

B2B Marketers Get Customers to Tune In and Connect through Online Social Networking

A recent survey of online marketers conducted by research firm Forrester and marketing resource MarketingProfs found that in a recession, the first marketing channel in which online marketers said that they would increase investment would be social networking. The beauty of using social networking sites for marketing is that it is cost-effective and if done well, can establish and strengthen your company brand and generate the sales you desire.

Connection and engagement are the heart and soul of online social networking. Two ways to successfully achieve connection and engagement are through video sites like YouTube and through Open Identity Programs like Google Friend Connect, MySpaceID and Facebook Connect.

When business-to-business (B2B) buyers are looking for resources to help guide their purchases, chances are good that they are visiting sites like YouTube. Home to an increasing amount of B2B content, YouTube welcomes marketers trying to reach these potential customers.

According to eMarketer, which conducts market research and trend analysis on Internet, e-business, online marketing, media and emerging technologies, more than one-half of the U.S. population now watches online video, and eMarketer predicts there will be 190 million online video viewers in the US in 2012.

At that point nearly nine out of 10 Internet users will be watching online video!

Why all this growth? Videos capture users' attention and make your message stick. In fact, research firm MarketingSherpa reported over 98% of business technology decision makers found viral videos more memorable than other forms of marketing.

If you aren't utilizing YouTube for online marketing yet, a good place to start is with a YouTube channel. You can customize your channel so that visitors can access your videos, post comments, and engage with your brand and company. Recorded webinars, product demonstrations, video case studies, industry events and advertisements are just some of the ways you can use videos to engage potential customers.

Another way to engage and connect is through Open Identity Programs like Google Friend Connect, MySpaceID and Facebook Connect. For marketers, these Open Identity Programs are a significant advancement in social advertising because of the cumulative power of pushing information out through connected sites.

For example, Facebook Connect is a new application of the Facebook Platform that allows users to integrate their Facebook data into their own site. Users can connect their Facebook profile with any partner Web site, including Amiando, CBS.com, CitySearch, CNET, CollegeHumor, Disney-ABC, Evite, Flock, Hulu, Kongregate, Loopt, Plaxo, Radar, Red Bull, Seismic, Socialthing!, StumbleUpon, The Insider, Twitter, Uber, Vimeo and Xobni. By applying a small piece of code, Facebook Connect enables seamless

integration with the Facebook platform. A visitor logs in to a “connected” blog with their Facebook ID, which enables their profile to appear on the blog and link commenting back into their Facebook activity feed.

This gives your Web site a new level of dynamic social context because you are able to link your Facebook friends and publish information back into the News Feeds on Facebook.

In today’s business environment, it is important to take advantage of every opportunity to not only get in front of your potential customers, but to connect and engage them. Marketing through social networking sites are an excellent way to accomplish this.

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