



# HER LEAD

## Building Social Capital & Meaningful Online Communities

In today's world, social media and online communities are critical to creating social movements in our societies. Anyone with access to the Internet has the power to create change and let his or her voice be heard. But how do we create social capital online in order to spark this change?

We first need to understand the difference between networking and building social capital. A network is made up of the people you know, but social capital consists of the people who are willing to do something for you. These people are generally considered friends and are there to help you. In other words, they are much more than a name on a list. The Harvard Kennedy School of Government sums it up like this: "The central premise of social capital is that social networks have value. Social capital refers to the collective value of all 'social networks' [who people know] and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other ['norms of reciprocity']. Hence, social capital is the group of people that is there to help you achieve your goals, advance your career, and beyond". Margaret Mead eloquently summed up this idea of social capital when she said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

So now that we know what social capital is, how do we achieve it?

### HERE ARE 4 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

1

#### POSITION YOURSELF IN THE DIGITAL WORLD.

People trust real people, not brands or companies, which is why you need to have and continually work on your personal, authentic brand. There are many things you need to do this, but the #1 recommendation is to have a website.

**Website:** You can do this through SquareSpace or other online tools, but the important thing is that you create a page to present who you are and what you do in one link. While the "About Me" portion of your LinkedIn profile and other social media platforms is incredibly valuable, having a website that tells your story and is compelling really allows people to get to know you.

**Email Signature:** an email signature is also very important as it allows people to see your digital real estate. All of your social media handles should be linked to in your email signature so that people can easily click to find you. Check out Wise Stamp to create a professional email signature.

**Social Media:** On all of your social media profiles, be sure you are telling the same story. For example, you should have the same name, picture, tagline, and website link on each of your social media profiles. In other words, when someone looks at your social media profiles, they should be able to see consistent information in the first 3 to 5 seconds of looking at your profile, which explains who you are.



In addition to using the standard social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. there are social media channels for specific audiences that you should check out:

**Social Media Channels for Entrepreneurs:**

- MicroMentor
- AngelList
- Gust
- SeedInvest
- ConnectAmericas

**Social Media Channels for Creatives:**

- Creative Mornings
- Behance

**Social Media Channels for Public Sector:**

- nova

**Social Media Channels for Game Changers:**

- Shared Value Initiative
- Global Citizen
- Horyou

**Social Media Channels for Women:**

- Lean In
- Levo

## 2

**BRING TOGETHER  
PEOPLE WHO HAVE  
THE SAME  
INTERESTS.**

So now you have executed all of the tips in #1, and you exist in the digital world. Online you are meeting people in other communities with different backgrounds who you share your interests. Next, you need to dive in a little bit deeper and search for influencers who are in your industry. This goes beyond your circle of trust which is your family, friends, classmates, co-workers and fellows in different communities you may belong to. You want to look for people who you could potentially create things with like projects, activities, and movements. Start by researching who the top five most successful people in your industry are who also live in your city. Once you have accomplished this, go wider, and search for the top five most successful people in your industry in your country, and then globally.

Once you have a handle on the most successful people in your industry in your city, country, and globally, research who the most successful people are in other industries. You should be aware of influencers in the public sector, in the private sector, in academia, in the nonprofit sector, and the most important one: THE MEDIA. It is only when you have all sectors that ideas and movements really get pushed forward so it is important to be aware of influencers in different industries, especially within your country. This way, you can create cross sector collaborations by pulling your contacts from different industries such as media, government, NGOs, corporations, etc. Having social capital is not about having thousands of followers, but about knowing the key people in different sectors, who could really contribute to moving change forward.

So after you have done all of your research, made a list of the 15 to 20 people that you want to meet, and connected with them on social media, you want to try to do things for them, which brings us to #3.

3

FORM COMMON  
IDENTITY THROUGH  
DIALOGUE.

You want authentic dialogue to become one of your values. In other words, to be successful, you need to become a person of value to the people you want to extract value from. The #1 rule of building social capital is that you have to give before you ask! So on social media, you want to help the people who you want to meet by authentically sharing their posts, advocating for causes that you are both passionate about, sharing events and invitations that they share, posting articles or blogs that they have written, etc.

You should think of yourself as their PR manager who is helping to spread their message/brand. However, before you begin this process, you need to make sure that your values and interests align with each person you are trying to connect with, otherwise, it will be very difficult to authentically support and help them. Other ways to create social capital in the digital world include LinkedIn endorsements, reviews online for businesses you want to connect with, etc. Also, don't be afraid to endorse your competitors. If you feel that they do great work, it says a lot about you to endorse them. Always keep in mind, the bigger the pie, the more there is for everyone.

4

ACT  
COLLECTIVELY  
TO EXERCISE  
INFLUENCE.

So no, you have digital real estate, you have created your lists and brought people together who have shared interests, and you have been forming a common identity with other influencers through dialogue. Now, you want to use all of these tools to exercise influence together in the real world. You are now part of meaningful online communities that can go out and create change. So think about your online communities and start organizing in-person meetings.

For example, you may have an online community of entrepreneurs that you stay in touch with. Start meeting them in person to continue to create relationships and move work forward. If you can be a part of five communities in the real world, you are well on your way to creating sustainable, positive change.

No matter what you do, remember that if you have a smart device and/or Internet you are part of the privileged community that really has what it takes to change the world. So be a part of the collective intelligence that is shaping the future of our world.



**LET'S CONNECT. BUILD A DIGITALLY AWARE NETWORK & CHANGE THE WORLD TOGETHER! KARLA RUIZ COFINO - @KRUIZGUATE - WWW.KARLARUIZ.COM**