



## **Ride the wave of social media**

By Angela Kubisky

The numbers speak for themselves. Facebook has 800 million active monthly users. LinkedIn has more than 200 million members. And by the end of this year there will be more than 21 million Twitter users in the United States.

If you think all that liking, linking and tweeting is about birthdays and funny stories, think again. Seventy-seven percent of consumers say they interact with brands on Facebook, primarily by reading posts and updates. Fifty percent of LinkedIn users say they use it to build new networking relationships with individuals who may influence customers and 44 percent say it increases their face-to-face effectiveness. And 78 percent of engagements with a brand's tweets are re-tweeted, making Twitter a highly effective means of spreading the word about a business.

Here is another thought. There are 79 million millennials in the United States, versus 48 million Generation Xers. Millennials have an estimated purchasing power of \$170 billion. This increasingly important block of consumers uses social media and the companies hoping to do business with them should be, as well.

Let's face it, social media is a wave that is getting bigger and better and will never crash. Are you riding it or resisting the tide?

The Morris County Chamber of Commerce is atop the crest and has made social media an integral part of our strategy for serving our members and growing the chamber. We regularly hold seminars to help members learn about and better use social media, including Twitter 101, Maximizing LinkedIn, Using Facebook for Business and Maximizing Web Video Traffic. We teach our members how to leverage social media and use it to promote their companies.

At the same time we believe the chamber has an obligation to use the skills we teach and to be an example of how social media can impact an organization. Toward that end, the Morris County Chamber of Commerce is active on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, You Tube and Google Plus.

We use these media in a systematic fashion designed to maximize their impact and our visibility. For example, we promote upcoming events to members in the morning, engage in online conversations such as sharing articles in the afternoon and welcome new members in the evening.

It is working. Social media has become an effective recruitment and retention tool for the chamber. For example, people see photos of chamber events on Facebook, recognize clients and decide they want to be where their clients are.

Our success can be yours. You can use social media to make and build relationships with other members via social media and then reinforce those ties at face-to-face meetings. Comment on a chamber event you attend and watch as you establish connections to others who had a similar experience – or wish they had.

Here are some general tips for making social media work for you.

First, create a strategy. You would not launch a marketing campaign without a strategy. You need one for social media, as well.

Engage, don't sell. When you attend a face-to-face networking event you do not try to sell something as soon as you meet someone. You chat and get to know each other. Do that through social media, as well.

Quite simply, do not become a social media pest. Use it when you have something valuable to offer others.

Finally, be responsive. If a customer or contact asks a question or makes a comment through social media, respond to them. Conversations beget more conversations – and strengthen ties.

Social media is a powerful tool for today's businesses. The Morris County Chamber of Commerce is using this tool and you should, as well.

Start now. If you have not already, visit our web site at [www.morrischamber.org](http://www.morrischamber.org) and like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, join us on LinkedIn and subscribe to our You Tube channel.

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