



Getting Social and Showcasing Your Expertise Online

 Jennifer Culbertson

If you had to pick the one reason behind your company's success, it is likely to be the expertise of your employees. Their vast experience and ability to market, sell, deliver, and service your products and solutions are essential to any company's success.

With so much expertise and knowledge, one of the biggest questions companies face is how to effectively get out there and communicate their expertise to give them the competitive edge. How do they utilize their knowledge in order to create the best value for current customers (who are the best sources of word-of-mouth advertising)? And how do they do this in an economical and timely fashion?

For many of us, we take our expertise for granted. Many times we think that our customers and prospects know our background and understand exactly what we can offer, but I can bet that's not true. Even if your customers and prospects know you're an expert, they don't know *how much* of an expert you really are. So it's our job to get out there and show what you really know.

As the world moves to doing more business online, one great way to communicate your expertise and story is through social media. Social media provides a cost-effective way to reach a wider range of prospects and customers with timely information that's meaningful and useful. Let's explore some ways you can showcase and communicate your expertise.

Blogging

Many companies already take advantage of blogging, whether it's through their own

website or third-party blog sites. Blogging is an excellent way to communicate what you know and how you've helped other customers as well as to showcase the depth and breadth of your knowledge.

If you're already blogging, you have a great opportunity to better leverage your blog. Many different types of audiences may read and follow your blog, so you need to ensure that what you are communicating is meeting their needs. Keeping all readers in mind while you blog can have a great impact on how effective your blog is. Most readers are looking for evidence of your company's knowledge, but they are looking for different levels of detail. Too much technical language will intimidate prospects and general business readers; too many high-level posts will alienate those looking for more technical detail. If you're trying to cover multiple targets (prospects and customers) with your blog content, you may want to consider separate blogs. If you don't do separate blogs, simply remember to keep your content balanced so that you don't alienate audiences.

One of the great aspects of blogging is that you can share tips and insight with readers without spending hours of researching or writing. When you offer useful information, readers will want to follow your posts, visit your website, and learn more about your products and services. Readers will be engaged, interested, and appreciative of the value that you're willing to share.

Videos

When done correctly, videos are a powerful, persuasive marketing tool to showcase your

expertise. There are a wide range of video formats, and each can be used to draw in different audiences:

- » **Educational Videos** - Primarily used to educate, these videos can also be used to establish trust and thought leadership.
- » **Technical Demonstration** - These tend to be videos showing more technical detail with narration. These videos can be very technical, but they can also be used as a product demonstration for prospects.
- » **Viral Videos** - These videos are quick, short, and generally entertaining to the viewer. Viral videos tend to center less on value-oriented content but rather focus on trying to gather viral interest for your product or service. Viral videos differ from the other types of video in terms of their location. Viral video is at its best when it is found outside the company's website. Viral video is all about distribution and promotion, and the aim is for the video to be embedded in many different sites to reach as wide an audience as possible.

All types of videos have their place in communicating your expertise and generating interest. Videos are valuable because they can be integrated almost anywhere – on your homepage, blog, Facebook, Twitter, newsletters, and more!

Podcasting

Aside from technical demonstration videos, this is one of the strongest outlets to showcase your expertise in detail. Podcasts provide a great opportunity for businesses and

individuals to leverage their subject matter knowledge and expertise to generate increased awareness. Podcasts can be as short as five-minute recordings geared toward prospects or as long as an hour to cover a topic in more depth. Podcasting gets your company name out to areas of the Internet that it couldn't get to otherwise, including podcasting sites such as PodcastAlley.com and even iTunes®.

Podcasts are very inexpensive to create; the greatest investment will be your time. Here are some podcasting tips:

- » Promote your podcast the same way you would promote anything through social media: advertise new podcasts through your ongoing marketing activities, website, Twitter, Facebook, and so on.
- » Make your podcast fun. Even though your content may be more technical, have someone with an engaging voice host it. Even better, have two people host it so they can play off of each other.
- » iTunes also supports video podcasts. Take advantage of your podcast feed to distribute your videos.

Looking for some examples of how podcasting can be done? Microsoft has a large library of podcasts available for listening at <http://tinyurl.com/3zjxdyk>.

Online Forums

Online forums, or message boards, are online discussion sites where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages. Though online forums are perhaps one of the oldest forms of social media, they are still one of the most powerful. Forums are a great way for you to develop relationships with and between customers and prospects. Better yet, forums are easy to maintain and quite inexpensive.

Here are some helpful online forum tips:

- » You can feature the forum at your site, on Facebook, or both places. It is recommended that you only have one forum so that content isn't duplicated between the places. You want people to have one place to go to so they can find information easily.
- » Have a designated moderator to watch for spam and inappropriate messages. Nothing decreases credibility like a forum filled with spam.
- » Encourage your employees to join the forum. This not only gets your new forum off to a solid start, but it also showcases your employees' expertise.
- » Divide the forum into different sections tailored to various audiences such as business, technical types, and general information.

- » As always, promote the forum through social media avenues.

Getting the Word Out

The best way to communicate your company's expertise is by displaying it through all the social media outlets. Through the power of the Internet, blogging, videos, podcasting, and forums – when leveraged appropriately – are some of the most effective marketing tools to showcase your expertise. 

Jennifer Culbertson owns Looking Glass Marketing and specializes in working with Microsoft VARs and ISVs to build and execute marketing strategies that drive results. With her 18 years of marketing experience within the channel, coupled with her understanding of Microsoft Partner needs, she can help take your marketing to the next level. For more information, contact Jennifer at Jennifer@lookingglassmarketing.com or call 614-453-5927.



Gain ultimate performance and speed with Recurring Contract Billing

Many of our clients using Recurring Contract Billing can expect to see ROI in as little as three months.

“Because we implemented **Recurring Contract Billing**, an efficient and reliable billing solution, we were able to keep pace and effortlessly bill 15,000-16,000 customers a month using fewer resources. That's incredible!”

*Tim Zdrzil,
Accounts Receivable Manager
Accounting Systems Administrator
Homes.com*

Encore has been providing reliable solutions to our Clients through our Partners for over 20 years. Because of your collective support we have accomplished what few have. In appreciation of your continued business **we have increased margins and reduced product pricing.**



Solutions for Microsoft Dynamics GP®
See The List for information on additional Encore offerings including Project Tracking, Advanced SmartList, Investor Relationship Manager and more!

Toll Free: 1.888.898.4330 • sales@encorebusiness.com • www.encorebusiness.com