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## **How You Can Use Social Media to Grow Your Business**

Social media Internet tools such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube are effective and efficient ways to improve sales, marketing and even human resources. This is the message heard by a diverse group of Chicagoland small business presidents, CEOs and owners from Presidents Advisory Committee (PAC) ([www.PresidentsAdvisoryCommittee.com](http://www.PresidentsAdvisoryCommittee.com)) member Mike Montgomery, President of liQuidprint ([www.liquidprint.com](http://www.liquidprint.com)), a leading web design and consulting firm at a recent PAC Speaker Event.

“Social media is about connections and conversations. If we think about it, sales and marketing are about connections and conversations, so social media is a natural business fit,” he said.

Mr. Montgomery described social media as Internet- and web-based technologies which transform content consumers to content producers. Traditionally, companies craft a message intended to be consumed by the market. With social media, the message is crafted by customers to be consumed by other customers, without the firm sitting in the middle.

The social media landscape is comprised of social media sites such as Twitter ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)), networking sites like Linked-In ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)), and Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)), and user-generated content, such as blogs or YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)), videos. These tools are inexpensive and easy to use, but hard to control. For small businesses, social media is not “command and control,” it is “monitor and respond” to the conversations about their companies.

Mr. Montgomery shared numerous examples of how companies use social media. For sales, cold prospects can become “warm” as network connections are identified. In marketing, the company’s brand can be deepened and validated by customers as conversations are extended within social media sites. For HR, the ability to cultivate and recruit top-notch staff is improved by expanding into new virtual communities.

How can business owners use social media to promote and grow their business? Mr. Montgomery suggests beginning with these steps:

- Ramp up your networking with professional networking sites such as Linked-In and Plaxo ([www.plaxo.com](http://www.plaxo.com)). Just like networking in the physical world, you must spend time and must be a “giver” as well as a consumer.
- Create and maintain a company page in the networking sites. Keep it fresh.

- Utilize user-generated content sites such as WordPress ([www.liquidprint.com](http://www.liquidprint.com)) for blogs and YouTube for videos. YouTube in particular can be useful to provide “how to” tutorials to customers and staff.
- Measure your results. Track measures of engagement, such as visits, links and comments. Track recommendations and connections. Fix or drop what doesn’t work, and emphasize what does work.

Nick Arvis, Founder of PAC, says “in the past, businesses have spent enormous energy getting contacts, figuring out the right trade shows and making cold calls. With social media tools, we can have warmer and more directed contacts, and with greater efficiency.”

### **About Presidents Advisory Committee**

Presidents Advisory Committee groups are roundtables of small business presidents, CEOs and owners who meet monthly as a peer advisory board. PAC members provide objective feedback to each other in a safe and trusting environment. Members apply simple, but effective *Tools for Success*<sup>™</sup> to analyze growth areas, set long-term goals and prioritize issues. These tools are especially powerful when working with other business owners, presidents and CEOs dedicated to each others’ business success.

PAC blog: <http://PAC.liquidprint.com/blog/>

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