



## **Five Do's and Five Don'ts for Using Social Networking Sites to Grow Your Business**

by Margy Rydzynski, Arlington Entrepreneurs

### **DO:**

1. Treat your presence online as a proxy for in-person networking. You need to work that virtual crowd and get your name out there. Treat your social network (or networks) as a way of building community and developing relationships. This is as important for a business as it is for an individual.
2. Do your homework before establishing a presence online. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of opportunities for you. Choose a network that's appropriate to the product/service and/or age group you're targeting. Wondering where to start? Visit Simple Spark, an online catalog of online applications, including social networks at: <http://www.simplespark.com/>
3. Post regularly. Nothing looks more unprofessional than a blog or social networking presence that lies dormant for months at a time. Also, search engines love content that's updated frequently. Make it a commitment.
4. Respond to other peoples' posts. The best way to attract attention to yourself is to pay attention to others.
5. Once you've signed up, make sure you fill out your profile completely. Include a photo that's casual, but not unprofessional. Consider changing your profile photo from time to time to keep things fresh. Talk about yourself as well as your business.

### **DON'T:**

1. Don't treat a social network as an outlet for free advertising. Users want social interaction and information, not an ad disguised as a post. They get enough of that in the side bars.
2. Don't leave your profile picture blank. Think about it: would you go to a networking meeting through your local Chamber of Commerce with a paper bag over your head?
3. Don't start a blog or set up a social network and then ignore it. People will not get a good impression of your business. In fact, they may think you've gone out of business.
4. Don't expect overnight results. Relationship-building takes time.
5. Don't bore your readers/viewers to death with long-winded rehashes of the latest board meeting. Leave the annual report on the table. Talk to people—don't read to them.

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