

# INSIGHT

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# A lasting footprint

*Experts weigh in on how to leverage the power of digital networking*

THE OFT HEARD PHRASE, “what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas,” doesn’t really hold true anymore thanks to social media and the revolution of technology.

With the click of a share button, a photo, status update or basically anything can be shared across social network platforms in a fraction of a second for the world to see.

For power-networkers who use these tools daily to reach out to prospects and clients, this new way of life can prove incredibly powerful when done well. It’s also potentially disastrous when done poorly. For business leaders and their employees, keeping social media accounts updated and active has become a business must.

Greg Linnemanstons never met a networking opportunity he couldn’t take advantage of to identify prospects and help his company’s inbound marketing business grow. He relies heavily on social media not only to increase his reach, but to

reinforce the company’s standing with Google.

Social media networking is an addition, not a replacement, to traditional networking, he says.

“It’s part of a comprehensive approach to first make sure that Google does not miss anything we are doing,” says Linnemanstons, president of Weidert Group Inc.

While the giant social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are part of Weidert Group’s overall strategy, the business-focused LinkedIn has become Linnemanstons’ platform of choice.

For Linnemanstons, LinkedIn is used to vet people and companies Weidert Group may pursue as prospects. Its functionality has become an integrated part of how the company does business.

When someone fills out a form on Weidert Group’s website, the first thing Linnemanstons does is research them on LinkedIn and then look at the company’s webpage.

“This way I form an opinion of if they are a qualified lead and should pursue them,” he says. “If they seem legitimate and if there is lots of well-developed professional profiles



that represent their people, I will be more interested in pursuing them.”

When looking to network with professionals, the first tool many people turn to is LinkedIn. While it’s easy to make connections just by sending a request to connect, experts in this field say virtual networking should incorporate in-person networking techniques as well.

“LinkedIn is still a preferred business networking platform and connecting with someone should be personable just as if you were connecting with them in person,” says Susan Finco, owner and president of Leonard & Finco Public Relations. “Sending a personal message with the invitation engages you with that person and shows you are more genuine in wanting to connect with them.”

LinkedIn allows you to see other professionals within an industry or



GREG LINNEMANSTONS



SUSAN FINCO



AMANDA BETTS

company you want to network with, as well as many of their connections. Finco says this is a great tool to use when introducing yourself to a hub of professionals.

“When you reach out to someone who might not know who you are directly, you should mention a person who the both of you might know,” Finco says. “It’s all about taking that personal connection you would make with an in-person networking event, and carrying it over to the virtual and social side of networking.”

A way to promote a business through social networking is making it visible to the Google eye. The more a company posts relevant content, the more Google will pick up on this.

However, Amanda Betts with Stellar Blue Technologies says that if you post frequently every day, you are competing with your own content. Some platforms, like Twitter, are more lenient, however.

“There is definitely a science to timing when it comes to social media,” says Amanda Betts, marketing director for Stellar Blue Technologies. “The two biggest mistakes we always see are a company or person who never posts anything, or the other end of the spectrum when someone posts too much.”

Another key component of making a company more visible to prospective networkers comes from the personal side of social media. When a business makes a post, the best thing that can happen is if followers and people with their personal accounts, share and promote that post.

While some promotion of your company or brand is important, Betts says 70 percent of content shouldn’t be about you. It should instead be something that is fun and engaging like tips or tricks or “did you know” posts to create brand loyalty.

Linnemanstons says Google algorithms look at social media behavior and activity and they also look at how many real live human participants in social media are

pointing to a particular piece of content and to a website that owns that content.

If employees with the company share posts and updates made through their company’s social media platforms, this will in turn, get the company on Google’s radar.

“Basically, when a question comes across, Google is going to point to a certain website because lots of people have been sharing information about that site, which tells Google there is good content there,” Linnemanstons says. “For Weidert Group, social media becomes the way we can make sure Google can

see what we are doing and it’s a way to promote good content directly to a live audience.”

Experts say the bottom line to strengthening a social media presence is to always keep your mobile strategy in mind before posting on social media.

“You need to understand your mobile strategy and that social activity and mobile activity go hand in hand,” Betts says. “Engagement with your audience is always going to be top dog and you need to incorporate those kinds of strategies into how you promote yourself or your company through social media.” ❶



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