Businesses Get Social

To stay up to date with the way people are using the internet, many companies are building their social media presence. Businesses are using social media to establish their brands, connect with customers and business colleagues, improve their products and services, and check out potential hires.

According to Nielsen, social media sites and blogs are visited by three quarters of the people using the internet, up 24% from last year. This means having a social media presence is even more important than ever. Here are some of the ways businesses are using social media to stay ahead:

• Continuing the Conversation – Whether customers are following a brand on Twitter, checking brand updates on Facebook, or watching commercials or brand-related posts on YouTube, social media keeps companies fresh in customers minds and connected. When customers say they like a product, it’s easy to shoot back a message suggesting other products to look at or even just a “Thank you for being loyal” message. This ease of interaction helps businesses create relationships with their customers and maintain a dialogue in real time.

• Responding to Issues and Complaints – Social media outlets are becoming the new complaint or customer service lines for the next generation of consumers. When faced with these complaints, businesses can use Twitter and Facebook to provide up-to-the-minute responses to issues and grievances posted by specific customers. Posts on Twitter and Facebook can also be used by the business community to shed light on large-scale problems and to disseminate information that could help large groups of customers.

• Telling Customers about New Opportunities – Once the dialogue is started, businesses can stay relevant in customers’ lives by posting coupons, special sales, new product recommendations, and other pertinent information. These posts, tweets, and messages help to continue to form a relationship with customers and encourage them to be active participants in the businesses’ online community.

• Managing Reputations – Keeping the finger on the pulse. Social media can be used to stay abreast of market tendencies, situations, and trends allowing businesses to respond to situations as they develop in real time. It’s important to avoid kneejerk reactions, but this does allow savvy companies to adapt to changing customer needs and opinions as they appear.

• Networking with Professionals – Although using social media for business often times involves dealing with customers, it can also be used internally or for networking with business colleagues. Sites like LinkedIn, allow business professionals to make useful connections and find valuable resources, contacts, and partnerships.

• Researching Prospective Employees – Social media sites can also be useful when considering potential hires. Many businesses scour the social media pages of prospective hires to get a better insight into their lives and to make sure applicants are representing themselves honestly during the interview process. Although this may seem sneaky, it is a common practice in today’s business community.

• Monitoring the Competition – Checking up on future employees can give businesses the leg up in the office. Checking up on your direct competitors through social media sites can give you a real leg up in the market. Watching movement on Twitter and monitoring marketing techniques and trends on Facebook or YouTube can be the difference between a successful internet campaign and marketing flops that fall on deaf ears.

As social media continues to gain leverage in the digital world, businesses’ social presence will continue to increase. According to Google, social media sites make up three of the top ten most visited sites on the web – #1 Facebook, #2 YouTube, and #5 Wikipedia – and Twitter falls just out of the top ten – #13 Twitter.

How do you use social media to better your business?