

FOCUS ON TECHNOLOGY

INFORMATION & TRENDS

Social Media 101: Four Steps to Get Started Today

By now, most people have heard of LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and all the other types of new buzz words that seem to be on every news channel. Why the interest? Because just like the invention of the automobile or the telephone, this new technology allows you to create ways of connecting with new prospects and partners like never before; and your competition knows this too.

With the right strategy, social media allows you to connect with the right people anywhere in the world, at any time at all times removing the traditional barriers that have limited personal interactions. We know the opportunity is out there but how do you get started?

Here is a quick four step plan to get you going:

1. Back to the basics: Define who you are, what you do and what you offer your clients. Often it is this basic question that causes people the most trouble. Before jumping into the many social media tools, take a moment to reflect on what makes you unique and valuable to the marketplace. Odds are there are one or two (or hundreds) of people who do what you do and who on the surface are as equally talented, experienced or qualified. How often do you attend a networking event and have trouble standing out from the pack? How often do you meet a new face and have trouble sharing the specific benefits of the services that you uniquely provide. To be effective in any business development effort, ask your best clients why they chose you and what unique factors helped them make the wise decision to choose you.

2. Find and Connect with People. Once you are clear on what specific benefits you can provide, it is time to find and connect with potential clients and partners. The challenge can be that the opportunities are endless and overwhelming with-

out a plan. The easiest way to get started quickly is to

- a. Connect with the clients and partners you already have
- b. Join relevant groups in both LinkedIn and Facebook. Hint: what groups are your clients and partners associated with?
- c. While at events, make sure to connect with the contacts you are making. Be the one to initiate the connection requests
- d. Add your connection information to your email signature.

Make sure to avoid the common mistake of just joining groups with people that do what you do. Instead, connect with the groups your clients connect with. Remember, people who choose to be online are there to make valuable

connections too. Just like you, they are looking to connect with people that share their interests and can be potential partners or clients.

3. Add Value to the Conversation. Networking 101: No one likes a pushy salesperson but everyone likes a helpful contact.

- a. Use your status updates to share your individual assets in a non-pushy way. What expertise can you share? What valuable articles are you reading? What events are you attending that may be relevant to your network?
- b. Be active in the groups you have joined and add value to the discussions taking place. Remember, the goal is to connect with people in the groups. Give sincere feedback on

Continued on page 18

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