

TRADESHOW TIP SHEET

JANUARY 2010

Twittering (and more) at Tradeshows



Are you on Twitter? It's been almost a year since the **'Twittering Your Way to Tradeshow Success'** e-book came out. If the book were re-written today it would be quite a different book. The social media landscape has changed and evolved into a useful and common tool that companies are learning to work with in their marketing and communication efforts. A year ago the question was often 'what's Twitter?' Now the questions tend to revolve around finding effective ways to use the 140-character micro-blogging service.

In fact, we should probably include more than Twitter when discussing

ways to use social media to bring people to your tradeshow booth. Yes, you should have a Facebook page and a YouTube channel (at least) when working to create buzz for your product or service. But Twitter is still a powerful tool, so let's focus mainly on that for this newsletter topic.

There are a lot of facets to using Twitter effectively in connection with your tradeshow marketing: not only do you want to use it to listen to the conversation about your product, market or industry, you can also see what people are discussing about your competitors. Twitter is a powerful 'real-time' search tool where you can uncover what people are saying about the show, your products and more.

Again With the Planning?

If you intend to use social media to draw people to your booth or create a little buzz about your show appearance, the first thing you should ask yourself is: what's our goal? What are you trying to do? How are you going to measure the results? It could be as simple as sending out tweets every hour to let people know about hourly prizes.

One company we know didn't even have a booth at one show because they couldn't afford it – they showed up with a laptop and a Twitter account. But by offering free demos of their new software it didn't take long for them to book every single appointment they had available for the week-

end. It worked because they had a product that people were interested in, and once the word got out they were offering free personal demos, that information spread quickly through the 'Twitterverse.'

Often the plan can change – your ability to adapt in midstream may be valuable. One tactic may flop but another may fly high. Have more than one way to interest people in your widgets or services and be flexible enough to put your energy into the winner – and have the willingness to drop something that's not working.

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KNOWING WHAT
PEOPLE ARE
TALKING ABOUT
ONLINE HELPS
YOU WITH A LOT
OF THINGS—
FROM
RESPONDING TO
CUSTOMER
COMPLAINTS TO
FINDING IDEAS
FOR NEW
PRODUCTS THAT
YOUR MARKET IS
ASKING FOR.
ARE YOU
LISTENING?

Making Sure People Find Your Tweets

Hashtags (the pound or ‘number’ sign followed by a word) help people find information quick on Twitter. Most shows are easy to find by using the hashtag (#ORSM09 for Outdoor Retailer Summer Market 2009, for instance), which allows everyone that’s going to be at the show to follow the current conversation. Make sure all your tweets about the show include a pertinent hashtag.

Don’t feel shy about including hashtags for your company or product, either. It may crowd the 140 characters of the tweet and force you to get creative with the remaining characters but it makes it easier for your crowd to follow you.

Speaking of following, the more targeted followers you have, the more effectively your message will

spread. If you’re launching a new product, for instance, many of your followers may re-tweet your information to their followers, and so on, so that your initial tweet may be seen for several levels.

Beyond hashtags, people will search under your Twitter handle, and your company name. If your Twitter name is not your company name, include the company name in tweets regularly so that you’re more easily found. But be careful not to overdo the self-promo stuff as most people like to see fun things like links, pith comments and even a little mundane information along the way. Look for the balance that makes the most sense to you and gets the most positive response from your followers.

There’s More Than Twitter...



Just a year ago most of the online social media buzz was aimed at Twitter, but things have changed fast. Facebook is the place where millions congregate regularly, and companies are creating their own pages to promote business engagement with that audience. If you don’t have a company page, they’re relatively easy to set up.



And once you do set it up, invite people (through Twitter, your blog and main website) to become a ‘fan.’ Once someone is a fan, they’ll see your Facebook page posts in their timeline, or at least have the ability to view the

page.

The question is – what do you put there? In a way, your Facebook page is much like a blog. You’d be posting information on your company, products, people and events. You could post photos and videos, do interviews with the guy in the R&D department that helped create your new widget. Anything that is of interest to your fan base. Of course, when you have an event scheduled, make sure that your Facebook page is the beneficiary of all of your event-related posts, including Tweets, blog posts, videos – anything that you create in connection with the show.



Bottom Line

At this point most marketers agree it’s not a matter of IF, but WHEN you will be involved in Social Media – if you aren’t already. If you are involved, the question becomes ‘how can we best use our current resources to converse with our customers and clients through these new tools?’ Often it means using current employees that are web-savvy and understand how best to use Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn. Sometimes it means bringing in new folks altogether. It might also mean you have to hire a consultant that can help

your company learn how the social media landscape affects you, and helps to manage the new project by training current employees and bringing in a few outside experts to help if appropriate.

Whatever your needs and goals, feel free to contact us at Interpretive Exhibits. We’ve been online for years, picking up valuable expertise in online marketing, social media interaction and how the new tools can best help you with your tradeshow marketing.