

Title: Social Media: No Longer a Social Craze - Now Firmly a Business Media Must!

Still not using social media to market your company? It's time to get onboard!

In this new age of technology there is a new way communicate and social networking sites allow us to do this effectively and efficiently. For those businesses that are still resistant to using social media to market their product and services, it's time to jump onto the social networking bandwagon. From text messages to emailing, the tech savvy generation, otherwise known as Generation Y, has turned online communication into a must have skill.

Today, millions of people of all ages are engaged in social networking. According to a New York Times article titled *Half of America is using social networks*, "Fifty percent of all adults in the United States use social networking sites. These sites are more popular among young people with 83% from the 18-29 age group and 51% of those from the 50-64 age group." In the blink of an eye those engaged in social networking can communicate with their families and friends worldwide. Social networking users have tremendous influence at their fingertips. With the click of a button users can rate a product or service and endorse or denounce a company to countless interconnected networks of friends and family members.

Armed with this knowledge, many companies have created social networking profiles for their businesses and organizations. However, with the massive amounts of people communicating on social networking sites all at once, how can business owners be sure that their promotions are effective? Here are a few tips to help you stand out:

1. CREATE A MEMORABLE PROFILE

The first step is to create a profile page that accurately reflects your company. Make sure that your profile name is easy to recognize and remember. For instance, users interested in learning about news and events at Brookdale Community College can visit www.facebook.com/BrookdaleCCnews. Similarly, volunteers interested in working with the American Red Cross can visit www.facebook.com/redcross. Be sure to upload images and text that best reflects your company's image.

2. PROVIDE FREQUENT UPDATES

Status updates keep visitors informed on upcoming events, news, product releases, sales and more. It is important to keep your visitors or 'friends' engaged with fresh new information on a regular basis.

3. CREATE A FORUM FOR TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Facebook especially allows users to ask questions on any topic. Facebook's user blog explains that "Facebook questions helps you tap into the collective knowledge of the more than 500 million people on the site."

4. **EXPRESS YOURSELF!** Upload pictures and videos about your post. Videos upload just as easily as pictures and recorded footage of a past event can serve as an effective promotional tool. Both photos and viewers have the power to effectively communicate your organization's story and key messages. Videos can also be posted on a YouTube account, and with the right keywords, can be easily found through search engines.

A great example of this occurred at Brookdale Community College at our Polynesian Exhibition Cooking event that took place on December 7, 2011. Students, faculty and staff were invited to taste the delicious cuisine that comes from the Polynesian Islands.

As a staff member in the College Relations department, I filmed the event with a Flip camera. The footage from the event was used to create a video that would be used to promote future exhibition cooking events. Using a low cost editing site, www.onetruemedia.com, I created a video that showed the highlights of the Polynesian Cooking Exhibition. Once edited, I added music with a fast tempo so that it would capture the happy mood of the event. I then uploaded the video to Brookdale's Facebook page. The video was well received and garnered lots of positive feedback. The video was also picked up by an online news source. The video can be viewed at this link <http://youtu.be/reDKBddJL8I>

Creativity is essential when it comes to using social networking sites. It is important to keep followers up-to-date on the news and events of your business or organization. Those new to social media marketing may think that it is like learning a new language, but will quickly realize that engaging your audience is as easy as sharing your thoughts and experiences with a group of your closest friends.

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