

# How SMBs Are Leveraging Social Media

Most use Facebook to communicate with customers

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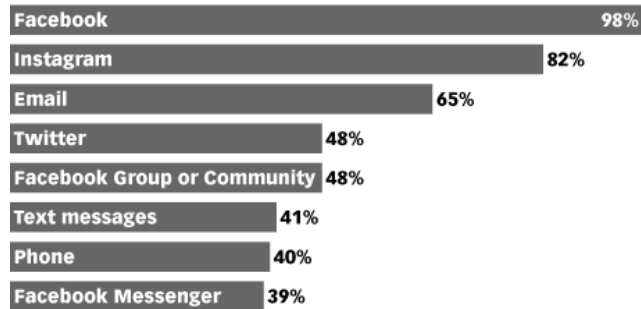
**Stephanie Wharton**

**S**ocial media is a boon for US small businesses that often lack the resources to invest in costlier marketing tools. In fact, for these marketers, social channels largely outpace email and mobile as customer communication methods.

Facebook and Instagram are the top two channels US small and medium-sized business (SMB) professionals rely on to communicate with customers, according to a September 2017 study by social marketing app [Ripl](#). Nearly all (98%) respondents say they use Facebook to interact with their customers, and another 82% report using Instagram for this purpose.

### Methods Used to Communicate with Customers According to US SMB Professionals, Sep 2017

% of respondents



Source: Ripl, "Q3 2017 U.S. Small Business Social Media Marketing Research Survey,"

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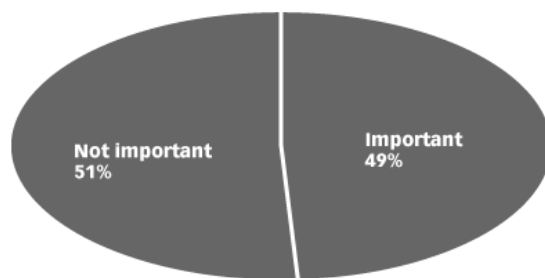
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Small-business professionals are certainly seeing the value in social marketing, but the conversations they're having with customers on these channels generally tend to be one-sided.

Both Facebook and Instagram give customers the ability to provide feedback to businesses—whether in the form of ratings, reviews or comments. But a large share of small businesses are not taking these customer evaluations into account. A September 2017 survey of US SMBs from **Bank of America** showed that 51% of respondents do not consider social media reviews and online ratings to be an important part of their business.

### Importance of Social Media Feedback and Online Ratings to Their Business According to US SMBs, Sep 2017

% of respondents



Source: Bank of America, "Small Business Owner Report" conducted by GfK Public Communications & Social Science, Nov 7, 2017

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This means that nearly every US SMB owner is embracing social media as a communication method, but less than half believe social feedback is critical to their business.

This detail directly contradicts consumer sentiment and behavior. Shoppers are increasingly seeking ratings and reviews to help inform their purchase decisions. Over the past few years, trust in this type of content has grown. In 2014, 17% of US internet users said they didn't trust online reviews at all, [per research from BrightLocal](#). By 2017, that attitude had shifted, with only 3% of respondents saying the same.