

Pinterest: The Next Social Site For Small Business?



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

Facebook, followed by Twitter, have always been the go to social media websites for businesses.

This year, we saw the

rapid rise of Pinterest, which is now the third largest social media site today. The website continues to attract plenty of users and enthusiasts – including small and big businesses alike.

What Is Pinterest?

Pinterest is a virtual pin-board that lets people organize and share photos that they find anywhere on the web. They can create specific boards and pin any photo that they come across – in case they need it for inspiration.

The website is often touted as a digital dream collage, or a cork-board with magazine clippings and recipes.

Users can create boards about anything, and pin any photos they

like ranging from recipes to gifts to fashion to food.

The website is image based only, except for the small captions on the photos, thereby taking away the clutter of texts and webpages.

Users can also view the most recent pins or the most popular ones, follow other users, like other photos and even re-pin them on their own boards.

Unlike Facebook or Twitter, where accounts can be made private, all pinned photos on Pinterest are available for public viewing, so anyone can basically comment or re-pin your photos. Likewise, you can like and pin anything that catches your attention as well.

Who Is Using Pinterest?

Pinterest has indeed grown over the past year, with a total unique visitor increase of 2702.2% since May 2011. It averages around 1.36 million users each and every day and is driving more traffic than Google+, LinkedIn, YouTube and even Twitter, and the number continues to rise.

Top businesses have also taken to Pinterest to reach out to potential

clients. These include mobile phone carriers such as Verizon and AT&T, mobile phone manufacturers like Motorola, LG, Samsung and Apple as well as other brands such as Whole Foods, Krogers, Nordstrom and the like.

Why Should You Consider Pinterest?

Pinterest is something worth considering because it is a website that inspires action in people. It serves as a recommendation engine, or a repository of ideas, purchases and sales waiting to happen.

Pinterest users constantly visit the site to look for ideas, inspiration and other things that are out of the ordinary. Likewise, they visit the site to look for things they or their friends might find interesting or to remind themselves what they need to buy, use or revisit.

Many users also visit the site to recommend and share products that they like; and they can serve as potential buyers.

Remember that millions of users do these on a daily basis – and some of them might just end up as your near-future clients, long term buyers and potential product advocates.

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Windows XP Support Ending Soon

*by Frank Wright,
Service Manager*

Windows XP set the bar for business friendly operating systems and has been in use for over twelve years now. Microsoft is now pushing users to its new operating system, Windows 8. Many users and administrators alike feel that Windows 8 will not be a suitable business friendly operating system for its users.

Another issue with Windows 8 is that many software providers still do not support it so as a business where should you be looking? Windows 7 has been the most business/application friendly operating system since Windows XP so that would be the best replacement.

Since Microsoft is discontinuing support for Windows XP, what does that mean exactly and when is it going to happen?

Microsoft has set a date of April 8th 2014 as the end of support date for Windows XP. Oh, 2014 you have plenty of time to plan down the road right? Wrong, when Microsoft stops supporting the operating system it will become very vulnerable to attacks so you want to make sure this is completed before Microsoft ends support.

Hackers will develop malware to attack XP and Microsoft will no longer be working to patch the holes that cyber criminals are using to steal your personal information.

Since support is ending it means that doing online banking or other transactions on your personal computer running this operating system will become extremely dangerous. In relation to businesses, they risk exposing client data which can be very costly.

Businesses need to plan these operating system upgrades as it will take a decent amount of time/preparation to complete smoothly and successfully.

Planning means start now don't wait till the last minute or you will not be able to get everything switched over in a smooth fashion. Since upgrading computers from Windows XP to Windows 7 is the best option to prevent major security risks what needs to be considered to accomplish this?

The first step in getting your company ready for operating system upgrades is making sure your software is compatible. Many organizations use software that is specific to their industry, the software companies that develop this software also needs to be preparing.

Companies should be checking with their software providers to ensure their software will work on Windows 7 and should get documentation on how to smoothly upgrade their computers software for the least downtime possible.

Not only does industry specific software need to be addressed but software you use every day also needs to be looked at. Most computers running Windows 7 are 64 bit operating systems, that being said not all software runs on a 64 bit operating system.

One application I can think of that is not compatible with Windows 7 (we have seen numerous issues) is older versions of Microsoft Office. Businesses need to not only keep their operating systems up to date but this software also should be. Office XP does not function properly on Windows 7 nor do any other old versions.

The other problem with keeping old software like this is the file formats have changed since they have been released. Your clients may start sending documents to you that your copy of Office might not be able to read. Office 2010 pairs well with Windows 7 and it supports all current file versions released by Microsoft.

One final consideration, many businesses and users alike want to know what it will cost to simply upgrade from Windows XP to Windows 7 however, there are two problems with this.

First, Windows XP to Windows 7 does not offer an in place upgrade, this means that all of your software, user files, etc. would be lost simply doing an "upgrade" to Windows 7. While user files can be backed up, software/applications cannot, they will have to be reinstalled.

Second, upgrading an old workstation may not be worthwhile. In most cases, older hardware was not designed to run Windows 7 and because of this tends to run slower and not perform as well as a computer that was designed for it.

We highly recommend upgrading the entire workstation to new hardware, especially in the case of businesses. It just doesn't make sense to spend all the money on the time involved in upgrading the operating system if you can't gain speed benefits and make your employees more productive.

Need a hand getting started with your businesses upgrade? Give us a call today at (734) 457-5000 and we can work with you on a plan to get your company switched over to Windows 7 so that your computers remain supported for years to come.

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How To Know If You Have A Virus Infection

by *Jeremy Miller,*
Technician

There is a lot of anti-virus software on the market today. They are created from many different software developers. All of them are a little different in how they protect your system.

There is no guarantee that your anti-virus software can protect you from any virus out there.

First let's look at how anti-virus software works. Anti-virus software is usually installed on your computer, then it is scheduled to scan your computer regularly. A virus scan will scan each file on your computer for a "known" virus signature.

A virus signature is a piece of code that is known to your anti-virus software manufacturer as a virus. If your anti-virus detects a signature it will either remove it or ask you how to handle the file. You should remove any viruses that your anti-virus finds for you.

Most anti-viruses come with heuristic protection as well, which is when your anti-virus is able to detect suspicious activity on your computer.

Viruses are known to leak information, such as online banking information, or any other personal or confidential information.

They can lie dormant waiting for a specific user interaction before becoming active. They have the

potential to cause unreparable damage to computer operating systems.

There are many ways to get a virus on your computer with having an anti-virus software installed. The main reason is that virus developers have studied many different anti-virus software, and have been able to write viruses that cannot yet be detected by most anti-viruses.

The reason your anti-virus software cannot detect a newly written infection is because the anti-virus manufacturer has not yet seen the virus and does not have a signature in the database for it. This is the big reason why you should keep your anti-virus software up-to-date.

Another reason that your anti-virus software might not detect a virus would be because you trusted it.

Have you ever saw a pop-up on your screen asking for your permission to allow a program to run? If so then you may have allowed a virus to infect your system.

The last most common cause of infection is attempting to "Speed up your PC." There is a lot of software out there that claims to speed up your PC for free. The problem is that good software is not free. Some free versions of software can actually slow your computer down, to promote the paid-version.

Also when downloading this software, there is usually a few links that look like download links.

If you click on the wrong one, you may install a virus. Also once you do get the right link, there are usually additional software included during the installation process.

You should always pay attention to every screen during the installation process to make sure you are only installing what you intended to install. There are a number of ways to detect if you may have a virus on your computer.

Your computer should behave regularly. This means your computer should not have any drastic changes day-to-day.

If you have lost access to something, or cannot connect to sites or services that you normally can you may have a virus. If you are browsing the Internet and your address bar does not go directly to the site you want, you may have a virus.

Also if your computer takes longer to startup than usual, this may be a sign of a virus.

If you have any of these symptoms on your computer or if you would like to proactively manage your computer's security, you should contact us for assistance.

We recommend regular check-ups for your computer to prevent any malicious activity on your computer. You can contact us to work out a plan to combat malicious activity on your computer that will be simple and easy to understand.

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Get Past The Roadblocks To Creative Concepts

Sometimes the ideas just don't come. You don't have to be a cartoonist or a novelist to need fresh ideas; every job calls on us to find creative solutions from time to time. When you're not feeling the magic, look for these common causes of "imagination block":

Inside the box thinking

You may be looking for familiar solutions to the same old problems. Get into the habit of questioning all your assumptions and looking at situations from different angles.

For instance, instead of asking, "How can we sell this product to our customers?" try, "What would make a customer reject this product?" and build your solution around eliminating that objection.

Fear of...

Maybe you're afraid of failure. Or



the commitment a solution might call for. Or perhaps you're aware that the best idea will require you to do things you're not comfortable with.

Confront your fears head on, and identify why they're paralyzing you. Most of the time you can overcome them if you break them down into manageable elements.

Lack of knowledge

Take a look at your subject. If it's unfamiliar, you may not know

enough detail to generate any relevant ideas. Do more homework.

Or if you're casting about for a completely new idea, devote time to studying something outside your usual area of expertise without looking for a flash of inspiration. Often, exploring a new field will generate unexpected connections between existing projects.

Overabundance

Sometimes the problem is that you've got so many partial ideas that you can't choose just one to develop.

Try picking one at random and working on that alone until you've either got a solid project or you reject it for being unworkable. Or step back and look at your priorities so you can choose the option that suits your needs best.

Twitter Writing Tips

Writing on Twitter is by necessity an exercise in brevity, and it may surprise you to find out that B2B marketing can actually be quite effective even when you can use a maximum of only 120 characters.

Here is an important tip: just stick to the facts. Long titles may be SEO friendly, but more than likely they will just get lost on Twitter, where they simply do not work. Titles need to be short, to the point and appealing.

On Twitter it is not a bad thing to be familiar; messages with a famous quote, a hit song or a piece of pop culture often resonate.

Tweets that carry with them some kind of positive connotation will give your message extra impact.

This does not mean, however, that you can just copy text outright, so exercise some discretion.

Being timely is also important on Twitter. You are writ-

ing for a real-time audience, and any message needs to be in tandem with the current interests of your followers. Remember, he who hesitates on Twitter is truly lost.

MCHUMOR.COM by T. McCracken



"I guess they ran out of stimulus money before finishing the Yellow Brick Road."