

Trade Shows 2.0

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-- Charles Pappas --

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By Charles Pappas



When Samuel Morse tapped out the first message on the telegraph, "What hath God wrought," in 1844, the modern Information Age took off like a drag racer who'd just gotten the green light. Within 30 years after Morse's world-changing transmission, the Earth was blanketed with 680,000 miles of wire above the ground and below the sea, linking together 20,000 cities and towns in what is now called the "Victorian Internet." The old, slow universe, where a trip from New York to Boston took a day by railway and steamship combined, was thrown, as Henry Adams wrote, into "the ash-heap and a new one created."

That universe is now being recreated, with Web 2.0 throwing the older e-mail and Web sites into the trash bag of history. Coined in 2001 by Dale Dougherty, a co-founder of O'Reilly Media Inc., "Web 2.0" officially became the 1 millionth word in the English language last June. The term represents the online technologies that have transformed the we-talk-at-you marketing monologue into an everyone-chimes-in democratic dialog. Also generically known as "social media," Web 2.0 refers to a torrent of tools that have

emerged since the 1990s, such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Today, millions of Web 2.0 sites span the planet connecting an estimated 140 million people, according to Comscore Media Metrix. For trade show exhibitors in particular, Web 2.0 is another arrow in their quiver to help them target customers more accurately in a depressed economy, permitting them, like the telegraph did, to reach more people with more information, extending trade shows beyond the limitations of mere time and space.

But mastering these new tools isn't always easy. "Once a new technology rolls over you, if you're not part of the steamroller, you're part of the road," says Stewart Brand, the cyber-cultural guru who wrote "The Media Lab: Inventing the Future at MIT." The first in a two-part series on how to use Web 2.0 without becoming roadkill, this story profiles three of the most game-changing social-media technologies along with examples of companies who are using them to enhance their presence on the trade show floor. Next month, we'll explore three more Web 2.0 tools you can add to your exhibit-marketing arsenal.

Short and Tweet

Twitter

The back story: Winning the prestigious Webby award for “Breakout of the Year” after realizing a staggering 900-percent growth spurt in 2008, Twitter has become a viral sensation. However, the free service’s description sounds as boring as its actual usage is popular: Users send frequently updated messages — no more than 140 characters long — on the service via computer or phone to one or more individuals. Sounding too limited to be useful, the micro-messaging medium has won over 11 percent of online Americans with its simplicity. Twitter now has somewhere between 6 million to 9 million registered users, based on estimates by Jeremiah Owyang, a social media expert for Cambridge, MA-based Forrester Research Inc.

How it works: Once you sign up for a free account, you can start finding people you hope will follow your tweets by using the service’s tools to contact individuals already on Twitter. You can also search through your Gmail, Yahoo, or AOL e-mail accounts, or just send clients, prospects, or pre-registered show attendees e-mails from your Twitter account, promoting your tweets. If they’re interested in subscribing to your feed, they simply click the “follow” button on your Twitter profile. Then, any time you tweet, your messages are automatically delivered to them via the Twitter program. When someone new starts to follow your feed, Twitter notifies you via e-mail.

How exhibitors are using it: Hewlett-Packard Co.’s ProCurve business added a Twitter-based tactic to its exhibit-marketing program for the 2009 Interop show in Las Vegas last May. HP ProCurve wanted to capture 400 leads, almost 13 percent more than it did at the 2008 show. But with show attendance down almost 20 percent from 2008, HP ProCurve knew it needed to aggressively market itself using all available means.

After setting up a Twitter account and recruiting 150 initial followers by reaching out on its Web site, HP ProCurve reps sent out a tweet once every two days at first, then once or twice a day in the four days before Interop opened its doors. The tweets alerted the recipients about new HP ProCurve technologies showcased in the exhibit, the 10 partner companies featured in the booth, and prizes it would give away.

The day Interop started, HP ProCurve ratcheted up the number of its tweets, building to five or six a day for the

three days the show ran. The company also gave away two prizes a day, such as an iPod or digital picture frame, prefaced by tweets urging followers to come to the booth for the reward. HP ProCurve’s prizes came with a twist: You had to be the first to locate one of the eight product areas in its booth called “pods,” find a specific staff person, then offer that staffer a special password. One such tweet read, “Stop by the convergence pod in the HP booth today, see Renee, and mention ‘Networks Collide’ to win.”

The 150 initial followers mushroomed into 250 by the time the show closed. Aiming for 400 leads, the company surpassed its goal by 50 percent, reaching 600, thanks at least in part to its promotion.

While HP ProCurve found out Twitter can propel prospects to visit your booth at a show, Rick Grant found it could also bring the show to your prospects. When Grant, the owner of consulting firm Rick Grant and Associates Inc., worried that attendance at the 2009 Technology in Mortgage Banking Conference & Expo would be low, he sought a way to engage with the few prospects that might be at the show, and connect to those that couldn’t make the trip.

Before the expo opened, Grant set up a Twitter account, then contacted approximately 75 current and prospective clients

in 50 companies that were not registered to attend the show, requesting that they sign up for the micro-blogging medium to follow him during the expo.

During the show, Grant updated his Twitter followers several times a day, tweeting about conference sessions, the facility and amenities, gossip overheard in the hallways, and new offerings on the show floor. The dynamic duo of Twitter’s immediacy and intimacy resulted in a unique post-show relationship: In the months since the expo, Grant discovered that he is twice as likely to generate new business from a company where at least one executive followed him on Twitter than those that didn’t.

The takeaway: Use Twitter to offer incentives to come to your booth, tweeting the offer starting roughly one week before the show and then several times throughout the day during it. Engage those not attending the show by tweeting bulletins of which exhibitors are there, updates on new products, and summaries of educational presentations.

The most effective use of Twitter for your exhibit-marketing program during a trade show may be to incentivize attendees to come to your exhibit by tweeting about in-booth activities.



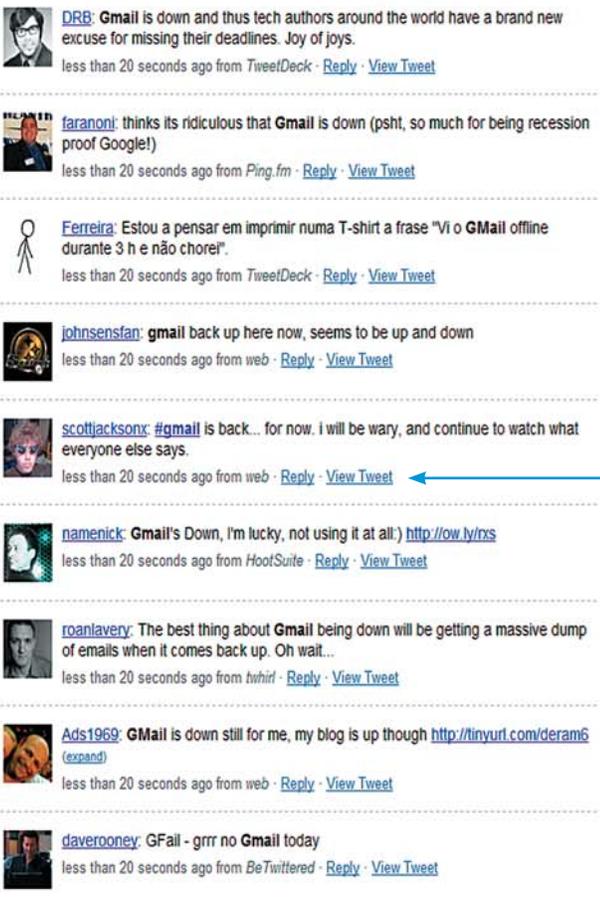
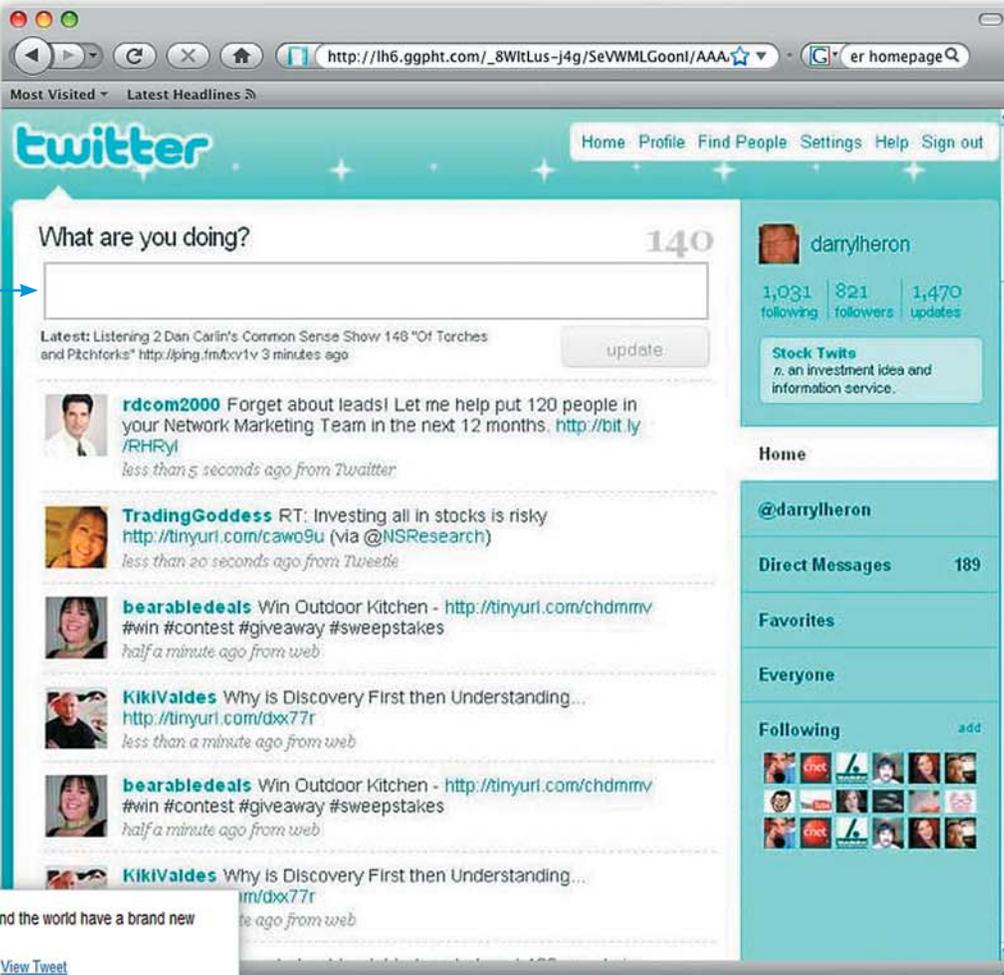
Twitter Tip #1

Albert Maruggi, senior fellow at the Society for New Communications Research, encourages Twitter virgins to think of their tweets as radio broadcasts, with certain audiences available at certain times. Why? Because, like radio, only a fraction of your followers see your tweets since they may not be tuned in to your live "broadcast."

Twitter Tip #2

Tweets for an event have a short shelf life. According to

Tim Patterson, author of "Twittering Your Way to Tradeshow Success," a good rule of thumb is to start your tweets no more than two weeks before a show. That way the information stays fresh and is therefore perceived as valuable by attendees.



Twitter Tip #3

The best tweets are re-tweeted by your recipients to their own contacts or followers, extending the reach of each message you send. So Hayes Davis, founder of Appozite LLC, which runs TweetReach (www.tweetreach.com), urges tweeters to make their tweets more re-tweetable by keeping them short enough for followers to use the re-tweet "RT @username" notification in front of the original text without exceeding the 140-character limit. For example, if you tweet "Check out this fascinating blog post at http://somelink.com," it's short enough for a follower to pass it on to someone else with the re-tweet alert by typing "RT @username Check out this fascinating blog post at http://somelink.com."



Twitter Tip #4

People are more likely to re-tweet your message if there's something in it for them. Maybe it's some breaking industry news they could be the first to share with their followers. People will also re-tweet if there's something more tangible in it for them, such as being entered in a contest if they re-tweet. So consider those motivating factors when creating your tweets, and you're more likely to achieve viral status via re-tweet after re-tweet.

With a Little Help From my Friends

Facebook

The back story: Named for the “face books” that colleges hand out to incoming students to familiarize them with the mugs of current faculty members, Facebook is arguably the most pervasive online phenomenon of its time. Originally called “The facebook,” this social-networking hot spot was launched in 2004 by Harvard student and founding nerd Mark Zuckerberg. More than 1,200 Harvard students signed up within 24 hours of the site going live. An average of 250,000 people worldwide now sign up each day for the free service, for a current total of 200 million registered users — more than twice the population of Germany — with an average of 67.5 million visitors a month, according to Comscore Media Metrix reports.

How it works: While Facebook is well known for its personal accounts, companies can cash in on this social-networking site and start a business account that enables them to share messages about their services and products with Facebook users. Once you choose a category that best fits what you’d like to promote, you create a profile that becomes your company’s main Facebook page. Besides adding text about your company, Facebook allows you to create photo albums, start your own blog, or merge your existing blog from your company’s main Web site with your new one on Facebook.

To locate clients or prospects you already know, Facebook uses a program that will scour your e-mail contacts (as well as AOL Instant Messenger or Windows Live Messenger lists) and compare them against its own database of members. When it discovers a match between its database and your e-mail contacts, Facebook gives you the choice to invite that member to become a “friend.” If the individual accepts, his or her picture will appear on your page, and your messages will automatically be posted to his or her personal page (called a wall).

Additionally, Facebookers who see your promotions or search for your company or product can click a button that says “Become a Fan” and thereby become part of your network, with their face appearing on your page and their name being added to your Facebook members list.

How exhibitors are using it: Facebook’s vast reach and popular acceptance make it an ideal venue to generate leads before, during, and after a show.

Sonicbids Corp. took advantage of Facebook’s viral nature for the annual South by Southwest (SXSW) music and film conference and trade show last March in Austin, TX. The Boston-based business hooks up musical entertainers with promoters, festivals, and regular gigs. But for its booth at SXSW, Sonicbids wanted to acquire new talent and generate more leads to add to its stable of 200,000 members.

A month before the show, Sonicbids created an “event” page on Facebook to promote its upcoming presence at SXSW. Its goal was to achieve viral status and generate buzz by inviting business contacts and bands to view information and RSVP for Sonicbids’ off-site event at the show.

The company asked current members to invite their friends, fans, and other bands to visit its Facebook page, and encouraged invitees to post their content there, including photos and videos. The page listed the lineup of bands at the soiree and kept a running tally of who planned to attend, building an almost adrenaline-charged sense of anticipation and excitement. Sonicbids then linked its Facebook page to an RSVP page at the company’s official site,

all the time compiling names and contact information for at-show and post-show relationship building.

At the show, a whopping 2,000 online followers — from Facebook as well as MySpace, Twitter, and others invited via e-mail — attended Sonicbids’ off-site event, about 30 percent more than anticipated. But the company’s social-media strategy didn’t stop there. Sonicbids now uses its Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter accounts to keep members and prospects up to date on the company, share new business opportunities promoted on the site, and serve as a two-way pipeline where members and Sonicbids’ support staff can directly connect with each other.

The takeaway: Start using Facebook several weeks before a show to inform current clients and prospects about events, activities, and in-booth offerings. Connect your Facebook page to event invitations and keep tallies of who plans to come to the show, your booth, or your event to build a sense of community involvement. Urge readers to spread the word along about your show-related activities. Update your page frequently to keep friends and fans engaged.

Facebook’s vast reach and popular acceptance make it an ideal venue to generate leads before, during, and after a show.

Facebook | Sonicbids

http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sonicbids/33684446977?ref=s

facebook Home Profile Friends Inbox Settings Logout Search

Sonicbids Become a Fan

Wall Info Photos Boxes

Sonicbids Just Fans

Sonicbids Listening to Billboard/Adweek music supervisor CD... dig "You Without Me" by Eddie Tadross http://www.sonicbids.com/profile/eddieta dross - click view EPK to hear it (can't take credit for finding him - Peter Nashel of Duotone Audio Group picked him for the CD).

Eddie Tadross Profile | Sonicbids
Source: www.sonicbids.com

June 27 at 10:25am · - Share
2 people like this.

Sonicbids

CAKU Open Mic (Atlanta, GA)
CAKU Open Mic (Atlanta, GA)Deadline: Sep 5, 2009 at 11:59 PM Eastern TimeChristian Accoustic Kafe' Unplugged is a music series held at The New Arts Exchange in Atlanta, GA...

June 5 at 5:36pm · Share

Sonicbids

Mike Pinder's Songwars Songwriting Competition
Mike Pinder's Songwars Songwriting CompetitionDeadline: Aug 25, 2009 at 11:59 PM Eastern TimeMike Pinder of the Moody Blues started Songwars to nurture emerging songwriters with the help of the pros. Songwars is a quarterly contest with annual and quarterly prizes worth over \$50,000...

June 5 at 5:36pm · Share

Sonicbids

BAM 2009 - Barcelona, Spain
BAM 2009 - Barcelona, SpainDeadline: Jul 24, 2009 at 11:59 PM Eastern TimeBarcelona Acci Musical, BAM is a week long event featuring concerts by the best established stars and up-and-coming artists from the international music scene...

June 5 at 5:36pm · Share

Sonicbids

Rockit Room, SF - July 4, 2009
Rockit Room, SF - July 4, 2009Deadline: Jun 18, 2009 at 11:59 PM Eastern TimeThis gig listing is for consideration to play at the Rockit Room in San Francisco on July 4, 2009. 300 Pound Booking is looking for at least 2 artists to fill the date. Genres accepted include punk, ska, and metal...

June 5 at 12:09am · Share

Sonicbids

Hubbub UK - Online Reviews
Hubbub UK - Online ReviewsDeadline: Aug 4, 2009 at 11:59 PM Eastern TimeHubbub UK is an online reviews service which aims to give artists from all over the world exposure in the thriving UK music market and beyond...

June 5 at 12:09am · Share

Sonicbids

Tomato Art Fest
Tomato Art FestDeadline: Jul 4, 2009 at 11:59 PM Eastern Timevoted "Best Festival" in the 2007 Nashville Scene Reader's Poll. 8th in East Nashville. The festival is focused on tomato art, but for musical acts...

June 5 at 12:09am · Share

Applications Done

Facebook Tip #1
 Maintain your Facebook strategy year-round with status updates at least once a week to keep your audience connected to you.

Facebook Tip #2
 When sending your "friend" requests, do not exceed 60 requests in a day, says Nick Jag, author of "Facebook Marketing." According to Jag, that suggests you might be spamming other users. Generally speaking, Facebook will issue you a warning after about 60 requests in a 24-hour period.

Facebook Tip #3
 Do not send links in your messages, and don't post them on walls. If you post a link in a message or on a wall, you're forcing yourself on your "friends" and "fans" without their approval. Recipients are most likely going to see it as spam and delete it. Instead, use the soft-sell approach: Post the link on your profile and redirect people to it during conversations with them.

Facebook Tip #4
 If you need to send messages to friends individually (not by lists or by posting to your wall), you can usually get away with slightly more than 100 a day before you're accused of spamming.

Send Message

To:

Subject:

Message:

Attach: Record Video Post Link

We're All Connected

LinkedIn

The back story: Ever since it rolled out in 2003, LinkedIn has stood apart from other social media sites by providing a strictly business atmosphere for its users. After the company's five founders invited 300 contacts to join up, LinkedIn acquired 4,500 members in the first month — and now has more than 40 million registered users spanning nearly 170 industries in 200 countries. Many are attracted by the service's "gated-access approach," where contact with any other professional on the service requires you have either a preexisting relationship with him or her, or know a mutual acquaintance on LinkedIn, who acts as a go-between to make any introductions.

How it works: LinkedIn lets you create a Web page with a résumé-like profile of your current and past jobs, education, and projects you're working on, as well as a summary paragraph that acts as a kind of professional elevator pitch. But more than a glorified résumé, LinkedIn also allows you to list your professional contacts and then socially network with them.

A kind of online Rolodex, the site lets you add people to your contact list by sending them e-mail invitations, which they must accept before you can add them. For example, if you want to add Jane Doe from the Massive Dynamic Corp. as a contact, you need to invite her to join your network. If she accepts your invitation, both of you are automatically added to each other's list of connections.

You can also create a group based on your profession or interests and invite others to join. By the same token, you can search for groups who share your professional interests — e.g. recruiting, sales, marketing — and immediately become part of them by clicking "Join this group."

How exhibitors are using it: To connect with potential clients at EXHIBITOR2009, the annual educational conference and exhibition for exhibit and event marketers, Dave Hibbel decided to get personal. Starting about two months before the show, the senior account executive at Elk Grove Village, IL-based 3D Exhibits Inc., who was a standing member of the "Exhibitor Conferences Group" on LinkedIn, sorted through its roster and sent personalized e-mails to every person that fit within his company's target audience. As a member of the

group, he could contact them directly and didn't have to locate their individual e-mail or postal addresses.

Tying the e-mail's verbiage to his booth's promotional tagline — "Perspective Matters" — Hibbel inquired in his communiqués if recipients would be interested in a simple conversation related to their "perspective" on exhibition marketing while at the show. Of the 100 individual e-mails he sent, Hibbel received approximately 30 responses.

While his approach may have lacked the ultra-hip factor of Twitter or the "everywhereness" of a Facebook-YouTube-Flickr mix, Hibbel tapped into something just as powerful — credibility and authenticity.

In fact, according to Joseph Pine and James Gilmore in their book "Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want," the rampant virtualization of friends and acquaintances on the Web (how many online contacts do we actually meet in the flesh, much less know?) has triggered an inverse need to connect with people that share a history and/or have an abiding social connection with us.

With an initial agenda of simply seeing how many recipients were going to the show — and therefore getting a hunch how 3D might fare there — 18 of the 30 who responded came to the booth to chat. Of that group, two signed on for what could be as much as \$250,000 in business for the company. For exhibitors like 3D, LinkedIn

proved it might be the missing link between a show experience that's middling — and one that's moneymaking.

The takeaway: Search for people you've worked with or are affiliated with and add them to your contact list, going for quality over quantity by adding only people you've had contact with in some manner. Join LinkedIn groups relevant to your industry. Promote your exhibit by sending customized e-mails to carefully selected prospects from those groups. Ask your connections to let their connections know about your upcoming shows, products, and events. Then, following each trade show, invite individuals you met there to join your LinkedIn network, and use LinkedIn to keep the dialogue going until your next show. ■

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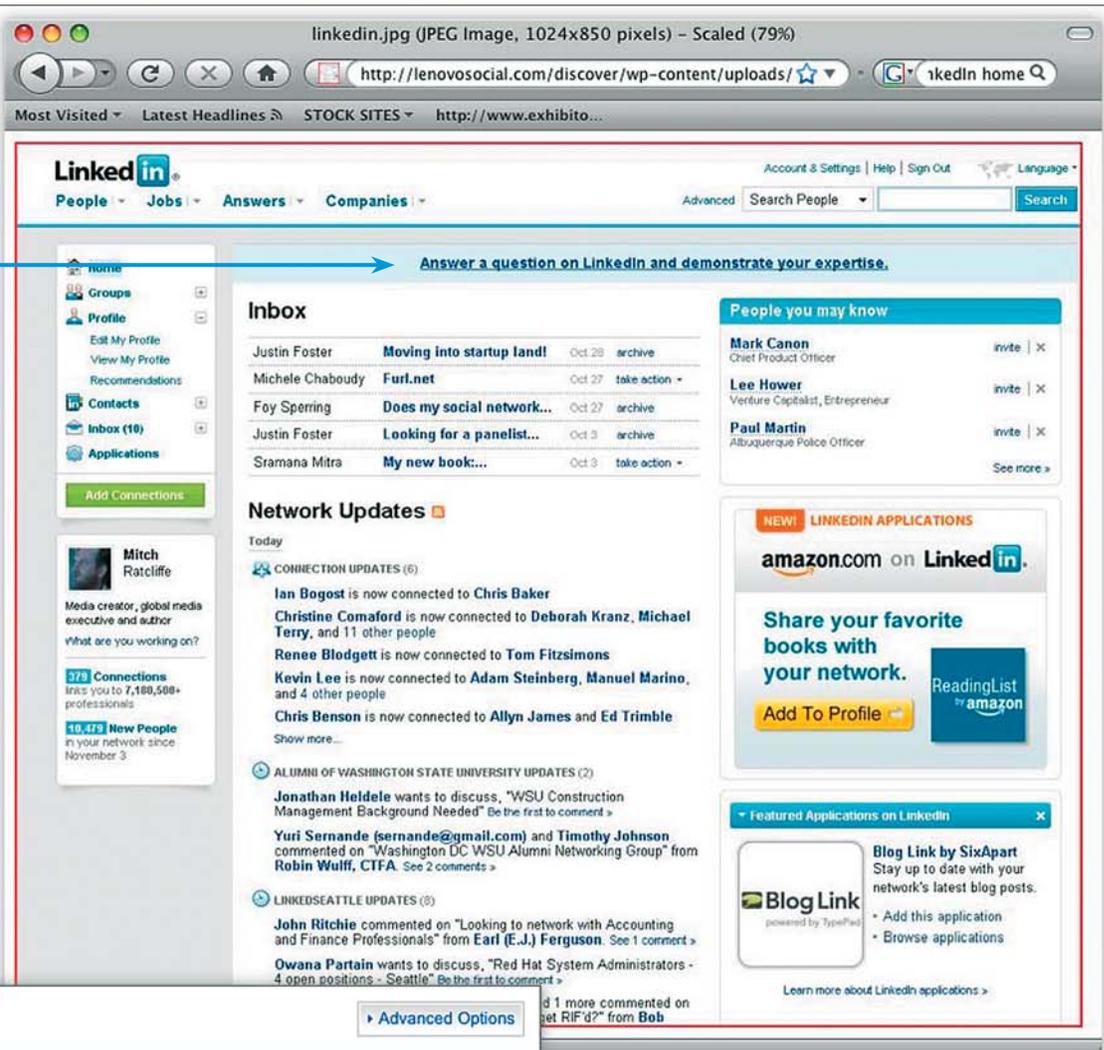
LinkedIn Tip #1

If you want people to engage with you, you need to put yourself out there. Melanie Schmidt, principal at Timpano Group Inc., says one of the best ways to do just that is to use LinkedIn Answers to ask a question of the community. That gets discussion going, and puts you at the center of it. Or, better yet, answer questions posted by others.



LinkedIn Tip #2

According to Eric Butow, author of "How to Succeed in Business Using LinkedIn," if you use InMail (LinkedIn's internal e-mail program) to send out queries, you'll average a 30-percent to 60-percent response rate.



Connections

Showing 42 of 42 connections.

7 outstanding sent invitations

Initials	Name	Job Title	Connections
B	Bendickson, Mark View & edit details »	Founder exhibitdesign	277
	Blume, Teresa View & edit details »	Sales Coordinator at EXHIBITOR	43
	Brudos Ferrara, Nicole View & edit details »	Experienced Writer, Editor, and Communicator	14
	Brueske, Sharon View & edit details »	HR Manager at Exhibitor Magazine Group	13
C	Curry, Sheree R. View & edit details »	Owner, Curry Media Services/Freelance Business Journalist and Writing and Editing Consultant	188
D	Davis, Kelsey View & edit details »	Marketing Specialist at Marsh	6
E	Englebert, Tracie View & edit details »	Freelance Graphic Designer	3



LinkedIn Tip #3

Be careful who you invite to be connections on LinkedIn, warns Scott Allen, principal of Linked Intelligence. "Let's say I invite 50 people — names I've culled from my e-mail address book. If just five of those people click on the button that says 'I don't know Joan,' that's all it takes — five people who say they don't know me — to get LinkedIn to suspend my account," Allen says.



LinkedIn Tip #4

If you're focusing on C-level managers and decision-makers, LinkedIn may be the most powerful of the social media sites. According to Butow, almost 28 percent of LinkedIn's 38 million professionals are senior executives, and 49 percent of users are decision makers in their companies.