


PARTNER MARKETING ROUNDUP:

Microsoft Goes

Social

 The Partner Marketing Group

Coupling social media with traditional marketing is beginning to build new marketing muscle. With social media monster sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr, DiggIt, and Delicious, your business can reap broader exposure than ever, increase traffic to your Web sites, establish new partnerships, improve your search engine rankings, add new sales opportunities, and reduce marketing and sales costs. You have to know there's a real business opportunity here.



However, for Microsoft® Partners looking for hyper-relevant connections among themselves and with customers and prospects, it would be a digital crime to overlook the veritable explosion of social media opportunities being brought to you by the world leader in software solutions. Don't get us wrong – any thorough social media strategy should include the leading broad-based players in the field, but take a look at what Microsoft brings to the party just for you, and make sure you take advantage of the best of what they offer. Here are seven premier sites – and a handful of event venues – that you should seriously investigate for your business advantage.

Where to Begin? The Microsoft Partner Network

<https://partner.microsoft.com/global/40073318>

Collected here on this Partner-specific site, you'll find a wealth of guides and playbooks on how to incorporate social media into your Microsoft Dynamics® business. For example, you



can enroll in Microsoft's Social Media Marketing online course, access tutorials on how to effectively use major sites (such as Facebook) as a Partner, link to a great LinkedIn setup tutorial, and much more. If you're just starting out, make the Microsoft Partner Network your first stop on the road to social media greatness.

Partner Solution Profiler – The First Stop to Biz Visibility

<https://partner.microsoft.com/40020720>

Microsoft Solution Profiler is *the* first online tool any Partner should visit to profile his/her solutions. Your profile will populate a wide range of relevant Microsoft.com Web sites worldwide, making you available to more than 170,000 customers looking for technology Partners every month. A solution is a unique offering that solves a particular customer need: hardware; hosting; Microsoft volume licensing sales and services; your own specialized services; software, including software delivered as an online service; or training.

When you profile your organization's solutions and skills, you are placing your offering in front of thousands of customers and Microsoft Partners worldwide through the directories throughout the Microsoft.com site. In addition, Microsoft Partners search for partnering and networking opportunities via the online Partner community, Partner Channel Builder. (More detail on this later.) Begin generating leads today! Learn more and begin to profile (or check and update) your company's solutions at <https://partner.microsoft.com/40020720>. Microsoft has simplified the profile writing process for you with writing templates to fit different organization models, giving you no more excuses to delay – begin driving greater awareness about your company today!

Microsoft PinPoint™ – Get Discovered, Become a Star

<http://pinpoint.microsoft.com>

If Microsoft's Partner Solution Profiler is the hub, Microsoft PinPoint is an important spoke to know about. Among Microsoft's more than 200 public-facing sites designed to help potential customers connect with qualified Microsoft Partners, PinPoint is one of those networking sites – an online marketplace – with a special feature that can help you shine! Here, you'll find a comprehensive directory, powerful search features, an easy-to-use interface, and a ratings and review feature. We especially like the Ratings & Reviews feature, where your custom-

ers can rate your company up to five stars. (It might be a good idea to entice your best customers with a box of doughnuts to write a nice review about you!)

Go to <http://pinpoint.microsoft.com> and search for your own company. Your PinPoint profile will combine information from your Solution Profile and your Partner Profile in the Partner Membership Center (PMC). If you like what you find, that's great! If not, it is important to take the time to update your profile so it is truly relevant to your target customer.

If you can't find your company, visit Microsoft PinPoint at <http://www.pinpoint.microsoft.com/en-US/GetListed> to get started. There you can view sample profiles, download the writing guidelines, and download a customer review e-mail template. Microsoft will review your profile before publishing it – a process that normally takes one week.

TIP: We highly recommend the webcast called "Generating Leads in a Tough Economy – Leveraging Microsoft PinPoint." Go to the Partner Learning Center (<https://training.partner.microsoft.com>) and search on the word "PinPoint" to find it.

Microsoft Dynamics® Community – Rich Content, Plus a Great Showcase Opportunity

<http://community.dynamics.com/>

One of the newer networking resources that some Partners may not know about is the Microsoft Dynamics Community page.

You might be asking, "Sure, I've been to that site, but why would you call it a networking opportunity?"

In fact, the Microsoft Dynamics Community is a growing educational resource for prospects, customers, and Partners. You can read blogs about sales, marketing, and products. You can visit forums, offer product suggestions, and learn what the Microsoft executive team has to say. This site received 1,017,611 views in FY09, with 119,000 visitors in September 2009 alone (the last full month before we filed this story).

If you have access to PartnerSource, sign into the Community *with the same* Windows Live ID you use to log in to PartnerSource. You'll then be able to click on the "Organization" tab on the horizontal navigation bar. Similar to LinkedIn and other social media sites, you can set up a personal profile and an organizational profile (see sample below), and link them together. (In fact, have everyone on your team set up a profile and link it to your organization.) Not only can you post your personal and company information, but you can also use the "Networking > Capture Leads" tab to create your customized lead capture page! With the easy-to-use wizard, it takes little time at all to customize your lead capture page with your company information, select the fields you want added to your lead form, choose a background color, and even upload a company photo. For detailed instructions on how to set up an organizational profile and lead capture page, visit



Sample of the business organization page on the Microsoft Dynamics Community at <https://thepartnermarketinggroup.leads.dynamics.com/marketingservices.aspx>.

<https://community.dynamics.com/content/organizationhowtodoc.aspx>.

Note to ISVs: Make it a point to get your organization listed on this site as soon as possible, along with some key product messages. Whether you sell through a channel or not, this is a slick way to generate visibility among customers and prospects, as well as with Partners that may be interested in promoting your product to enhance the solutions they offer.

Partner Channel Builder – Make 1 + 1 = 3

<https://partner.microsoft.com/global/40015789>

The value proposition of the Partner Channel Builder site is powerful. Use this resource to connect and create partnerships with other solution providers that will allow you to offer more complete or compelling solutions to your prospects and customers. Simple as that!

Partner Channel Builder allows you to explore for strategic alliances with other Partners by industry, geography, and competency. For example, you can respond to Partners around the globe that may need the functionality of the ISV solution you offer, or you may be looking for consulting or implementation resources to backfill the big project you just closed. Offering real give and take among the Partner community, it allows for easy searching and straightforward posting for opportunities. Once you've taken the first step, you can advance your connections online or face to face.

Partner Learning Center (PLC) – Microsoft Offers Some Real Social Training

<https://partner.microsoft.com/40056112>

Social media marketing might not be the first or even the second thing that comes to mind when you think of the Partner Learning Center (PLC). For instance, with 810 class offerings for Microsoft Dynamics products alone, it seems that the PLC has other priorities.

But Microsoft wants you to think differently, because they're devoting more and more educational resources to this important new marketing dimension. For instance, in August 2009 Microsoft ran a pair of on-demand classes introducing Partners to the opportunities available through social media. Other courses include "What's the Buzz About Web 2.0?" and "Using Twitter as a Strategic Relationship Tool." So, if you're uncertain how all this fits with the seri-

ous business of business solutions, you just might have a thing or two to learn.

Microsoft Local Engagement Team – Get Personal

www.mslocalpartner.com

Did you know that you have an assigned local engagement resource from Microsoft to help you market, sell, and network? No, it's not your PAM (Partner account manager), or tele-PAM, although they offer key support for your business strategy.

We're talking about the local engagement team (LET), comprised of 10 locally-based business development managers, whose main goal is to help Partners successfully drive marketing and sales efforts, including Web site content, business expos, seminars, radio programs, social marketing, and more. They are also available to those that are looking to connect with complementary businesses and organizations in their area such as local learning centers, the SBA, and others in the business community. From the LET page, you can pop over to the Small Business Center (<http://www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness/local/default.aspx#Welcome>) to find local events, get free trial software, and much more.

If you haven't done so already, make contact. Simply click on the map provided on the site to find your local engagement manager!

Join the Microsoft Dynamics Partner Community Conversation

The Microsoft Dynamics Partner Community Team is no slouch when it comes to "getting social" with Partners. Between LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and the Partner Community site, you will find opportunities to learn, contribute, and network with other business professionals. It doesn't take long to bookmark the following sites, and your investment in the online conversation will increase your visibility with other Partners. (ISVs – take note.)

- » Watch On YouTube – <http://www.youtube.com/dynpartnercommunity>
- » Follow On Twitter – <http://twitter.com/MSDynReady>
- » Build Your Network On LinkedIn – <http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=2322557>
- » Tap Into Learning – <http://www.microsoftdynamicspartnercommunity.com>

Make Face-to-Face Connections With Other Partners

Online may be just fine when it comes to day-to-day social networking, but ultimately

there's no replacement for face time. You may be completely dialed in, or should we say logged-on, to the best online sites. However, real success in building relationships with other Microsoft Partners comes from getting together. For example, conversations held during the networking portion of live events often provides the opportunity to find other Microsoft Partners with complementary solutions that could be offered to customers. Events you should prioritize (in addition to Worldwide Partner Conference and Convergence):

Quarterly Microsoft Partner Connection Briefings: During these sessions, Microsoft will share with you the resources, programs, and investments available to help you capitalize on opportunities and grow your business. The best part of these events is the networking! To learn more about recurring events near you, check out the Community resources (especially for your area and region) at <https://partner.microsoft.com/US/communitysection>.

International Association of Microsoft Certified Partners (IAMCP): IAMCP represents Microsoft's "best of breed" Partners from around the globe. The IAMCP organization was formed in 1994 and now has 35 chapters throughout the continental United States. Visit www.iamcp-us.org to find a chapter in your area.

The Partner Event: This event provides Partners with three educational tracks focused on leadership, sales, and marketing. The education is not only contained in the sessions, but you will also have many opportunities to network, learn, and share ideas with your peers throughout the event. For more details on this event, go to <http://www.thepartnerevent.com/>.

Small Business Association (SBA): There are a plethora of resources available at <http://www.sba.org> to find other businesses that will complement your strengths and extend your portfolio.

We may have only scratched the surface when it comes to Microsoft's plentiful assets designed to help Partners drive new success in the digital universe. But take full advantage of these sites and resources, and you can propel your business in novel ways, making some surprising new connections.

The Partner Marketing Group is a team of marketing strategists, planners, and program managers that specializes in helping Microsoft Partner organizations and Microsoft Corporation develop and execute fresh, innovative, cost-effective marketing strategies. Learn more at www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com.