

Web 2.0: Companies Gain Competitive Edge with Social Networking Tools

In a world that is becoming increasingly digitized, maintaining corporate reputations through press releases, advertising and important relationships through lunches and phone calls may no longer be enough. Social media has opened up an entirely new way for people to communicate.

Blogs, podcasting, Facebook, to name just a few, have shifted business and personal communication from monologue to dialogue. The ability to publish content is becoming ever more accessible.

With such an enormous volume of information being created and exchanged daily, participating, monitoring and facilitating content flow can help businesses gain a competitive edge by actively engaging with key audiences on a 24/7/365 basis.

Learning about and utilizing these new tools and technologies is essential to establish a dynamic, interactive and truly connected Web presence to preserve and protect reputations, maintain and strengthen relationships and deliver business results.

Here are a few ways to participate

Blogging: An interactive Web tool designed by an individual or company that provides commentary or news on a particular topic on a regular basis. Readers are encouraged to comment and

share opinions.

Businesses can use blogs to spark interest within their target audience or to engage employees to communicate directly with customers, stakeholders and fellow workers. Sharing thoughts with the broader market, in addition to discussing product(s) is essential to maintain brand awareness and heighten credibility.



Podcasting: Posting or transmitting an audio or video file which is downloaded to be viewed or heard by other Internet users. This is a creative way to publish information and promote product (s) and services through demonstrations, interviews and presentations. Podcasting allows the audience to instantly connect with your company's message.

Facebook: One of the fastest growing social networking sites. Users can create a profile, join networks and connect to a wide variety of people worldwide. To create a "corporate presence," do so by

adding a group where people can connect to a page and become a "fan of" your company.

There are many more social media options to choose from beyond the few mentioned. Some include: MySpace, LinkedIn, Ning, Flickr, Wikis, YouTube, Twitter and Bebo.

Do your research and determine which communities are most beneficial for your company to join.

Consistency is Key

From usernames to images to core content, be consistent in everything you do, in every channel in which you participate.

Be certain to integrate social networks with company Web sites. Leveraging your online presence multiplies your exposure and optimizes your position with search engines.

A company's public relations resource. Whether in-house or contracted, can and should develop a comprehensive Web 2.0 strategy to ensure you achieve and maintain a competitive edge.

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