

Officially social media is “an umbrella term that defines the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio.” (www.wikipedia.org). In our terms? It’s a place on the Internet where you can interact with your friends, fans and customers through updates, pictures, videos and more. Need just one reason to get networking? Visiting social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, is now the 4th most popular online activity – ahead of personal email!

Some tips to get your started or to keep you going!

- It’s called “social media” for a reason! Be prepared to **interact** and engage with your friends and fans.
- Remember to keep your work and personal life separate.
- Starting a new social media profile is like starting at a new school. Friends will come, but it takes some time to get to know to everyone. Be patient.
- Social media is word of mouth times ten. Be prepared for both positive and negative feedback.
- Social media is changing so fast, you need to keep up with the trends. Visiting www.Mashable.com will keep you up-to-speed on the latest in social networking.
- If you don’t know what you’re doing, follow some people who do and learn by example.

If you’re not tweeting you should be! Here are some Twitter tips to get you tweeting:

- You only have 140 symbols – use them wisely and learn how to abbreviate.
- Use hashtags. Hashtags are the # symbol in front of a topic. They make topics stand out and easier to find.
- Direct message: use “DM” in front of @username to send a private message to “username.”
- Retweet: use “RT” in front of @username to give someone credit when you share their original tweet with your followers.
- @replies: on your home page, click @yourname to find all mentions of you on Twitter.
- #followfriday is a game in which people suggest who to follow on Twitter. Recommend fellow users by typing #followfriday and then @username.

Social Media sounds complicated, but once you get the hang of it, you too can be updating, tweeting, engaging and have a one-on-one relationship with your fans, friends and customers, all from your computer or even your mobile phone.

Lastly, don’t forget to remind people that you are networking! Include your Twitter name, Facebook page, blog address, etc. on your business cards, promotional items, website and more.

Follow me at @loftmkt or on Facebook at <http://tiny.cc/LOFTMKT>.

- Elizabeth Rosenberg, President – LOFT Marketing & Communications.