

National Institute
of Restoration, Inc.
nir-inc.com



2009

OnSite

Volume 11 • Issue 11 November 2009

MARKETING MATTERS

Social media and small business

Small businesses are slowly testing social media as a way to connect with customers. While only a fraction of all small businesses now use social media in some way, the number is expected

to mushroom.

Forrester research projected that the \$716 million that people spent on social media marketing in 2009 will grow to more than \$3 billion in the next five years.

The most popular of



Confused about social networking? You're not alone.

the social media tools for businesses is currently LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com), the professional site that lets you connect with colleagues and in groups with similar interests.

Fewer business are using blogging or Twitter according to a survey by Sage Software and AML-Partners.

How do businesses use these social networking tools?

Most small businesses are using social media to respond to customer questions. Other common uses include networking, messaging and advertising. Businesses using Twitter collect followers and then offer special deals or incentives to get people to visit their websites.

Coming to Nashville April 8-9, 2010



NIR's 20th Executive Leadership Conference

Serious Business Fun Times in Music City

Mark Your Calendar Today!

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Keep moving during uncertain times

Have you ever been faced with the paralysis of failure? A situation when, despite your best efforts, things did not work out?

Perhaps you could not turn around that hot-shot worker you mistakenly hired. Or perhaps you have some unforeseen costs and are now drowning in debt.

Like all things in life, failure can lead to a total shutdown or it can teach us a lesson. Successful business people fail as much as the rest of us; they just learn from their mistakes and manage to keep

going according to David Silverman, author and entrepreneur.

Silverman says the ability to remain in motion is what separates successful and resilient managers from others. It is certain that things will not get better if you remain stuck.

As an example, he writes about the time he had to call a plumber after unsuccessfully trying to fix a broken toilet. As water gushed on the bathroom floor, the plumber observed that a professional makes as many mistakes as an amateur. The difference, according to the plumber, is that the professional fixes the mistakes faster.

To change, you must simplify

If you are trying to make a change in your work efficiency or lifestyle, it is hard to break out of habits that have been developing for years. Stop looking at changing everything Peter Bregman advises on the Harvard Business School blog.

Focus on just one change and you're far more likely to be successful.

If you want to change your weight, cut out one food instead of going on an elaborate diet. Research shows that all of the hundreds of diet options out there work if you simply reduce your calorie intake. And eliminating one food is



far easier than planning meals and snacks for the entire day.

The same principle applies to management Bergman writes. If you have a good plan for your business but it is not working, the problem is implementation.

Simplify your plan to a few basic elements. You need to decide on one part that is most important and focus on that. Perhaps it is communication within your company or concentrating on how many supplies or materials are wasted.

Remember, you don't have to do everything at once. Set the other parts of the plan aside till later and you will begin to create the change you are seeking.

Concerned about holiday marketing?



It's November and you are already seeing the oncoming tsunami in your mail and email boxes. If you're inclined to halt marketing just because people don't often buy contractor services for Christmas presents, think about sending out something after the rush is over — the week after Christmas or the first week of the New Year.

You could do a "Happy 2010" promotion with a postcard that offers a coupon or free gift for those who respond. You'll get your business in front of potential clients who would likely have lost your message two weeks earlier.

A colorful postcard can be a nice alternative to the tax forms and letters from accountants that begin arriving on December 27. And since holiday guests make people realize they need to make some changes at home, your message could make 2010 a great year for you as well as your clients.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Nuts & bolts
- Working smarter

NIR helps you boost your business

From networking to education to marketing assistance, the NIR supports restoration specialists. **434.973.4200**

NUTS AND BOLTS

Afternoon naps making a comeback

Americans work longer hours and sleep less than their counterparts in other countries. For that reason, some firms are warming up to the idea of letting workers nap at work.

A survey by the Pew Research Center recently reported that about 34 percent of adults surveyed had napped during the previous day.

Research shows that a 20-minute power nap three times a week can reduce heart disease as well as make you more alert.

Some of the companies that provide places for employees to nap include Nike, Google, Zappos.com, the architectural firm Gould Evans Goodman Associates, Yarde Medals manufacturing plant and Lippe Taylor, a public relations agency.



Single-family houses, apartment buildings and highway construction should offset the continued slowdown in commercial and manufacturing property.

Google device holds potential for contractors

In the interest of helping people go green, Google.org – the philanthropic division of the search



engine giant – has developed a free web-based tool that let people know their home power consumption. Called the Power meter, the device lets consumers monitor their home energy use with a live data feed to the web.

To use the device, homeowners must have an electrician install the TED 5000 to their

electrical panel. The device can measure shifts in power usage at the single watt level.

For more information, go to www.theenergydetective.com website and look up TED 5000.

Construction rebound in 2010

The McGraw-Hill construction forecast released in October predicted that 2009 will go down as a stunningly bad year for the industry with the value of new starts plunging by 25%. However, the forecasting survey predicts a climb next year in new construction.

Single-family housing is expected to grow by 30% next year if mortgage rates remain low. The renewal of the \$8,000 tax credit for first-time home buyers will also help construction as will any action the government takes to slow down the foreclosure crisis.



Is that bridge shaking?

We don't pay much attention to highway bridges when we drive over them. Neither has the government according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. The society notes that the average U.S. bridge is 43 years old and most were designed to last 50 years.

A bridge's life can be extended with preventive maintenance but that requires an investment in inspections and repairs.

Federal government officials say one in four bridges has a structurally deficient rating.

That's not as scary as it sounds according to ASCE spokesman Andrew Hermann. He said peeling paint or flooding problems can cause a bridge to be listed as deficient.

Is the worst over for commercial building?

According to the latest data, the answer is probably yes. The steepest decline in construction spending for commercial buildings has already occurred with

large construction projects says economist Jim Haughey.

The decline will continue through next winter and construction spending will not likely increase until late next year. However, any downward trends before then are likely to be more gradual.

Working Smarter

Making better use of your time

- **Keep a clean desk.** Have nothing in front of you other than what you are working on now.
- **Prioritize your work.** Never do an unimportant task first just because it can be handled quickly. You will never get around to the difficult but most important work if you do not schedule it



to be handled first. Break your important larger projects into small, manageable tasks and dig in.

- **Limit peeks at your email.** Email has replaced phone calls as the number-one interrupter of good work time. You must discipline yourself to make your email wait on you. Check your email no more often than once every 90 minutes to two

hours. Then handle email as it comes in. For each new email, read and delete it, reply to it or file it for later work. Keep your email inbox clean.

- **Use two monitors.** Your effectiveness will increase tremendously when you can view an email and your client's account screen or two related files at the same time.
- **Just say no.** You want to be a team player and help others out who are in a bind. However, that helpful attitude, while likeable, may be undermining your own attempts to complete work you are responsible for on time. When you are approached with a request you do not have time to accommodate, smile and apologize. Do not let others dump their work on you. Accept the notion that it is all right to decline extra jobs if you really cannot spare the time.

— Adapted from www.scottsimmons.com

Let NIR Open Doors For You

Keep in touch with your clients by giving them information they can use.

Send NIR's popular newsletter on the insurance industry including business tips to all of your agents and adjusters.



Contact NIR to learn more:
434.973.4200
nir@nir-inc.com