

## FOCUS ON MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS

# Social media not one size fits all; slice 'em up, allocate topics

By **CARRIE FELLON**

Special for Lehigh Valley Business

A good marketing plan inevitably includes advice on increased brand exposure through social media outreach.

But if a business' or employee's social media efforts are inadequately targeted, they could be for naught.



Fellon

Focusing social media marketing activity through a specific segmented lens contributes to greater efficacy – increasing the likelihood of

higher revenues.

The American Marketing Association defines market segmentation as subdividing a market into distinct subsets of customers that behave in the same way or have similar needs.

Members of a business team can share an overarching marketing direction while they concentrate on their individualized target – each focusing their social media efforts on a smaller subset of the organization's larger directives.

#### KEEP IT REAL

When selecting a market segment for focused social media outreach, it is critical that the marketer choose a group that authentically aligns with him or her personally and professionally.

If truly drawn to a segment, one will learn the jargon of that niche and embrace the values of the group – and thus be more likely to make true connections.

Examples of potential market segments are



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theater or classical music lovers, sports team enthusiasts, world travelers, car club members, golfers, tennis lovers and cigar club members.

#### GAUGING THE TARGET GROUP

Before developing a social media plan for a person's market segment, first gain a deep understanding of the group and plan accordingly.

These steps to assess the target group can make social media outreach more effective:

- Analyze your business' current revenue from the segment (before a concerted social media outreach).
- Set revenue goals and make plans to measure outcomes.
- Identify outside resources to help reach the segment.

■ Assess the competition (who else is targeting this group?).

■ Maintain knowledge of pipeline opportunities for the segment.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS, LINKS

LinkedIn and Twitter are ideal social media vehicles for business development in one's targeted market segment.

Businesses and employees can share event announcements, such as lectures, sports events, meet-up groups or concerts, that would appeal to a specific group of potential clients.

And, of course, linking to articles of particular interest to a focused group also is recommended.

#### PERSONAL MESSAGE

With respect to LinkedIn specifically, it is

best to avoid merely clicking the button to connect with a contact in a focused market segment. Instead, write a personal message before extending an invitation to connect.

A sample message: "I enjoyed meeting you at the antique car show. It's always fun to meet a fellow car lover. Thanks in advance for connecting!"

And when it comes to content, balance is key.

Striking a balance between content relevant to your target segment and content related to your own business is ideal. Be careful to avoid too much self-promotion.

#### KEEPING IT FRESH

One tactic to develop social media content for a specific market segment is to set reminders to review upcoming event calendars relevant to your group.

We are all busy. Using Outlook tasks, customer relationship management or even your phone to remind yourself to check resources will help keep social media content current and fresh.

Finally, when attending an event that you have promoted on social media to your targeted market, be sure to arrive with a value statement about how your business can help the segment.

And be ready to articulate what problems you can solve for them.

*Carrie Fellon is a financial strategist at JoycePayne Partners of Bethlehem and Richmond, Va., responsible for client financial strategy and counsel, comprehensive financial planning and investment management. A Certified Financial Planner and chartered retirement plans specialist, she can be reached at [cfellon@joycepaynepartners.com](mailto:cfellon@joycepaynepartners.com).*

## LinkedIn blueprint: Go from fun to essential networking

By **LOREN ROBINSON**

Special for Lehigh Valley Business.

Unlike most big-ticket tech purchases,

Microsoft's acquisition of LinkedIn didn't draw much attention from the public.

Yes, you heard about it in the news, but there were no bells ringing on Wall Street or big announcements dubbed "Breaking News."



Robinson

In fact, quiet acquisition has been Microsoft's style since it began acquiring businesses in 1994, either wholly or by buying substantial stakes.

Microsoft quietly finalized its outright purchase of LinkedIn on Dec. 8. Microsoft paid \$26 billion, or \$196 per a share, a \$65 premium over the stock's \$131 per share June 13, 2016, closing price.

LinkedIn joins a stable of Microsoft purchases, or interests, such as Skype Technologies, Hotmail, a \$1 billion interest in Comcast, a \$200 million interest in Best Buy and a \$605 million interest in Barnes &

Noble, to name just a fraction of its subsidiaries.

Microsoft has changed its acquisition strategy. Instead of playing catch-up in key technological areas, Microsoft now seeks to either get into a market early or create new ones.

While the LinkedIn purchase did not cause a media frenzy, the acquisition has a fairly strategic rationale of combining Microsoft's user presence with a business-oriented network.

The benefit for LinkedIn users may be the business network finally growing into the networking powerhouse it visualized in 2014.

#### PROFESSIONAL FACEBOOK

Prior to its sale, LinkedIn was the go-to site for business-to-business social networking.

Users joined, created their profile (rather offhandedly) and amassed as many connections as possible, as if they were collecting chips at a poker table. Very few users actually "networked."

Of course, there were power users who understood the network's benefits and



**LinkedIn says its newsfeed will provide real time information about a user's network, profession and industry and become 'a new daily habit.'**

used it to parlay connections into profits.

But overall, LinkedIn became the professional Facebook. You collected users and boasted about the number of connections that you had amassed.

Part of this lackadaisical attitude could be attributed to LinkedIn and its "let it flow" approach to user instruction.

#### SLOW GROWTH

LinkedIn CEO Jeff Weiner (at a presentation to Morgan Stanley) said the company's mission was to "connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful."

Initially, LinkedIn achieved that goal; it saw membership climb from 32 million users to 277 million users in five years.

At the same Morgan Stanley meeting, Weiner intoned that LinkedIn would, in the future, "create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce."

That's not what happened. Instead, in 2015, LinkedIn faced stagnant growth. It continued to acquire new members, but its unique member acquisition didn't grow throughout 2015.

Advertising on LinkedIn, a profit driver for the network, dropped from 35 percent to 10 percent. Correspondingly, LinkedIn's share price dropped.

#### PROFINDER

After the sale was finalized and regulatory approvals granted, LinkedIn/Microsoft began making changes, and first