

Social media for career growth

Fact: Social media is not a bubble that will burst anytime soon. It's here to stay and it's influencing the way people communicate and do business. It makes sense, then, to ensure you know how to use it as a tool in your own career.



By [Donna Rachelson](#) 7 Jan 2013

If you're online, reading this article, you probably have some experience of social media. Maybe you have a personal Facebook profile or you are an avid wedding dress "pinner" on Pinterest. Perhaps you're active on Twitter or you enjoy browsing YouTube clips of cats singing.

Whatever the case, social media has become a huge part of our digital world. Mxit, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, YouTube, Foursquare - the list of social media platforms is lengthy and potentially confusing. But by keeping a few simple guidelines in mind, it becomes much easier to manage your social media activities and make them work for you.

Use social media strategically. Think about the term 'social media'. Essentially, it's a form of media that allows for more immediate and personal interaction than traditional forms of media. But it's still media.

Would you recklessly place a newspaper advert meanly criticising a colleague or competitor? Probably not. But posting a rude remark about someone on a social media platform can be just as silly. Just as you would think very carefully about what to say before being interviewed on national television, it's important to think and behave strategically on social media.

Just because it's fast-moving doesn't mean you shouldn't prepare a strategy. In fact, the immediate nature of social media means that it can be more dangerous to be unprepared to say something without thinking than in traditional forms of media.

Remember your networking etiquette. Social media activity is often termed 'social networking' and I believe it's critical to remember to apply the same good manners you would use in real life networking.

In other words, be polite. Don't just talk about yourself - listen. Connect with the right people. Make an effort to meet people where the relationship can be mutually beneficial. Spend time developing your network strategically and focusing on important relationships, rather than just trying to collect hundreds of business cards (or in the case of social media, followers). Discuss appropriate topics. If you're on a social media platform to build your career, like LinkedIn, posting endless photos of your puppy is probably not going to help you achieve your goal.

Choose where to be active. You wouldn't join every networking club, industry body and social event you ever heard of in real life - you wouldn't have enough hours in the day. Similarly, it's important to play to your strengths in terms of deciding what social media channels to use. It's critical that you don't dilute yourself over too many channels and lose your impact. Rather identify one or two platforms that work best for you and focus on using them as best you can.

In terms of team branding, members of a well branded team are able to clearly communicate what they do and why they are vital to the company. They are able to convince others of their value and turn them into brand ambassadors for the team.

To create a team brand, the team needs to have a clear understanding of its target market (who does it serve?), its core competencies (what does it do better than any other similar team?), the benefits it offers (what makes it valuable?) and its brand personality (what is distinctive about the way the team does things?).

Effective team branding results in recognition from customers and peers. With recognition comes feedback and insight, which assists in making your team even more streamlined and efficient. Recognition turns the spotlight onto the team and individuals in it. People develop pride in what they are doing, which in turn increases productivity, quality of work and morale.

Your team becomes a trusted source of information and will be sought after. You become more relevant. When you're relevant, you are able to command an increased share of budget and management attention.

A strong team brand supports the broader strategic corporate objectives, and thus assists the company in being more competitive in the market. Your team moves from a service role to a strategic one.

By building a team brand, you create an air of distinction for your team, which can go a long way when you are competing for attention, budget and relevance within your organisation.

ABOUT DONNA RACHELSON

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