Smart Social Media Skills Can Improve Sales Efforts

Thomas Fox is president of Tech Experts, southeast Michigan's leading small business computer support company.

The old saying goes, "Information is power." In sales, that's more true than ever. Fortunately, the Internet has made researching prospective clients and preparing for your next sales appointment quick and easy.

When preparing for a sales call, you can browse to a prospect's website to research their business, search for other key decision makers, and review recent company news.

Search engines can help you find additional information, such as recent hires, number of employees, and general information about the prospect's industry. But, Internet searches only go so far. As more companies take advantage of social media, researching prospects on social media sites is a great way to learn more about your prospect.

Facebook

FaceBook (www.fb.com) is the undisputed king of social media.

More than a half-billion people have FaceBook accounts, and fifty percent of FaceBook's active users log in every day.

If you're selling, there's a good chance your prospect's company (and potential buyer) have FaceBook pages where you'll find a wealth of information about their business.

People spend over 700 billion minutes per month on FaceBook - if you're not actively using FaceBook to prospect (and market your company), you're definitely missing some sales.

Twitter

Awareness of Twitter (www.twitter.com) has exploded from 5% of Americans in 2008 to 87% in 2010, and business use has never been higher.

Twitter's search function allows you to find mentions of your potential client's company and key decision makers, and the site's people search feature helps you find users who list your prospect in their bio.

Following these Twitter accounts can help you stay abreast of the latest company news and help you gather deeper insights into what

your prospect is working on and what it important to them.

Social networks

LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) remains the number one business to business social network, where professionals sign up to connect with other business people and industry veterans.

Reviewing a company's LinkedIn profile can tell you about other employees that work for your prospect, and how you might be connected to them.

You'll also find information that will help you relate to your prospect - where they went to school, other positions they've held, and even hobbies they enjoy.

News alerts

You're already searching a prospects company name, buyers' names, and industry information before you go on your first sales appointment, so staying on top of updated prospect information will give you the leg up on on winning business long term.

All of the popular search engines offer a free news alert service

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Need help? Call the Tech Experts 24 hour computer emergency hotline at (734) 240-0200.

How To Ensure A Safe And Virus-free Internet Experience

Visiting websites like Facebook, Ebay, or Youtube at work may keep you busy while there's "nothing to do." However, if your computer system isn't properly protected, you run the risk of a virus or malware infection.

We've put together some of our best tips in this "safe browsing habits" article. Following these general guidelines can help protect you against Internet based threats.
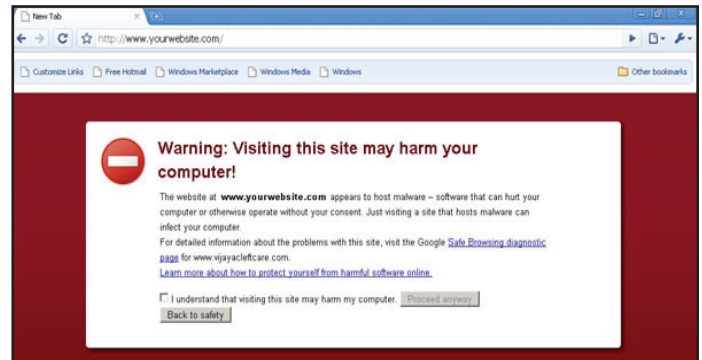
One of the dangers faced by users when they browse the Internet is a hacker or infected computer accessing the browser's cookies. Cookies are small text files saved on the computer by the server of the page the user is visiting.

The information cookies contain is usually related to the page being visited, which can include user names and passwords, browsing preferences, etc.

Java Applets and JavaScripts can also put users at risk. Although the majority of these programs that are run on the user's computer at the request of the server are harmless, they can be designed to steal system information and send it to a malicious user.

Another threat that is becoming one of the most dangerous threats on the Internet is phishing. This technique involves tricking users into thinking that are visiting a legitimate web page, when they are actually visiting a malicious page.

This technique is particularly dangerous when the malicious page simulates an online banking page. Web pages that perfectly imitate the appearance and functions of well-known banking entities are be-

coming increasingly common-place on the Internet and entice users into entering personal data that will fall directly in the hands of unscrupulous cyber criminals.

But that's not all. There are also viruses that are capable of getting into computers when users browse the Internet. To do this, they usually exploit vulnerabilities that allow them to install themselves on computers without the user realizing.

The malicious code that have the capacity to do this include many Trojans designed to steal confidential information from affected computers.

Online banking

When making transactions on the Internet, check that the process is carried out through a secure server. Several characteristics identify these types of servers. One of these is the address that appears in the address bar in the browser, which starts with https://.

What's more, a padlock or key icon will appear in the browser window. If the padlock is closed or the key is complete (not broken), the server is secure.

Disable cookies

Another recommendation is to disable the cookies from the toolbar

in the browser you are using. Although they must be enabled in order to access some web pages, they can be enabled temporarily.

Even though it may be tiresome enabling and disabling the cookies, it can prevent a lot of serious problems.

Double check the URL

To avoid falling victim to phishing scams, make sure that the page you are visiting is legitimate. To do this, copy the URL of the website you want to visit and paste it in the address bar of the browser. It is also advisable to identify and monitor the Java Applets and JavaScripts on the system to avoid any nasty surprises.

Raise your security level

Raise the security zone in the browser to 'medium' or 'high.' This can be done from the toolbar in the browser you are using.

Anti-virus is key

Finally, make sure that you have a reliable antivirus installed, which is updated at least daily. This will prevent malicious code from slipping into your computer while you are browsing the Internet.

Feature article by Terrell Canute, Service Technician at Tech Experts

The Benefits Of Using The Current Version of Windows

With all the different versions of Windows out there, how do you know what one will work best for you, and why?

The answer, in most cases, is the most current version of Windows is the one you should be using. In general the most current version of Windows (in this case Windows 7) will offer the greatest benefits for your money.

Security

One of the many benefits to having a current operating system is the security features.

When you're up to date, you are far less vulnerable to viruses and malware.

Windows XP is still one of the most widely used operating systems. The problem with it is that there are so many viruses and malware developed for it that it is much more vulnerable than Windows Vista or Windows 7.

One security feature that makes Vista and Windows 7 more secure than Windows XP is the fact that they both have a two way firewall built into the operating system.

This means that if a virus was to get into the system (and the firewall was still functioning properly) the outbound firewall would catch outbound communications from the virus to whatever it is transmitting to.

Windows XP only has inbound firewalls which helps to stop incoming connections, but does nothing once a virus, malware or other attacker has gained access to the computer system.

This is likely the biggest advantage security wise for the newer operating systems.

Increased productivity

As far as productivity goes there may be instances that require a user to stick with an older operating system due to software compatibility

issues. These issues in most cases are few and far between.

The reason this is the case is due to compatibility features within Windows 7 and Vista that allow a user to set a program to run in "Compatibility Mode."

Running a program in compatibility mode allows a user to run programs that were designed to be run in older operating systems.

This feature will allow programs that were designed to run on operating systems as old as Windows 95 to run in the current version of Windows.

While compatibility mode will work in most cases, it isn't guaranteed. Always work with your line of business application company to keep your software updated. Remember the importance of maintaining support for any speciality software you use.

Updated applications

One final reason to use the most current Operating System is the ability to run newer applications and hardware that were not previously supported in older operating systems.

If your computer is older, it might not have the horsepower necessary to run the most current version of Windows. In that case, it is may be more beneficial to upgrade the PC.

If you're interested in upgrading, we can check your current systems for memory and processing power, looking forward toward an operating system upgrade.

Remember, an up to date system lets you be more productive, have better security over your important data, and increase your profitability by decreasing downtime due to failing hardware, viruses and malware.

Feature article by Frank Wright, Service Manager for Tech Experts

Simple Tips To Keep You Out Of Computer Trouble

As you can imagine, we see a lot of computer and network issues . Sometimes, they're pretty difficult to diagnose and repair, but in some cases, a simple fix is all you need. Here are some tips you can refer to the next time your computer goes a little crazy, and some advice to keep you out of trouble.

Reboot!

Nine times out of ten, rebooting your computer and connected equipment will solve the problem you're having.

Do a full restart, which means go to your Start menu, shut down the computer, and power down your peripherals and computer. Then, restart it fresh.

We know what you did

A good computer consultant can tell if you've been bad or good on your computer, and usually pretty quickly. Tell us what you really did right before the computer crashed – this will save time and aggravation.

Your consultant will figure it out eventually – why not make the repair quicker?

There is no free lunch

Downloading free music, movies and games from the Internet can open holes in the security system of your computer, making it easy for other people to access your files.

Be safe… Only use legitimate sites like iTunes and Netflix for your downloads.

Use strong passwords

We walk a fine line in recommending passwords. If they're really easy to remember, that means they're also really easy to guess. If we make the password very hard to guess, it's also going to be very hard to remember.

Here's a suggestion: Create a "main" password which you then modify for each site you use. A good main password would consist of numbers and letters (but not your birth date!).

Try using your first dog's name combined with the address of the first house you lived in, and then add to the password for each site. For example, buffy1944 could be a good base password. Then, you'd add AMZ at the end for your login to Amazon.com – buffy1944AMZ, EBY at the end for your eBay account, etc.

Update your antivirus

Hackers don't care that you're too busy to renew your antivirus and anti-spyware software – in fact, they hope you don't! Set your software to update at least once a day and run a full system scan at least once a week. This is also a good time to schedule system maintenance tasks, like your system defrag.

Public wi-fi is public

If you don't have an urgent need to check your online banking or private e-mail at the coffee house, don't do it. While you're on a public network, even if it is encrypted, a nearby hacker can capture your passwords and other personal information.

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(www.google.com/alerts, www.bing.com/news, alerts.yahoo.com) that will send updated web and news content to your Inbox.

It's also a good idea to set up alerts on your prospect's competitors, executives and key decision makers.

These updates can give you additional reasons to contact prospects and clients, and give you additional insight into what is happening behind the scenes.

Bringing it all together

Web based CRM sites such as SalesForce (www.salesforce.com) will help you keep track of multiple prospects, deadlines and milestones.

SalesForce includes direct links to both FaceBook and Twitter to help you monitor clients and prospects in real time.

Be sure to build out your database to track both business and personal data about your prospects and decisionmakers.The wealth of information available on the Internet makes it easy for a sales professional (or company owner) to go into a call well prepared.

The best things? Since not all salespeople take the time to leverage web research and social media tools, doing your homework can help you set yourself apart from the competition and improve your sales performance.