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**Social Networking – The Next Great Marketing Medium?**

**By Rob Sullivan**

There has been a virtual explosion of social networking sites in the past couple of years. Even the big players like Google, Yahoo and MSN are getting into it.

With so much interest in how social networks work, one begins to wonder if there is marketing potential within these social networks?

I've been watching social networking for some time now. In fact I'm a member of various social networking sites including MySpace and LinkedIn just to name two.

I joined partly because I wanted to see what they were, but more importantly to see what impact social networking would have on SEM in the coming years.

I've been a member of various services for some time and the reach these sites have is incredible.

For example, from my LinkedIn network of seven people I have an expanded network of over 12,600 people.

Imagine that – I'm only a click or two away from close to 13,000 other people who share my similar interests ranging from what I like to watch on TV to work I could provide to them.

Through my connections and their connections, I'm connected to people ranging from the American Cancer Society, to Sun Microsystems to the University of Texas to Google.

But what marketing opportunities are there for Social Networking?

Well, let's look at MySpace.

MySpace is one of the top sites on the Web today. It racked up 9.4 billion page-views in August 2005

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(more than Google) and new users are signing up at a mind-boggling rate of 3.5 million a month.

MySpace is typical of where today's 18–30 year old goes to manage their digital life. It allows users to post photos of themselves and their friends, create a blog, list their favorite bands, view and share videos, suggest things to do and lists a set of people they consider friends. It is on this "Friends List" where most of the opportunities lie.

All thirty million plus users of MySpace have a friend's page that lists people that person considers their friend. This is a list of people that they are interested in talking to and about, as well as hearing from on a regular basis. Once you add someone as your friend they can send you emails, comment on your photos, read your blogs, as well as leave messages that you can then share with others. This is an opportunity for instant feedback about you.

The ability to add friends to your page is key for marketing to MySpace users. According to Courtney

Holt, head of new media and strategic marketing at Interscope Records, "This generation is growing up without having ever watched programmed media." "They don't think in terms of the album, and they don't think in terms of a TV schedule. They think in terms of TiVo, P2P, AOL, and of course MySpace."

You can see how this could grow.

Let's say you create a MySpace account to talk about your product or service. You blog about it and search for others that may share your interests.

You then invite them to be your friend. When they become a friend you start your "soft sell" pitching your product to them.

As they grow to appreciate it, they start blogging and sharing it. Soon hundreds or even thousand of people are talking about you and your product or service.

Don't think this will work?

Let me give you some examples. There are many bands who have gotten their start on MySpace. Simply by hosting some of their music online and blogging about themselves they developed a following. Soon they had record deals and contracts lined up.

Of course to use services like MySpace you need to have something this target market needs. If you don't then you probably shouldn't put too much effort into MySpace.

But that doesn't mean other social networking opportunities should be overlooked. As I mentioned above, LinkedIn is more of a professional introduction service. If your product or service fits here then by all means explore it further.

And there are others as well. Services such as Yahoo!'s MyWeb, Flickr, del.icio.us and more.

So if you've ever wondered what other online opportunities could be out there, consider social networking. It could be the next great online marketing channel.

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### **Who Do You Know?**

**By Alfred J. Lautenslager**

#### **Who Do You Know? by Alfred J. Lautenslager**

We've all heard that networking should be an integral part of our total marketing plan but what is networking? And is it the same for off-line marketing as it is for on-line marketing? The answer to both questions is yes. Many Internet marketers venture off into classified ads, opt-in mailing lists, and postings of all sorts. Many times the traditional networking ways of off-line marketing are forgotten. So, what is networking in the traditional marketing sense, (NOT networking marketing or MLM programs)?

Simply stated, networking is contact to establish relationships that can lead to business. Sometimes the path to business is direct; other times it is indirect such as referrals. The person you know knows someone else who needs your products/services.

Networking means making these contacts and building on them by talking with people about what you do and who you are. It also is in turn, listening to them to see how you might assist them in what they do.

These contacts, the people you need to know or the people that

## Social Networking – The Next Great Marketing Medium?

can help you, might be right under your nose. To help build that list, answer the following:

1. Who has taken an interest in you lately or in the past?
2. Who have you been good friends with?
3. Who do you always talk business with when you get together?
4. Who has helped you or offered encouragement or advice in your business.
5. Who do you go to when you have a challenge or particular need?
6. Who comes to you for help?
7. Who do you idolize?

This list could go on and on but the general notion is we are already networking, networking is all around us and the people to build our network with are with us everyday.

The following list will detail at least 50 people that you can add to your network right now. This list is by no means exhaustive. It is suggested that you choose 1 or 2 people for a group of these and start making more of an attempt to put

yourself in front of them. You will then determine whom you can help and who can help you.

50 --- Who do You Know - 50

1. Neighbors
2. Country Clubs
3. Fraternity Members
4. Electronic Contacts
5. Family Members
6. Former Employer
7. Former Customer
8. Current Customer
9. Former Educator
10. Scoutmaster
11. Attorney
12. Banker
13. Former Employees
14. Delivery Driver
15. Bartender
16. Politicians
17. Hobby Clubs
18. Real Estate Brokers
19. Travel Agent
20. Executive Recruiters

## Social Networking – The Next Great Marketing Medium?

21. Postal Workers
  22. Coffee Shop/ Bakers
  23. Firefighter
  24. Golfing Buddies
  25. Law Enforcers
  26. Friends
  27. Celebrities
  28. Social Organization Members
  29. Doctors
  30. Vets
  31. Parents of Child's Schoolmates
  32. PR contacts
  33. Auto Dealers/Service
  34. Best Friend
  35. Leads Clubs
  36. Store Owners
  37. Chamber of Commerce Members
  38. Printer
  39. Service Organization Members
  40. Dry Cleaners
  41. City/County Government
  42. Health Clubs
  43. Church Members
  44. Hotel Concierge
  45. Trade Organization
- 
46. Kids Sports Coach
  47. Investment Clubs
  48. Accountant
  49. Alumni Clubs
  50. Teammates Parents

Knowing people who already believe in you and your company, people who will recommend you, refer to you and open doors for you can make the difference between marginal performance and great success.



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