



SOCIAL NETWORKING FAQ'S

Q. What is Social Networking?

A. Social networking is a way for people to connect online and organize themselves according to their interests and how they choose to share, store and deliver information within their community (or 'network').

Q. Where can you start Social Networking?

A. Social networking can occur through the use of many online venues including:

- Email
- Blogs - which are a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images and links to other blogs, web pages and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual.
- Social sites- some of the most popular of which are Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Q. How do you start Social Networking?

A. Before you begin any type of social networking, it is important that you are clear on what you wish to accomplish and how you want to present your brand. So the first step is always to define your company's brand and your social media strategy.

You will not be creating a campaign through social networking, rather you will be starting conversations. This is how utilizing social media differs from most traditional marketing tactics.

The purpose of your social site is not to be a cruise critic site, and it is up to you to ensure only accurate information is used. An easy way to think of your social site is to compare it to a newspaper. A paper has different sections-sports, travel, home, headline news, weather, local, etc. Social sites are basically the same and your role is that of a writer for a given section.

Q. Why is Social Networking important?

A. Social networking is a new way for you to promote your brand and expand your client base.

- 3 out of 4 Americans use social networking technology
- Visiting social sites is now the 4th most popular online activity - ahead of personal email. Time spent on social networks is growing at 3 times the overall internet rate, accounting for 10% of all internet time.
- 93% of social media users believe a company should have a presence in social media- but only if used properly; meaning it is a dialogue, not a monologue.
- Social media is leveling the playing field.

Whether you are a large or small travel business, you want your voice to join with those taking control. Potential customers/clients may be those who are browsing the social networks, providing you with an easy way to create awareness of your business.

Q. What is Facebook?

A. Well, to start off, like most social media sites, it is FREE to create a Facebook profile. Facebook currently has 250 million users with 120 million logging on at least once a day and 30 million accessing Facebook on mobile devices. Plus, the group with a largest amount of purchasing power, Generation X and the Baby Boomers, represent the fastest growing Facebook user demographic.

Q. How do you join Facebook?

A. Simply go to www.facebook.com and follow directions for signing up. You will have the ability to allow other users to become a 'fan' of your business and when they do so, your status updates and other information will show up regularly on their Home page newsfeed every time they log in.



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Q. What should you post on Facebook?

A. Facebook is not about the hard sell, it is about starting a conversation that will engage and excite potential clients. With any social site you utilize, you should share a compelling message! Think of why potential clients should choose to contact you above your competition. Are you an expert on a particular destination? Do you lead group trips? Do you have specific hobbies that make you the best at setting up affinity groups? Use your specialties to your advantage.

Q. How do you use Facebook?

A. ■ Create a story, not a sale! After an event where you have taken pictures you have the ability to upload the pictures and tag anyone in the picture who is your friend. This sends a message to them letting them know you uploaded the image. This is a great way to keep in contact with prospective customers and to give them a different kind of gift that is free and helps them remember the great times they've had on vacation. They also use this whenever they lead a group tour so they can share the memories of traveling with their clients.

- Post regularly
- Appeal to your audience

Q. What is Twitter?

A. Like Facebook, Twitter is FREE! The biggest difference is that Twitter is utilized to provide very brief (140 character) status updates. These status updates are referred to as 'Tweets.'

The monthly growth rate of twitter users from January to February of 2009 was 138% and there are over 3 million tweets posted every day!

Anyone can read your posts unless you choose to restrict them to those you approve as 'followers.' Your followers will automatically receive your status updates on their homepage, which is called a Twitterfeed

Q. How do you sign up for Twitter?

A. You can sign up to create a profile on www.twitter.com

Q. How do you use Twitter?

A. Some best practices to follow on Twitter include:

- Don't advertise blatantly.
 - Post regularly, especially on 'Travel Tuesday' when travel postings get top notice
 - Quality over Quantity- answer questions and offer advice while showing your humor and personality.
- Twitter is not only a place for you to share information about yourself, it is also a place to learn.

Q. What is LinkedIn?

A. LinkedIn is a business-oriented site that is mostly used for professional networking. It has more than 40 million registered users, covering 170 industries. You can utilize LinkedIn to create awareness of your business.

Q. Is LinkedIn also free?

A. LinkedIn has both a free basic service, as well as a paid version that has more features and options

Q. How do you use LinkedIn?

A. Best practices on LinkedIn are to:

- Create a group - this will allow you to network with other travel professionals as well as those interested in travel as a hobby. This will allow you to share best practices when networking with other travel professionals.
- Post in the Q&A section- this will allow you to show your expertise and earn the trust of prospective clients.
- Join special interest groups- to explore the possibilities of creating group business based on affinity travel.

Sites such as LinkedIn allow you to segment and search for different populations based on special interest groups and professions. Utilizing LinkedIn is also a perfect way to develop a niche market for yourself.

This is a great tool to build your group business pipeline.