



### Message from the President

## Get Social!

While the economy is on everyone's minds, a second topic that is dominating business conversations is Social Media. And what is social media? According to an online dictionary, they are primarily Internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings.

I know what you are probably thinking, who has the time and money and what kind of return on investment will I receive? But remember it hasn't been that long ago that you were probably having the same thoughts and conversations regarding e-mail and websites and for the most part that has turned out pretty well. Social media tends to be very informal and many may believe that they deserve minimal focus and thought.

But according to a recent Social Media Benchmarking Survey, the opposite is true. While you may think a printed piece may have an infinite shelf life that ends in a landfill, your blog posts, history of discussions, network of contacts and other social media products are going to be around for a long time.

With that in mind, here are seven ways small businesses can jump on the social marketing bandwagon with a moderate investment of time and/or money from [www.searchengineinland.com](http://www.searchengineinland.com).

**1a. Start a blog.** Blogging is old news to many (Web 1.5, perhaps?), and it's certainly not as sexy as chasing a link from the front page of Digg. But it's still a great way to open up a dialogue with your customers, and that connection is the reason social marketing exists. WordPress is free, open source software—so the price is right. The time investment is completely up to you, but this truism applies: The more you put into it, the more you'll get out. Still, it's okay—and I'd even say it's recommended—to start slowly and increase your time investment as you get comfortable with using a blog.

**1b. Comment on other blogs.** You can't blog into a vacuum. Blogging is about creating and joining conversations, and that includes reading what others in your industry are saying and joining the discussion on other blogs. It's free, and again, the time investment is up to you. You'll be able to supply your name and URL when leaving a comment, and there's no debate that intelligent comments on other blogs helps build traffic to yours.

**2. Get active at Yahoo Answers.** If you're a service-based small business, you already know that your expertise is your No. 1 marketing tool. Yahoo Answers is a great way to share your knowledge with people who are looking for it—a direct connection with potential customers.

**3. Make and share videos.** Good video cameras are cheap these days, and a short video needs little editing/production. Even if you do decide to add some sizzle to a video, the required software won't break the bank. How-to videos are an obvious choice. "Tour" videos—tours of your business, restaurant, the homes you build or sell, etc. are also a good idea. In addition to using them on your own Web site or blog, YouTube is an obvious sharing destination. Local search is also embracing video: CitySearch recently announced that local video ads will be added to its listings, and YellowPages.com is also pursuing video opportunities.

**4. Take and share photos.** I'm a longtime believer in using Flickr as a marketing tool. The time and cost investment is minimal. And thanks to Flickr's incredibly active photo groups, you can share photos of your products with people who are interested. A pet store owner could share photos with the 2,000+ members of the pet parade group, which is one of dozens of animal-related groups. A company that makes iPod accessories could post nice product photos in the Apple group, with its ~2400 members. And a construction company that makes custom homes could post photos in the appropriate city group, like San Francisco or Chicago.

**5. Try StumbleUpon.** Of all the discovery-type of social sites (Digg, Reddit, Netscape, etc.), I believe StumbleUpon requires the lowest time investment. Joining groups related to your industry and adding friends from those groups can be done quickly. Once you do that, as you add pages to StumbleUpon—including your own great content—other users will "stumble upon" what you've added. As those visitors give it the "thumbs up", your content is then shown to even more users. Unlike Digg or del.icio.us, you don't need to spend several months building up a great user profile. I should note that the main benefit of StumbleUpon will be traffic, more so than links, sales, etc. So rather than hope it becomes a direct source of revenue or higher rankings, you should hope that it increases awareness, blog readership, feed subscribers, and the like.

**6. Join groups & mailing lists.** Social marketing is about finding your customers where they are. There's a good chance at least some of your customers are using Yahoo Groups or Google Groups to share interests. Much like the Flickr examples above, there are probably groups/lists that are highly related to the products or services you offer. And much like the Yahoo Answers suggestion, being able to help others in this community setting can be a great marketing tool.

Every social marketing opportunity will have its own rules to follow, and you should make sure you know those rules. But here's one general rule for using these sites as marketing tools: Don't spam the system. Flickr doesn't want your entire product inventory posted, and they have rules against doing so. But a few high-quality photo submissions that add to the community are fine. Whatever social marketing you do, be an active contributor. Add to the signal, not the noise.

When you do that, you're on the road to social marketing success.

For more information on social media or to join the Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce community on Facebook and LinkedIn, contact the chamber at 540-586-9401.

## "BUSINESS BEFORE HOURS" at MAKE & TAKE GOURMET

### Wake Up - Get Up - Get Going!

The Chamber will hold the second of its recently designed monthly networking event, "Business before Hours" on Tuesday, June 30th, in Forest at the Make & Take Gourmet located in the Forest Square Shopping Center.

This new event gives our members an early morning opportunity to network with other Chamber members before getting into their busy daily schedules. Our newest members also learn how to unlock the benefits of their membership while they exchange business information with other new members.

Make & Take Gourmet is located next door to our Forest satellite office at 14805 Forest Road and, weather permitting; both sites - as well as the outdoor arena - will be available for networking convenience.

Light breakfast fare will be available and all of our Chamber members are invited to attend as a benefit of their membership. For more information, call us at 540-586-9401!

Join us from 8:00 to 9:00 AM on June 30th for your best opportunity to wake up - get up - and get going!

## Give Your Business Something to Cheer About At Expo 2009!

Interested in promoting your business at the area's premier networking event of the year? The Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce is accepting exhibitors for its Bedford Area Business Expo. And this year, it's a Homecoming celebration, as the chamber suits up for its 70th anniversary and leads a cheer for the business community that makes the Bedford area so special. The Expo will be held on September 24th at the Bedford Area Family YMCA.

Chamber members and non-member businesses alike can participate in this one-of-a-kind event that includes several ways to network, complete with an Exhibitors' Pep Rally, all in one location! So "bring your business back home", and to Expo 2009, as we return its two popular features--the Bedford Area Job Fair and Taste of Bedford-- to complement the premier networking of the expo. The Job Fair runs concurrently with the expo to provide exhibitors the added benefit of recruiting from their booths, and the Taste of Bedford provides a unique "after hours" networking opportunity by hosting area restaurants, wineries and caterers providing samplings of their products. Plus, discounted rates are available to businesses interested in only the Job Fair or Taste portions of the event!

Join the parade of businesses at Homecoming 2009, contact Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce at 540-586-9401 for more information or to reserve your booth. Exhibitor contracts are also available on our web site at [www.bedfordareachamber.com/news-announcements](http://www.bedfordareachamber.com/news-announcements) Expo 2009 is sponsored by: Bedford Memorial Hospital, Heritage Green Assisted Living Communities, National College, WSET-13, Bedford Bulletin, Progress Xpress, and WLNI-FM.



## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

### GILDED ERA

This month our spotlight is once again focused on Gilded Era in Bedford Centertown. Located on North Bridge Street, Gilded Era lends to the city's charm with tastefully and elegantly dressed windows which accurately reflect the name of the business.

Owner and Manager of this business that has provided an anchor for Bridge Street over the past 16 years, Fay Harris is truly an entrepreneur who is always on the lookout for ways to enrich her business as well as Bedford's business community.

On Saturday, June 27th from 10 AM - 3 PM, The Gilded Era is holding a Book Signing and Reception for Bedford's own Margaret Krantz Parks, author of "Echoes From The Covered Bridge," a charming and heartwarming story of being raised at Krantzy's Corner in the eastern part of Bedford County. Ms Parks says her earliest memory "is on election day in 1932 as we traveled from our farm to Bedford so our father could vote for Franklin Roosevelt as President."

Stop by the Gilded Era Antique Mall, 115 North Bridge Street in Bedford Centertown for the book signing. While you're there, browse Gilded Era's displays of vintage fashions, jewelry, linens, tapestries, trunks, dolls, Victorian framed prints, Victrolas, postcards, sterling, books, quilts, and beautiful antique furniture while at this antique mall. For more information, you may call Fay at 540-587-9322.



New Forest business, Virginia Handcrafts, celebrated its grand opening on Saturday May 23rd with a ribbon cutting ceremony by the Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce. Virginia Handcrafts is actually a 40 year-old business that was re-opened in Forest by new owner, Carolyn Seaman. "I have been very happy with the location at Forest Square and the people who live and work in the area have been very receptive!" stated Seaman. Carolyn handcrafts several items herself that are displayed in the store including quilts, wall hangings, baby items, bags, and unique jewelry. The store also represents approximately 40 artists with a wide array of items including soaps and candles to pottery, metal and wood work, leather goods, glass and more! Visit Virginia Handcrafts, located at Forest Square Shopping Center. Always something new, always something unique!

## MONETA YMCA OPENS FOR BUSINESS

On Thursday, June 4th, the Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce was pleased to assist the staff at the new Moneta YMCA in an Open House and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. President Susan Martin and Board Member Curry Martin were in attendance on behalf of the Chamber to extend the Chamber's best wishes and to present the ribbon to Mary Jo Boone, Executive Director and CEO of Bedford Area Family YMCA.



Ribbon Courtesy of Frederic's Flowers

The new "Y" is located at 1039 Mayberry Crossing Drive in Moneta (Near Centra Health & across from Downtown Moneta). Stop in, sign up, and get in shape for summer!

Put a Community Bank with **People You Know** and Trust Behind You.

Serving 40 communities. Over 80 fee-free ATMs.

## StellarOne

Excellence. Partnership. Service.

888.785.5271 • [www.StellarOne.com](http://www.StellarOne.com)

MEMBER FDIC

ONE PLAN *complete*

**Member One** FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

434.237.0871 800.666.8811 [memberonefcu.com](http://memberonefcu.com)

The ONE for You.

## LYNCHBURG HEALTH & REHABILITATION CENTER

Medical Facilities of America+ Community Skills HOME

Essential Skills Transitional Skills

Critical Skills

HOSPITAL ACCELERATION ZONE

### The Recovery Map<sup>SM</sup>

Road to Recovery

The Recovery Map is our rehabilitation program that enables our patients to return to independent, active lifestyles.

5615 Seminole Avenue • Lynchburg, VA 24502-2282  
434-239-2657 • Fax 434-239-4062