Social Media Marketing

An Introduction & Outline on How I will use Social Networking to Expand my Business

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The Purpose of This Paper

The purpose of this paper is to outline a few of the more popular social media sites, when they came into existence and to whom they are directed. My plan is to obtain a bachelors degree in web design & ecommerce, with this degree I will obtain a position in an upwardly mobile firm in which I can utilize my talents; and more importantly learn from those already in the field. Through consistent learning I plan to stay current on and incorporate new and cutting edge technology into my job. While I am learning as an employee, I will be marketing myself to the public as the owner of DaiDream WebDesigns & Publishing. I am educating myself in the advantages and guidelines of using social network marketing as a way of enlarging my business.

Some Background on Social Networking

Ten years ago social media was nonexistent and social marketing was good old fashioned word of mouth during conversation at the grocery store, on the phone chatting with a friend or at some social gathering. If a business owner wanted to get the word out about his new business venture, he often had to create an extensive and expensive marketing campaign. The marketing campaign would have been launched via television, magazine, radio, newspaper and billboard advertisement. That was then, this is now.

The 21st century ushered in the era of social networking and social media with the web debut of LinkedIn in Ma 2003. LinkedIn is an internet community of business professionals who share their professional profiles and resumes. This gives you the opportunity to review a profile or resume and possibly create a mutually beneficial business relationship. Directly on the heel of LinkedIn was the launch of MySpace in July of the same year. MySpace put a much more social twist on things, not only because it was embraced by the younger web enthusiasts ages 13-25; but as a byproduct of them being younger, they were not business professionals yet so it was strictly used for social networking purposes. From 2003 through 2006 the makeup of internet social networking was either for older business

professionals, or the younger set looking to share music or keep in touch with friends.

The median answer that stood in the gap was introduced in August 2006 as Twitter. Twitter allowed users to create a profile and share short messages of 140 characters or less, updating their "followers" on one question, "what's happening?" The definition of "followers" according to Twitter is someone who is interested in following all of your updated posts to keep tabs on or track of what you are doing. Twitter was embraced by almost everyone because of the short and sweet nature of it. Unlike MySpace or LinkedIn there wasn't a lot of reading and no additional pages to click on unless you wanted to see a person's profile. Twitter updates could be sent via

SMS (Short Message Service) messages easily and quickly from a cell phone. In May 2007 the world was introduced to FaceBook as the "adult" answer to MySpace. FaceBook attracted the more mature we users who were interested in social networking. It had less of the flash and music aspects of MySpace, more depth and functionality than Twitter; and had a much more social aspect to it than LinkedIn. I personally believe that FaceBook was the vehicle that pulled together the best of the previously mentioned sites allowing the room and versatility for the creation of in-depth social networking which naturally bred social marketing. FaceBook operates on the

act of "friending". Friending as defined by FaceBook is the act of asking others to be your friend, it is in essence asking for permission into their circle and allowing them into your circle as well. This friending allows you access to the "walls" of all those you have friended (made friends with). This is the crux of marketing. This is how marketers get their products or services "in the face" of potential customers or clients. This is also how those same potential customers or clients will spread "the word", be it good or bad on products and services they love or hate. This has coined a new term as well, "viral marketing"; and just as the name implies, this kind of marketing spreads from person to person just like a virus. This is the 21st century twist on what was previously known as "word of mouth advertising" which was previously done in person or on the phone.

Social Networking & Marketing

According to *Marketing* (pg. 424), Direct selling is defined as personal contact between a sales person and a consumer, it allows for the back and forth interaction needed in order for the salesperson to present the product and the potential consumer to get feedback on their particular questions about that product. The text also states that eh annual volume of direct sales in the United States is approximately $30 billion. This is a very lucrative market. The social networking sites have allowed for salespeople to interact with potential customers in almost the same "personal" way. Let me provide some clarity to that last statement. Many people think that making a *personal* connection actually has to happen in person, with the extensive use of social sites becoming more and more mainstream that statement is no longer absolutely true. Personal connections are initiated via the web and social sites; and some are maintained their exclusively for extended periods of time. Because a profile in FaceBook contains your personal information which you have chosen to share by friending someone, that then gives that person *personal* access to you. Granted, not all of your friends will become personal either via the net (internet) or take it a step further to actually meet, however the potential is there.

By developing a profile on social networking sites and actually interacting with a network of friends, a salesperson could position a product and create a strong brand loyalty. This happens because as a friend the will begin to trust your word over what they see on television and other marketing venues. We all are more inclined to believe the word of a friend over a company whom we know is out to make a profit. In working for that company, the salesperson is out to make a profit as well, but since we "know' them or have a more "personal" connection with them we are more likely to believe or buy (no pun intended) what they tell us about a product or service. This ability to engage the salesperson whom we view as a representative of the company, in a back and forth question and answer session is what will help to build brand equity and eventually brand loyalty, brand loyalty is where the money is this is why car manufacturers offer such good deals and rebates for customers who stay loyal to their brand. Brand loyalty can only occur after the customer has realized the value of the product or its brand equity, this value is then shared by the brand. To state it more plainly, I may love Hellmann's mayonnaise so much that I will buy only that brand. Because I now recognize the value of the mayonnaise, I am more inclined to position the Hellmann's brand name as a brand name I can trust and rely on.

Who Uses Social Networking

For as big as the world is, when we begin to talk to others quite often we uncover friends or relatives that we have in common with people we hardly know. When this occurs someone is sure to say "what a small world", the widespread use of the internet and social media has effectively made the world even smaller. Because the internet is a series or networks all tied together, we now have the capability of interacting either socially or in a business setting with people all over the world. The following is a short list of approximately how many people use social networking worldwide.

Country	Population	% of Population using social media
Brazil	185 million	69%
China	198 million	70%
France	62.2 million	50%
Germany	82.3 million	47%
India	1.15 billion	78%
Italy	58.3 million	46%
Russia	141 million	85%
United Kingdom	60.9 million	64%
United States	308 million	59%

If through social marketing a business owner can reach a tenth of the social

internet community of any country listed, they're doing really well.

How to Use Social Networking

Ok, so by looking a t the number of people using social networking sites one may reach the conclusion that it could be profitable to tap into this resource. The very next question is, "how exactly does one do that?" Before we tackle that question, lets address an easier topic; what not to do. The biggest no, no is to create a profile or blog that is not updated regularly. Let's step back for a minute, up to this point we have not even mentioned blogging. Blogging is a huge resource that many companies have begun tapping into. Most blogs are penned by ordinary people who are simply stating their opinion on a given subject or whatever comes to mind. As of late companies have begun to employ people as blog writers whose main purpose is to spread the good word about a company, product or service. I chose not to address blogging in this paper because there are so many sites devoted to bloggers it would go well beyond the scope of this paper. To create a profile on a networking site and then not monitor it or engage the public is nothing more than an electronic billboard which will yield. Another mistake not to make is consistently updating with new posts, but never engaging in conversation with your list of friends or followers. A marketer must develop a social aspect in which they comment on the status updates or tweets (posting on Twitter) of others and introduce posts which invite the comments of others.

The use of social media is not merely another tool in which to broadcast company updates. The Bowl Championship Series (BCS) which determines the sport's (football) national championship game for colleges found that out the hard way. Just this year they decided to hire a, Executive Director who as part of his first order of business created a Twitter feed and a FaceBook profile. The BCS then began posting tweets on Twitter and so called updates on FaceBook. All of the information was business related from the BCS to the public, incoming information was ignored. Big mistake. Once the public figured out the tactic, they began to receive massive amounts of the electronic equivalent of hate mail. Some of it because the company created a social network profile under the guise of being "social", but is was only a means of free advertising not intending to actually interact with the public. The majority of it being irritation over the companies long standing policies; which was further fueled by the audacity of the company to use social networking as a way to disseminate information et refusing to actually be social. They didn't value the public enough to listen to feedback. They were likened to everything from Balloon Boy to the KKK. They soon realized the severity of their mistake and began to work hard to reverse the negative images they perpetuated; and tried to learn how to interact in a more positive and productive way. There are many other sites that recognize the value of social networking sites; but the mishandling of these sites can do

more harm than good. He following is just a sample of sites connected to very popular brick & mortar stores that have somehow managed to miss the boat.

Store	Social marketing error
Abercrombie & Fitch	• No response to customers. • Not enough current holiday advertising.
Amazon	• No holiday specific ads. • No current updates.
Kohl's	• No holiday specific ads • Does not speak directly to customers.
Old Navy	• Sparse holiday messaging • Unanswered consumer complaints.
Target	• Does not actively update page. • Does not engage customers.

Now that we have covered what not to do, let's go over a few things that should be done. The following is not meant to be an all inclusive list; it is merely a starting point or guide. They suggestions can be used as a way to get started, however in promoting oneself in order to boost business you must be ever vigilant in looking for marketing opportunities.

1. Don't talk about yourself incessantly; provide links to other credible and useful resources.

2. Don't do social network marketing because everyone else is. Have a plan.

3. Create and post quality content.

4. Reach out to the bigger guys in your industry, become part of their industry specific communities. There's lots of experience and information to be gleaned from them.

5. Position yourself right in the thick of what consumers are passionate about.

6. Set up a blog, this may be time consuming; but nothing ventured nothing gained. Blogging is a very current and potent tool.

7. Don't be afraid to link to other blogs and websites, it will net you more traffic.

8. Claim your blog at Technorati, this will ensure that you are indexed with their blog search engine. Your updates will be broadcast across the network.

9. Subscribe to feeds and use RSS readers.

10. Join micro-communities relevant to your business.

As I stated the previous list is not to be considered the holy grail of social network marketing, it is just a few guidelines to help a business owner get on the road to success. Just as I have list of those who have missed the boat, I also have a list of those who seem to have found a combination of efforts that work for them.

Store	What they are doing right
Best Buy	• Exclusive Facebook applications to help with Christmas shopping. • Responds to customers.
Ebay	• Up to date sales promotions • Leads the conversation with customers.
JCPenney	• Responds quickly to customers. • Online sale promotions. • Does video posts. • Links to other resources for customers.
Toys R Us	• Celebrity endorsement. • Charity affiliation. • Discounts • Appeals to the nostalgia of parents. • Responds quickly to customers.
WalMart	• Create Cyber Week. • Features apps to support American troops. • Leads the conversation with customers. • Responds to customers. • Has current sales campaigns.

There is so much yet to learn and the sky really is the limit, as Google's Vice President of Engineering, Vic Gondotra so eloquently put it, "We are at the beginning of the beginning". Social network marketing is still very much in its infancy. There are those who believe this is nothing more than a passing fad, which is what others thought of the internet as well. According to Advertising Age, an article entitled; *Retailers Go Nuts for Social media in Holiday Marketing,* who referenced a survey done by BDO Seidman, More than half of all retailers will be using some form of social media marketing. This is up from just 4% in 2007. 76% say they will be using Facebook, 50% will use Twitter, 14% are planning on utilizing MySpace and another 14% will create video for YouTube. It seems that getting up close and personal with various forms of social networking has become a Web 2.0 skill that is very valuable to business owners.

As every other new or improved use for technology has shown, the benefits of such have spread across the business world to benefit almost everyone. Business owners get advertising and customer feedback for next to nothing, along with a decrease in their advertising spending. The consumer gets a retailer who is interested in how they feel; and consequently will address consumer issues. The entire economy benefits by new jobs that are created. There are more and more job postings for Web Editors, Online Editors, Social Networking Specialists, and various other titles

employers/businesses have chosen to call a new workforce that will keep the companies social networking sites updated. I see this as a win win situation.

Marketers say that "if used correctly social networking sites can be of tremendous value, allowing business to inform customers about activities within the company, creating a personal connection and giving the company more exposure." Charlie Wollberg a partner at Curve Detroit says, "If you don't have social media it is like having an unlisted phone number" No company wants or needs to be unlisted when it comes to building a business.

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