

Social Media for Machining and Moldmaking Businesses

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BASICS

- What are “social media”? They are tools that make it easy to share content on the Web, and react to content others are sharing. Five popular social media options: LinkedIn, Twitter, blogs, Facebook and YouTube.
 - As marketing tools for an industrial business, social media are at best mildly effective. Some of your customers are using social media, but probably not most of them.
 - However, social media provide easy ways to try to maintain awareness of your business.
 - Therefore: Engage in social media if you have an interest. Worth your involvement.
 - But social media not yet worth a large time investment. Develop a time-efficient strategy.
- All recommendations below aim at this.



LinkedIn

- LinkedIn is a business networking tool. Users connect to the profiles of other users they know. A web of interconnection results.
- Among all social media, LinkedIn offers the best ROI in terms of meaningful business exposure for amount of time invested.
- How to use: Create a profile at linkedin.com. Find profiles of people you know and invite them to connect. This includes customers and prospects, and people who might know your customers and prospects.
- No need to be pushy. In the text of your invitation to connect, just say you've started to use LinkedIn to manage your contacts. Some will choose not to accept your invitation.
- Keep connecting. Having more connections in LinkedIn means more exposure to others.
- Use Twitter to supply your LinkedIn profile with ongoing content (see below).
- The preferred way to use LinkedIn is to keep contacts visible to others. People won't expect you to be closely knowledgeable about all of your contacts, but people will form an impression (hopefully positive) based on the range and nature of your associations.
- Best value of LinkedIn: Maintain exposure to contacts whom you do not serve today, but might have the chance to serve in the future. Particularly if you are active at connecting or tweeting, they will keep on encountering evidence of you through your activity.
- For prospects you communicate with only occasionally, use LinkedIn mail. A note sent in this way subtly reminds them that you are someone they've chosen for their network. (If they don't use LinkedIn a lot, they might not remember this.)
- Link to me: www.linkedin.com/in/peterzelinski. In the text of your invitation, mention that you read these notes.



Twitter

- Twitter is a utility for sending short messages (140 characters max) to an audience of followers.
- Though Twitter is very popular, the Twitter community interested in manufacturing today consists mostly of people who hope to see Twitter more widely used for B2B in the future. For now, the percentage of industrial professionals using Twitter is small.
- Through functionality within LinkedIn, all Twitter posts can automatically be seen by your LinkedIn connections as well. In terms of maintaining awareness to the people most valuable to you, this is perhaps the best use of Twitter.
- How to use: Create an account at twitter.com. Post a few tweets. Find and follow others who have interesting tweets relevant to you. Some will follow you back.

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- Do not just promote your business. Be a person. Comment on news and happenings relevant to the industry. Show that the industry is where your heart is.
- Don't let Twitter be time-consuming. Spend time getting comfortable with Twitter, but after that, you could keep up your engagement in Twitter by investing as little as 15 min. at a time 2x per week.



Blogs

- Blog is short for “web log.” A blog is like an open journal on the Web, where you post a new entry whenever you choose.
- For a manufacturing business, a blog is a place to show your expertise. Write blog posts offering technical advice or explanations of topics your customers would benefit from understanding. Blog posts can also convey breaking news about your company, such as the arrival of a new machine.
- Make the blog a part of your website. An up-to-date blog shows that your website has fresh content, which in turn shows that your company is active and engaged.
- Blog posts should be short and narrowly focused on specific topics—not long and rambling essays. What can you get across with just 2-3 paragraphs, or with just a good photo and caption?
- One good post per month is sufficient to maintain the sense of an active blog. As long as an administrator takes ownership of the blog's quality, the duty of actually writing posts can rotate among staff members.



Facebook

- Facebook is the most widely used social media utility. However, Facebook is primarily for personal and recreational communication, not business.
- People have different preferences about business being part of their Facebook use. This makes things complicated. Some of your customers might see Facebook solely as a way to connect with children or grandchildren.
- For industrial marketing purposes, no harm in ignoring Facebook for now.



YouTube

- YouTube is a website where anyone can post and share video files.
- Use YouTube only for video you think customers or prospects would very much like to see—such as an unusual machining application showing a special area of expertise.
- Video that falls short of this high level of interest doesn't hurt you, but probably is not worth the time and trouble to film and post.
- If you do post video that is this interesting, promote it extensively. Describe it in your blog and announce it in Twitter.

GENERAL POINTS

- Your use of social media should be governed by a realistic plan for how you will keep on feeding these media consistently. Awareness builds slowly, and comes from your being steadily engaged. This should not require a lot of time, but it does require persistence.
- To make social media a natural part of your work, develop the habit of being open. For everything that happens in the shop, as well as everything you encounter and everything you learn, a natural part of your thinking should be to ask yourself, *Is this worth tweeting or blogging?*