

SOCIAL NETWORKING: AN OVERVIEW

A Basic understanding of the pros
and cons of online social
networking

Who am I?

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- 15 years in online media development
- Focus on information design, web design and development, graphic design, and online learning



What we'll discuss

- What is online social networking?
- Quick review of key avenues, key types
- Build yourself as a BRAND
- Know your customer
- Key potential results
- Cautions
- 8 steps to get going
- Final thoughts

What is online social networking?

- It's public networks like Facebook and Twitter
- It's Instant Messaging
- It's blogging
- It's multimedia like Youtube
- It's Wikis, like Wikipedia
- It's online collaboration tools like Microsoft Live

What is online social networking?

- Similar qualities to in-person networking but a (potentially) larger audience
- It's building and/or reinforcing relationships in real or close to real time
- It's about building a brand – you ARE your social network
- Consistency of message matters

Four Key Avenues

- Lead Generation - the holy grail
- Customer service
- What the others are doing (market research)
- Bringing on new people

The most famous sites

- Those with a business focus
 - LinkedIn, Plaxo
- Those with a general focus
 - Facebook, Twitter
- Specialized
 - Classmates.com, digg.com, stumbleupon.com

Business Focus Sites

- LinkedIn
- Plaxo

Key Audience - Business Social networks

- Designed for professionals
- Currently being used for
 - Job Search
 - Professional to professional
 - Drive people to your web site
 - Source of vendor contacts (limited)
 - Source of connections in your field

Key Features

- Primarily use of 'invitation' (LinkedIn) or 'connect' (Plaxo) process
- Search feature is good
- Use to research possible connections through similar groups or individuals
- LinkedIn has over 45 million members worldwide
- Use of Groups an important feature

Second Type of site

- Those with a general focus
 - Facebook, Twitter

Social Networks Key Audience

- Median age has increased to 25 to 34
- Both started as general social networking, increasing business involvement
- Best used for marketing, recruitment, prospecting and brand enhancement.

Facebook and Twitter Key Features

- Facebook uses 'Find friends' process
- Twitter has people you 'follow'
- Facebook for business
 - Create a group
 - Or create a fan page
- Search feature is ok – challenging sometimes to find things or people

More Facebook and Twitter Key Features

- Use to research possible connections through similar groups or individuals
- When a person signs up a fan in Facebook, their connection is announced via email
 - Facebook – 200 million
 - Twitter – 5 million

There are LOTS of others...

- Meetup.com, Xanga, Orkut, Bebo, BlackPlanet.com, Flickr.com, Reunion.com, aSmallWorld, Bebo, BlackPlanet.com, Blue Dot, Bolt, Broadcaster.com, Buzznet, CarDomain, Consumating, Couchsurfing, Cyworld, Dandelife, DeadJournal, DontStayIn, Doostang, Ecademy, eSPIN, Faceparty, Flickr, Flirtomatic, Fotki, Friends Reunited, Gaia Online, Geni.com and so on

Concept Number 1

- Online social networking is about creating yourself as a BRAND or BRANDS
 - You have to connect
 - You have to help them understand what's special about you
 - Your product or service is a by-product of you

Know your customer

- If your customer is 45 and up, traditional still works
- If your customer is below 45, new approaches matter a lot
- Some customers have lost trust in traditional sales and marketing
- The most credible source of information about a company is 'people like me' (Edelman Trust Barometer)

More Key Concepts

- Be on board (Sign up and post!)
- Be consistent
 - Your profile must be the business
 - Your posts must be business
 - Your photos, etc. must be business
- Build a network – from the top and grassroots
- Understand the idea of blogging

Key Potential Results

1. Find contacts who can help promote you (former clients, business partners, etc.)
2. Look at affiliate opportunities
3. Use these for learning opportunities
4. Get involved in the blogging scene
5. Get information about your industry
6. Sales leads through connections
7. Customers

Success Story

- Dell on Twitter – claims \$ 1 million in revenue over 1 year.

How did they do it

- Audience is already technical
- Has 19+ Twitter accounts
- 7,000 total followers
- Multiple reps to who post quickly
- Provide timely information
- Create relevant content, not just sales related

Understand that...

1. It takes time and focus
2. You may not get exactly what you're looking for but you'll often get something else of value
3. You have to consider this a regular part of you business

Cautions...

1. You don't own it
2. ...so you don't have control over what's said
3. You can get caught up in some trouble if you don't pay attention to the details

Remember that...

- Security is an issue – both Facebook and Twitter have been compromised recently
- You can lock out people easily
- You have to stay on top of it

What about other options?

- Consider 'pay per click' or 'pay per impression' advertising.
- How about Biznik.com, Ziggs.com, Young Entrepreneur?
- Make connections with successful organizations and discuss cross-selling or other opportunities

8 Steps to Getting Going

1. Decide where you want to start
2. Complete your profile,
3. Build your list
4. Search out related groups
5. Then search out the heavy hitters in the field and connect/join
6. Start your own group
7. Start a blog
8. Update often

Final Thoughts

1. Anyone remember MySpace?
(it's become a repository of musicians,
mostly)
2. Ever hear of Foursquare?
(A tool of choice for 20 and 30
somethings to meet and hang out)

It's critical to keep an ear open for the
future and how things are changing

Resources

1. The Ultimate Small Business Twitter List
<http://smallbiztrends.com/2009/01/the-ultimate-small-business-twitter-list.html>
2. Learning Twitter for Business
<http://business.twitter.com/twitter101/learning>
3. Penn Olson 10 Successful Facebook Business Pages
<http://www.penn-olson.com/2009/08/02/10-successful-facebook-business-pages/>
4. A Successful Facebook Marketing Campaign
<http://social-media-optimization.com/2007/10/a-successful-facebook-marketing-campaign/>