

Online Social Media

Internet Basics

Internet Presence:

- Attractive Web Presence
- Relevant or Interesting Homepage
- Updated Your Web Pages
- Consider Podcasts and YouTube Videos on Your Site
- Consider Having a Blog and/or Twitter Feed on Your Site

Internet Outreach:

- Promote Your Site and URL (forum postings, blog comments, links, ads, e-mails)
- Publish an E-zine and Send Out Action Alerts (not too frequently, though)
- Build an E-zine and Action Alert E-mail Database
- Write and Edit *Wikipedia* Articles
- Contribute Content to Other Websites

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- Wikis (*Wikipedia* and *Philosopedia*),
- Blogs (Huffington Post, Friendly Atheist)
- Micro blogs (Twitter)
- Social networks (Facebook and MySpace)
- Forums (Yahoo groups)
- Review sites (where users write reviews, including Amazon and the Internet Movie Database)
- Video and photo-sharing sites (You Tube and Webshots)
- Social bookmarking or news sharing sites (del.icio.us).

But you need to discover *where* in this universe of social media your target community is to be found. Ask the question: how does my target community receive or consume news? Also be aware that the concept of “target community” doesn’t quite equal “target audience.” This is because social media is interactive (community) while traditional media is passive (audience).

The basic rule with social media is to actively go where your audience is; don’t expect them to come to you. But when using social media for PR purposes, don’t be purely self-promotional. Use the 1/3 rule. That is, devote 1/3 of your time to promoting yourself, 1/3 to promoting others (such as providing interesting links to other people’s content), and 1/3 to just socializing.

In social networking, quirky and offbeat news works best. There are social news sharing sites where you can submit such material. But, again, use the 1/3 rule when you do so. Among the social news sharing sites are Digg, del.icio.us (Yahoo), StumbleUpon, Reddit, and newsvine. Search engines are attracted to these.

To monitor social media, so you'll know what they're saying about you, your competitors, and your subject area, use search engines like Technorati, Google Blog Search, search.twitter.com, and Google Alerts. Search for news stories using Google News. Use Twitter Search to find conversations about you, about your competitors, or of interest to you. A free Twitter service is Mr. Tweet.

Monitoring Social Media

THE TOP 10 CONVERSATIONS TO LISTEN IN ON (Reacting to these is a form of direct-to-consumer PR)

1. Complaint. (At least show you're listening, but you can do better than just that. You can respond affirmatively and turn enemies into friends. But if a complaint is merely venomous and you can't make any headway, as at a cocktail party, it's OK to simply walk away. Consumers are able to tell if a complainer is simply full of venom.)
2. Compliment. (Say "thank you" when you can. Also, provide links on your website to the best compliments or list your favorite tweets on your Twitter channel. These constitute unsolicited testimonials and thus have more credibility than solicited ones. They're very powerful in marketing.)
3. Problem. (This is where people are trying to solve a problem on their own or with peer help without calling your help line. Watching these can allow you to look for customer issues before they become complaints. And helping people with these problems becomes an example of your lining up for them instead of them lining up to complain to you. Customers can be forgiving if you show you care, and if you follow through. But it's important to respond quickly.)
4. Question or Inquiry. (This is where people are trying to get an answer on their own without calling your help line. Same sort of response as above is appropriate.)
5. Crisis. (Catch things before they go viral. You can kill a crisis if you respond quickly. Douse the first tree that catches on fire. Don't wait for the whole forest to go up in flames. To do this, remember that social media doesn't take the weekend off like traditional media does. Watch for spikes in coverage associated with crisis words.)
6. Campaign Effect. (What the buzz is following your most recent media campaign.)
7. Competitor. (Listen to conversations about your competitors. After all, they are listening to conversations about you. But the goal here is to listen in, not look for opportunities to trash your competitors. Don't stalk your competitors or look for opportunities to bash them online. Treat the whole situation more like a cocktail party. If you wouldn't do it at a cocktail party, don't do it online. To help with this, and guide staff properly, develop an internal social media policy that explains how to handle various situations.
8. The Crowd. (This is the general industry conversation. What are people talking about? Find out what's important to people relevant to the work you do. Also, learn what your market share

is of the general conversation and try to grow that. Furthermore, develop new ideas (products and services) based on what the crowd is talking about. Knowing the crowd also helps you position your products and services better as you do marketing.

9. Influencer. (How influential are the individuals who are talking about you vs. who are the cranks? Know who your niche influencers are. “Small is the new big.” Learn who the top influencers are regarding your brand.)

10. Point of Need. (What are people looking for? Find the needs to fill them. Listen, don’t pitch. Look for the *actual* opportunity to help, not just general opportunities. Make contact at the right point of need.)

Social networking is for the long haul. So be prepared to put in the time.

How to Make a Viral Online Video

1. In terms of subject and content, make your video stand out by being controversial, quirky, cute, funny, or amazing. It may contain fascinating information. It might startle the viewer. But whatever makes it unique, the finished product needs to be remarkable enough that people will feel moved to pass it on.

2. To be at your most creative it is necessary to lighten up, not think about the matter too hard, and not take yourself too seriously. Our most inspired moments often come when we aren’t in such earnest, and our best ideas usually emerge like a spontaneous joke. Moreover, when you try too hard, the finished product can show an excess of intensity.

3. Be honest. For example, don’t make a video that poses as an unsolicited endorsement by somebody else or that contains fake consumer reactions or on-the-street comments. (The only exception would be if your purpose is clearly satirical.) The Net community is extremely savvy to fakery and will rat you out as soon as they catch you. Then the only thing going viral will be your bad reputation.

4. While either homemade or professional quality is fine, plan and script your video, do several takes to get it right, and then edit the material tightly. If the main content happens to be some candid, unplanned incident, you still need to edit it carefully for best effect.

5. Keep your video’s length to between thirty seconds and two minutes. The goal is to get attention, tease, and titillate, not tell your whole story.

6. When posting your video online, give serious attention to its text description, using the best keywords for attracting its audience. The description should be interesting and accurate, clear and specific. Also, categorize your video properly so people can easily find it.

7. Consider making your video part of a series. This can build interest. You can also attach other elements: such as products like T-shirts and mugs, events like public gatherings or publicity stunts, or an associated advertising campaign.

8. Take an experimental approach and be persistent. It will likely take quite a few tries before you come up with something that hits. So make a number of videos and learn from your mistakes and small successes.

9. Read the comments that people post about your video in order to get viewer feedback. But don't take offense at negative comments and certainly don't respond. Moreover, never delete negative comments. It helps your video's popularity when people are talking about it, no matter what they are saying. Seek out other feedback as well. And encourage discussion in order to build buzz.

10. Promote your video like crazy! This begins with creating a link to it from your website, announcing it in your newsletter or e-newsletter, and adding a link to your e-mail signature (as well as the signature lines of other people in your group). But also spread the word among your online social media contacts, post messages about the video on e-mail lists and online forums, and inform interested bloggers about it or post relevant blog comments that include a link. Keep your eye out for other promo opportunities as they develop. Videos don't go viral by themselves.

Fred Edwards * United Coalition of Reason
www.unitedcor.org * info@unitedcor.org * 866.897.7248