



How Do You Dress for Networking

The Three Most Popular Social Networks for Business (and Why You Should Use Them)

By Drew Zagorski
November 2009

One of the most common questions I receive is: "Which social network should I be a part of?" My most common response is that for professional networking, LinkedIn is the top of the list; Facebook is becoming more and more professional, but it still has that "here are pictures from my kid's recital" element to it (I still get more connections on it from nieces and nephews and people I went to elementary and high school with); and then... there's Twitter, a free-for-all. In my mind, my jury's still out on Twitter. It's excellent for larger, marketing driven companies (nike, intel, and yes - Shaq), but not so great for small, independent, micro-businesses. Though I also find twitter more and more compelling.

So, all this said, I think each have their benefits. Does that make sites like Plaxo, Biznik and ZoomInfo moot? Well, I don't want to put nails in any coffin, but they certainly don't seem as relevant as they were only a year ago. The bottom line is that each is a good and viable place to create a hook for people to find you.

I was recently scanning the world of the wide web looking for the latest trends and information, you know, to keep the blade sharp. I came across an article by Paul Chaney, the man known as "The Social Media Handyman" and the author of *The Digital Handshake: Seven Proven Strategies to Grow Your Business Using Social Media* (www.thedigitalhandshake.com). The article put the answer to that common question I get in the perfect metaphor. LinkedIn is your business suit, Facebook is business casual attire, and Twitter is the after hours event. Here's Paul's article in its entirety...

THE THREE MOST POPULAR SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR BUSINESS (AND WHY YOU SHOULD USE THEM)

by Paul Chaney

An ancient proverb states that a "cord of three strands is not easily broken." By way of analogy, I hypothesize that the more individual connections to a person, the stronger your overall relationship with that person.

In constructing my social graph (i.e., my network of connections), I build relationships at three sites: LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. In some cases, I have connections with people on all three networks.

The connectivity usually begins on one network and gradually extends to two or three networks, and sometimes more, as we get to know each other. It seems logical and natural to continue the relationship cycle, building to sites where we both have a presence.

My focus is on creating threefold connections to individuals. It's not enough that you have a presence on each site, but that you leverage your presence to connect with others who also have a presence on those sites. Social media is about being social. Each platform offers distinct advantages, but you need all three to build the strongest connection.

If the "cord of three strands" philosophy is true, what are the top-three social networks for business? Based on my experience, I recommend LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.

1. LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is your business suit. It is not very conversational in its orientation, but people expect you to have a profile there. The network lends a degree of professional credibility—and requires the least amount of upkeep.

According to its Web site, LinkedIn is an interconnected network of more than 35 million business professionals from around the world, representing 170 industries and 200 countries. It is designed to be a place where you can find, be introduced to, and collaborate with qualified professionals with whom you need to work to accomplish your goals.

For a long time, I thought of LinkedIn solely as a place to find jobs or employees. My profile there was complete and detailed, but it was nothing more than an online resume. I kept it updated, thinking that one day a prospective employer might come along and offer me that dream job.

However, I have come to realize that LinkedIn is much more than just a place to hunt for a job. It's a social network that offers you the opportunity to connect with others in your field, find vendors and



How Do You Dress for Networking

The Three Most Popular Social Networks for Business (and Why You Should Use Them)

consultants, develop your business, and generate leads.

2. FACEBOOK

If LinkedIn is your business suit, then Facebook is your business-casual attire in that it allows more of a 360-degree view of you by combining both your professional and your personal sides. Facebook is a more conversational platform than LinkedIn.

A little over four years ago, I was visiting my son in college. At the time, he was a junior in college. He showed me some photos he had taken and posted online to a site called Facebook. I had heard of the site, but I really had no idea what it was other than a social network for college students. (Back then, you couldn't register on Facebook unless you had a .edu email address.)

I queried him about the site. I was interested in its unique features, such as the now infamous Wall, photo galleries, and status messages. I thought to myself how nice it would be if Facebook were available to users other than the college crowd. Not long after, in the fall of 2006, Facebook's young CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, did precisely that, opening the platform to anyone over the age of 13.

Since then, the average age of Facebook users has become progressively older. In February 2009, one of the fastest-growing demographic segments in the network was females age 55 and older.

However, the number of Facebook users in all age/gender demographic groups is growing, with use among women growing faster than among men in nearly all age groups. Among all users, those age 26-30 form the fastest-growing age group; 45% of Facebook's US audience is now age 26 or older.

With more than 300 million users worldwide and over five million new users joining every week, Facebook is the largest social network on the planet. Those numbers are strong evidence that social media is in the mainstream and businesses need to pay attention and consider establishing a presence there.

3. TWITTER

If LinkedIn is your business suit and Facebook is your business-casual attire, Twitter is your business social-networking cocktail hour: You go there to casually

and informally interact with potentially thousands of others.

Whereas LinkedIn tends to be a more latent form of engagement, interaction on Twitter is (or can be) in real time. It's the most informal of the three networks and allows for the greatest degree of conversation.

CONCLUSION

The more I think about it, the more I am convinced that participation in the three big social networks—LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter—is an absolute must for just about every business.

Drew Zagorski is the Principal of LeftBrainRightBrain Marketing. You can reach him at drew@lbrbmarketing.com.

LeftBrainRightBrain Marketing © Copyright 2009. All rights reserved.