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Advertising & Marketing

Social media marketing strategy: Just start

South Florida Business Journal - by [Jeff Zbar](#)
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When creators of GreenBusinessAlliance.com sought to build buzz around the corporate social responsibility site, they turned to social media marketing.

The site hosts a blog. It has links to its Twitter and LinkedIn accounts. The three feed content to each other, focusing on news about sustainable business practices. A recent example is an entry this week on the green practices at the presidential inauguration, which played on the blog and was linked into via Twitter.

Such simple practices can deliver big social marketing results, said Danielle Leitch, executive VP of client strategy with MoreVisibility. The Boca Raton firm, which specializes in online marketing, search optimization and social media, created the **Green Business Alliance** effort.

"Social media can be complex, but it doesn't have to be intimidating," said Leitch, whose firm is handling a similar program for the **Dairy Council of California's** Fitness Challenge. "In the right environment, it can be a powerful marketing tool."

Social media services have gained importance in the business marketing arena. Yet, companies can stray in their use of the applications. Some feel they need to have a presence in every tool available – like Twitter, LinkedIn, a blog, YouTube or any of a host of other services.

Instead, executives like Leitch say the best practice is to focus on a few applications best suited to a company's specific needs – and market aggressively across those platforms. For example, if a business-to-consumer company can benefit from visual product descriptions and demonstrations, creating a YouTube channel and embedding it on the company Web site can entice visitors with video. If a business-to-business sales organization needs to maximize its lead-generation effort, creating subgroups on LinkedIn can build a community – with the sales organization at its nexus. Twitter can be used to distribute promotional codes to drive sales or site traffic.

Applications used can vary by the target demographic, Leitch said. Facebook has found increasing acceptance by those in their late 20s through baby boomers. MySpace can be strong for younger audiences.

Existing digital assets, like company or product video and audio, can be deployed across blogs and other services. A user can tie in partners or sponsors to drive advertising revenue or build relationships, she said.

"You can double-dip in terms of having paid marketing simultaneously with your social media," Leitch said. "There are dozens of channels under the social media umbrella. You have to figure out who you are and what you want to get out of social media. You can introduce products to the market or create a buzz through viral activity, like people forwarding links. The results reflect the effort and how targeted the service is to the user's needs."

Social media, in many ways, is comparable to public relations. It often doesn't drive next-day sales, but builds brand awareness over time, Leitch said. Companies using it should be proactive – and patient, she added.

"The channels aren't difficult to figure out. What's more challenging is the strategy," she said. "You need a good strategy for how you're going to use these things. You do all this,

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and then 'now what?' That's backward."

Scan your industry peers' and competitors' Web sites to see what they may be using, said Jay Berkowitz, CEO of Ten Golden Rules, a Boca Raton-based social media and marketing company. See whether or how they're using the services to complement other marketing efforts. Read for style and how messages are crafted. In social media, blatant salesmanship can be taboo. Instead, giving advice, sharing insights or highlighting news or industry events gives the writer or company a halo of expertise within a "microcommunity," he said.

Choose a service to focus on, he said. If you get a lot of requests to join friends on LinkedIn or Facebook, those may be the best solutions, he said. Create an account, fill out a robust profile, find peers, customers, clients, vendors or prospects on the service – and invite them to join you, he said.

The key is to start – now, he said.

"Write a blog. Create a LinkedIn account. Do something. Anything," Berkowitz said. "Don't just sit there feeling the Internet and social media passed you by."

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