

Cutting Edge Internet Success: Marketing and Self-Promotion Through Newly Popular Internet Tools

By Maggie Sutherland

The days of using door-to-door sales and snail mail newsletters for marketing are permanently futile. Considering that the majority of people in the United States are now plugged in to the Internet, companies and individuals hoping to promote their business interests must now turn to it simply as a chief means for keeping up with competitors. However, to truly succeed in this vast and unknown cyber world, you cannot stop at the bare minimum of Internet use. Websites and email accounts are mere staples now, not cutting-edge tools. Stepping outside one's comfort zone is a must for adequate business promotion, by investing in such free growing Internet resources as blogs, podcasts, Youtube, Myspace, Facebook, and LinkedIn. And contrary to common beliefs, these applications do not just appeal to the young. In fact, studies show that the fastest growing demographic in these areas are persons aged 25 years or older.

When executed properly, a business can harness Internet cutting-edge tools so that they essentially run themselves, saving time while simultaneously exposing your business to those who might find it on the Web. A blog for example allows you to maintain running updates about your business. In her book entitled *Red Hot Internet Publicity*, Penny

Sansevieri reports that "Bloggers have gone from on-line journals and opinion pieces to newsworthy opinion drivers, and in many cases, blogs are the most reliable places to get an accurate assessment of a news item, product, or service." On a blog, she explains, you can post important current and chronological information such as new products or new policies as well as established aspects of your business that make you attractive to customers. Blogs are an important tandem to your company's website because the more often you post on your blog, the more exposed your company is on the Internet, which leads to Google hits and other Web publicity.

You can set up a blog for free (with friendly how-to guides) on websites like www.blogger.com. In addition to creating your own blog, you should investigate the blogs of your competitors or any business with some overlapping interests. You can actually comment on other business' blogs. By employing this tactic, you strategically increase your exposure by appearing on already-established blogs in the appropriate industry. You can find blogs in the right category on archival sites like www.globeofblogs.com or www.technorati.com. Keep in mind that the more active you are on your blogs and other people's blogs, the



Maggie Sutherland is an editor/scribe with Emerson Consulting Group Inc., which transforms companies and business experts into "thought leaders." Contact her at 978-371-0442 or inq@thoughtleading.com or by visiting www.thoughtleading.com.

more visible you will become on the Internet.

In your quest for extensive Internet publicity, you should also stay open-minded to alternate types of media such as podcasts, which are a type of audio blog. Podcasts and blogs have a relationship similar to that of books-on-tape and books in the sense that audio listening can be easier than manual reading. Podcasts are digital-media files that make information more accessible in an audio format. You can record yourself promoting your company or product (using an internal or external microphone on your computer) and then post it on your website, blog or on iTunes (for free, by the way!). Simply recording yourself reading the exact information that you post on your blog and then converting it to podcast format gives your customers the book-on-tape

advantage. If you post your podcast on iTunes and your customers subscribe to it (also for free), every time you add another podcast, their computers automatically download the new content. It's as if you're sending all interested parties an audio newsletter full of advertisement without any of the heavy lifting.

Youtube is the now well-known popular online archive of videos. Youtube can be a beneficial resource in a business for educational information as well as for exposure. For example, if you do not think that you have any business information that can transfer into a resourceful video format, utilize Youtube for your research. Find out there if anything pertaining to your business is already posted and then sponge this information. Also, relevant Youtube videos are simple to post on your blog (just copy and paste the link). Most beneficial to your company, however, would be to create your own Youtube video. You can set up a free account that provides you with the ability to upload, subscribe to videos, archive your favorite videos, and comment on videos (similar to commenting on a blog). Obviously a rock band would find Youtube more beneficial than a law firm but keep in mind that you are not limited to home-video style uploads. Things like Powerpoint slideshows and news conferences are easily adapted to Youtube format.

Two more networking resources that you might consider are Facebook and Myspace. On both of these you can create a personal profile that extends to other Facebook and Myspace users. These social networking devices are usually associated with teenagers, yet Facebook hosts 60 million active users and is the sixth most trafficked site on the Internet. One in four Americans has a Myspace account and 85% of these people are of voting age. On your Facebook or Myspace account, you can create a brochure or resume that publicizes any information you deem important to your business. You can also connect with potential customers that you know who are members or random members. And of course, you can link these accounts to your website or blog in order to produce maximum Internet visibility.

Self-promotion through the Internet is not just limited to advertising products and services: as an employer or an individual looking for work, there are more options than the typical job search engine that provides merely a place to post a resume. LinkedIn, a professional network for employers and employees, offers an opportunity for referencing as well as networking. As a LinkedIn member, you can research the type of person who works for a company at which you are applying by viewing their profiles. As well, you can see who-knows-who and who-works-where. LinkedIn provides organizational benefits because you can store all of your business contacts in one place on your personal account.

As a member of this network, you are given various advantages: Often, companies now post job openings *only* on LinkedIn because of both its reputation and professionalism. Thus being a member here comes with obvious advantages. As an employer, the ability to view a profile with references affords you a more personal understanding of a potential employee: you can gauge who would be a good fit for your company instead of leafing through a stack of faceless resumes.

The most effective way to promote your business and increase publicity today is to include one or more of these cutting-edge Internet tools and thus extend yourself through as many of the various branches of Internet resources as possible. Although it might at first seem that you're spreading yourself too thin, your presence aboard these online tools will likely generate an acute focus within prominent search engines such as Google and Yahoo and others. These revolutionary media vehicles will magnify your business on the Internet. You'll attain complete control over the information you provide as well as the techniques you are using to promote your business. It may seem as if tackling these projects would take too much time but in actuality you'll be pleased to learn that you'll basically be duplicating the same information over and over but in difference formats. So give your customers and intended market no excuse to avoid stumbling over you and your business, and most importantly the promotional business information you wish them to know.