



Ask SCORE for Business Advice

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Using Social Media for Research by Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

In the past few weeks, this column has focused on the importance of research. SCORE clients are encouraged to gain solid information before starting a new business. It is vital to know the demographics, psychographics, and spending habits of an area as an indication of whether or not there is a need for the specific type of business. Once a business opens, good research can help an owner further refine their concept.

Tami Pederson, owner of VC Connex, LLC, has turned to social media to stay up-to-date on her industry and make sure that she doesn't miss out on new opportunities. In business for about a year, Pederson's company provides turnkey solutions for businesses that exhibit at trade shows and conventions including pre-show planning and post-show follow up.

“When developing a market strategy for VC Connex, I realized Web 2.0 was a new source to market my company and also utilize it for additional research on the trade show industry and small businesses,” Pederson noted. “I consider Web 2.0 as one of the tools in my tool chest. I incorporate social media with the other aspects of marketing and research.”

Web 2.0 is considered the second generation of the web. It is the name given to the category of Internet tools and technologies that allow businesses and individuals to be active contributors rather than passive absorbers and includes blogs, social networking applications and tools, and the like.

As she discusses Web 2.0, Pederson is talking about an area that she wasn't all that comfortable with a year ago. However, the more she learned about social media, the more convinced she became of its benefits.

Pederson noted, “I started with LinkedIn. I became involved with a LinkedIn Group, Link Greater Green Bay, which encourages networking with other LinkedIn users. LinkedIn GGB meets once a month a takes a portion of that time to show the group how to utilize LinkedIn and other social media platforms.”

LinkedIn allows members to join relevant groups, follow and participate in group discussions, and access current industry news. Pederson joined groups related to the

trade show and event industry. She started attending New North Social Media breakfasts to learn how to better utilize social media, and signed up for FaceBook and Twitter.

“Joining Twitter was a big step for me,” Pederson stated. “I was nervous because I wasn’t sure how this medium worked. I followed what my social media counterparts taught me- listen. I listened to what people were discussing and discovered Twitter is a great way for me to communicate, share, and learn from others.”

She plans to continue learning and using social media. By utilizing hash tags and signing up for alerts, she is able to follow people and companies who are involved with small business, trade shows, and social media. She finds information on current trends and marketing, tips on running a small business, and customers who are looking for her services.

If you’d like to learn more about the necessity of research, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE. Visit www.greenbayscore.org or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information.

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