

netFRONT

Calling in the social
media cavalry >**Executive Summary:**

You already know social media is an important business tool. So, how do you get started in using it?

By Janeson Keeley

Social media is the Internet's version of word of mouth advertising. Like real life word of mouth, it can help or hurt you in business. Sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube allow people to express their opinions and share their experiences in real time to millions of people. This provides both potential benefits and pitfalls to businesses of all sizes.

Four social media specialists from this region answer frequently asked questions about the business use of social media:

Should my business be involved in social media? Patsy Stewart, owner of The Social BUZZ Lab, suggests, "Find out where your customers and competitors are. If they are on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or YouTube,



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you should be there, too." Stewart also advises, "Even if your business isn't involved in social media, it's important to monitor your online reputation. You want to know if someone is making negative comments about you. If you respond in a positive, proactive way, it can help your business. If you don't, it can do serious damage."

What does a social media consultant do? A consultant identifies social media strategies to help your business achieve its goals. Leslie Coty of Coty Connections notes that, "Working with a client can include setting up Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts, developing and posting content, integrating social media with traditional media, analytics, branding, and blog consultation."



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Can't someone in my company run my social media campaign? "Unless a business is willing to have an employee make a commitment to a social media presence, it should outsource it," advises John Lusher, social media consultant and marketing director for Consolidated Construction Services. He warns, "If you use an employee, he needs to have experience setting up, evaluating, and managing a social media presence; not just be someone who is on Twitter and Facebook."

How can I measure the effectiveness of my social media campaign? Bonnie Cranmer, a partner with New Media Strategy Team, says, "Knowing the numbers tells the story. If a business wants to increase sales, what were the sales numbers before and after the campaign? If a non-profit wants to invite volunteers or hold a public input meeting, were the numbers of

inquiries/participation increased?"

Isn't social media just for kids? "No!" answers Leslie Coty. She observes that, "Social media is the biggest revolution I've seen in my lifetime. It has changed the way we communicate, the way we advertise, the way we learn, the way we do business. If its power is harnessed, it can have tremendous results for businesses."

If you're unsure about whether social media is right for your business, uncertain about how to use it, or unclear as to how it can fit into your existing marketing strategy, a social media consultant can help. If you don't know how to monitor your online reputation or how to best respond to customers' comments about you, a call to a social media consultant should be on your to-do list today. 

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