

## Are you being social enough?

I am sure that most of you are aware of social networking. It seems like everyone is using **Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn** or any of a myriad of others but why? What are the benefits of social networking beyond making new friends? Well, I had been asking myself the same question until I decided to spend the last few weeks testing the various services. To my surprise many of these networks can have noticeable and beneficial impact on your business. Lets discuss the big three, shall we?

**Twitter** at first looks like a shallow messaging program but can actually be a powerful search tool for promoting your business. Basically, you send messages or "tweets" that are 140 characters in length. This is a good format because it forces people to focus on their message and keeps them from rambling. When you find a person or company that is talking about a subject that you are interested in, you can follow them. That means that anything they write about will go directly to your feed instead of your having to search for them. More importantly, if you are interesting enough people will start to follow you. Then you can start using twitter to promote your business. Others are still finding new and interesting ways to use Twitter in business but some of my favorites are :

- Announcing new services or products
- Providing links to important information on your blog or company website
- Providing a way for your customers to give feedback
- Start tweeting advice about your profession, it will become a search-able archive for your clients
- Let your customers get a glimpse into the daily workings of your life or business

**Facebook** has many attributes that are similar to Twitter but it broadens the format beyond text. In FB you or your company can start a profile and you will get what is called a "Wall". The wall is where you type messages, post pictures, video and shared calendar events. Then, you can start inviting people to be your "Friends". Anyone on your friends list can view your wall and vice-versa. Also, whenever a friend adds something to FB you are alerted in your feed just like in Twitter. A great way to start building a following on FB or Twitter is to include your account on your business cards. Since FB allows you to use more than text, you can utilize it in ways that you cant in Twitter.

- Post pictures of your ribbon cuttings or networking events
- Use the calendar to Post upcoming company events or release dates for products
- Start a video blog and post the episodes

**LinkedIn** is geared the most toward business and yet I found it the least useful of three. Like the other three it is all about making connections but it doesn't have the super fast back and forth of Twitter or the community building of Facebook. However, when it comes to pure networking, LinkedIn is the top dog. Upon joining you create a profile that will probably be more in depth than your last resume. Then the program will attempt to put you in touch with anyone in LinkedIn that held a job at the same company as you in the same time frame. If they accept they will become part of your network and you are free to communicate with them. Also, you can see people in their network but you cannot talk with them unless that person makes an introduction. You can also join groups of people dedicated to various subjects like copy-writing, website design or forestry. The large your network grows the more options you have and hopefully the more you are LinkedIn to

your particular industry. This is especially useful when you are:

- Looking for a new job
- Needing to fill a job opening at your company
- Need to ask a question that only the peers in your industry could answer
- Wanting to get a group together for a new project or venture capital

These are just a few of the social networking alternatives that are available and more are being created all the time. If you are using a social network for business purposes and it has worked for you, send us an email and tell us about it!