is something we will be covering in detail in Week 3 when we talk about using autoresponders.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE 1: MAKE YOUR CHECKLIST

1. Go through the list of key components above, and rate them on a scale of 1, 2 or 3:
 - 1 = you have it; it is fully functioning and getting your great results
 - 2 = it is set up and working, but not getting the result you would like
 - 3 = you do not have it or set it up at all.
2. Note the things you have rated “3” and put them on your “to do” list.
3. Look through the resources for this week and see where you can find these components for your campaign.

TOPIC 3 – YOUR PLATFORM AND MARKETING STRATEGY

Designing Your Promotional Platform and Marketing Strategy *(Audio 4)*

Perhaps at this moment you might be feeling a little overwhelmed with the amount of work that needs to be done to build your online platform. Don't! This cannot be done

in a single week. The time needed not only to set it all up, learn how to use it, building it into your daily routine and become skilled at it is something that takes months to develop. So take a deep breath, and give yourself some space in this process. That is what we are going to do now. We're going to plan out what you need to do first and when.

Assess where you currently are

Before you make any plans, you should first assess where you are. In the previous section, you marked the elements that you were strongest and weakest in. Do you have a lot of Twitter followers but no mailing list? Just the opposite? Have you not explored Facebook as a business tool yet? Do you need to get yourself a blog, or develop a more routine strategy for using it? Assess which of the key components in your checklist you need to develop most.

Now it would also be a good time to look at the number of followers and subscribers you have in each of these areas. Make a comparative list (bearing in mind that some of your closest followers will be in more than one list). Where are you strongest and weakest? What is your total follower count? For example:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Ezine subscribers = | 1800 |
| Blog subscribers = | 200 |
| Twitter followers = | 5200 |
| Twitter account 2 followers = | 1200 |
| Facebook friends = | 1200 |
| Facebook fan page (primary) = | 900 |
| Other Facebook fan pages = | 400 |
| Facebook groups = | 300 |
| Ning friends = | 500 |
| LinkedIn contacts = | 500 |
| Other assorted networks = | 500 |
| Total = | 12700 |

Different kinds of relationships

Just looking at these numbers alone is NOT enough to guide as to how you will build your platform. We will not just be looking at the lowest numbers and building them

up. You have to consider the *kinds of relationships* you want to build in your platform. You should start by asking yourself some questions like:

- WHO do you want to BE to your followers/fans/subscribers?
- Will you be the same in all places, or show different sides of yourself in different places?
- What kinds of relationships do YOU want to build in your network?
- Are you seeking professional style relationships?
- Do you want to create personal, fun relationships?
- Do you want to be interactive with your fans/followers?
- Do you want to preserve a bit of distance when dealing with you fans/followers?
- Do you want to have a combination of relationships (i.e., personal on some sites and professional on others)?
- Where are you already most “attractive” and visible to the public?
- Where would you like to increase your visibility and attractiveness?

Based upon your answers, you can now have a look at the social networks and see which ones meet your criteria. Each of these social networking platforms has different strengths and weaknesses in terms of building relationships with your subscribers and followers. Here’s a brief rundown of the differences:

- **Ezine list.** Your ezine list is extremely important as the people on it have all opted in to hear from you. On the other hand, it is a very “one way” relationship, in that they hear from you, but you rarely hear back from them.
- **Blog subscribers.** Your blog is a closer, more personal relationship, as you tend to communicate more frequently with your readers, and they also are being encouraged to communicate back in the form of comments.
- **Twitter.** Your Twitter account is a funny thing. On the one hand, you probably don’t have a very close relationship with 95% of the people on your list BUT the few with whom you establish a close connection are likely to become the best cross-promoters and supporters you have. Many of my Twitter friends have also become very close friends and business partners over the past few years. We’ll be talking more about how to use Twitter effectively on Week 5 of this course.

- **Facebook friends.** Your Facebook family is also interesting. Your friends might be very similar to your Twitter followers in terms of closeness. The difference with Facebook is that it is a lot easier to be casual and to start up ongoing conversations.
- **Facebook fan page.** Now, if you have a Facebook fan page (and you should) you become a different entity altogether. On your fan page, you are more of a leader, and your “tribe” is there to learn things from you. What kinds of things? Things about you, your products (your book, workshops, etc) AND also things you recommend. This gives you a certain amount of instant credibility and public “status” as an expert.
- **Facebook groups.** Groups on Facebook have many of the same advantages as a fan page, along with some key differences. Groups do not give you quite feeling of status as a fan page, but they allow you to be closer to your members. We’ll be talking more about how to use all these Facebook tools effectively on Week 6.
- **Ning networks.** If you start your own Ning network, you can treat it a number of different ways. You can make it a close-knit community, or you can start a professional network with you at the helm. Depending upon how you treat it, Ning will yield different results in terms of relationship building. We’ll be talking about Ning in Week 6, in our discussion of Facebook.
- **LinkedIn.** As mentioned earlier, LinkedIn is much more of a professional network. I use it mainly to find out and share information, as well as to find people to work with me on various projects. In terms of book promotion, I find it the least useful of the social networks HOWEVER, there are a lot of things you can do with LinkedIn that can help drive traffic to your blog, and in turn build your following. So while it might be the last of your priorities for building your book promotion platform, do NOT ignore it, as it has a certain professional quality that can render credibility to your book project.

Time allotment

As you can imagine, there is a substantial amount of time required to build these platforms. People frequently ask me, “How much time should I spend a day or week on all this?” The answer really depends upon your goals and your lifestyle. But ideally

you should set aside a little time every day to “nurture” your online networks in different ways.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE 2: CREATE A PLATFORM BUILDING PLAN

FIRST, consider these enquiries:

- Look over the items you listed in the first challenge as part of your “to do” list.
- Consider carefully ALL of the networking and platform building options we have described so far. Looking at the advantages and networking capabilities of each, which on your “to do” list do you wish to make your top priority to start?
- What kind of relationship do you want to establish with your followers on these networks?
- How many hours a day or week will you dedicate to building these platforms?

THEN, taking all that into consideration:

- Make a 1-year plan of goals you wish to achieve with your social network platform building. What will be in month 1, month 2 and so forth?

FINALLY

- Upload your 1-year plan in the Learning Circle Forum for this week.

TOPIC 4 – SET UP YOUR ONLINE INFRASTRUCTURE

Ok, so now it’s time to get down to business! It’s time to get your infrastructure set up. So, let’s have a look at your 1-year plan. What’s first on your list? Where are you going to start? How DO you get this all set up? We’ll be going into depth with each of the components over the coming weeks, but to get started, here’s a basic check list of what you’ll need to do/get in order to proceed with each component:

WordPress Blog (WP)

- Register WP profiles on both <http://wordpress.com> and <http://wordpress.org>
- Get a domain name
- Get a Linux hosting package
- Install WP in the root directory of your hosting area

- Find a simple theme WP to get started (you can find them via WordPress dot org)
- Make sure you activate Akismet anti-spam plug-in *immediately*
- Burn a feed on <http://feedburner.com> for your blog
- Set up Feedburner so you can accept email subscriptions (see “publicize” in Feedburner)
- Set up a text widget in you blog with the html code to your email sign up box, so people can subscribe to your blog (we’ll be talking more about blogs and RSS in Week 4).
- More info below about resources to integrate your blog

Ezine list

- Get an autoresponder such as Aweber, GetResponse or Constant Contact
- Create a “campaign” or “list” for your ezine
- Create a “capture form” in your autoresponder
- Place the code for the capture form on the home page of your site
- In Week 3, we’ll be talking about how to create an attractive giveaway to encourage people to sign up to your list, so they can get to know you and your writing better.

Twitter

- Sign up for a (free) account at <http://twitter.com>
- Be sure you personalise your profile; I also suggest using your real name
- Start looking for people you know on Twitter and follow them
- Have a look below at some of the suggested integration resources below
- We’ll go into depth on the best ways to use Twitter in Week 5

Facebook (FB)

- Sign up for a (free) account at <http://facebook.com>
- Set up your personal profile
- Start a fan page under the name of your book
- Start looking for people you know on Facebook send them a friend invitation
- Have a look below at some of the suggested integration resources below
- We’ll go into depth on the best ways to use FB in Week 6

LinkedIn

- Sign up for a (free) account at <http://linkedin.com>
- Set up your personal profile

- Do a search for some LinkedIn groups that might have potential readers of networkers for your book project.
- Start looking for people you know on LinkedIn and send them an invitation to join your network.
- We'll go into depth on the best ways to use LinkedIn in Week 5

Ning

- Set up a (free) account on <http://ning.com>
- This account will "follow" you everywhere on Ning, so be sure you remember what email account you use to set it up (otherwise you might lose all your contacts when you try to use a different email address)
- Look over the list of Ning networks (there are LOADS) in the resource section here at Spirit Authors, or do a search of your own. Join maybe 3 or 4 networks to start and get a feel for how Ning works.
- If you are already familiar with Ning, you might wish to start your own Ning network in the name of your book.

Outsourcing

As you can imagine, setting all this up takes both time and a bit of technical know-how. So the logical question is, can you outsource these tasks (i.e., hire an assistant)? The answer is "Yes," and many people do. But it has been my observation that if you use your assistant to do the majority of your networking, you will miss the opportunity to cultivate close ties with your followers. My advice is that you commit to being present in your platform building, and be actively working at it. You'll need to make a "mind shift" where you see a certain percentage of your week dedicated to NOTHING but promotion. This is essential if you are to make your business grow. Of course, it is vital you need to balance it with other things like content creation, writing, admin, and actively doing whatever else you do as daily work.

Automation

You'll be happy to know that there are a number of online tools (most are free) that can automate your social networking. Here are some "must have's" for your toolkit that will get you started:

- **Blog scheduling.** If you like to write many articles at once, upload them onto your blog but schedule them to be released on different days. This way, you can sit down

and do a bunch of writing in one go, and let your blog do all the work of sending it out while you are working (or playing) at something else.

- **Ping.** Once you have set up your blog(s), Twitter accounts, Facebook pages, etc., go set up a free Ping account at <http://ping.fm>. Ping is like a big switchboard for your social networks. You can send out a single update and have it go just about EVERYWHERE, including many sites I haven't yet mentioned. You can also "ping" by sending an update from your mobile phone. Very handy.
- **Twitterfeed.** The next thing you should do is get a free Twitterfeed account at <http://twitterfeed.com>. Again this is free. On this, I recommend setting up your blog feed (the one you set up in Feedburner) to be routed to your Ping account. That way, every blog you post is sent out to ALL your social networks in one go. Very cool.
- **SocialOomph.** With a free account at <http://socialoomph.com>, you can automatically follow and unfollow people who follow/unfollow you on Twitter. You can also send out an automated welcome message (called a "Welcome DM" or "Direct Message") as well as save drafts of Tweets and schedule them for delivery. These are the primary functions I use in Social Oomph. There is also a pro version (for a monthly fee) that does a heck of a lot more, but don't feel pressured into getting it. I don't use Social Oomph for scheduling my tweets anymore because it only sends them out to my Twitter accounts, and does not yet (as of this writing) integrate with Ping.
- **HootSuite.** I love HootSuite. It is also free (<http://hootsuite.com>). Like SocialOomph, HootSuite allows you to save drafts of Tweets and schedule them for delivery, but it has one BIG advantage over SocialOomph in that you can schedule these to any or all of your social networks individually. It's a very useful tool for automation.

I'll be talking more about how to use these tools strategically in the coming weeks, especially in Week 5 when we talk about Twitter.

Your final challenge for the week →

WEEKLY CHALLENGE 3: SET UP YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Start setting up all the technical components of your online infrastructure
2. Be SURE you have your accounts and profiles set up in time for the rest of the course. Here's the agenda:
 - a. Your autoresponder by Week 3 (next week)
 - b. Your blog by Week 4
 - c. Twitter and LinkedIn by Week 5
 - d. Facebook and Ning by Week 6

There's no need to upload anything to the Learning Circle for this challenge, unless you have questions or need help.