



## Ask SCORE for Business Advice

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### **Social Media by Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt**

“In 30 to 45 minutes a day, I can post two blogs and add a picture to Flickr and do a Tweet that refers people back to a blog or Flickr.”

This comment from Jeff Dawson, director of Lester Public Library in Two Rivers, might sound confusing to those not involved in social media. Although social networking has been around for quite a few years, businesses and organizations are just starting to realize its benefits.

Dawson had some experience with blogging before taking the position in Two Rivers in 2007. Then, in what he calls a “labor of love”, he began experimenting with various social media. He used his personal computer at home and spent long hours learning various options. “I just started playing,” he said.

Before long, Dawson joined Flickr, a photography-posting site, and started attending community events. His initial goal was to be part of the community and gain better exposure for the library by taking and posting pictures. His pictures gained a following and he learned that he had a talent that could be used to benefit the library. In fact, the community often refers to him as the “official photographer of Two Rivers.”

Dawson explains, “I put these photos on Flickr to share with the community and the rest of the world. From that I aimed the camera at the library and started taking pictures of the library and library events. The extra bonus of doing this is that I have city council members talking about the library and it raises our visibility.”

As he drew an audience, the networking evolved to include MySpace, Twitter, Flickr, and a daily blog. The library website, [www.tworivers.lib.wi.us](http://www.tworivers.lib.wi.us), includes links. “The beauty of social media is that it takes no space on the server. I can do this inexpensively and get the word out about the library in a place that’s kind of cool and hip,” Dawson noted.

Others in the community have taken notice, and Dawson has become the area expert on social media. He has given presentations to the Two Rivers Business Association, Rotary Clubs, the Manitowoc Chamber of Commerce, and the Calumet County Library System. He is getting inquiries from other libraries, as well.

“What’s happening is that the library is being put in front of a broad audience; this is thrilling to me,” Dawson said. “I befriend as many people in the community that I can (he has 3,800 friends on My Space) and am dropping the library into their homes, personal computers, and telephones.”

As Dawson teaches the business community, he says that it is important for businesses to be online. He has seen the library grow in terms of visibility and visits, and is convinced that social media is a vital part of marketing.

“The smart businesses say, hey, I have to compete in today’s market. This is the place to be.” Dawson said. “I’m here to tell them that anyone can do it and in fact, they can’t afford not to.”

If you’d like to learn more about social media, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE. Visit [www.greenbayscore.org](http://www.greenbayscore.org) or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information.

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