

APPLE IOS8 AND OS X YOSEMITE

Apple has recently revealed new operating systems for both its mobile and desktop / laptop devices. iPhone, iPad, etc. will get the new iOS8 software and desktops and laptops will get the OS X Yosemite software. Apple didn't announce any new hardware at the firm's recent Worldwide Developer Conference. The big news is that the latest version of the Mac operating system, OS X Yosemite is designed to work seamlessly across all Apple devices.

OS X Yosemite launches to the public for free in the Autumn and borrows heavily from the design of the current iPad in terms of its initial appearance. The new OS is visually pleasing with a sharp new design for icons and a new look sidebar for apps like Messages, Facetime, Contacts and Reminders.

On the search side of things, Apple has revamped Spotlight to bring a new search bar to the centre of the Mac screen that allows users to access apps, conduct searches through the web, calendars and apps as well as draw in content from the iTunes store by just typing a few key words.

The new iCloud Drive which is located in the Finder app synchronises content across your multiple devices including your Mac and iOS devices as well as Windows.

On the email front, Apple's Mail app is getting a major revamp on Yosemite to allow users to receive attachments up to 5GB in size as well as scribble their signature using the trackpad on their Mac.

From a business user's perspective, the key benefit of the new software is the ability to share and store data across all devices, including those running Windows.



CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) AS A PROFILE RAISING TOOL

Whether establishing a business-charity partnership or organising for a group of staff to volunteer in the local community, CSR is part of being in business. CSR is a great way to engage your staff, build teams and fulfil your business's role as a responsible part of the wider community. Large businesses often run substantial CSR programmes but small firms can contribute by engaging with local charity events. Charity isn't an obvious profile raising tool for businesses but it can be a great way of increasing your profile in the market while conveying a positive image as a good corporate citizen.

Think Local

If you are a local business, your customers will want to see you supporting the local area. Charitable organisations are often funded purely through donations. What's more, they often need help with more than just finance. A nice way to support such charities is to allow your staff to volunteer some time (say 1 or 2 days per year) during work to help out with the charity's activities. Alternatively, if some of your team are sporty, they could run a marathon to raise money. They could write about their experience in the local newspaper or a relevant business journal, giving the business and the charity some good PR off the back of the event.

Stick with what you are good at

If you want to build the profile of your business in a particular sector, you could try to support a relevant charity which you would like your business to be associated with. For example, if you offer accounting and taxation services to the social housing sector, then you could help out a social housing charity as part of your CSR programme. This would help to raise the profile of your firm in this market, while at the same time giving your business and your people the opportunity to engage in CSR.

Go with what you believe in

You may think that there is nothing you can do to help, but if there is a particular charity that you believe in then contact them. If you are passionate and enthusiastic about the chosen charity your firm supports, this will come across when you talk about it. It will make good reading in the local newspaper while generating some PR for your firm at the same time.

MEASURING PR

Public relations (PR) is hard to define and sometimes even harder to measure. The most succinct definition is that it is a management function that executes a specific plan of action that deals with an individuals or organisations impact on public interest through its procedures and policies. PR also evaluates public attitudes.

The ways to do this could be as simple as writing and releasing a press release or something more complex like direct media relations. PR involves a lot of behind-the-scenes work as well as public activity such as community relations, crisis communications and public press conferences.

It can sometimes prove challenging to try to evaluate the effectiveness of a strategy. Over the years, the steps to analysing the effectiveness of a PR strategy have changed and become more refined.

PR can be measured on 3 levels:

1. Outputs

This is the contact and response level. Measurement often involves determining the impact of a press release on media channels. Frequency, visits, prominence, reader contact, journalist inquiries and message impact are all considerations of outputs. The best way to measure outputs is to assign a scoring system. Base it on your target audience's tone and reach, as well as how well the message was delivered and if it included an endorsement or recommendation.

2. Outcomes

This term describes perception and behavioural levels, dealing primarily with knowledge, opinions and attitudes. When evaluating outcomes, the impact on target groups is measured through recognition, awareness, recollection, recommendations and purchasing intentions. The best way to measure outcomes is to use already existing material. You can use free online tools such as Survey Monkey to survey your target audience. Simply add a couple of carefully thought out questions to the survey to help determine if any of your PR activity is affecting awareness of your firm, encouraging purchase decisions etc.

3. Business results

Business results refer to the added value of a PR campaign. This includes impact on sales levels, revenue, reputation, brand value and market share. Most businesses measure these levels, etc. through their finance department. The data can be analysed to determine if a PR campaign has had a positive impact or not.

EFFECTIVE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MEETINGS

No matter what type of business you run, you need to network in order to build your business. Effective networking involves a lot more than simply handing out business cards. Here are a few tips to help your business development meetings produce the business relationships that you want:

Sort your contacts

Try to get a copy of the attendee list prior to the event. Cross check the list against your contacts and targets to identify individuals. Aim to meet each one and to get a follow up meeting in the diary.

Prepare

Prepare an agenda. You'll want to find out what their goals are for their business, what special skills they have, and what they're especially proud of (both business-wise and personally). What organisations do they belong to that may be a good fit for your business networking?

Post meeting

If your contact is unlikely to turn into a prospect, mark them off your list of potential business development leads (but keep them as a business contact). As you go through this process, you'll find your goals and interests match better with some people than others. This means that your meetings are producing the results you're looking for. For those that have similar goals and interests, you should schedule times in the future to continue to build on what you've learned. For those that may not closely match your goals, stay in touch more generally through email marketing, etc.

Stay in touch

There is no bigger failing for your networking activities than to let those that you've met fall by the wayside. Never forget that while they may not be an ideal match for you now, their businesses and lives will have changes that you may be able to complement. They'll also meet others that may be a better fit for you and will remember you when someone looks for your services and products.



Please contact a member of our team if you would like to discuss any of the issues raised.