

on the Web

Engaging Social Media

Before you dismiss social media as another “internet fad,” ask yourself these questions:

- Have you read a blog? (Do you write one?)
- Have you visited a video site such as YouTube or Google video?
- Have you listened to or watched a podcast (an MP3 show you can download to your computer or a portable media player like an iPod)?
- Have you read Wikipedia for information?

According to Wikipedia, online, social reference Web sites, or “social media” is described as the online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with each other”. Examples of these technologies include: Wikipedia, blogs, podcasts, Flickr (digital picture sharing), and YouTube (video sharing).

If you are curious about how to get involved in the new world of Internet communications, whether it’s blogging, podcasting or more, here are a few tips to get you started:

1. Plan for Success.

Take the time to develop a plan and figure out exactly what you’d like to accomplish.

2. Practice, Practice, Practice.

Take the time to practice. You’ll want to feel comfortable with the tools you are going to use. For example if you are recording a podcast. Write out drafts and start speaking into a voice recorder. Work on feeling comfortable typing and speaking. Get constructive feedback from co-workers, friends and family.

3. Jump in with Both Feet.

The only way to get comfortable with communicating on the Internet is to do it. You can minimize the natural learning curve through planning and repetition.

4. Be Authentic.

The most important thing you can do is to sound genuine. Be polite, confident and considerate.

5. Connect.

Once you start blogging, put links to other blogs on yours. When you post a blog, don’t be afraid to give credit to other bloggers in your posts. Ask CEOs who blog to share links. Take out blog ads. Ask your employees. Be creative.

6. Blog Instead of a Newsletter.

Instead of a traditional newsletter, use a blog or a wiki (site where people can update entries) to communicate with employees.

7. It’s Not “Open Mic Night.”

Humor can be a great addition to your social media events but remember to use it sparingly. Used too frequently or in the wrong way, it can detract from what you are trying to say. If you can’t say it in the office, don’t say it online.

8. Be Patient.

It takes time to get your message out there, but with solid effort, linking to other sites, publicizing that, and keeping your information interesting, you will find your audience grow.