

# Social networking a two-way street

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Social networking online and in organized public forums has become a daily activity for many local businesses, increasing their clientele base and adding to their job hiring tools. It works as a two-way street, with businesses putting out an online search for qualified employees and also for those looking for prospective employers and positions through Facebook, LinkedIn and other far-reaching Web media. But there is a catch, and area businesses chimed in on how job seekers can better utilize the social medium to their advantage.

A recent survey showed that more than 35 percent of small businesses are online to connect with prospective customers and more than 40 percent research prospective employees online when conducting background searches.

Social networking has increased business for Millenium Staffing Services since it built its online presence earlier this year. The staffing service provides job opportunities and other tools to those looking to find work in the valley.

"Millenium Staffing has gained much exposure through social networking, and we just really started utilizing these tools in the past six months," said Jennifer DeHaven, executive vice president for Millenium Staffing Services. "For my company, it is two-fold: marketing our services to companies that need a contingent, flexible work force and attracting the right talent to fill our open requisitions."

The key to reaping the benefits of social network sites lies in the people they hire to work in the company's best interest.

"Having the right person managing it and a user-friendly website to direct interested parties to," is important, she said.

Successful social networking also takes a good amount of time.

"I do not spend nearly enough time on them myself -- (I'm) still learning to make it

a daily best practice; however, I have several members of my team that are much more dedicated," DeHaven said.

Millenium uses social networking for hiring and weeding out the best employees for the positions it has available.

"We use job sites for all of our recruiting, and/or I personally forward all resumes that are sent in via our website to the appropriate recruiter, based on their job skills and our hiring boutiques," she said. "Additionally, we Tweet jobs, post on our Facebook page, and look for candidates via LinkedIn."

Social media has affected the company's business model in positive and surprising ways.

"Social media has completely changed the delivery and dynamics of job postings; we are able to understand who is applying (and) remember what you post is available for all your prospective employers to see," she said. "And we are able to quickly understand our customer's environment and needs."

Millenium recommends that job seekers use social networking as a lead generator for open positions, but never think that your job search should end there.

"Remember, if you can easily post your resume, so can hundreds of others," she said.

Never hesitate to find out the hiring professionals' contact information, and send your resume with a professional cover letter directly to them, and then follow up with a phone call, visit the company in person and generally be there in person as well as online.

"Figure out a way for your professional resume to be noticed, and never show up to submit an application or for an interview without looking your very best. This does not mean you need to wear a suit, however, it does mean that you should wear dress slacks, neatly pressed shirt and polished shoes," she said.

Millenium uses social networking when seeking applicants and when researching an applicant's qualifications.

"Use these tools as an important part of the total formula," she said. "But never forget that traditional job-seeker tools will help you and your skills get noticed."

As business owners are inundated with hundreds of resumes on a monthly basis, make sure your resume is sharp, with a strong concise objective

statement, and with clear, bulleted experience.

Also, be sure to contact multiple staffing services, DeHaven recommends.

"I suggest that you contact members of the Nevada Staffing Association ([www.nevadastaffingassociation.com](http://www.nevadastaffingassociation.com), as the member companies adhere to a strict code of ethics and standards), and cast your Web to as many job sites and employers as possible," she said. "And never hesitate to follow up your resume submission with a phone call or letter."

Job seekers can log on to [www.millenniumstaff.com](http://www.millenniumstaff.com) for available positions and other employment assistance.

The Firm Public Relations & Marketing was one of the many local PR firms to use social networking to its full ability early on, with daily updates to its Facebook page and regular Tweets on Twitter.

"Social media has helped us in that we are able to continually share information with a wide audience including current and potential clients, the media and the general public," said Jasen Woehrle, vice president, The Firm.

They tailor their social media to be more interactive with friends, clients and potential clients and employees.

"The information we post on our Facebook and Twitter pages is not just a bunch of press releases," he said. "We do want our followers to be aware of what our clients are doing, but we also have fun and post unique and interesting stories, photos and links. We also generate a quarterly newsletter to an e-mail list with useful information and video and we post this information on our social media channels."

This strategy has made for a successful reach.

"We make sure to have a variety of topics and consistency in posting interesting information," he said. "We post at least once daily, sometimes multiple posts per day."

The Firm also turns to social media when looking to recruit new hires or fill a position, although it sticks to the traditional forms of accepting applications.

"We may post on our Facebook and Twitter pages if we have a job opening, but we do not accept resumes or submissions for employment through social media channels," he said. "Our website is the best place to get the latest job postings ([www.thefirmpr.com](http://www.thefirmpr.com))."

While social media has added a new factor to its business plan, overall it hasn't truly affected the company's way of doing business.

"I do not believe that social media has changed our business format, I think it has enhanced it," he said. "The public spends a lot of time on computers and mobile phones, so it is necessary to be involved and proactive with social media."

The most important recommendation for job seekers is to remember that if you put something online that it stays there forever.

"If you are using social media pages, stay away from posting provocative photos or Tweets," he said.

You may limit who can follow you on Twitter, but one of your followers may re-Tweet your post, bringing a black mark to your online profile.

"Ask yourself the question: 'Could this post misrepresent what type of employee I am or could be?'" he said. "If there is even a flicker of doubt, I would recommend reconsidering the post."

When hiring, The Firm looks at the social media pages for anyone that they are considering talking to, for two reasons.

"It helps us get a better understanding of who the person is," he said, "and it is important that our team is savvy in social media, so we would expect that a potential employee has at least a Facebook page or a Twitter account."

With social media evolving and expanding so rapidly in the past couple of years, in addition to the country's "new economy," the field is more competitive than ever, he said.

"Beyond reviewing a resume and cover letter, potential employers can get to know prospective employees before they even walk in the door for an interview. Also, prospective employees have a great opportunity to research and understand a particular company beyond their website," he said. "If you are applying for a job or have an interview, do your homework."

Manpower Inc. uses online social networking for brand visibility, awareness of market trends and an expanded exposure to both clients and candidates.

"It also bands our internal staff together on an international level," said Cottia Bender, director of recruiting, Manpower Professional. "I think it's successful because we have a large group of people at corporate to keep it updated and fresh."

Manpower uses social networking, particularly the website LinkedIn, to hire employees for higher skilled positions.

The social networking component of an organization's marketing program is ever expanding in need and opportunities, said Amber Stidham, director of strategic planning for Imagine Marketing of Nevada.

"Social networks provide a cost-effective, efficient and responsive communication vehicle to our clients, which, in today's economy, is critical to success," she said.

There are many reasons it's important in today's business climate to have a social network presence.

"As a business or a job seeker, you need to be where people gather," Stidham said.

Social networks provide everyone the opportunity to conduct online networking, develop relationships and learn about the people and organizations they are interested in knowing more about.

"In many ways, it evens the playing field as they allow anyone to participate, but at the same time it weeds out those who choose not to take an active interest in developing an online presence," Stidham said, "whether it's for their business or to help promote themselves as a valuable prospective employee."

Social networking is about sharing information just as much as it about creating a culture or painting a picture of who you are -- as a business and in life, which is what has made their online presence so successful, she said.

"It's critical you always strive to strike a balance between sharing information to position you as an expert in your field, while ensuring people have a chance to know your personality and style," Stidham said "It's the 'personal' portion of this philosophy that many people have a difficult time maneuvering through. Consulting in these various areas is where our firm excels."

The online medium also expands the company's opportunity to show its personality and business acumen.

"Being a marketing firm, we're able to get away with sharing our quirky humor, interesting industry insights and random musings more than what is typically considered acceptable for other businesses," she said. "For us in particular, they have been an ideal creative outlet and gathering place for our team, clients and

community contacts to share stories, gain insight to help their own businesses and has helped better position our entire team as the industry experts. They have also allowed us to create an online presence to showcase what our company culture is like day-to-day and that has played favorably to us in recruiting and hiring team members."

Imagine Marketing has an on-staff go-to person who oversees the day-to-day workings of its social media.

"They spend about 30-60 minutes per day in generating content, responding to inquiries, reviewing trends and reporting it back to the company so we can act and adjust our service areas accordingly in order to meet the needs of our market," Stidham said.

Aside from the company's website, it has found other online social media sites helpful.

"Facebook is an ideal site to begin using if you're new to the social networking world," she said. "It's populated, regularly used by account holders, interactive and provides the host with a variety of controls on how to operate and custom maintain their own page or profile."

Imagine Marketing uses social networking for hiring, as does its many clients.

"Companies are increasingly using their social networking sites to recruit new employees," she said.

As someone who has been heavily involved in the recruiting and training of the firm's staff for nearly a decade, she sees it as an ideal place to draw candidates from a pool of people who already understand their organization as a culture and company and actively want to be a part of it and hit the ground running. Often, job opportunities are not required to be posted as a public notice, but instead are found by job seekers and businesses that are establishing a one-on-one professional relationship that can lead to a job offer when an opening happens.

"Social networks allow job seekers the opportunity to find an ideal place of employment and actively start a positive relationship with potential employers that could, in fact, lead to job opportunities," she said.

The medium has changed a few things for the growing marketing firm.

"Providing social networking services and consultation has quickly grown into a focus area for our firm over the last few years," Stidham said. "We quickly

adapted, retooled and continue to successfully help our clients better understand just how cost effective, yet impactful, marketing via technology can be."

As a veteran social media user, she offers some advice for job seekers.

"As a starting point, I recommend job seekers connect with ideal employers on Facebook or Twitter and actively engage themselves with the content and people involved in those organizations," she said. "When dealing with small businesses, this can be especially positive to job seekers as you can personally engage in dialogue with decision makers."

Behind every e-mail address, Yahoo! Web search, YouTube video view, Tweet, Facebook status change and Web visit there is a potential consumer.

"Using social networks can be a valuable tool in extending a business brand or your own personal brand," she said.

Another tried and true social network medium is the weekly breakfast or lunch meeting. Local handyman Douglas Pashley, who has owned Newport Handyman for four years and has 25 years of maintenance experience, has found the northwest chapter of the national Le Tip organization to be very lucrative for his small business.

"It's a way to grow my business and it's very structured and very organized," he said. "We have to start at 7:15 a.m. and end at 8:15 a.m., because we all have to get to work."

And work has doubled for Pashley since he joined two years ago. The organization's annual fees are beneficial to his business plan.

"The money I made in the first year paid for my dues many times over as well as this year," he said. "Being with Le Tip, it comes back to you fivefold."

Le Tip is based on the premise that people connect with other business professionals, sharing expertise and offering a means to expand their business through word of mouth. The organization began in 1978 and has more than 50,000 members who assist each other in expanding their business and providing education through its members at weekly meetings.

"I meet bankers, real estate people, computer people and everybody needs a different kind of person in the course of their day and the whole premise is that we can pass their card along and refer them to other people we meet in our day," Pashley said. "I'm pretty dedicated to it. I hardly ever miss a meeting because I

get so much out of it. I highly recommend it to any business owner out there."

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