

Establishing a Facebook outpost for your business

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Everyone is talking about social media – businesses, nonprofits, teens and their 40-something parents – but the recent conversion of social media from personal use into a marketing tool creates a whole new world of opportunities and pitfalls for the uninitiated.

PUSH VS. PULL

Before testing social media in a haphazard manner, company executives and PR/marketing professionals must learn a whole new paradigm.

Traditional public relations typically employs a “push” model by sending out press releases or drafting bylined articles and pitching them to editors. Social media, on the other hand, tries to attract audiences through search engine optimization and creating an online presence. The target audience, including reporters, is already online looking for related material, and the most productive method tries to “pull” them in.

If you follow a “push” strategy online, you will probably turn your audience off, or even get blocked out by potential clients.

PRIORITIZING YOUR PROGRAM

Online marketing options have experienced explosive growth in the past few years and you must decide where to focus your efforts. You must reach the most people possible while still focusing on your target audience. Here are some statistics to consider in that endeavor:

- Twitter has 5 million to 6 million users; Facebook has 200 million users.

- Blogs increase by 900,000 posts per day; Facebook/MySpace adds 50 million entries.¹

For this reason, Facebook is rapidly growing as the preferred marketing tool, and it is adding business-friendly features to take advantage of the inflow.

THIRD-PARTY APPLICATIONS

Facebook now offers a specific option, called Facebook Pages, targeted at organizational groups. It may be accessed by clicking on the “ads and pages” icon at the bottom of the Facebook home page.

Facebook Pages provides a template for your company’s founding date, services and mission as well as a special section to announce company events. Even more important, it offers the ability to create an outpost by integrating with third-party applications such as LinkedIn.

Just click on “more applications” after you have established your Facebook page and you’ll see a box to search for any application you wish. After you open the application and approve the integration, you should also hover

your mouse over “settings” in the top menu bar and it will let you include the program as a box on your Facebook site as well.

You may also access an RSS feed third-party application and input your blog’s feed address to integrate those entries.

FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND BLOGS

A similar method may be used to integrate Twitter and other social media into your Facebook outpost. In addition, you should also create an account at www.tweetdeck.com. This program provides an interface to monitor both Facebook and Twitter, and you can send transmissions to them either simultaneously or one at a time. More sophisticated programs such as <http://ping.fm> also include many other networks.

Twitterfeed (www.twitterfeed.com) provides another useful resource. You can input any RSS feed, such as your blog feed, to integrate it with Twitter and post the first 140 characters of each entry. Once posted on Twitter, it will automatically be translated into a Facebook entry, assuming you’ve integrated the two as described above.

IMPLICATIONS

The latest marketing trends with Facebook, Twitter and other social media have already begun to transform the nature of business operations on a global scale. Business and social functions are starting to blend together with a mishmash of entries devoted to both concerns.

This blending is causing an increased transparency of business operations. The pull model, derived from the intrinsic nature of social media, also means unintended audiences will automatically be attracted to access much of your material.

Recent debates about online trends have even suggested the obsolescence of blogs. Due to time constraints, many social media professionals are forwarding useful material through Twitter and Facebook instead of drafting lengthy blog entries.

In any case, social media are here to stay. They access a huge untapped audience and businesses that fail to integrate them do so at their own peril.

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1. PRSA, The Digital Impact Conference, April 30-May 1, 2009