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# Social media 101

Companies push to teach the benefits – and rules – of Facebook, Twitter

Premium content from Birmingham Business Journal by Greg Heyman, Contributor

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At 63, [John Lauriello](#) readily admits that he's not as knowledgeable about social media as some of his commercial real estate firm's employees who aren't as old as him.

By contrast, many of those younger workers only think of it as a way to connect with old friends and share what's happening in their personal lives.

But along with bridging the gap between what different age groups know – or don't know – about the various personal uses for social media, Lauriello, a founding principal with **Southpace Properties**, also recognizes the need for training his employees about achieving the maximum results from Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social platforms.

To accomplish that, several in-house training programs on social media have already been conducted by the IT staff at Southpace, with more planned for the first quarter of this year.

Lauriello said the goal is to familiarize an older generation of employees with social media for the first time, while helping a younger age group sharpen their skills.

"It's from the very basic, 'What is LinkedIn, what is Twitter, what is Facebook, how does it work, how do you set up your profile, how do you interact with people?'" he said. "Even some of the younger folks are learning some stuff now in classes that they probably did not know."

Experts say social media training is becoming critical for employers at businesses looking to tap into the new marketing and business opportunities created by the new technology.

[David Sher](#), a partner with Buzz 12 Digital Marketing Content, said a training program should not only train employees how to use social media, but also prompt them to consider the best approaches for its use.

"Many companies haven't even made up their mind whether they want employees tweeting or posting on Facebook because the companies often times don't even know what they want to do," Sher said.

He said training should involve a company learning the best features of social media to share the image it wants to project.

"I think in order to do it properly, it would involve actually doing some type of content calendar to determine what it is you and or your employees would want to post so that you actually have a strategy that you're trying to achieve," Sher said.

Identifying the strategy Induron Protective Coatings wanted to achieve was part of the training employees received during a presentation at their annual sales meeting, where a consultant shared how different social media strategies could help.

[Davies Hood](#), president of Induron, said the result was not only a greater understanding of social media, but also appreciation for using it to communicate their message.

Hood said getting the most from social media involved training, along with discussions about the content Induron wants to share and how often information should be posted to social media sites.

"We put together a calendar of different topics that goes out about six months, where we talk about different niches of our paint business and different general interest topics," Hood said.

Hood believes it's also important to tap the knowledge some employees already have about social media.

"I've been encouraging participation from different people throughout the organization – our sales manager, our sales team, the different members of my upper management team," he said.

Hood appears to be on the right track, said [Andrea Walker](#), senior project manager/digital strategist with Panorama Public Relations. She said involving everyone when it comes to learning more about social media is guaranteed to result in more effective training.

"You also want to get your employees involved in what you're putting together as well, because they could give you some insights into some things that you wouldn't think about in how they use social media," she said.

Walker said most companies already educate employees about company use of the Internet – which mainly focuses on email – but she adds they should also make sure workers are familiar with social media with basic training sessions that familiarize employees with platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

"One of the things about these social networks is that they're constantly adding new features," Walker said.

Lauriello said training should also involve an emphasis on knowing how to use social media for business, in addition to more traditional approaches.

"If you try to do one without the other today, you're behind the eight ball," Lauriello said. "If you're just doing social media, the chance of success is somewhat limited, and if you're not using social media today, I'm convinced your chances are also somewhat limited."