

Business

Making the most of your online networking

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SOCIAL networking sites offer a free resource to boost your business but there are still companies not making the most of sites such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Marketing and branding creative director of east London-based Creative Web Solutions Kofi Oppong specialises in training people how to maximise the potential of these platforms.

"[US President] Barack Obama was the first candidate to use social media – Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. The bottom line was he was accessible, it didn't even matter if he was writing the posts."

He said **Twitter** should be considered the slickest of social networking sites.

"Think of Twitter like a magazine and tailor it to your readers."

"Gucci don't want a lot of followers, just the affluent few. Primark need everybody. Don't trash your brand. You should know your target audience."

"Don't bombard with tweets. Apart from exceptions – like the riots where people were using Twitter to keep up – limit your tweets to two or three a day."

2-3 Number of tweets you should aim for to maximise your firm's impact on Twitter

Kofi said developing a strategy was vital. For example, think about the time you tweet – the key times were 1pm and 6pm for the British and the UK market. There is a tool called **Twitter** which lets you set up tweets in advance.

He said: "Don't assume if you follow people they will follow you back. Big PR companies won't follow you but if you follow them you can see who they are following and if they would be useful to you. You also need to follow people who are likely to follow you."

"**Twitter** is the yellow pages for Twitter. You can use it to find specific people, in a specific field and in a specific area."

He said: "If Twitter is the Ferrari then **Facebook** is the Ford Mondeo – it is reliable, established and more people use it than any other social media platform. You need to use it as a business tool. Make it like a second website, get people to like your page."

"**LinkedIn** is based on six degrees of separation. It is the scariest of any of the social networks and the most surprising."

"Companies recruit using LinkedIn. You can use it to find the people who make the decisions in a company."

If that isn't enough to cope with, **Google+** is snapping at the heels of the other sites promising to make sharing online an easier process. Go to creative-websolutions.com.

How social media has taken off for CityJet

TECHNOLOGY

A shift in marketing techniques heralds a more optimistic phase for airline

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More and more top businesses are putting social media channels at the forefront of their bid to interact with clients.

Airlines are no exception. CityJet, currently the largest airline at London City, launched a £1million marketing campaign this week and, as well as using traditional advertising methods to get their message across, it's also using sites like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to build a dialogue with its potential customers.

Chief commercial officer at CityJet Andrew Cini said: "I've got two kids and they would say to me 'you're too old – you never use Twitter or Facebook'."

"It's the way to do business these days. Go to City Airport and take a look. Business people are 70 per cent of our customer base during the week with many of those working in Canary Wharf."

"They are always on their Blackberries and iPhones. I thought they were emailing but they're not. They're on Twitter and Facebook."

The airline launched its Twitter concierge service in June. This allows customers to interact online with CityJet staff. They deal with complaints, suggestions and individual requests for services.

It also runs competitions such as Give them A Break offering people the chance to recommend someone for a free trip.

"I had two main goals when I first joined CityJet," said Mr Cini. "The first was to improve the customers'



CityJet CEO Christine Ourmieres says that next year might see the company move out of recovery mode

What are people doing online?

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experience onboard but I found I didn't need to do much on that."

"The second was to engage people in a conversation. Fifty per cent of our people are on the web and want to engage. So I've got more of our workforce focusing on the customer

using social networking sites and our website."

Overall, business is in recovery mode at CityJet, which became the top City Airport airline when it took over VLM two years ago, after that business reported losses of more than 50million euros in January.

However, the forecasts are now good for the future and hopes are the company will break even next year.

CEO Christine Ourmieres admitted turning around the financial position had been a challenge.

She said the key has been more efficient use of aircraft and crew.

"It doesn't mean you have to reduce services but you can do some of what you are doing on less," she said. "We sold four aircraft so we are optimising

the fleet and the structure of the network."

The company has also brought in new staff rotas and have put a recruitment freeze in place.

Until the airline breaks even, Ms Ourmieres said there would be no new routes launched – although it might change its position next year.

"We're looking at next summer for more at City Airport," she said. "It's a good place for us and the success of the leisure routes in the last year has been a surprise. When you experience something good, especially in a crisis environment, you keep doing it."

"Next year is big for us and City Airport with the Olympics 2012 here so we will be looking to do a lot of business."

Challenge in charity shop

SHELL

EMPLOYEES of Shell will be taking over a Deptford charity shop today as part of an Apprentice-style competition to raise money for good causes.

Sense, a deafblind charity in Deptford High Street, is one of four stores in south London which will change hands for the day.

Teams from Shell, which is due to relocate much of its workforce to

40 Bank Street this year while refurbishment is carried out at its Waterloo headquarters, will be competing against each other to raise the most money for their store.

One of the Shell team leaders Richard Rowell said: "The teams are going out of their way to find fashion items, books, DVDs and music to sell at knock-down prices, so shoppers in the areas can look forward to bumper bargains."

Bank wins Dragon Award

BANK OF AMERICA

WHARF firm Bank of America Merrill Lynch has scooped a top award for its community work.

It won a Dragon Award presented by Lord Mayor of the City of London Michael Bear in a ceremony on Tuesday night.

The company based at 5 Canada Square came top of the capital's firms in the education section for its work

with students from four schools. The scheme sees it focus on improving employability skills, business awareness and financial numeracy for 12-15 year-olds.

Speaking about the awards, organised by the City of London Corporation, the Lord Mayor said: "This year's entrants to the Dragon Awards have created over 5,000 work opportunities in the capital and contributed over 12,500 days of volunteering."