



Your Web Coach, Christine Chubenko:

Social Media

by Christine Chubenko | for Oakland Business Review
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Lately you can't open a magazine, newspaper or website without seeing the phrase "social media". Generally, you see the names Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube very close behind. And there is more – oh so much more. So what are these and do we really need them? I'm on the Board of Directors for the Royal Oak Chamber of Commerce and I chair a newly created committee called the "IT Committee." The purpose of this committee is to determine what social media is useful and appropriate to use in the Chamber's website so that our membership has optimal networking resources available to them. If you take a look at this comprehensive list of Social Media/Networking sites - <http://traffikd.com/social-media-websites/> - you'll see an incredible selection that covers just about every topic. You'll also notice that social media actually has categories: networking, news and blogs. There may be more but that is all I've found so far. I'm sure you've also noticed that there is a seminar just about every day somewhere in your area whose topic is social media and how it can improve your business.

The most popular programs that have caught the eye of the business community are Facebook and Twitter. In my opinion, Facebook is like a senior yearbook that has erupted into this vibrant microcosm. It is also the biggest time-sucker I have ever experienced. I go into Facebook telling myself that I'm only going to respond to the person who sent me a message and 2 hours later it feels as if I've had a Vulcan Mind Meld because I now know everything about all my FB friends including the fact that someone's daughter is on a gingham bandana kick. And Twitter? Given that you have 140 characters (not words) to tell the world what you are doing, I fail to see how that could possibly be a business tool.

Yet – these programs are being used in very interesting ways that certainly have my attention. For instance, Daren Bossenberger (ideationsigns.com) has made the leap to become Facebook savvy because he sees it as being his business' most potent testimonial. Facebook offers businesses and organizations a slightly different setup that allows them to have "fans" rather than "friends". So his very satisfied clients write glowing recommendations on his wall (Facebook speak) and those who are interested in his services can read his profile and hear unsolicited kudos from his clients. If they want more information, they can go to his website and see his portfolio, but first, they get to know *him*. Isn't a good relationship at the core of good business? Facebook also allows photos and videos to be posted and these media are being used more frequently by businesses.

I'm also surprised at the potential of Twitter. The other night I was at a Chamber function and I was talking to Howard Collens (GallowayCollens.com) and several hours later he tweeted about it. Good for the Chamber. Good for the venue. Good for me. In fact, during a previous event someone with whom I was talking was tweeting to his followers (Twitter speak) that he was at this event and they should check it out.

Yes, this application is mobile and will run on your PDAs and cell phones. In a world that likes its immediate gratification, this is not a bad gig. I was wondering how many of his followers were within a short distance of that venue and decided that it was a grand idea to stop by and check it out. There are some exciting possibilities here.

I certainly have my work cut out for me – there is a lot of excitement wrapped around these applications and there is a lot of untapped marketing potential in them. I've had my Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts set up for a while – perhaps it's time I actually use them!

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