



Using Social Media to Communicate with your Membership Base

Article Title

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Article Summary

Social media is fast becoming one of the most used applications of the Internet. Used both personally and professionally by all demographics their use is something that is becoming a key part of many membership associations. Social media and social networks in particular are enabling membership managers to ensure communication is maintained with their membership base, through a medium their members prefer. This article highlights how membership organisations can utilise social media to provide additional value to their members.

Article Body

Social media is described as a category of websites that are based on user participation and user generated content. Examples of social media sites are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, as well as blogs and forums and sites that have user generated content such as Amazon's customer reviews.

Social media is the largest growing area of the Internet. More and more people are logging on and registering themselves with a range of social networking sites, creating and writing blogs or contributing or creating content in some form. The growth in use is highlighted in the below statistics (which were correct as of January 2010):

- LinkedIn has over **50 million members worldwide**
- Facebook currently has in excess of **350 million active users on global basis**
- Twitter now has **75 million user accounts**
- Flickr now hosts more than **4 billion images**
- There are over 200,000,000 blogs on the Internet
- Wikipedia currently has in excess of **14 million articles**
- Mobile is even bigger than before for Facebook, with **more than 65 million users accessing the site through mobile-based devices**

So we can see that more and more people are turning to social media as a way to keep in touch with each other, to share information and to find out about news and events.

For those running the membership management side of a membership based organisation, it is important that you continue to communicate with your members in a format and medium that suits them. Being able to contact members through their medium of choice adds value to their membership and also ensures that two way communication can be maintained at all times.

So what are the popular ways off keeping in touch with your membership base?

- Telephone
- Letters





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- Newsletters
- Emails
- Website
 - Blogging
 - Articles
 - Forums
- Twitter
- Facebook
- LinkedIn

Different membership organisations will have different demands from their membership bases. A very traditional membership group may place value in the more established forms of communication such as letters and telephones. However, surveys have shown that all demographics are using social media more than ever. It is no longer something that appeals to the younger generation only, as shown by the below statistics:

- The median age of a Twitter user is 31
- The median age of a MySpace user is 27
- The media age of a Facebook user is 26
 - Yet the fastest growing segment on Facebook is 55-65 year-old females
- The media age of a LinkedIn user is 40
 - 80% of companies use LinkedIn as a primary tool to find employees

So it's no longer enough to assume that your membership community is not and does not want social media as part of the membership communication options.

Each form of social media has its benefits and drawbacks. In terms of communicating with members, social networking sites are most likely to have the greatest impact. Social networking is the way of increasing the number of business and/or social contacts by making connections through individuals. While social networking has gone on almost as long as societies themselves have existed, the unmatched potential of the Internet to promote such connections is only now being fully recognised and exploited, through web-based groups established for that purpose. Popular social networking sites include Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Using these sites to communicate with your membership base is now an important part of membership management. These sites are all free to use, but do come with an investment of time. The time it may take to manage accounts with the major networking sites and to update each one individually can make the exercise difficult to justify.

However, there are comprehensive membership management software solutions available that have social media modules as part of the basic package. These modules enable membership managers to manage and update their social media channels from within the one solution – making them quick and easy to maintain.

Social media is just one module of a comprehensive membership management solution. Good quality software packages will also include email marketing, event management and tools to help boost membership retention and aid membership growth.





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Resource Box

[Persona Membership Management Solution](#) is part of the portfolio of solutions from [Silverbear Ltd.](#) Employed within societies and membership organisations throughout the UK, Persona helps organisations to build, define, examine, inform and communicate with existing and potential members.

Persona is helping membership organisations on a daily basis. For more information on Persona and the benefits of membership management software, visit their website:

<http://www.SilverbearMembership.co.uk>

