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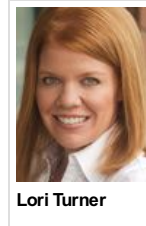
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Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

Social Butterfly or Albatross?

LORI TURNER

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Lori Turner

Many companies are jumping on the social media bandwagon. But for some, it's striking a sour note. They're finding out that social media is only "free" if you don't count the many hours spent planning, collecting content, posting content, monitoring, responding to and engaging others. Many companies struggle to show that it's really providing a return on the investment.

Is social media the right strategy for your company? The short answer is that, for most companies, there is a role for social media. After all, Facebook's more than 500 million users alone equals the population of the world's third-largest country.

The real question is "how significant a role should social media play in your overall sales and marketing strategy?" The answer varies based on your sector and target market.

What industry are you trying to reach?

According to NetrospeX's 2010 Social Business Report, industries among the top 10 most active in the social media space include banking, recruiting, IT, software, retail, traditional media (TV, radio, print), and consumer electronics.

Social media usage is highest among companies selling products and services directly to consumers (B2C) as well as more tech savvy companies – like IT, credit card processing, biotech, marketing, telecom – that sell to other businesses (B2B).

Who is your target market?

You need to look at demographics. It's a given that social media skews younger. It also skews female. Women are much more likely than men to engage through Facebook. And, while men account for roughly 10 times as many Twitter accounts as women, women have more Twitter followers and send more messages.

What type of professionals are you trying to reach?

If you're selling to marketers or HR professionals, social media should be a significant part of your strategy. These two job types are the most social of all, according to NetrospeX. In fact, HR employees have twice as many friends and followers as the average for all other job titles.

Other social professions are communications, IT, sales, customer service and CEOs. Employees in operations and finance roles are the least engaged in social media.

So while you're likely to reach a CMO or CEO through social media, don't count on a response from the CFO or COO. The C-suite is split on the topic of social media.

Where is your target market?

Geography also matters. In general, West Coasters are the heaviest users of social media with San Francisco leading the country. On the East Coast, the pockets of heaviest use are Boston and New York.

In the NetrospeX study, the Memphis market ranked 42nd in the nation for the amount of social media engaged in by business users. This tells you that social media in Memphis has a long way to grow, and progressive companies that engage now can establish leadership in their sector.

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BUSINESS LICENSES	17	98	4,246
UTILITY CONNECTIONS	84	613	21,986
MARRIAGE LICENSES	30	124	4,477

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In my next column, I'll be sharing examples of Memphis companies that are using social media in unexpected ways.

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