

Do You Feel the **LOVE**



Illustration by Dave Swang for The Partner Channel

 Virginia Weinstein

A couple of years ago, my sister showed me a Web site called Facebook. She was explaining a story of a former boyfriend and how she couldn't see his pictures because he was no longer her "friend" on Facebook. I thought to myself, "That is just another new tool for college students." Adding social webpages while on campus just wasn't the norm when I attended college. Today it seems that everyone – from my mother, who is 56, to industry professionals – has a Facebook page. Next time you log into your Facebook account, think of this: according to a March 2009 article in *The New York Times*, Facebook is signing up one million new members per day. But what really surprised me about the social media phenomena is a recent article in *The New York Times* about the U.S. government asking Twitter for help in Iran. "Are you kidding?" I thought. A State Department official asked Twitter to postpone scheduled downtime to keep a channel open for Irani-

ans protesting the country's contested election. I had associated Twitter with Ashton Kutcher and other celebrities, NOT government and business. The Nielsen Company reports that unique monthly visitors to Twitter grew nearly 1,400% from February 2008 to February 2009. So I started thinking, "How many people are using social media for business marketing?" Yes, we blog, and we reconnect on Facebook with high school friends – but who is actually using social media for business and closing deals from it?

According to a July 2009 report by Nucleus Research, nearly half of office employees access Facebook during work. Nucleus found companies effectively lose an average of 1.5% of total office productivity when employees can access Facebook during the work day.

The report went on to say that:

» 77% of workers have a Facebook account.

Facebook

Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. Millions of people use Facebook everyday to keep up with friends, upload an unlimited number of photos, share links and videos, and learn more about the people they meet.

It is an easy way to stay connected and learn more about your Partner contacts on a personal level. We use this as more of a "keep-in-touch" relationship building tool. It has helped us connect with newer Partners without meeting directly face-to-face at events.
 – Giuseppe Ianni, Azox

Facebook is a joke. I signed up for Facebook, and people from high school suddenly appeared and wanted to connect with me. Some friends connecting was nice, but then people I've never heard of tried to be my friend. I found the time and energy to keep up with Facebook to exceed its value. For professional contacts, I prefer LinkedIn. I purposely avoid befriending colleagues in my professional life with Facebook.
 – Mark Rockwell, Rockton Software

Twitter

Twitter is a service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: what are you doing?

I use this as a means to direct people to our vertical Web site. It's just another easy way to reach people.
 – Jennifer Imes LuPiba, AccuNet

We reply to Tweets from Microsoft Dynamics® NAV users asking basic questions or expressing frustration. I have seen several people requesting suggestions for companies that have implementation experience with a particular ERP. Clearly prospective purchasers are not limiting their due diligence to reference sites furnished by the vendor and are trying to find "real" users to talk to.
 – David Thikoll, Silverware

In my opinion, this is the most useless form of technology to come out in years. I see no business value; it's far too informal and way too trendy.
 – Todd Bowlsby, ISM

Please! Not another partially clothed person who wants to follow my Microsoft Dynamics® marketing updates on Twitter! Fortunately you can BLOCK those strange people.
 – Cheryl Strege, The Partner Marketing Group

LinkedIn

Relationships matter. Your professional network of trusted contacts gives you an advantage in your career and is one of your most valuable assets. LinkedIn exists to help you make better use of your professional network and help the people you trust in return. LinkedIn's mission is to connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful.

LinkedIn has driven more traffic to our Web site and has helped with referral leads. Most of our employees are on LinkedIn, and we have set up a company profile. Employees are linked to some of our customers. It is great how it notifies you when someone changes jobs. That could be a potential lead for us.
 – Ann Haucke, The Resource Group

100% of the Partners surveyed by The Partner Marketing Group are using LinkedIn to connect to customers, groups within the channel, and associations. Tip: Is your company profile set up? If not, make sure someone within your organization does this soon. This is just another way to increase traffic back to your Web site.

Blog

A blog is a type of Web site that is usually maintained by an individual. 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 definitely, through www.erpsoftwareblog.com. We plan to place blogs on our Web site as well and link to the ERP software blog site. It's very effective for SEO (search engine optimization), and it has raised our rankings. Google Alerts has returned #1 rankings for Microsoft Dynamics® GP for a couple of our blogs.
 – Judy Van Der Linden, InterDyn – Artis

The Partners surveyed agreed that blogs are a good tool for business, but not all of the Partners have started one yet. For Partners that enjoy reading blogs, and for those that have started their own blogs, the consistent theme is that if you do a blog, you need to keep the content fresh for your viewers. It all comes down to how much time you have to devote to it.

Tweako	Tweako.com is a user-powered community Web site, and social network, specializing in all aspects of computing, technology, and the Internet. Users submit hand-written articles, or links to outside Web sites, which are guides, tutorials, service reviews, new software, general information, how-to's, and much more. Tweako.com is a place to learn and share information and knowledge about every computer and technology topic out there. Tweako.com hopes to create a Web site where users can find information and help for all their computing needs, from programming to cleaning spyware.	The most common reaction from Partners was "huh?" Not a single Partner confessed to using this site. Maybe this is a new opportunity to get ahead of the networking curve?
Digg	Digg is a place for people to discover and share content from anywhere on the web. From the biggest online destinations to the most obscure blog, Digg surfaces the best stuff as voted on by its users. You won't find editors at Digg — the site provides a place where people can collectively determine the value of content. Digg claims it is changing the way people consume information online.	Most Partners have never heard of this, and of the Partners we surveyed, only one is currently using this site and another is preparing to start. Comments ranged from, "I have no idea what this is," and "I haven't had the time to research this yet," to "Is Digg some gardening site?"
MySpace	MySpace is an online community that lets you meet your friends' friends. Create a private community on MySpace, and you can share photos, journals, and interests with your growing network of mutual friends. See who knows who or how you are connected. Find out if you really are six people away from Kevin Bacon.	Again, this is a site that Partners view as a social site with little to no business value. As one Partner stated, "It seems like this is for teenagers and hip hop stars."

- » Of those workers with Facebook accounts, nearly two-thirds access Facebook during working hours.
- » Those who access Facebook at work do so for an average of 15 minutes each day.
- » 87% of those who access Facebook at work couldn't define a clear business reason for doing so.
- » Of those who do access Facebook at work, 6% never access Facebook anywhere else — meaning one in every 33 workers built his/her entire Facebook profile during work hours.

The Partner Marketing Group took a purely unscientific poll of Microsoft Dynamics® Partners, asking them what types


Using LinkedIn	100%
Sending a Newsletter	61%
Using Facebook	61%
Using a Blog	56%
Using Twitter	44%
Using Digg	5%
Using MySpace	0%
Using Tweako	0%

of social media formats they use to benefit their businesses. Our results may surprise or inspire you ... or even make you laugh.

The hands-down winner of social media use in our market space is LinkedIn. And while sending an e-newsletter is not one of the new forms of social media, it is tied for second place with Facebook with the Partners we interviewed. We first interviewed Partners in July. We then went back in October and asked them to update us with any changes they may have had since their initial responses. We found that usage of three social media sites increased among the Partners surveyed: LinkedIn moved from 94% usage to 100%, blogging increased from 39% to 56%, and Twitter increased from 39% to 44%. Partners see social media as a continual touch or "nurture" that needs to be done with prospects and customers. Other types of marketing mediums that Partners are using are Google Alerts, association memberships, and webinars.

As the social media "frenzy" continues to carry on, we can be certain that new sites will come (and go). Some Partners have found these resources to be great tools in their success, which shows us there is a fit for our organizations if we have the time (and extra

time can be very hard to come by). In the end though, one Partner summed up the madness for us with this insightful comment:

"How about the phone? That's a tool that still works quite well to communicate. I can not only use my phone to talk to people, I use it for e-mail and text messaging." Jim Traynor, Intelligent InSites 

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