

TOOLS | RELATIONSHIP

The Way You Use Social Media Tools Can Be a Competitive Advantage

If you want to stand out, you have to use them well. And that means focusing on people, not just numbers.

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There are plenty of social media tools out there, and network marketers are jumping all over them with their product and opportunity messages. How do you stand out from the pack, and derive real return on the time you invest in social media marketing? And which tools are the best use of your time?

Let's begin with tools. While there are a great many tools to choose from, we've seen some consistent results within our industry with Facebook, first, as well as blogs, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

If you're new to social media marketing, I suggest you start with Facebook, as it provides you access to what I like to call an "extended warm market" of people who may be open to what you have to offer.

We've seen the best results in our industry from Facebook, since it builds on what we do best as network marketers: build relationships.

But there are lots of network marketers using Facebook, as well as blogs, LinkedIn, and Twitter. How do you stand out from the crowd, and find real success? Well first, it's important to understand that the majority of network marketers are not using social networks effectively to build their businesses. They mistakenly think that social networks are ad networks, and they wind up spamming these networks with product and opportunity

messages that are not only inappropriate, but often in violation of the terms of service of these networks.

To stand out, it's essential that you focus on the "social" aspect of social networking. When you strive to understand the needs of others, and lead from a standpoint of providing value, you will already be different from the vast majority of network marketers on social networks (and your online friends will appreciate it!)

Here are some ways to use social networks to effectively market your business.

Facebook: Facebook is a relationship network. It's a place to connect primarily with people you've met in real life, and continue to develop that relationship so that people come to know, like, and trust you. As a network marketer, this can be a rich source of business, when it's used appropriately. The key is avoiding sales and recruiting pitches as general status updates. Instead, invite all your prospects and customers to friend you on Facebook, and then spend time getting to know them. Comment on what's going on in their lives. And share links to articles and other free information that provide value to your prospects.

Set up opt-in areas, such as Facebook Pages or Groups, where you can deliver more business-specific messages (as well as more value-driven posts), and invite your friends to become a part of that if they'd like more information from you about your business. But remember, people will only be interested in your business messages if they've come to know, like, and trust you first. So spend time daily on relationship-building activities, and you'll have much better success with your business presence on Facebook.

Blogs: Blogs can be a great way to position yourself as an expert that people come to for advice, and to whom they refer their friends. Rather than linking your online contacts to a sales page immediately, which can sometimes scare people away, a blog provides a softer middle ground, where people can get to know you before being invited to do business with you.

**Successful network marketing
blogs focus on providing value**

**“that people can use right now,
without spending a dime.”**

So if your goal is recruiting more people into your downline, then your blog might focus on topics of interest to people seeing an opportunity. You might write posts about how to work a home-based business successfully, the tax advantages of a home-based business, or how to choose a network marketing opportunity. If your goal is to sell more products, you might write posts related to your product line. For example, if you sell a nutritional beverage, you might write posts about how to live a healthy lifestyle.

As people read your posts and value them, they may choose to subscribe to your blog. You can also offer them the opportunity to opt-in for a “special report” of some kind, or your newsletter. Once they opt-in, you have permission to market more directly. Always remember, of course, that people opted in because of the value you have provided, and continue to focus on providing value along with your business messaging.

LinkedIn: LinkedIn is an under-utilized tool by network marketers. Statistics tell us that only 14% of people believe what someone says about themselves, but 78% of people believe what others say. Think about what this means for recruiting. You can tell people how you will support them in the business, but only 14% will believe you. Here’s where LinkedIn comes in. LinkedIn has this fabulous tool called “recommendations.” You can ask people in your downline, and others that have worked with you, to write recommendations about you. They can write how good you are at what you do, and what a great upline you are, committed to the personal development of your team.

**Now, when a prospect Googles
you (and you know they all do),
they’re going to find your
LinkedIn profile full of people
recommending you. What a
powerful tool to assist you with
recruiting!**

Twitter: There are a lot of people on Twitter these days who are self-promoting. The unfortunate thing is that many of these well-meaning folks are network marketers who have no idea what they're doing, and are just broadcasting noise into the social stream. There are effective ways to use Twitter, but they take time and effort that many people aren't willing to invest. If you want to stand out on Twitter, you need to invest the time in PEOPLE. You can use search tools such as Twellow.com to identify people, based on keywords, who may be a good fit for what you have to offer. But after that, you need to actually talk to them on Twitter. Sending them an auto-DM with a link to your website accomplishes nothing except to annoy people.

**Instead, be a human being.
Introduce yourself to people.
Retweet their stuff. Ask about
their day. Promote others. All of
this helps you to build social
capital on Twitter, so when you
share your stuff (such as blog
posts you've written), others are
willing to pass it along.**

It is very rare that someone achieves success on Twitter by pitching a product or opportunity out into the social stream. The real success with Twitter comes from engaging in conversation with people, and building relationships. Actually, that's where success with social media in general comes from.

Social media tools have brought many network marketers new prospects and new opportunities. But if you want to stand out, you have to use them well. And that means focusing on people, not just numbers. Relationships are the key to success.

If you'd like to learn more about how to use social tools successfully for your network marketing business, I invite you to check out my Direct Sales and Social Media blog, where I write articles daily on how to use social media successfully. You can find it at

<http://www.jenfongspeaks.com>. Use the search feature to find articles on just about any social media topic you can think of!



Jennifer Fong is a speaker, consultant, and trainer, who teaches direct selling companies and individual direct sellers how to use social media effectively as a business building tool. A former direct sales company CEO, Jennifer built her company from the ground up, and understands what it takes to build, lead, and train a team, as well as the 3 major principles of any direct sales party plan business: book, sell, and recruit.

A champion of social networking and social media marketing in the direct sales industry, Jennifer is passionate about teaching direct sellers how to use social media tools to enhance their businesses, while remaining true to the basics of a party plan business.

She provides consulting services to direct sales companies, helping them skip the learning curve and achieve immediate success through a comprehensive social media strategy.

She also coaches and trains individual direct sellers, and other business owners, on how to put the principles of social media to work in a profitable way, maximizing the return on their social media investment.
