

Does Social Media Fit the Industrial Segment?

By Steve Hartkopf, Aligned Marketing

A number of people I've talked to recently don't understand all the fuss around *social media*. What is it? Why is it growing so fast? Can Twitter help or hurt us? Do we need to do anything?

Psychologists say that people remember things presented to them in 3's so, briefly, here's my take in 3's:

People use social media for three primary reasons:

1. To **acquire knowledge**, which is why content is so critical and the key to both your personal and your professional brands. Sharing knowledge (value) and developing your brand is also driving the growth of corporate blogs.
2. To **see what other people are doing and buying**, which is the basis of sites such as Digg. Digg is really just a *recommendation* service.
3. To **connect** with other people, which is a basic human need and the foundation of Facebook's and all of the social sites' success.

The proliferation and success of social media is driven by three factors:

1. **Trust:** Many surveys have documented that people trust "someone like me" more than any other source. Moms trust Moms and car-nuts trust car-nuts, it's how we humans are wired. For the first time peer opinions are more accessible to us than the wisdom of experts and the propaganda of *sellers* (read; product brochures).
2. **Online access:** No matter how unusual or obscure the topic, the wired-up world, that's all of us, know we can find a lot of information - details, perspectives, and context - online. According to Google and Enquiro, over 70% of product and service searches now begin online. At any given time, there may be thousands of people online discussing the merits of various screw drivers, for example.
3. **Confidence:** It's all about how we *enter* the decision-making process. We are less willing to make decisions without a great deal of information. Since the information and recommendations are relatively free, it would be nonsensical for us to do anything other than access both the information and the recommendations. Why do you think Amazon, iTunes and so many other sites have rating systems for their customers that are, basically, managed by their customers?

You and your company should be a part of social media for many reasons but here are my top three:

1. We all know the power of the network, of **networking**. It is the best way to gain employment and, as mentioned, the way our new connected world learns about products, services and what other people think. Social media allows you and your company to expand your network exponentially for virtually no cost.
2. Your customers, peers and superiors are already part of social networks so it's a good idea for you to **join the conversation, express yourself and, frankly, monitor** what's being said about your company, its products and your competition. Why would you not want to listen-n to that conversation? Your email will be there when you return.
3. If **growing** your business, circle of friends and contacts, and expanding your influence are important to you then you need to be part of the social media revolution, because, simply put, **it's where all the people are**.

Aligned  MARKETING
(www.aligned-marketing.com)

Aligned Marketing specializes in business communication and technology. We help our clients refine their message – *value proposition* -- and build online and offline tools to grow their business. As an outside provider of marketing solutions, we do what our clients don't want to do, don't have time to do, or aren't able to do on a variable cost basis. For more information contact Steve Hartkopf, Vice President of Marketing at shartkopf@aligned-marketing.com, 803-810-3180 cell.