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Women at work: Social media a great way to connect with clients

KELLY MULLANEY • FEBRUARY 15, 2009

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What happens to companies that don't pay attention to consumer trends? They fail. They invest time, energy and money in products they want to sell without making sure these are products consumers want to buy. The secret of every successful [business](#) is finding out what people want and helping them get it. Social media will help you accomplish this.

The social media phenomenon works because people enjoy discussing how they feel about certain products and services. When online, people tend to open up and reveal more than they might otherwise. Online forums, chat rooms, blogs and social networking sites are environments where people freely discuss what they want and

like. Recommendations are made, relationships are nurtured and questions are asked.

Where do you start?

Begin with establishing your goals. Do you want to learn more about your [customers](#)? Improve visibility? Research your industry? Network? All your online communications should support your original intentions. It takes time to establish yourself in a community. Virtual ones are no different.

Without an organized strategy, you risk spreading yourself too thin and wasting time on activities that don't move you toward your goals.

Online groups or social networking sites: Think of social networking sites as a very large conversation. Becoming a trusted, respected participant requires following the discussions and contributing meaningful comments. Online groups will gather at certain sites. For example, LinkedIn.com is popular with professionals. MySpace.com attracts musicians and other members of the creative set. Facebook.com is a general socialization site. Twitter.com allows you to connect in real time with multiple people.

Consider joining an industry-related group filled with your peers, a group populated with your ideal customers and a group that shares one of your personal interests. Respectively, this combination will give you pertinent information in your field, a chance to connect with prospects in their world and a place to develop relationships over a common leisure pursuit.

Courtesy counts. Just as there are manners for a civilized society, online groups have social norms. Always include a personal message when contacting a group member. Treat the relationship just as you would with face-to-face contact. Follow discussions before posting your comments and questions. And remember: Everything you write online is available to the public.

Blogs: Blogs create an environment devoted to your business culture and/or offerings. Blogging is an investment of time but provides all the benefits of social marketing. You can establish an entire community

 BUILD YOUR FAMILY CALENDAR

WHAT YOU WANT WHEN YOU WANT IT RIGHT ON YOUR CELL  

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This column is written by members of the Rochester Women's Network, whose focus is to help women connect, grow and succeed. For more information, go to www.rwn.org.

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dedicated to your insight and advice. WordPress, TypePad and Blogger are tools that will help you establish your own blog quickly and easily.

Yvonne DiVita runs Lipsticking.com, one of the top 10 blogs for women and marketing. DiVita offers this blogging advice: "Be conversational, post often and leave footprints by visiting and commenting on other blogs." DiVita also offers encouragement: "Don't give up too soon. Lack of comments does not indicate failure. Many people read blogs but don't comment. Be persistent, patient and connect, connect, connect."

Listen to the conversation and customers will tell you what they want while putting you in the position to help them get it.

Kelly Mullaney is president of Working Art Media, a Rochester-based online business solutions firm. She can be reached at www.WorkingArtMedia.com.

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KellyMullaney wrote:

Hi Barefoot,

I'm glad to hear your success story in Facebook, and even more that you had such fast results, but then again, after 2 years you are not really new to social media. In the great majority of cases I see that most people who embrace social media for their businesses are pleasantly surprised when they see the results.

2/17/2009 2:27:11 AM

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Barefoot325 wrote:

I have used social networking in business for over the past 2 years and I just joined Facebook last week! I didn't think I had the time, nor did I think it was necessary for business...even though I had heard it was.

Wanted to share my personal experience that within hours I was making business connections via Facebook. It is fun and it works.

For more check out www.sheretreats.org

2/15/2009 10:11:12 AM

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