



CAREER TIPS

It's not just for fun...

Social Media Means Business



Not so long ago, companies advertised in the "Yellow Pages," and broadcast special promotions on radio, while job seekers knocked on employment agency doors with printed resumes in hand. Since then, the immediacy and widespread popularity of social media has dramatically changed all that. Companies send targeted messages to consumers via Twitter and other social media while individuals find employment opportunities online and are discovered through LinkedIn.

So, what must corporate leaders know about Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn in order to help their companies thrive? And, which of these, and other related methods, offer the best avenue for finding a new position or advancing your career?

COMPANIES E-CONNECT WITH CONSUMERS

Businesses of all kinds use social media to interact with customers for a variety of purposes. Lee Bogner, a consulting marketing technologist and social business analyst, has implemented a range of platforms for retail, food and beverage, media, and technology companies. But the unconvinced still ask, "What's in it for us?" Bogner advises business leaders to stop hesitating. "Social media is not going away – and your competitors are already using it."

But how does a company leader know which vehicles to utilize? Web strategist Randy Shannon (www.webstrats.com) advises company executives to ask, "Who are their customers and what social media platforms are they

likely to frequent?" He and other experts agree that for consumers, Facebook and Twitter are the logical choices.

Bogner reports that "these platforms give companies a tremendous opportunity to hear what consumers think of them -- both the good and the bad." That's because social media offers companies a 'pipeline into the thoughts, perceptions and attitudes of their customers.' "Monitoring online consumer conversations allows companies to create better customer service policies. Companies can also be proactive in responding quickly to emergencies or product recalls. This preserves the reputation of the company and builds a positive brand image.

"All companies should use social media as part of their public relations strategy," adds Bogner. In fact, Facebook and Twitter offer excellent ways to promote and help brand firms in a favorable light from their very inception. This was recently exemplified: both of these platforms were employed when three-way social media conversations were initiated between a clothing manufacturer, an e-retailer and consumers.

Brendan Kownacki, a social media strategist, feels "Social media isn't a choice anymore; the only choice is what interactive vehicles companies decide to use." Here are several examples:

- *Location-based technology* is used as a marketing tool by some retailers and restaurants. Foursquare and Yelp utilize the "GPS" built into mobile phones. Participating businesses offer incentives and online game rewards to encourage customers to drop by when they are in the vicinity of their locations. Kownacki utilized

Yelp on behalf of a manufacturer of flu vaccine materials. A notification system alerted potential patients on their cell phones when they were close to a location where flu shots were available. Conversations ensued on Twitter among participants.

- A consumer brand recently attracted 3,000 You Tube viewers less than twelve hours after filming a promo. In this instance, viral marketing caused a national response, even though it was targeted to people in the Washington, DC area.
- Shannon recently set up a LinkedIn account for a statewide association in order to "give individual members a wider networking opportunity." He also initiated an association Twitter account through which leaders provide valuable insights to members. Both platforms built added value to the association membership.

And businesses are not the only ones to benefit from social media. Job seekers and careerists hoping to move up the corporate ladder are being advised to promote themselves using social media tools in order to differentiate themselves from their competition.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAREER TIPS

Career length employment with one or two employers in a lifetime is a thing of the past. That is one reason why Dan Schwabel, author of "Me 2.0 Building a Powerful Brand for Career Success," suggests that job seekers develop themselves as if they were a name brand starting with these three steps:

- Create your own personal website which will continue to work for you during all stages of your career.

- Develop a core message – a phrase to distinguish yourself.
- Use search engine optimization (SEO) which utilizes key words (your name + niche skills associated with your job specialty).

Schwabel recommends utilizing all three major social media sites: LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

GET LINKEDIN TO CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Experts concur that LinkedIn is the premier social media career development tool.

Kevin Palisi, an executive recruiter with Korn Ferry International labels it "the gold standard of social media." He suggests keeping all information up-to-date and filled out completely at all times. Include current job title and education (which recruiters search for), as well as any off-line industry associations to which you belong.

- Utilize your core message as your profile headline, offers Schwabel.
- Palisi suggests, "Join and participate in the online industry groups, such as "RAPS," which is appropriate for regulatory affairs professionals." See who the discussion leaders are and link to them, adds Shannon.
- Find actual job openings on a company's LinkedIn corporate profile pages. Also, check to see if you have a direct connection to anyone in the company who could serve as a referral.

(For more in-depth information on utilizing LinkedIn, see DIA's Global Forum Issue I Volume 4, August 2009, page 25.)



TO FACEBOOK OR NOT TO FACEBOOK

- For careerists on the lookout for positions, Facebook has two job search tools or applications: Branchout and Beknown. The latter is associated with Monster.com and is also available through a Twitter account.
- Most experts DIA spoke with do not endorse Facebook for corporate career advancement. Most agreed that LinkedIn is the social media platform of choice for this purpose, especially in combination with Twitter.

• A Facebook profile is considered primarily a tool for connecting with friends and family. According to the pundits, the danger of Facebook is having profile pages that contain both personal and business contacts.

• If you choose to use Facebook for both personal and professional connections, make sure your career information is visible on your “wall”. Both Shannon and the CEO of jibberjobber.com, Jason Alba, suggest using one of the following options to prevent social situations from potentially harming your professional image.

- Carefully select your privacy settings. Some include the ability to review potential posts and photos (so friends don’t “tag you” in embarrassing situations) and allow you to choose your audience when you enter a post.
- For extra safety, make your Facebook profile 100% private so that business people cannot access the social information on your profile. Establish a discrete Facebook account, known as a “business page” or “fan page” for your professional connections. Google “business page + Facebook” to view the current rules.



A FEW WORDS GO A LONG WAY ON TWITTER

- Twitter, a microblogging platform, is used by entrepreneurs and small business persons to brand themselves – and ultimately to sell products and services. It is also used by individuals for job searches/career development, and by recruiters to find qualified job candidates.
- Twitter users send 140-character (or less) messages in “real time” to connections called “followers.” To begin using this social media platform, first become a “follower” of others who are well-known in your or other related industries.

- Use Twitter as a lead generation tool: Go to the Twitter search bar; type in search words to find a directory in your area of expertise. In the directory, find individuals with whom you would like to contact.
- Seeking career advancement? "Don't forget to link to where you want to go, not necessarily where you are now," Schwabel advises. Seek out titles of positions that you hope to attain in the future.
- Executive recruiters or hiring managers may put out a tweet using the hashtag (#) to indicate specific jobs openings. To find a pharma sales rep job, for instance, Bogner suggests: "Go to the search bar in Twitter and type in "#jobs pharma sales." Or look on Google's search bar and type in "twitter jobs pharma sales".
- The hashtag (#) indicates a subject topic. The tweeting conversation takes place in real-time. The first to "tweet" on this issue creates the name of the discussion and precedes that phrase with a #. To brand yourself, insert a (#) somewhere in your tweet, explains Shannon
- To brand yourself as an expert in your field, "tweet" (or create a message) about your industry. The aim: When someone likes it, they will "retweet" (or send it on) to their followers.

- Tweet about industry trends, events, news items or link to your own articles, presentations, blogs, podcasts or You Tube videos to become known as an industry thought leader.

Social media is not just social anymore. While it's amusing to see status updates of celebrities or tweets from friends, don't underestimate social media's usefulness for business. As a corporate decision-maker at the top, it can help connect your company to customers and distribute news about your services. For corporate job holders at all levels, don't forget to use social media's tools to develop your career. In other words, emphasize your strengths and abilities using branding techniques and social media. And build your success communicating the 21st century way. ●