

How to Use Direct Messaging for Social Media Marketing Success

By Michele Peterson



Is direct messaging part of your social media marketing strategy to engage with prospects and communicate with clients?

It's a powerful strategy. And with great power comes great responsibility, so let's make sure you're using direct messaging responsibly and effectively.

Imagine this ... you're at a party, and you're telling a story about your last road trip/flight/Uber driver/restaurant meal/whatever. You're the center of attention. People are hanging on your every word. Laughing at the funny parts. They're engaged. Reacting and responding.

A few make some comments that let you know they'd really like to hear more. Others have lost interest and have moved on to the next conversation.

Would you remain in the middle of the room and continue talking to the entire group? Or would you take the interested people aside and continue the conversation privately?

What option would make the other person feel most valued and important?

Which creates a stronger connection with your audience?

Of course, you would continue the conversation privately. Most of us would.

Now, while this example was an in-person scenario, it could just have easily taken place on social media.

Social media is a great place to attract attention with public posts (like standing in the middle of the room telling a story). AND it can be an effective way to continue the conversation privately with direct messaging.

All social platforms offer a way to make direct contact with someone. Facebook has Messenger. Instagram has Direct Messages. LinkedIn has Messaging. Alignable has Inbox messages. Twitter has Messages. Snapchat has Chats. Pinterest has Inbox messages.

Sometimes a direct message is a way to privately continue the conversation that began with a public post. Other times, it can be the way you start the conversation in the first place.

Let's look at both of these scenarios ...

Social Media Direct Messaging Scenario 1:

- You post something ... a video, a photo, a link.
- A member of your audience engages with you by posting a comment of their own.
- You reply to their comment with a public comment of your own AND send them a direct message with a more personal call-to-action.

Social Media Direct Messaging Scenario 2:

- You jump right into the conversation with a direct message offering information.
- They reply with something that essentially says, "Tell me more."
- You reply with a personal call-to-action.

It's tempting to use an autoresponder-type direct message. Something you can just copy, paste, and send. Resist the temptation.

Most people are savvy social media users these days. And a bad copy and paste autoresponder is about as welcomed as a tired pick-up line.

Your direct messages MUST be more personal than that ... or at least appear to be so.

You can copy and paste the bare bones of a template message, but personalize the message with their name, their company, and something you know about them, if it fits in with your overall message. Tell them why you're contacting *them* specifically (rather than the general public) and why you think they'll be interested in the information you're sharing in the message.

Remember the basics of all good copywriting and make it about them, not you. Position the message from *their* perspective ... what *they* will get out of the information, not what you will.

I used social media direct messaging recently to promote a [local live event](#). I posted the event publicly on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Alignable. I also sent direct messages to my local contacts on LinkedIn and Alignable, since that's where people are expecting business-related messages.

Now, I'm connected online with a lot of people I haven't actually met in person. This is the message (abbreviated here for space) that I sent to them:

Hi, (First Name)! Thank you for connecting with me here on (social media platform). As a first step in getting to know each other, I'd like to extend to you the following invitation ...

One of my colleagues and I are hosting a local Focus Group with a small group of hand-selected business owners ... We're only accepting ONE (city) business per profession, and I would love for you to be there representing the (their industry) profession ...

I think you will make some excellent contacts during the meeting and possibly generate several new clients and/or referral partners for your (business/firm/practice) ...

(First Name), let me know if you would be interested in attending as my personal guest (or if you would like more information) ...

P.S. If you know of another successful business that would be of value to the others in attendance, please send me their info and I'll try to get them a spot as well. Thanks, (First Name)! Talk soon.

If I already had a relationship with the person, I personalized the opening paragraph with some detail that I know about them and their business. Then I continued with the same body copy about the event itself.

Because the LinkedIn and Alignable platforms are designed for business, the messages can be longer and more like an email. This allows you to give a bit more information and have a compelling conversation. (**CAUTION: Be careful to avoid spamming your social connections with direct messages! Play by the same anti-spam rules as email.**)

The longer length also gives you room to insert their personal information multiple times. For example, I used their first name three times. I also inserted their industry and how they refer to their company (i.e., business/firm/practice) to make it seem less like a template message.

Personalizing social media direct messages takes some time and effort. It's more than a quick copy, paste, and send. But the results are better than you would get with mass market "billboard" messaging.

About half of the people I sent direct messages to replied, even if they didn't want to attend the event. So, I started a deeper conversation and am building a stronger relationship with them, even though they didn't take me up on this particular offer.

While my live event landed me one new retainer client for a 15-month campaign, I also got meetings with three other people who didn't attend the event but who replied to my direct messages. One hired me to write some Facebook ad copy for her, and I'm following up with the other two on projects they have planned for several months from now.

Just as taking the conversation private in person gives you the opportunity to forge a deeper connection, so does a direct message on your social media platform of choice. And it's the deeper connection — the more personal conversation — that lands you more new work as a web copywriter.

If it worked for me, it can work for you, too. Leave me a comment and let me know how it goes!

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