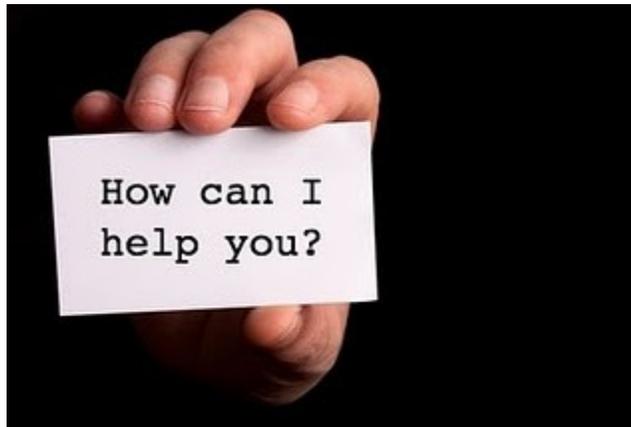


WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2010

Recap of Social Fresh Portland: Social Media B2B Panel



The second session that I attended while at Social Fresh Portland was the "Social Media B2B Panel," with Greg Cangialosi of Blue Sky Factory, Jason Peck of eWayDirect, Adam Holden-Bache of Mass Transmit, and Schneider Mike of Allen and Gerristen. A lot of great information came out of the panel, starting with the first comment that "social media doesn't just happen." The panelists agreed that companies need to put a smart person behind the tools, and get buy-in from everyone in the company, not just the executives.

For B2B companies, their goal is to make their customers more successful than their competitor's customers. To identify what they want from a specific social media strategy, they need to start with the bottom line in mind. Cangialosi commented that social media is just an extension of every other area of the company, but that it's largely happening out of marketing departments. The panel advised that the marketing department should lead with their messages, but customer service should be involved as well, and whoever is responsible for CRM, for a more complete strategy. Peck added that B2B companies need to have communication skills and subject matter expertise to effectively deploy a social media strategy.

Cangialosi said that the true promise of social media is when you can engage with people, which the legal marketers I know in social media would agree with. When engaging, it's important to be transparent in social media channels about why you're there. If you're not planning to use it for customer service, let them know, but expect people to ask questions anyway. The panel also suggested working with a public relations team in advance to forecast out what prickly issues could come up.

Someone in the audience asked how social media can help companies get to B2B decision makers. Peck said that it connects people who can connect you to them. But it's important to be there *before* the sale. The key to getting to decision makers is to provide good content.

As was mentioned during the last panel, many companies measure their success in social media by the number of followers that they have. But the key is in engagement. One of the benefits of social media is that when it comes to lead generation, you can now see very clearly who you're dealing with because of social data. Schneider pointed out that while everyone is talking about engaging with their audience, they shouldn't forget that they want to sell something. They still need to ask people to buy.

Another audience member asked what tools, from a content standpoint, work best for companies and Holden-Bache said "Blogging, far and away." This seems to hold true in the legal market as well, with many lawyers able to build their reputation for having a certain area of expertise through their blogs. The panel used [HubSpot](#) as an example of effective blogging because they use their posts to invite further engagement in webinars, white papers, etc. Cangialosi suggested other companies should similarly use a call to action at the end of every post. The best way to improve awareness is by generating dialogue and interaction from the blog content and then getting others to spread it. An audience member pointed out that just because someone writes content doesn't mean that anyone will necessarily read it. Schneider also cautioned that it's still important to take the online relationships offline. Instead of running

"campaigns," companies should think about building relationships. That way, even when the platforms change, the relationships live beyond the tool. Cangialosi added that the database is still king though - social media may drive customer signups, but you never know which networks might disappear.

Another question from the audience was about what place Facebook has in B2B marketing. Schneider said that it's a great place to test media and can also be a conversion point. Someone else asked about timing messages to appear during business hours, and Schneider agreed that timing matters, but suggested that companies find out what works for their audiences first - do your clients read blog posts at 9am on Monday morning or at 6pm Tuesday evenings? Audience member, [Nicole Donnelly](#), said that her company is beta testing a program called [Big Ruby](#) which can measure what time of day works best for your audience.

The panelists mentioned that companies who are doing social media "right" include [Kaspersky](#), [HubSpot](#), [American Express](#), [Sales Force](#), and [Direct TV](#).

So how does this translate for law firms? As I've been hearing so often lately, the message was that it's all about relationships. But the panel takes this one step further to say that it's important to know your audience, what they want, where they're involved and to engage them in ways that are useful to them. This will vary from firm to firm, and for client to client, but if you identify these things as part of your social media strategy development, it will help your firm in becoming more successful in using social media.