



## Get tweeting if you want to get ahead

### Management analysis

#### Social Media

If you think that Tweeting is for twits then you may be missing a trick. Internet-savvy businesses are using social media for everything from direct sales and customer service to product development and recruitment.

Charlie Lawson, national director of Business Networking International in Britain and Northern Ireland, said social media was best seen as a form of networking which could be used to augment face-to-face relationship building. "You can't solve it all by jumping on Twitter but it allows you to grow your network and then carry on the relationship process face-to-face." He also says it is about quality, not quantity, and posts should be focused on building visibility, credibility and profitability in that order. He recommends linking to content in your field of expertise, commenting on

She advised creating a blog and linking to it on social media sites.

Karl Schewpe, managing director of whatjobsite.com, believes that social media is an ideal, but as yet unexploited, recruitment tool for small businesses.

More sophisticated recruiters will network, watch out for cv updates, join industry groups and discussions and try and engage "passive jobseekers" — those not actively looking for jobs but open to opportunities in the same way as they would with traditional networking.

Most commentators agree that LinkedIn is a good place to connect with senior business people and Twitter is the place if you want to reach a large audience. But some businesses are sceptical about Facebook's business potential. However, Peter Jackson, business development manager at 77Agency, a digital marketing agency, says it

has great potential for consumer-facing businesses. "After the initial rush to set up fan pages Facebook is now being seen as a serious business tool," which will only be enhanced by its new functionality, he said. The first step is to build a fan page for your business, then to put some apps on offering exclusive content, competitions or video. Businesses can also put Facebook "like" buttons on their company websites. These



industry-relevant matters and retweeting posts by respected members of your business sphere.

Victoria Tomlinson, chief executive of Northern Lights PR, a media specialist agency, advises businesses to have a social media strategy which joins up activity on the web with more traditional marketing and public relations. It should also involve the whole team including management — and not just be delegated to the office junior with a Facebook account. "You have to be prepared to invest a bit of time." You also need to think strategically about how often you post and where," she said. She also advised against "shouting — 'look at our offer', 'look at our new product' etc.

If someone just talks about themselves it is a real turn off. People engage with people not products."



likes will then be integrated onto the soon to be launched "timeline" to show the history of what users do, buy and rate. Meanwhile adverts or the "sponsored stories" on Facebook are gaining in credibility.

Natasha Dyer, e-commerce manager at Cowshed, has recently begun using Facebook and Twitter. She posts news about product launches, press clippings, offers and competitions on the company Facebook fanpage once or twice a day. She uses Twitter in a similar way but says that it is also a good way of gathering feedback on products,

asking for input on product development and dealing with customer service issues. "There is a lot more we could do, we could be more creative, but already it is enhancing our brand."

● Carol Lewis