

Social Media: The New Portfolio Tool

There's no doubt about it. Today's generation clamors for interactivity. No longer satisfied with allowing the television set to continue on its own monologue, consumers now appreciate the ability to connect with companies directly and whenever they choose to, through social media.

Sites like Twitter and Facebook have contributed to the overall popularity of social media. Their growth points to the fact that social media taps into the consumer's desire to engage with companies on a more personal level. Social media also appeals to the intrinsic need for human connection, which is often unavailable through technology's cold and scientific demeanor.

But best and foremost for entrepreneurs and small businesses, social media is the great equalizer. You may be competing with larger companies who have almost unlimited advertising resources, but as long as social media remains free and accessible to all, you have the same potential as they do to compete for customers.

Why not use this trend in the marketplace to your advantage? Go ahead and put your best work to work. You can do this by promoting your portfolio via social media. A few ways to do it:

- ▶ Use your social media space to shine a spotlight on your clients. Not only does this strengthen your relationship with a featured client, when you mention how your product or service was involved, these links take on even more importance: They lead to your living, breathing portfolio pieces, plus a kind of 3rd party validation.
- ▶ Periodically "leak" sneak peek information on certain projects you're working on. Offering previews of your new products, services, or site's features can help build demand. At the same time, you can capture critical feedback to ensure a smooth launch. Not only are you involving your audience as a free focus group, you're engaging their minds in what you sell, which certainly can create desire.
- ▶ Because multimedia is so integral to social networking, connecting via video allows you to express your company's value proposition beyond words. Doing this requires small businesses to wear another new hat, producer, and the results can be well worth the effort.
- ▶ Try finding compelling new ways to present your success stories, case stories, and testimonials. Create a prominent place for these influence-building tools in your portfolio sharing mix, too.
- ▶ Jump on occasions to link back to media write-ups where you're mentioned. Someone mentions you in a blog post? Tweet about it. You've been mentioned in an article in your local newspaper, or on an industry website? Ditto on Facebook and beyond.

In order for small- to medium-sized businesses to compete with the big dogs, it's crucial to optimize all the marketing opportunities at your disposal. With social media providing your an excellent forum for leveling the playing field, portfolio sharing this way should be considered essential.

