



Generating and Monitoring Social Media Buzz

Listening and engaging are essential – but don't get stung!

Social media is here to stay. Forty-three percent of small businesses in 2009's Inc. 500 said it's "very important" to their business/marketing strategy. And 91 percent of the Inc. 500 used at least one social media tool in 2009.

Social media opens up a whole new level of communication. With it, you can rapidly spread the word about new products or services, and listen and speak directly to your customers, prospects and the media.

While many small businesses are wading into social media, there are pitfalls. You only get one shot to make a first impression, and with the speed of the Internet, it's difficult to correct a bad first impression once it goes public. So you need to be prepared.

Twitter and Facebook are two of the most popular and effective ways to communicate through social media. Both give you access to millions of potential customers.

Twitter connects you immediately to people in a way never before possible. In a single 140-character "tweet," you can talk and listen to masses of customers and other stakeholders. Its conversational nature allows you to create relationships with everyone who's important to

your business. It gives them a more intimate connection to your company. And it helps you attract customers.

Small businesses typically get over half of their customers through word of mouth. Twitter can help by encouraging people to spread news to friends in their networks. So when you issue a press release, tweet it to your Twitter network; interesting news can go "viral" when it's recommended or shared by an ever-expanding network of followers.

Twitter also lets you monitor conversations about your competitors. You may be able to use this information to offer better service or sales incentives. Listening and responding will help you attract new customers and strengthen the loyalty of your existing ones.

Facebook "fan pages" give your stakeholders a place to gather, find information about your company, discuss issues, and ask questions or communicate with you. A Facebook page can house everything that relates to your business, including:

- ▶ Company overview
- ▶ Website and contact info
- ▶ Press releases
- ▶ Videos
- ▶ Company news and status
- ▶ Customer interactions

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A Cision Best Practices Tip Sheet



It's simple to create and update, so it should always have fresh content. Plan to commit a few hours each week to promoting the page. Identify people who would be interested in it and invite them to become a fan. You can also include a Facebook page button on your website, and use Twitter or email to get the word out.

Linked-In, similar to Facebook, is a business social networking tool. It's a good way to look for possible employees or business partners, get frank feedback about new products or services, speak with others in similar businesses, and engage in other "business to business" communication.

Finally, because a positive presence on the social web is essential, many growing companies – 36 percent of the 2009 *Inc.* 500 – are developing guidelines for social media interaction. The [Cision website](#) and [CisionBlog](#) contain helpful ways for you to think about developing your own.

