

How social networking can help with your marketing

The power of Web2.0, the interactive side of the internet, opens up a huge potential to publicise and expose your business to a larger audience than ever before. No longer is the world a huge place, with the rise of social networking it seems like it's just outside your back door!

Social networking for business began with blogging, a medium which enabled organisations to write about their business in other ways, to advertise their expertise, explore new concepts, ask their audience, invite feedback and responses, and publicise their events and activities; and because it was open to all who wanted to view it, especially through the search engines, good blogs could command a wide readership, and using RSS could be followed on a regular basis without unnecessary researching.

Then there were social networking sites, with the ability to collect and make friends and communicate with them in a relaxed and convivial style, even from the other side of the world. My friend in China would be lost without Facebook! There are now a myriad of different websites, each communicating, emulating, competing and evolving as technology moves continuously and rapidly forwards.

Certain sites, such as LinkedIn, Plaxo, FriendsFeed and Ecademy (to name but a few) have adapted their services for the business world by seizing this opportunity for business networking, whereas Facebook provides for all kinds of social networkers, and indeed some applicants use their profiles for many different activities. In fact for Facebook it is suggested that you apply as an individual, rather than for other sites in which you would join as your business name. Twitter, the 'micro-blogger', has taken the world by storm because it appeals to the quick-fire responses of 140 characters combined with a desire to know what everybody else is doing in 'real time'.

The need to network for business using Web2.0 should not be seen merely as a trend. Although it may be seen by many as a 'time waster', I think it does depend on 'how you use your time' to achieve results. Social networking is about increasing your following (aka collecting friends) to find other like-minded or interesting people, learn what each other is doing (this is certainly come to the fore in Twitter), a place to express and publicise your activities, form groups and forums for more interaction, ask questions and receive answers (LinkedIn has excellent facilities for this), publish your blogs and advertise through marketplaces (using Ecademy's extensive SEO properties), republish your articles for a wider readership (though there are sites designed for this), and learn much more quickly about what's going on in this ever-increasingly fast world. If your business is one of the first to hear of a particular subject and is then able to rapidly respond to it, what difference would that be against your competitors?

It is also the concept of RSS that has contributed to wide social networking use. Think of the implications if your posts could be automatically reproduced in other social networking sites just by pressing one button, combined with the ability to enable your blog posts, articles, weblinks and other relevant material instantly accessible to a potential huge readership throughout the world. Many businesses have benefited from an increased traffic to their websites and blogs, plus other media such as audio and video, with the chance to explain, educate, publicise, inform, request material, gather information, become established as an expert in your field, and achieve more sales – surely this is a phenomenon of the 21st century we cannot ignore.

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