

# EFFECTIVE SOCIAL NETWORK AND MICRO-BLOG MANAGEMENT: WHAT EVERY PR PROFESSIONAL NEEDS TO KNOW

**A**s the world of social media continues its expansion, one thing is becoming clear: more and more public relations and marketing professionals are relying on micro-blogs and social networks to fuel their initiatives.

Here are some of the ways PR and marketing professionals incorporate social media into their business models.

- ▶▶ **Customer service tool:** field client complaints (and praise) as it happens, in real time.
- ▶▶ **Brand awareness:** spread word-of-mouth and gather together a community of those who have a vested interest in the brand.
- ▶▶ **Promotional tool:** distribute offers, discounts, and incentives.
- ▶▶ **Live events/breaking news:** highlight a conference, announce a new product, or send updates to a large amount of people in real-time.
- ▶▶ **File sharing:** tools such as Tweet Cube allow you to send documents to your list.
- ▶▶ **Monitor trends:** paint a minute-by-minute or day-to-day picture of the trends for a given niche.

## Where should you listen?

All micro-blogs and social networks are designed for in-the-now usage, such as sending status updates; connecting with business associates and friends; and sharing and distributing online content. Whatever your reason, you'll need to do a little research up front to see which applications meet your business needs. But as a rule of thumb, always follow your audience.

If you are new to the social media arena you may well be wondering which applications are worthy of your time. After all, your online audience can be found using: blogs; micro-blogs such as Twitter; social networks; message boards; podcasts; consumer opinion sites; and video and photo sharing communities, such as Flickr and Youtube.

Here is just few of the social networking and micro-blogging out of hundreds you might want to consider, if you haven't already:

- ▶▶ **Facebook** – a social media platform that allows users to connect with friends, upload pictures, create fan pages, and share links and videos.
- ▶▶ **Flickr** – an online application that creates community around management and sharing of photos.
- ▶▶ **Hi5** – one of the world's largest social networking sites.
- ▶▶ **Jaiku** – a place for people from all over the world to share their activity streams and breaking news.
- ▶▶ **LinkedIn** – a social network that lets you connect with other professionals in your field.
- ▶▶ **MySay** – a platform that allows you to send micro-voice messages via the web rather than traditional textual messages.
- ▶▶ **Twitter** – connects people from all over the world with common interests via "tweets."
- ▶▶ **Yammer** – a micro-blogging site used for closed internal communications

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### Best practices for utilizing social networks and micro-blogs

So you think you are ready to jump on board and start utilizing micro-blogging and social networking in your public relations and marketing initiatives? Not so fast. First, you need to do the hard work of figuring out how social media participation can best advance your marketing and communication goals. In most cases social networking and micro-blogging don't stand tall alone – their impact is magnified by your blog, and your other online and offline initiatives.

Once your strategy is in place, these best practices can help you get the most from your efforts.

1. **Build a strong network.** This doesn't mean you have to follow everyone and anyone. Try to build rapport with influentials within your niche and connect with individuals with whom you share a common interest or bond. Twitter Local is just one of the many applications that can help you start connecting with people and organizations you might know well.
2. **Time your micro-blogging updates with those of your official blog or website.** It will give you a legitimate reason to post and help spread the word about any other activities in a resourceful manner.
3. **Make it personal.** If you use social media for personal reasons, this part's easy. If you are contributing from a corporate angle, you can still let your personality shine through, just be sure to balance the mix of messages.
4. **Post with some regularity.** Often PR professionals wonder how they can get and maintain a decent enough following. If whatever you are saying is stale or boring, and if you don't interact with others on the site, people aren't going to want to keep up with you – so keep posts fresh and interesting.
5. **Don't worry so much about ranking;** produce quality content instead. A person's influence on many of these sites is directly linked to how often they post or their number of friends. As a result, some users can tend to pile on the updates and invitations without giving much thought to the worthiness of the content or relationship.

If you've established and maintained a profile as part of a professional strategy and don't feel comfortable sharing intimate details about yourself, don't. Rule of thumb: don't post information that you wouldn't want your clients, colleagues or potential employers to know.

## Balancing work/life identity: the case for transparency

Managing social media goes beyond mere physical maintenance. You must also manage your identity.

If you've established a profile as part of a professional strategy and aren't comfortable sharing intimate details about yourself, don't. Rule of thumb: don't post information that you wouldn't want your clients, colleagues or potential employers to know.

If you still want to maintain an online persona garnered towards your personal life, consider setting up two separate accounts. Then use the strategies outlined in this white paper to help you keep track of both. Just be sure to maintain transparency and state your objectives in each profile – this way you're less likely to have to field questions if a client sees a status message that's not particularly business-like.

## Tips for managing your time

The average person belongs to five to seven social networks and/or micro-blogging sites. Add to that the umpteenth things that need accomplishing throughout the day, and things can get a little hairy. Save your sanity by following these simple rules.

1. **Limit your participation to just a few key social networks or micro-blogs.** With so many options to choose from, it's easy to go a little overboard with the online profiles. It's best to stick with a couple of sites where you know you'll make the most impact and receive the most return.
2. **Don't be afraid to delete some profiles.** It's better to be committed to a select few sites and manage them well rather than fritter away time – a resource you could spend doing more productive work.
3. **Avoid the clutter** and only post or follow what is of significance or of sincere interest. Otherwise, you might wind up virtually six feet under in alerts.
4. **Give yourself a time limit and stick to it.** You can't do it all. If you only have a half-hour to devote each day, then limit yourself to that period.
5. **Consider setting up an RSS feed or linking multiple profiles** through a common platform. It can save you valuable time and energy when it comes to updating your status, profiles, and tracking content.

## Tools that save time

In addition to your standard RSS feed or the countless third party add-ons, and site-specific resources available, such as TweetScan or TweetDeck, you might want to check out one of these other applications. They are designed to help you listen to and manage your social media and micro-blogging content more effectively.

- ▶▶ **FriendFeed** – create custom feeds of the content your friends and family are sharing.
- ▶▶ **Hellotxt** – update your status and check the stats of your friends with one click.
- ▶▶ **Ping.fm** – update your status on multiple sites without having to login to each individual network.
- ▶▶ **Plaxo** – find and connect with friends and family, share and discover online content, then upload to a Outlook, Mac, or your mobile phone.
- ▶▶ **Posty** – write a post and then deliver it to a microblog or site of your choice.
- ▶▶ **Proflactic** – pull together all of your profiles from over 190 networks or upload the addresses of custom sites.
- ▶▶ **Sendible** – connect with all of your email, mobile, and social networking contacts anytime, anywhere.

## Social media: what guidance to provide to employees

In recent months, businesses looking to enter the social media arena have questioned how they can get a better handle on employee usage of social media. Corporate communicators often bear some of the responsibility for setting employee policies and monitoring use. To start:

1. Accept that employees are going to use social media (both professionally and privately). Teach them the appropriate things to say when representing the company.
2. Lead by example and demonstrate the productive use of social tools.
3. Monitor what your employees and others are saying about your company on blogs, social networks, and other sites that emerge.

## About Us

BurrellesLuce helps communication professionals maximize their media relations results through a full range of planning, monitoring and measurement services. Besides delivering content, BurrellesLuce 2.0, also enables clients to target and connect with journalists and bloggers, monitor the media for coverage, and measure and understand the impact of their outreach efforts. Founded in 1888 and headquartered in Livingston, New Jersey, BurrellesLuce has offices throughout the United States.

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## Contact us

To find out more about BurrellesLuce media relations planning, monitoring and measurement services, please contact: [info@burrellesluce.com](mailto:info@burrellesluce.com) or **800.361.1160**