**Using Social Media for Research**

Social media is not just a platform that you can use to shout at the world. If you’re thinking of this as a foghorn, then you’re going about it in completely the wrong way.

Social media in fact has much more in common with a telephone. It is *two way* tool that allows you to communicate with others. Never forget the ‘social’ in social media!

This means it can be used for many more things than just getting word out. Here are a few powerful examples.

**Check Out the Competition**

Before you begin trying to market your products, it’s a good idea to start by doing your research. That means checking out the competition and seeing what they have to offer and how they’re performing in terms of numbers. You may find that there are some brands that you wish to emulate: brands that have managed to build a very big and engaged audience. Look for these and make sure that you learn from them.

Another thing to look out for is opportunities. Spot the brands you want to emulate but also ask yourself what they’re doing wrong and more importantly – who they’re missing out in their marketing! Are their elements of their demographic that they have forgotten? Are people asking for something particular on their wall and going unheard?

**Learn the Lingo and the Audience**

Another tip is to try and spend some time immersed in the ‘world’ that you are entering into. That means contributing to the social groups that you will later be promoting in and it means *reading* the content that is being shared. What’s popular? What’s not? Are there different groups within this niche? Are their controversial topics and things that you should try to avoid mentioning?

This is also a good time to build your own reputation and to establish yourself as something of a leader in the niche and an authority. Let the community get to know you before you start ramming your content in their face!

**Find Partners**

This is also a good opportunity to scout for partners. That means looking for influencers that might be willing to give you a shoutout, it means looking for brands that you could potentially do cross-promotions with and it means generally finding people that you can work with. You’ll be surprised just how many opportunities are there if you’re willing to look – so just spend some time doing that critical research.