YourBusiness!

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Did you know?

The 2009 Budget proposes a temporary 100% Capital Cost Allowance for computer hardware and systems software acquired after January 27, 2009 and before February 1, 2011.

This temporary measure will allow you to fully expense computer investments in one year.

For more information, please visit: www.budget.gc.ca/2009 or speak with your tax professional.

Social Media Marketing: How to Avoid 5 Common Mistakes

By Harp Arora

Odds are you're already on social media – whether it's Linked In, Facebook, Twitter or one of hundreds of other possibilities. But did you know owners of small businesses and sole proprietors were more likely than other businesses to report benefits from social media? In a recent study a whopping 84.8% reported they got greater exposure for their business because of social media.*

It proves small business owners are a savvy bunch. And by avoiding common mistakes, you'll be even further ahead of the pack. Here's how:

1. Go ahead, be a snob. Look, you'll regularly get invited to join many social networks with funny names like Bebo, Ning and Plaxo and many more. Don't just join because someone sent you an invite. You could spend a lifetime figuring them all out. Instead, pick 2 or 3 to start and get comfortable. Do make sure you pick the places your target customer hangs out. My target customer is on Linked In and Twitter – so that's where I spend the majority of my social media time.

2. Get dressed for the ball. In other words, complete you profile before you make it public. That means adding a picture, some personal and business information, a website etc. Many automatically assume you're a spammer if you don't have this information. Remember, people like to do business with people so show some personality and be authentic. And don't worry about making it perfect – you can always tweak later.

3. Show up to the party! One of the worst things you can do is set up a profile and then not show up for weeks or months. The reason people connect with you is because they want to interact with you. When your profile is there but you're not, they'll think of you as just another one-night stand (forgive the analogy). Check in from time to time, say hello, and respond to interesting posts.

4. Make sure you're at the right party. Are you disturbed by posts about someone's cat? Don't read them. Unfollow them. Unfriend them. Social media is about creating the experience YOU want. Find people who add value. Better yet – be that person that adds value for others.

5. Pitching is for the baseball game. Social media is NOT about constantly pitching people to buy your stuff. It IS about creating a dialogue and a relationship. What better opportunity could you have to find out how your customers think, what problems they struggle with, and what they like to do on the weekends. It's OK to post about yourself once in a while - just make sure you respect your connections.

Most of all, have fun. Enjoy both the added exposure and the wonderful relationships you build along the way.

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* Social Media Marketing Industry Report: How Marketers are Using Social Media to Grow Their Business, March 2009