



Social Networking and the Government Market – Today’s BFF’s

We all know a few people who seem to have outstanding networking skills and results. Admit it: we view them with a wonder, admiration and, yes, some disdain. After all, do they have a real job? How have they found a way to spend time online, meet people AND make money? And why can’t I do this?

My experience with networking is probably similar to yours. When I started my career in the eighties in the defense and technology industry, “networking” meant early morning breakfasts with industry talking heads, lunches of more of the same, and multi-day conferences across the county loaded with “meet and greet” opportunities, exhibitions and evening cocktail hours. In most cases, the result of all this time was a quickly fading memory of “what’s his name”, dog-eared business cards, and heat from management for the ROI on the dollars and hours spent “networking”.

Fast forward to the new millennium. Web technology networking tools and applications unleash infinite networking opportunities with minimal travel requirements. But most professionals have not committed yet to social networking tools as an essential and critical tool in business and career development. It turns out that social networking can be much more effective than old-fashioned networking – and the cost is certainly right! But there are some do’s and don’ts that you need to keep in mind in order to maximize the effectiveness.

Get started with these five online networking tips for business:

- 1) Identify one or two social networking tools and COMMIT.

There are lots of networking tools, and more appear each day, but you don’t have more and more time in a day to update, search, and market. It’s much easier to learn, implement a strategy and build relationships when you are working with one or two applications.

- 2) Decide which tools will be for personal use and which will be for professional – and STAY TRUE!

I use FaceBook to keep up with personal information with friends and families, so I don’t “friend” my business associates or prospective clients. I use LinkedIn and Twitter for business, and while I may Link in with a social contact, there is also a business purpose for the connection. This allows me to keep an online separation of work and personal communications.

3) Spend time on creating and fine-tuning your on-line PROFILE

Consider this step as the building the mother of all resumes or CV's. No telling who is going to read your profile after it is posted – spelling errors are fatal errors. Formatting and dropped words present you in a shoddy and sloppy light. Post a profile picture that one can actually SEE your image as the face of a professional. Be sure to complete your profile; don't leave blank areas. Keep overview and summary statements brief and relevant. Use short sentences and paragraphs, consistent with web content practices.

4) Download the mobile version to your MOBILE device

These are typically no charges for the mobile versions of your chosen applications. This will deliver content and contacts at your fingertips. Save the more in-depth actions and searches for the laptop.

5) Start building your CONNECTIONS

Using the search function, start building your connection network by typing in the names of colleagues, clients, partners and contacts that you would like to have as part of your network. If they are current users, send a "let's connect" message. A standard request dialogue box will pop up – personalize it with a short comment or greeting. Use your contacts database and invite others to connect with you. Remember to stay true to the purpose of the networking tool you have selected for business in identifying connections.

Congratulations – you are now using online social media networking for business! In the future we will discuss strategies for building your connections, group memberships, recommendations, and marketing tactics through social media.