

events, and knows that your 15th wedding anniversary just occurred?



Get the Word Out

Social media sites also allow you to quickly spread news about special events at your site, too.

“When paired with great community socializing, networking and on-site events, customers see and hear about you everywhere in the community,” said M. Anne Ballard, president of Universal Management Company in Smyrna, Georgia.

Ballard sees social media as a good tool “for building awareness and demonstrating that you are active, alive and out there. And it helps to invite masses to your on-site events.”

As an example, Ballard mentioned that Store Self Storage of Palm Beach Gardens successfully used social media to get 1,000 people to attend their yard sale and 800-plus people to attend other events.



One Component of Your Overall Marketing Plan

A key to building awareness of your property is exposure and awareness throughout the communities you serve. A solid, functional website is

crucial to your success, along with every other advertising and public relations aspect of your property’s comprehensive marketing plan.

A huge benefit of social media that can’t be overlooked: Social media tools don’t require you to create, print, mail or pay for postage if you want to communicate. It’s a free way to generate and spread news instantaneously. But social media won’t work alone as your only marketing and outreach vehicle. It has to be part of an all-inclusive marketing plan.

“You can’t just have an online presence only,” said Ballard. “Storage customers still come predominantly from a three-to-five-mile radius. These people need to see you everywhere, online and in person out sponsoring events,” she said. “There needs to be a perfect balance of community networking and socializing, along with social media and e-mail messaging.”



Potential Pitfalls

In more rural areas, social media might not prove as effective as would in an urban, or densely populated, area. This doesn’t mean it’s not worthy of inclusion in your overall marketing plan, but you should manage expectations when you are getting started. While social media is immensely popular around the world, it hasn’t caught on everywhere just yet.

You should also be aware that the success of your social media efforts

will only be as good as the network of followers you can build. It will take time and effort to capture customers, and convince them that your posts and information are worth reading.

Operators should also be aware of the potential negative repercussions from a public relations standpoint. While social media sites easily allow others to share and comment on topics that are relevant to your location — it also provides a vehicle for customers to voice their displeasure. Unlike an e-mail that is sent from one person directly to another, a post on Twitter or Facebook is visible to everyone who follows you. If someone has a bad experience, they can easily post their side of the incident for everyone to see. You then must decide if you want to delete the post or address it on this public forum. How you handle these situations can effect the tone of your social media presence, and eventually, your business.

Regardless of the few issues worthy of consideration, social media is here to stay.

“Social media is becoming a key component of advertising efforts,” said Lisa Barth-Chiapetta, with Barth Self Storage in Wisconsin. Barth Storage, which operates three facilities in Kenosha, Wisconsin, is currently redesigning their sites to incorporate social media opportunities and links.

“It provides a new way for people to perceive your brand, and allows your ‘friends’ to validate your services,” she continued. “And if you don’t start using it, sooner or later you eventually will. It’s like peer pressure... everyone is doing it. If you don’t, eventually you’ll be left behind.” ❖



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