

HARNESS THE POWER OF LINKEDIN

More and more business people are using LinkedIn as part of their networking strategy. Whether it's to keep contacts up to date, meet potential new clients or get up to date information from industry groups, LinkedIn is a powerful business tool. Here are some tips to help you get the most from LinkedIn.

*Update Your Profile Summary*

Read your profile summary from a client's viewpoint. Consider what you are saying and how compelling your message is. Try to keep your profile consistent – for example, if you write it in the first person then make sure the entire profile is written this way throughout. Make sure you add in any significant recent developments such as a promotion and give a little detail about your firm – i.e. where you work and what the company does.

Set Goals

Set written goals for what you want to achieve from LinkedIn. Whether its lead generation, expanding your contact base or keeping up to date with relevant trends – write out your goals and stick to them. Review those goals on a regular basis and track your progress.

Identify Relevant Industry Leaders

Create a list of leaders in your industry that you would like to meet. If you're in sales, these could be prospects. If you're looking for a job, it could be employers. Search for them on LinkedIn and develop a plan to make them become a connection. Remember not to send an unsolicited request to link – if they don't know you they could report your request as spam.

Download Your Connections

Export your LinkedIn connections and save them to your computer. Your connections are a valuable business asset – they could be an important part of your sales pipeline now or in the future. To do this, simply go to your LinkedIn contacts list and at the bottom of the page, you'll see "Export Connections". Export to outlook and save as a .CSV file. It can be opened in Excel. Do this on a regular basis so that you have a backup copy of your contacts.

Back Up Your Entire LinkedIn Profile

It takes time to write a decent profile for LinkedIn. So spend a few moments to download a copy of your profile. As above this is useful in case of disaster – you will have a copy of your content to use again in the future if required. To do this, log into LinkedIn and go to your profile view. On the bottom right side of your profile photo is an edit drop down menu. Look for the 'export to PDF' choice. Click on it and it will save to your computer.

NEW YEAR, NEW PR STRATEGY

No matter how big or small your business you need a PR strategy. Even the smallest start up business can have a simple PR strategy which uses local press, social networking and email marketing to raise the profile of the firm with very little financial cost.

*Identify your target market*

To begin with you must identify your target market – who are you trying to reach, why are you reaching out to them and what is the message? Remember – if nobody knows who you are and what you do, the sales calls will not come. PR is not sales so plugging products will not suffice. Instead focus on producing a newsworthy story such as "local business creates new jobs" or "national firm expands into new overseas markets". Write stories that you would be interested in reading if you were to see the headline in the newspaper or online.

Select the appropriate media

If your potential customers are generally online then there is little point in getting lots of press coverage in newspapers and magazines. Select the media that is most appropriate for your target audience. Identify the trade press titles that your customers read. If you don't have the answers to this already – ask your existing clients via a survey.

Set targets

Set targets for your PR campaigns. Whether that is to receive press coverage in one newspaper and once online each week or whether you want to make the national news once a month, set realistic, achievable targets.

Recycle content

If you send a press release out to a trade journal, business magazine or newspaper, make sure you recycle that content. Once it has been published you can then put a copy of the news article up on your website, tweet a link to the story, add a status update on LinkedIn and even email a copy out to your clients and prospects. Aim to use each piece of press coverage at least twice – after all there is no point in re-inventing the wheel in order to gain additional PR.

ULTRABOOKS

As workers become increasingly mobile, demand for thin, light laptops has increased dramatically. Technology has improved in the last few years which allow manufacturers to create thinner laptops with batteries that last for 5 or sometimes 10 hours. PC users looked on in envy at Apple Macbook Air owners but since then, Intel created the "UltraBook" specification.



So what are Ultrabooks?

Ultrabooks are a new class of ultraportable laptops with a few key features: Intel processors, thickness under 0.8 inches, screen sizes between 11- and 13-inches, and long battery life ratings (7 hours or more). Intel created the Ultrabook specification for laptop manufacturers like Acer and Asus to produce these sleek laptops, ideally at prices under £1,000. In other words, the Ultrabook promises the whole laptop package: portability, power, and affordable price.

Some high-end versions even offer swivelling touchscreens that will take advantage of Windows 8's touch-friendly interface, Intel's Ivy Bridge processor for better battery life and performance, and higher resolution displays.

So why buy an UltraBook.

As many business people work from home as well as the office, an UltraBook offers a huge advantage – a full featured computer with a light weight. Carrying a laptop around can leave you with a sore shoulder, however you can pop an UltraBook into your briefcase and barely notice the extra weight.

Due to the smaller screen sizes – 11 to 13 inches as mentioned above, UltraBooks are compact enough to use on cramped fold out tables typically found on trains and airplanes. This allows road-warriors to catch up on work while travelling to and from meetings.

As UltraBooks are designed for mobility, they can be used for almost an entire day without being plugged in, can connect to Wi-Fi and Bluetooth devices for email and internet usage and ultimately allow users the ability to remain productive while on the go.

MEETING THE EXPECTATIONS OF TODAY'S WORKFORCE

The current economic environment continues to challenge businesses. As such, having the right team in place is key to the success of any business. As firms focus on recruiting the best talent they are no longer seeking employees that can merely get a job done. While traditional recruitment strategies may have focused on finding a candidate with specific talents that performed a particular job function, managers today face the daunting task of hiring employees who are skilled, flexible and sophisticated enough to work well in today's ultra connected, "always-on" business world.



With millennials slowly taking over the workforce, this new generation's expectations are very different from their predecessors. Today's professionals want a career rather than a job. The latest generation of business people want flexibility, a modern working environment and opportunities to progress.

Finding the right people is only half the story. Once you have the right team in your organisation, you need to make sure you retain them. Retaining employees relies on the ability to keep up with a rapidly changing business environment. With technology at the forefront of these changes, managers must find ways to keep employees engaged and stimulated. To accomplish this, human resources should be re-evaluated to stay abreast of these changes and facilitate easy transitions.

The future workforce is changing. Completing tasks and meeting deadlines will not be limited to the office. As technology allows your workforce to be more mobile than ever before, it is necessary to put in place a business strategy which maximises the opportunities presented by allowing employees greater flexibility.

Those firms who embrace such changes and implement appropriate strategies will progress while those who don't will most likely be left behind. High performance businesses must strive to meet the expectations of the modern workforce in order to progress. Retaining your best people means that you and your business need to adapt, embrace change and give your team the flexibility to work in a way which is productive but also rewarding.

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