



Enterprising Rural Families™

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This newsletter is an instrument of the *Enterprising Rural Families: Making It Work* program of University of Wyoming Extension. For further information concerning the *Enterprising Rural Families* program or on-line course contact information@eRuralFamilies.org or go to <http://eRuralFamilies.org/>.

TIP OF THE MONTH:

HOW TO HAVE GOOD FOREMEN

Consider minimum criteria:

- Job orders: reading, understanding, delegating orders
- Communication skills: verbal - clarity over phone/radio; written—minimum to carry out processes where necessary
- Interpersonal communication: respectful, asks & answers questions effectively, clear instructions, checks for understanding, available to help
- Trainer: able to teach effectively, follows operating procedures
- Feedback: takes feedback openly, willing to grow and respond to supervisor

Make the opening available to all:

- Define the job description completely and carefully
- Define the qualifications to carry out the job description
- Give fair opportunity to all employees to apply. If necessary, translate into other languages used in the workplace
- Allow interviewees privacy and plenty of time to ask and answer questions. Discuss visions for advancement
- After interviews inform everyone of the process used and results obtained in an open meeting

Is Social Media Right for your Business?

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Consider this...

Nearly 70 percent of small businesses are either “somewhat” or “very likely” to use social media in the next 12 months, according to the research firm Techaisle. Of those businesses, 36 percent use Facebook, 35 percent use LinkedIn, and 24 percent use Twitter. Eighty-one percent have a website involving their company name and products. A few other statistics to highlight the impact of social media in today’s environment:

- ⇒ Over 80 percent of Americans use some type of social media;
- ⇒ There are now more than 800 million active Facebook users, with over 200 million added in 2011;
- ⇒ More than half of Facebook users log in every day;
- ⇒ Facebook is available in more than 70 languages.¹



What exactly is social media?

The term media refers to how people communicate and obtain information. Social media (typically applied to web-based and mobile technologies) encourages the creation and interchange of user-generated content. Since interaction is a two-way street, information must flow from readers back to the creator of the information. Social media is about establishing a relationship between your business and your customers. Stan Skrabut, instructional technology educational specialist for the University of Wyoming Extension, recommends a business should invest in a Facebook page dedicated to the business, a Twitter account where followers can see instant news and updates, and a YouTube account which is an ideal platform to show how-to tips or product testing videos to potential or current customers (S. Skrabut, personal communication, October 20, 2012).

What social media is not?

There are conflicting opinions on the value of social media for the family business. Mark Cuban, outspoken owner of the Dallas Mavericks professional basketball team and a “shark” on the reality show *Shark Tank*, had this to say about social media; specifically Facebook:



*“Facebook is what it is. **It’s a time waster.** That’s not to say we don’t engage, we do. We click, share, and comment because it’s mindless and easy. Its best purpose in life is as a huge time suck platform that we use to keep up with friends, interests and stuff.”²*

Regardless of one’s view, when people are shopping online they have what is called “Commercial Intent”. They are looking for something they want to purchase. It is no different from the days of searching through the Yellow Pages for a business that is selling what you want. The Commercial Intent is to find those who provide what you are researching.

Commercial Intent is not prevalent in social media because the overwhelming percentage of its users are not there for shopping. They are there for conversation and interaction with others. The important thing to remember when creating social media for the business is to **always** redirect customers to your original site. If you mention a new product on Twitter, a host of offers via Facebook, or commercials on YouTube, it is imperative to link your customers to the main website to maximize potential “conversions” and sales.³

How can social media help the business?

Social media is not the end-all, be-all of your business. It’s not the magic bullet that will allow you to take a struggling business to the height of success simply by displaying your Twitter or Facebook icon. But what social media can do is make you a better company by allowing you to listen, react, and promote faster, more efficiently, and to a greater customer base than ever before.

What can your business achieve through social media?

Engages the ‘connected’ shopper. Consumers are savvy about where and from whom they purchase products and will take the time to research online before making a purchase. By having a social media presence that is both engaging and engaged, it helps reassure consumers that your business is reputable and trustworthy.

Provides greater brand exposure. If your brand can capitalize on the nature of social media by providing great content and engaging and interacting with your audience in a way that leads to building a “community of interest” that people want to be involved with, then your brand will get a great boost.

Utilizes the next generation of word-of-mouth marketing. What better way to interact with new potential consumers than via people who have already experienced what you offer. When your social media presence starts to generate conversation and reactions such as likes, shares, tweets, or pins, then you get their approval as well as a gateway for their friends or family to get to know more about your brand.

Provides transparency. Social media is an open book. If someone likes you, then great, everyone can see it. If someone doesn’t like you and mentions something negative about your brand or experience, then this too is available to all. Many successful businesses use this as an advantage to show how in-sync they are by replying and finding a resolution to a problem. This shows that your business has integrity and values interaction, criticism, and debate and more importantly knows how to deal with it.

Opens up conversation. The users of your brand or experience are the best people to learn from when it comes to making things better. By asking questions about their experience with the company, you will get an understanding as to what consumers are looking for. You will also be able to gauge how to improve things in the future. Social media for small business success is truly about listening as opposed to marketing!

Your ‘brand’ goes far beyond your business name and logo. It is your entire image and the way that you are perceived by your customers. It’s your reputation and it’s the emotions and attitudes that are associated with everything you do, and all that your business stands for.



Aids customer service. Many businesses face the same questions time and time again when it comes to customer service. Use social media to answer those questions. By doing this you can demonstrate the company's responsiveness. Also, others within the community can offer answers and support to new consumers who have perhaps experienced the same issues themselves. This provides a great way to build brand loyalty.⁴

The bottom line is know your business

One of the keys to the successful use of social media is knowing your own business. Play to your strengths. If a large company, focus on using social media to connect with a larger audience in order to get national exposure for your brand and product(s). If you're a small, local family business, use social media to build a dedicated, loyal customer base by offering the personal touch that only a local, family business can provide.

If your product is primarily used by other businesses, use social media to network with other businesses to place your product in the commercial marketplace. If your business offers a product or service most often used by individual consumers, use social media to develop customers who see your brand as quality, trendy, or up-to-the-minute.⁵

Knowledge of your business's strengths, target market, brand, and niche is an essential part of a successful social media strategy. Using social media in today's business climate is as important as learning how to use email for business was 15 years ago. Family businesses have the opportunity to embrace social media--the possibilities it brings and the challenges it presents--in order to remain profitable and relevant in an ever increasing online social world.

References:

¹ Techaisle. (04 March 2011). *U.S. small business social media usage*. Retrieved 01/05/2013 from: <http://www.slideshare.net/techaisle/techaisle-us-small-business-social-media-usage>

² Cuban, M. (19 November 2012). *What I really think about facebook*. Retrieved 01/05/2013 from: <http://blogmaverick.com/2012/11/19/what-i-really-think-about-facebook/>

³ Ryan, D. (25 April 2011). *The importance of social networking to your business*. Retrieved 11/12/2012 from: <http://www.seoconsult.com/index.php/seoblog/social-networking-and-search-engine-optimization/the-importance-of-social-networking-to-your-business.html>.

⁴ Debono, J. (30 March 2012). *13 reasons why using social media for business is non negotiable*. Retrieved 11/12/2012 from: <http://socialmediatoday.com/james-debono/480927/13-reasons-why-using-social-media-business-non-negotiable>.

⁵ Bosari, J. (08 August 2012). *The developing role of social media in the modern business world*. Retrieved 12/03/2012 from: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/moneywisewomen/2012/08/08/the-developing-role-of-social-media-in-the-modern-business-world/>



Selecting An Icon For Your Social Media

Choosing the right social media icons for your site is important. This is the way you draw attention to your different accounts. Sure, people may find you on the different sites, but it's easier if you help them by including these icons somewhere on your site. There are literally thousands of different icons you can use, so it's important to choose the one that fits your site the best. This will depend on the site you have, what you use it for, and what's important for you.



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