



## How To Be a Social Media and Marketing Ninja!

Ellen Rohr and [Melinda Emerson](#)

**Ellen:** Hey, it's Ellen Rohr, The Plumber's Wife turned Business Makeover Expert and your host for Business Makeover 2014. The intention of this program is to help you stop, think about what you want and craft a plan of action that's going to make 2014 your best year yet. Get off the hamster wheel of doing the same thing all the time and make this year, your most wonderful year.

My guest today, I'm so excited and star struck... I love you so much... this is Melinda Emerson, The Small Biz Lady.

**Melinda:** Hey, everybody. I'm so excited to be here.

**Ellen:** I was preparing for our interview and I went to your awesome blog. The email address is [SucceedAsYourOwnBoss.com](#) and Melinda's blog is amazing. My favorite blog of all your awesome blogs is 'How I Became the @SmallBizLady'. You said that this one is a particularly personal blog for you and that you have trouble sometimes writing personal blogs.

**Melinda:** Oh yeah, I mean, who wants to write about themselves, I'd rather write about you.

**Ellen:** Well, I'm always bragging on me.

**Melinda:** Listen, I would much rather write about you. I would much rather write about the wonderful entrepreneurs I meet that are doing such creative and unique things for their customers and for their employees in leveraging social media. It's very hard to turn the cameras on yourself.

**Ellen:** But you are so relatable.

**Melinda:** I don't particularly enjoy it.

**Ellen:** That's why I love, love, love listening to you and I love hearing about your experience. So summarize for us, how did you become @SmallBizLady? If you're new to Melinda's entourage, Melinda has over a quarter million Twitter followers. This gal was in early on the social media bandwagon and has really used it to great effect for herself and has helped so many people. But how did it happen for you? You didn't start out as like oh, I think I'll become a social media expert.

**Melinda:** Not at all. Let me tell you. I wrote my book *Become Your Own Boss in 12 Months*. I wrote my book in 2008, turned it into my publisher in September of 2008 and September 17, 2008 is when the market crashed, right? So my publisher came back to me, patted me on the head and said oh, thank you so much for being a first-time author that actually turned in your book on time, but we don't think anybody is thinking about entrepreneurship right now. There are too many people out here losing their job. We think that your book would do much better in a more

conducive environment, so we're going to postpone the release of your book until March of 2010. That was 18 months.

**Ellen:** What's interesting too, when **you lose your job isn't the most natural response for someone like you or me like why not start your own business?**

**Melinda:** Absolutely. Most people get so disenchanted with Corporate America at that point people were absolutely starting businesses, but you know what? They were like no, no, no, we know better than you. We think that a more favorable environment to release your book is March of 2010. I was sitting up there like holy macaroni Batman, what am I going to do? Literally, I read something online where Bill Gates had said if he had \$2 left in the world he would spend \$1 on PR.

At that point, I think I had \$5 left in the world and I said okay, I'm going to spend \$2.50 on PR and, literally, I hired a woman who specialized in book launches who knew social media. As a matter of fact, the name of her company is [WebSavvyPR.com](http://WebSavvyPR.com). I called her up and told her my sad story of how I've been thrown under the bus by my publisher and she said you know what? Great! We have 18 months. That's what she said to me. I was like really? What are you talking about crazy lady? She said no, this is actually perfect. By the time your book comes out, I will help you build an audience that will be clamoring for your book. She said I think the perfect place for us to go with your brand is Twitter.

**Ellen:** Let me interrupt you just a second just to pull everybody on the page with us today. Melinda and I are going to chat and it's my job to make sure that we craft an interview that's going to be of service to the most people today. Today's topic is 'How to be a Social Media Ninja' and no one does it better than Melinda Emerson. We'll also be talking about crafting a marketing plan specific to your company. So we're going to weave in and out her story and some other tips for all kinds of businesses.

Let's get back to your story for a minute because Twitter intimidates a lot of people and that's why I wanted to mention this, but what I wanted to underline about what happened to you in your life is the worst thing became the best thing. Don't you think that happens over and over again?

**Melinda:** Absolutely. It's all about how you're going to eat your lemons, right? I like lemonade, so I decided that I was going to turn this situation around and I was willing to invest in myself and hire a coach or a vendor to help me. I hired this woman and she was like you need to go to Twitter. I, literally, said to her what is Tweeter? What are you talking about? She said oh, don't worry. I'll teach you. So for the next two weeks she showed me what Twitter was from her account.

So finally, the day came for me to sign up for my own Twitter account. I'm in front of my computer on the phone and she's in front of her computer on the phone. I go to login to Twitter's home page, I put in Melinda Emerson and something bounces back 'this name is already taken.' That's what I got.

**Ellen:** Your name Melinda? It's not like you're Joe Smith or anything.

**Melinda:** Right, I'm not Jane Doe, but name Melinda Emerson was taken. I was like, what am I going to do? She said don't worry. We'll just come up with a nickname for you. What you need to understand is I have never had a nickname in my life. I've always been called Melinda, so I'm like what do you mean a nickname? She said no, we're going to figure out a name that tells people who you are and what you do.

So we kicked around a couple of names, I didn't like any of them. Then finally, she said how about Small Biz Lady? Well Ellen, I liked that one. That turned out to be the best branding accident that ever happened to me.

**Ellen:** You know that gives me some strength, too, because sometimes I look at someone who's done such a great job with their brand and I think they must have had this strategic well thought out plan.

**Melinda:** Not even, no. What happened to me was my name was taken and in about two minutes we came up with Small Biz Lady and it was available.

**Ellen:** Another thing you did in your career is you built on the experience that you had and it spring boarded you to where you are. I think a lot of us look back on our history or we're in a job right now and you think I don't know what I'm doing with my business that's going to get me to the next level, but it does seem to all add up. You were a TV producer once upon a time.

**Melinda:** Yes, I have a Journalist Degree from Virginia Tech. I started out in TV. I mean I got my dream job when I was 23, but like a lot of people, Ellen, my dream job became a nightmare. I had to leave. After five years of working every single Christmas and working with people that I didn't think were very nice or very smart I had to leave and I started my first company Quintessence Multimedia. It was a video production company. Basically, I had a fax machine, a laptop and a dream. I started in the basement of my house and I networked with people I had worked with as a volunteer. That's how I got my first customers.

I took out a home equity loan and I paid off every bill I had, even my car, and I got myself to barebones bills. I brought in my kid brother, he had just graduated from college and he needed a place to stay. Great, he became my tenant. He took my guest bedroom, paid half my mortgage and that's how I survived the first year.

**Ellen:** I like that. Somebody said to me the other day that they'd been advised that no matter what to put as much money as you can into marketing. She said however, Ellen, you tell me to be careful in terms of going into debt. I said well, that's the paradox of entrepreneurship. It's yes and yes. Put every dollar you can into marketing and do not go into debt or make sure your debt becomes less and is at least manageable. I mean you have to do both. It's not one or the other.

**Melinda:** You do and the reason why is because it takes 18 to 36 months for a small business to breakeven, let alone replace your corporate salary. So, in many cases, you have to be prepared financially to go without a paycheck for a year or two, particularly if you're single. Now, if you have a spouse that has a great job you might have a little bit more cushion, but your spouse is not even really going to be able to carry the whole load for very long so you have to financially prepare.

**Ellen:** In your case, you used work experience. You deliberately got a part-time job so that you could learn about the industry you wanted to get in to.

**Melinda:** Absolutely. I worked for another production company for a year before I quit my job and started my own company and I did that so I could learn the business. I knew how to tell great stories, I knew how to write great scripts and get editors to edit things, but I had no idea how to price a job. I had no idea how long it should take to edit a video outside of a television station. You know what I mean? I didn't know any of that stuff and it was extremely helpful for me to work a business like the one I wanted to start.

It really leads into I created what I call The Emerson Planning System in my book *Become Your Own Boss in 12 Months*. I walk people through life planning. You need to develop a life plan before you ever write a business plan so you can figure out what you want out of life and then build a business that aligns with that. Then I walk people through developing a financial plan because guess what, guys? The money to start your business is going to come from your right or left pocket, so you have to have the ability to save.

People who have assets have options to go into business, but something you've got to do is really evaluate your skills. You've got to figure out what skills you have and then what skills you need to run your particular business, which is part of the reason why you need to go work part time for a business like the one you want to start. Don't start a restaurant because you like to eat. Go find out what it's like to work in one.

Then the fourth step is really evaluating who your paying customer is. Too many people get caught up working on their logo, their location, sending out invitations to their grand opening event and could not tell you if their life depended on it who their niche target customer is and that is a critical mistake. You've got to know who that paying customer is.

**Ellen:** It's funny. As you visit and for those folks who are here, we've been good friends forever, I am all in on your idea. My friend, Howard Partridge, says that your business exists for one reason only and that's to make your life goals come true.

**Melinda:** Exactly.

**Ellen:** There is no separation between business and personal. It's all one life and, to start with, what do you really, really want out of life and can a business help you get there is speaking to me. Let's pause here for a moment and consider whose listening today. I think some folks on the call are going to be super savvy with social media and, if so, then you're going to always learn something from Melinda, no doubt about it.

We're going to be talking about social media as well as how it fits into an overall marketing plan. You might be on the phone thinking what is Tweeter, so we're going to start with some basics about social media.

Becoming a social media ninja is, of course, a study just like martial arts. We're going to start with the basics and the basics work and see how we can expand those into real marketing strength for your company. So let's talk a little bit about why a small business should engage in social media. You know, Melinda, I can picture a plumber on the phone, he and his wife going really, we've tried for years to keep our kids off these devices. Do we really want to get online?

### **Why should a small business engage in social media?**

**Melinda:** Because social media really has leveled the playing field for small business. It used to be the guy with the most advertising budget always won the customers. Now that's not the case because people don't necessarily trust traditional advertising messages. With social media you are able to get so much more information about your customers, even about your competitors. You can be listening and they not even know you're listening.

So it is wonderful as a way to attract people you never would have had the opportunity to attract. You also can use social media to constantly demonstrate your expertise and that's the beauty. If you have a professional service business of any kind, you need to be blogging. You need to be posting pictures. You need to be posting video testimonials from happy customers. You can leverage all of that stuff through social media.

But does everybody need to be doing everything in social media? No. Does a plumber need Pinterest? I don't really think so. I think you need to figure out where your best target customers hang out online. Is it Facebook? Is it Twitter? Is it LinkedIn? Is it Pinterest? Is it Google Plus? I don't know, but you've got to conduct what I call a listening strategy first so you can figure out who your customer is, where they're hanging out online and then you need to figure out what your best keywords are so you can use those keywords in the content you're going to develop.

The currency in media is quality content and you can do it through videos. You can do it through written copy. You can do it through case studies of before and after pictures. There are all kinds of ways you can do it. You don't have to be an award-winning journalist like myself. There are all kinds of ways to skin a cat. You can do podcasts. You can do audio interviews, whatever. You just have to have a content strategy.

**Ellen:** But you don't need to do all of it.

**Melinda:** No, you don't need to do all of it and, by the way, I built my brand for six months. When I first got on Twitter, I never tweeted any of my own original content. I didn't even start blogging until six months after I got on Twitter. I shared other people's content every day and built a powerful brand.

**Ellen:** Okay. So you went on and you re-tweeted and you started to hear what other voices were and started to recognize other people who were tweeting in a clever, relevant way. So you even learned who you were attracted to.

**Melinda:** I went out and friend raised.

**Ellen:** Friend raised, okay.

**Melinda:** I went out there and shared other people's content. I answered somebody's small business question every day and I shared something personal about myself every day. I have a seven-year-old son, so he gives me great material. So I get on Twitter and I might say something like I had to act like an ape to get Joe-Joe to eat a banana this morning. Something like that and everybody will laugh. All the mom bloggers will be like I hear you, sister. I mean there are all kinds of ways.

What you want to do is be relatable. You want to be transparent. You don't want to be a drone that's just out here tweeting out links. You want to become a part of the community. How do you do that? You show up consistently on social media. You can't tweet once a month and think you're going to do anything for your business. You've got to tweet every day. I treat Twitter like a job, like it's my job on Twitter to share helpful information every day to end small business failure. That's the job I gave myself.

**Ellen:** I love how you do that. **Is that your mission?**

**Melinda:** That's my mission. My mission is to end small business failure. Every single thing I do is about that and I did it for two years straight without any financial remuneration for doing it.

**Ellen:** Okay, let me stop you right there to underline something. One is, notice how Melinda so naturally related her purposeful action with her mission in life, which is to end small business failure. So when you go to social media and you start sharing, when you key in to why you're getting out of bed every morning, it turns it from a grind into a joy to be able to do what it is that you do. So having a mission is going to drive so many areas of your life.

I like this because there are certain things that I feel really strong about. Why I do what I do is to help people find freedom, financial freedom, lifestyle freedom, in a winning business of their own. I get out of bed for that. I've got freedom. I want to help other people expand what can be done, especially in hard economic times. A job may not get you there. The last thing you just said was about monetizing. What are ways that we could measure our effectiveness? To look for an immediate 'if I tweet X-times I'm going to make X-number of dollars', I don't think that is the currency necessarily.

### **What are the ways that you could measure it?**

**Melinda:** No, social media is a long-tail strategy. It is not a quick-fix kind of thing. It is not going to start raining money in business the minute you start using social media. That is a fallacy. What you want to do is build a strategy. You've got to figure out who you want to be in social media. I decided in 2007 that I wanted to be America's No. 1 small business expert. That was my BHAG, my big, hairy, audacious goal. As of 2011, when you Google America's No. 1 small business expert it is me.

**Ellen:** Woo-hoo!

**Melinda:** It took years of working diligently being a content machine in order for that to happen. Now, once you get critical mass that's when you can monetize.

**Ellen:** Now, you talk about return on investment, but you have a different way of measuring return on investment. **We spend marketing dollars and we get sales, but what else?**

**Melinda:** There's really a triple ROI to social media. The first thing is return on investment, but in social media your investment is your time. So you have to evaluate how much time you're going to spend versus what you're going to get. The second thing you've got to look at is this return on what I call influence. That's really how you monetize social media, you are able to, basically, monetize your influence.

If you become America's No. 1 plumber that means you have an audience. You have a herd that you can move. That's how you really monetize it, but then you've got to look at, ultimately, everything you do in social media is about your brand identity. So it's return on identity, as in your brand. That's why you have to be really careful because you can hurt your brand as much as you can grow your brand with social media. You have to watch what you're doing and how you're doing it. You have to make sure you're communicating to the same audience every time. It should be clear who your target customer is by what you share, by what you say. You can't be all over the place. You've got to be consistent.

**Ellen:** Let's talk about this target market a little bit. For any kind of marketing plan, we want to identify who it is we're trying to find, who we want to magnetize, who's going to relate to what we have to offer, where we're going to be able to be of service to them in a meaningful relevant way. That's a give and take. Who you are, it's essential to figure that out, then who would be in need of what you have to offer.

**So when you craft a strategy for your marketing, do you create an avatar or a target market person?**

**How do you find out which social media you use based on figuring out who this target market is?**

**What's your approach to that, Melinda?**

**Melinda:** Well, if you're an existing business you've got to look at your existing customers and then you've got to do some surveys and just talk to them and figure out how are these people using social media. Are they using social media? Are they using Google searches to find a plumber or are they still using the yellow pages? I haven't used the yellow pages in over five years.

**Ellen:** My kid has never used one. He's 28 and he's never opened the yellow pages.

**Melinda:** I immediately put them in the recycle bin. They still deliver them, I don't know why. My point is that you've got to figure out how your customers are finding you now.

**Ellen:** So talking to them.

**Melinda:** Whenever somebody cold calls your business the person answering the phone always should ask them, how did you hear about us? That's an extremely important question. If it's Internet, if it's word-of-mouth referral, you need to know.

**Ellen:** You know what's cool about this is that the basic work in social media and the basics of social media marketing are the same as marketing basics for any kind of marketing. I mean that's what I'm hearing.

**Melinda:** Absolutely.

**Ellen:** This is not all of a sudden it seems new because it's electronic and it's different and I'm older than kids who grew up with this, but it's really just talking over-the-fence marketing in a new age.

**Melinda:** Absolutely. The other thing you might want to think about as plumbers and service businesses is about how you can use social media to grow your business or expose yourself to new customers, so things like Groupon and Living Social might be a good way. Your HVAC guys that are on the line with the winter upon us now doing a discount furnace check just to get in the door and become those people's plumber. Give them a little magnet and get it on their refrigerator so when they've got an issue you're the guy they call. There are all kinds of things you can do to engage customers in ways you never could have before.

**Ellen:** Would a good idea then be to reach out to your customers and say okay, let me know what social media you use in order of preference. Is it Facebook, Twitter?

**Melinda:** Absolutely, but you want to incentivize them to give you the information. So I would send out a survey, but I would send it out maybe with a coupon for \$10 off your next call to the plumber if you fill out this survey for us. If you're sending out holiday cards, put the survey in the holiday card. There are all kinds of ways you can skin a cat, but you just want to make sure that you try to get some feedback from your existing customers. Your existing customers are the most valuable people in your organization. So many people spend so much time trying to attract new customers. I'm saying how 'bout you try to keep the customers that you have.

**Ellen:** That's so good.

**Melinda:** It's much cheaper to keep a customer than it is to go out and get a new one.

**Ellen:** That's right. Now let's talk about what to do. Okay, so I'm going to commit to social media and I'm going to commit to Facebook and Twitter. It's what I've discovered my customers are in to. I do know, Melinda, one of my clients instead of doing traditional service agreements has said

if you follow me on Twitter and if you are my Facebook friend you're in my 10% off club forever because it's easier for us to communicate that way. That's all you have to do.

If you turn somebody on to me I'm going to give you \$10 off and we're going to communicate all of these specials and all of these coupons and stuff in Facebook and Twitter. I love that he's done this, but if he does that what is too much communication, what is too little communication? Let's say I've committed to Facebook and Twitter, what would be some basics for the strategy in terms of how often and what kind of content?

**Melinda:** think that each social media site is different. For example, if you're using your Facebook fan page as the main way you're going to communicate with your audience, posting once a day is fine. If you post more than that you could become spammy. Plus, Facebook really controls how many people see your posts when you post them, unless you're going to pay them for accelerated access to your audience, so you definitely want to post about once a day. Sometimes it may pay to do a Facebook ad, but you want to be really careful about that. The cool thing about Facebook ads is you can really control who sees them and you can control how much money is spent per day.

With Twitter it's a little bit different. In order to be taken seriously on Twitter, I think you need to be tweeting three to 10 times a day. I wouldn't tweet the same kind of thing every day. I would tweet a helpful article. I might tweet helpful quote. I might tweet something personal about myself. I might tweet a discount coupon or something, participate in tweet chats and stuff. Twitter is labor-intensive, so you've got to figure out how you're going to do that, what you're going to share, if it's going to be original content or other people's content. My suggestion always is that you do a mix of other people's content and your own. In fact, you should be sharing other people's content at a four-to-one ratio of your own content.

**Ellen:** Whoa! That's interesting. What's nice about that is it is easy. It's easier to re-tweet and say love it, yeah, thanks, great tip. If you're going to do three to 10 times a day and you just saw something cool of Huff Post then you can re-tweet that as a way to turn people on to things. What are some things you should never ever do? I've got to tell you, though, one thing that makes me un-follow somebody or hide them from Facebook is when they go all political. What do you think about that?

**Melinda:** That's interesting.

**Ellen:** Well, I'll just say this, if they go all political and I don't agree with them.

**Melinda:** Right. See, here's the thing. I don't follow people who open tweet me and ask me to follow them.

**Ellen:** Okay.

**Melinda:** The only way I follow people is if they actually have engaged with my brand in some kind of way. Like they have to actually talk to me and say something. If they do that then I can engage with them. But if you don't ever talk to me, I'm not going to engage with you. I'm not going to follow you.

**Ellen:** And that's to have the automatic reply, like if you have an automatic reply on LinkedIn or...

**Melinda:** Automatic replies are another big no-no.

**Ellen:** Okay.



**Melinda:** Automatic replies are a good way to get un-followed by people. The other thing, too, is that nobody wants to hear buy my stuff. Buy my stuff. Oh, by the way, buy my stuff. That's another great way to make yourself a pariah in social media. You just don't want to do that. You really want to just make sure that people know about you.

**Ellen:** So that's what you mean, a return on influence and a return on identify. This is a chance for people to say you know what, that chic knows what she's taking about. When it comes to business she's always a rational, fun, clever, sane voice, whatever it is that is authentically true to you.

**Melinda:** Yeah.

**Ellen:** So to be an influencer, to have a clear identity, these are the goals of social media. Not to do a stimulus response, if I send out a tweet I'm going to make another sale today.

**Melinda:** Exactly. The thing about it is that you cannot really overtly sell people and think you're going to do well on social media. I think that, obviously, at the end of the day all of us are doing this to increase sales, but you have to do what I call attraction marketing. You need to demonstrate your expertise so that your target customers will find you.

**Ellen:** Let's talk about this. Especially with the people I work with most, service contractors, plumbing, heating, cooling, electrical chimney sweeps, restoration guys, carpet cleaners, these guys are usually problem solvers. Some people will spend \$1,000 on a pair of shoes, but really not want to spend the same amount of money on a new disposal and a kitchen faucet, right? So there's kind of an eek factor to what service professionals do. This is going to be specific to these people for a moment.

If that's the case, it seems to me that one of the fears that service contractors have about going to the Internet and social media is what if people say nasty things about them. You ripped me off. I could have done it myself, blah, blah, blah. Because it's a problem-based industry sometimes it brings out the worst in people, so is it better to stay away from social media? How do you stay in front of that inevitable backlash that someone at some point is going to say they didn't like you or your prices or you caught them on a bad day?

**Melinda:** Well, the thing is that you have to be willing to be exposed and the best way for you to use social media is not to hide from people. If somebody gets on your Facebook page and says you suck, you ripped me off, you don't delete it. You go and respond to it. If somebody gets on Angie's List, Yelp or any of that stuff and says something about you, you need to go and leave a response. You would be surprised how often you can build relationships by responding and explaining to people how you fix the problem.

**Ellen:** I love it. You can always call them, right?

**Melinda:** Absolutely.

**Ellen:** Okay. I love that.

**Melinda:** Then when you fix their problem, you need to ask them to go back to where they bashed you and fix it.

**Ellen:** You can fix it so well. I'm going to do such a great job that you're going to be happy to tell everybody what a great job I did resolving the issue that we had. So, yeah, you can call them up. You're probably going to have them in your database. Those are going to be someone you know.

So you're not limited in your response to just respond to them on Facebook or Twitter, but it makes sense to say ahead of this, too, right? If the only exposure you've got on social media is this kind of stimulus response, someone slams you and you're trying to make it back, we're really digging a hole anyway.

**So, we have to stay ahead of it by doing what?**

**How do you keep a negative review on Yelp from taking over your social media life?**

**How do you play off it?**

**Melinda:** Well, you need to have Google Alerts on your name and on the name of your business. You should have Google Alerts on your top two or three competitors, too, so whenever somebody leaves something about you online you will be notified within half a day or a day to them posting it. That's a good way for you to try to keep track of it. Certainly, there are reputation management services like that, but I don't really think you need all that. Google Alerts is really good for you kind of keeping track of who's saying what about you. I just think you want to make sure you're on top of it, that somebody in your organization, you or someone else, is kind of monitoring what's being said about you online.

Listen, what you want to do is make sure you're doing great service and that you ask people to give you a review when they're happy. If you proactively go out and seek positive reviews on those services, you will drown out the one person who said you're a jerk. Even on your receipt that you give people when you're doing service in their home should say hey, please us a review on Yelp, Angie's List, whatever. You want to just make sure that you're proactively trying to control the conversation as much as you can.

**Ellen:** I was talking about political views, what's too much to share, what's just enough? You talked about the moments where you share with Joe-Joe, even though it's challenging for you to write something personal sometimes. What's the mix? What's the flavor? What really works? I think when you show someone that you're a human being it's really compelling and magnetic.  
**How much is too much? What's just the right amount?**

**Melinda:** Well, you definitely won't want to share anything that you don't want to see in the newspaper. You should use that as your barometer, right? People don't want to know what you had for breakfast.

**Ellen:** **Is that the Anthony Weiner rule?** Could we call it that?

**Melinda:** Yeah. Keep your free flag hidden, okay?

**Ellen:** That's too personal.

**Melinda:** The other thing, too, is about your Facebook page. Men, be careful about the pictures you 'like' that your friend sends you. Make sure if you're using Facebook for business it's for business and there's not a half-naked picture of some woman that your friend sent you that you 'like' on your page. When women are the number one people calling plumbers, carpet cleaners and stuff like this, you do not have want to have something on your Facebook page that would be offensive.

**Ellen:** But it is fun when you have a neat interaction with a customer. I think testimonials are a great way to get personal. Hey, I was at Mrs. Jones' house today. We had so much fun. Who knew we were both into model trains or whatever is authentic and real in terms of a customer interaction. Do you need to get their permission?

**Melinda:** I don't think you need to get their permission. I think, obviously, if you want a testimonial from them and, by the way, guys, video testimonials are the most powerful testimonials are the most powerful testimonials you can get. If you start carrying a little \$125 Sony Bloggie Camera in the truck with you and somebody is really happy, they had a flooded basement and you fixed their problem or they had a hot water heater that was a problem and you fixed it, get them saying how happy they are. Get it in writing or, absolutely if you can, get it in video.

**Ellen: How do you go about your day?** Give me a description. You tweet a lot and you've created this amazing Twitter following. I asked you this question once. I said how did you get 250,000 plus Twitter followers and you said one at a time.

**Melinda:** Yeah. I mean there are all these crazy services out here you can hire to get followers, but that's a waste of time. If you don't have an authentic relationship with the people that follow you, you won't ever really be able to monetize the people that are following you. So do it the old fashion way, one follower at a time.

**Ellen:** So how do you go about it during the day? You've probably incorporated some good daily habits as far as being engaged in social media. **How would your day go down? How would you find tweetable moments or Facebook moments?**

**Melinda:** I spend about 90 minutes a day on social media and that is because I use a service called [HootSuite.com](http://HootSuite.com), where I schedule my content to go out all day. So I'm not on Twitter all day, but I schedule my content to go out all day. The other thing, too, is I develop content constantly. So I post to my own blog every Monday, every Tuesday and every Thursday. I also write a social media and small business column for the New York Times and that comes out on Fridays. So that sort of gives me four days every week that I'm coming out with content and then every Wednesday I do a live tweet chat on Twitter called Small Biz Chat.

I convene small business owners from all over the world live on Twitter for one hour every Wednesday night and I answer people's small business questions along with another small business guest. That is, literally, how I keep my brand out there, how I generate so much content. I never am short for things that I want to share and, again, it never ever hurts to share other people's content. The highest form of flattery you can give someone is to share their stuff and say why you like it, so you absolutely should get in the business of doing that as soon as possible.

**Ellen:** I have been a guest on Small Biz Chat. I listen in and, occasionally, I participate on Small Biz Chat. I tell you what I love about a tweet chat like that is a lot of people, a lot of action and some really clever ways of stating solid information. I think that's what I like about Twitter and so Eric Oni, if you're listening, he's one of my friends and is so clever at a phrase or a sentence. So if that's your personality, if that's the way you think and speak, Twitter is a really great medium for you. That's what I look for in Twitter followers.

When you say something is tweetable, it's got a flavor to it that is appropriate for the short form. It's fun to read. It looks good. It sounds good. You try to say it again. So I think that's what Twitter is great for. With Facebook you've got more space. You've got a little more freedom. The pictures are going to be a part of it. **Is Instagram on your radar these days?**

**Melinda:** You know what, Instagram is awesome. I definitely see folks in the plumber-exterminator-carpet cleaner realm using Instagram. You've just got to be careful because some of you guys might be doing stuff that's gross and you don't want to be

**Ellen:** That's what we love about it. It's a dirty job. We're totally dirty job people, but it is kind of fun when you do see something weird or look what I found in the drain today. I mean there are some pretty amazing, pretty interesting fun things. Some of them a little big gross, I'll tell you.

**Melinda:** Yeah, but there are some people that love it, though.

**Ellen:** But you could have the mystery of the day. What is this? As far as what you found in a drain line or something could be a lot of fun. Gosh, you've got my creative juices flowing today. Okay, as you look to the future of social media, Melinda, there are all kinds. Like you said, Pinterest may or may not be of service to the plumbing community. Instagram, it seems like all my nieces and nephews are way into it, but the older folks I know are more Facebook people. You want to find where your people are hanging out. But if you were to back a horse in this social media world, pick one or two you think are going to be around for the long haul.

**Melinda:** I think Google Plus is going to be around for the long haul. You're going to see a big surge in Google Plus in 2014. I also think that Twitter is not going anywhere, but video is going to be the most powerful thing shared online in 2014. So everybody needs to be figuring out how to incorporate video somehow on your websites, somehow in the content you're developing. People think video is going to be 80% of what's shared online in 2014, so you've got to figure it out.

Don't forget about mobile web marketing. Everybody is searching the Internet now from a smartphone and 25% using smartphones only search the Internet from a phone. So you've got to make sure that you guys can be found in local searches and you've got to figure out if there's some kind of mobile web offering you can make for your customers, some mobile coupon or something to keep in touch. Now, make sure you've got permission. People hate getting text messages from people they didn't give permission to contact them that way. So you've got to be permission based, but start thinking about ways you can engage your customers using mobile web as well.

**Ellen:** I just love this! So, Melinda, you've made a terrific product available for us. You know the drill, right below this interview is going to be a button and you can click on it to learn more about what Melinda is going to share with you. You are going to offer the *How to be a Social Media Ninja* book and webinar. This is your new book. I'm super excited to share this. Plus, you're throwing out a lot of sweeteners like, Are You Google-able?

**Melinda:** And 20 Ways to Jumpstart Your Twitter Marketing.

**Ellen:** You can be a Twitter ninja as well as a social media ninja.

**Melinda:** Then, I'm going to give you 15 Ways to Better Communicate with your Target Customer, in addition to my webinar *How to be a Social Media Ninja*. I'm going to teach you all of the ins and outs of how to dominate your competition online. So you're going to get all of that for the low, low price of \$97. But we're going to throw in all those extras and it's going to be worth way, way more than that.

**Ellen:** You know what makes you so extraordinary to me? I love you on a million levels, but from our conversation today, at the end of this conversation, I feel excited and more relaxed and more capable of being a social media ninja. Sometimes I get just overwhelmed and want to collapse. There's too much. I can't do it. This is for somebody else. But from visiting with you for this last hour, I'm kind of excited to get over to Hoot Suite and put some fun stuff together and just dig in. You make it seem really doable, Melinda, so thank you for that.

**Melinda:** It is doable. I'm not smarter than anybody else, I'm just more consistent. So that's what you've got to figure out. If you want to do this I can show you the way, so let me teach you how to be a social media ninja. Sign up for my goodies below this audio recording so that you can get in

on the ground floor and you guys will be able to blow past your competition because, let's face it, most of your competition isn't doing this stuff.

**Ellen:** That's so true.

**Melinda:** So, if you invest in social media, you're going to be light years ahead of the competition and you're going to be the one that stays in business. Your business is not going to disappear. You're not going to be a dinosaur. You're going to be in it for the long haul.

**Ellen:** You are wonderful. This has been a rockstar interview. I'm so happy to visit with you. Thanks for spending time with me and with the Business Makeover 2014 community. So we'll be hearing more from Melinda. Click on her offer below. I'm going to say goodbye, sister. I'll talk to you soon and thank you.

**Melinda:** It's my pleasure, my dear.