



Social Media, 2010. . . Is it Right For You?

Social media and social networking is EVERYWHERE we turn. FaceBook, LinkedIn, Twitter – everyone is doing it, but should you as a business in the special events industry jump on this speeding train? That is the question in the air of many of the hotels, resorts, clubs and vendors in our industry. The answer? Yes! Yes! A thousand times “yes”!

Actually, when you think about what social media is all about, it couldn't be *MORE* in line with our industry – it's an online party! People coming together who share like interests and passions, sharing information in a group environment format. So, for the industry to NOT become immersed in this “new to some” and engaging communication vehicle is simply not an option.

A little clarification of the terms (definitions!) for those who need it – when you create a posting on Twitter, it is called a “tweet”. It must be very short (140 characters or less), unlike FaceBook where you can write longer posts. A blog can be set up for free on websites such as www.WordPress.com or www.blogspot.com and you can write as much as you want – it's like an ongoing story. It can be a consistent theme or whatever you like – it's just a place to write thoughts or articles that can be accessed online by anyone who follows you.

Here are a few tips and tricks for becoming savvy in the social media world:

- Building and cultivating relationships with people to whom you want to stay connected is the number one reason to use social media. Its online networking at it's finest.
- Remember the title – “SOCIAL Media”! Stay social and do not use it as a vehicle to simply self-promote! Nothing is more of a turn-off in the social media world.
- Get inspired – educate yourself! Learn all you can from the people you respect most – follow other people's blogs, tweets and posts to keep your finger on the pulse of what is happening in your industry.
- Share useful and interesting information – be an educator and become known as an expert in your industry or area of expertise. Writing a blog or online newsletter (or even quick tweets) and sharing useful and helpful information is a great way to gain a loyal following. An event planner, for example, could share great party ideas or hot themes. A DJ might share some awesome ideas for best loved event song choices. A linen or rental company might write about the hottest new choices in rentals or linen colors and fabrics. Our industry provides endless opportunities of writing about interesting, useful advice and information. Chef can share favorite recipes and eco-friendly choices!
- Connect people to your blog and website. Posting a quick tweet or post with a link to a useful tidbit of information on your blog or website is a great way to drive traffic to your areas of contact (websites, blogs, etc), where people will undoubtedly look around and see what else you have to offer.
- Have a dedicated person who blogs, posts and tweets your information. You want a uniform voice and the same writing style. Be consistent with your posts.
- Work and personal info – keep it separate! Do not mix your personal and work personas – keep it professional (but casual and relaxed) if you are blogging/tweeting/posting for work.

Once you have built some strong relationships and have a following (the more people you follow, the more people will follow you – using good key words specific to your industry is also a way for people to

find you), you can then start to talk about events or things of interest that you are involved with that may be of interest to your readers. But again, I caution – do not **just** promote products, venues and services, and when you do, space it out between other tidbits of good, useful information. Social media is the newest avenue of choice for various industry vendors to stay connected to each other. It keeps you fresh in the minds of potential clients! The possibilities are endless! Tweet, tweet. . .

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