

Social Media for those with limited time and money

These are brief notes from the Mayfield Business Forum (MBF) discussion meeting held on Tuesday 1st May 2012

What is Social Media

- Software / communities such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+
- Allows two-way conversations
 - Someone posts an article, comment, news item, question
 - Others respond and a multi-way conversation can start
- Can set up groups to restrict conversations to friends, family, those with shared interest, those who sign up
- Topics range from trivia to sharing of expertise and deep discussions

Social Media for Business

- Creating groups to engage with: customers, prospects, suppliers, staff, potential employees, local community, shareholders, influencers
- Finding contacts via your network and their connections
- Messaging news, product / service updates, support
- Market research with surveys & questions
- Showing expertise by responding to questions, joining in discussions, publishing and promoting opinion pieces and white papers
- Creating a profile to showcase your capabilities – useful for selling and for job search

Which Social Media?

- David Wilson pointed us toward the very useful “infographic” <http://blog.zintro.com/2012/04/18/leveraging-social-media-expertise-infographic/> which summarises Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ together with their strengths and weaknesses
- David himself has found LinkedIn to be highly effective for finding jobs, making contacts and driving business and he focuses almost entirely on this, checks activity many times a day and is thinking of giving up on a website to focus just on LinkedIn

- Tom had also found LinkedIn very useful in his recruitment business for finding suitable candidates though you have to be careful not to be seen as sending spam messages
- Both Roger and David agreed that Premium membership of LinkedIn did not seem to be worthwhile. Among other features, it allows you to contact anyone on LinkedIn but the most fruitful ways of contacting people were via intermediaries whom you knew and who knew the target contact or via joining in conversations on shared interest groups
- Julie Rae has told us in previous meetings how she has successfully used Facebook in her consumer sales business (Toys to You) but nobody at the meeting had used Facebook successfully
- Twitter seems to have limited use: good for PR, news and those who want to promote themselves as expert commentators on niche topics
- Roger pointed out that photos and videos were highly ranked by search engines so that businesses who could produce interesting images or clips should post them on sites such as Facebook, Picasa, Flickr or YouTube to raise their profile

How much time and money?

- Since David relied so heavily on LinkedIn he often spent a few minutes each hour keeping up to date. Others spent a few minutes each day. The key was to have a consistent and regular presence and respond to enquiries
- Businesses should allocate time for marketing and nowadays social media is an important part of marketing so should be allocated time accordingly. Time on other activities (cold calling, face-to-face networking) might have to be reduced accordingly
- For small businesses social media mainly requires time rather than money. The basics can be done for little or no cost.