



New York Daily News unveils new small business social networking tool

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The *New York Daily News* has teamed up with Toronto-based **SalesSpider.com** to launch a new social networking platform that will enable 500,000 small businesses to connect and interact with one another.

The *New York Daily News*, America's fifth largest newspaper and the most-read paper in the New York metropolitan area, will also facilitate readers with finding sales leads - namely by way of government tenders - and obtaining government grant information, as well as being able to access a number of additional business tools at no extra cost.

Readers are not the only people to benefit from this partnership, with online advertising clients expected to profit now that they are able to hone in on the paper's key business audience, which if successful, may prove itself to be a valuable weapon to combat the current crisis. CEO of *Daily News*, **Marc Kramer**, said: "By providing an active community and business support system, it is our goal to offer a sustainable service to help them cope with these difficult economic times and help them build for their future."

Speaking on the newspaper's popularity, president of **Sales Spider Inc. Russell Rothstein**, said the joint venture means that advertisers will have a "greater reach", as well as position itself "as a model for the newspaper industry to increase revenue within digital business demographic."

On its website, **SalesSpider.com** describes itself as a "free business social network". In July 2008, **Rothstein was quoted as saying**: "We're the largest social networking site in North America focused on SMBs", confirming that whilst the company is based in Canada "92% of users are in the States".

Since the site's launch in 2006 it has **generated an impressive amount of interest from the media**, especially as more and more news organisations look to bring in new sources of revenue, employing the vast array of new media platforms at their disposal. Last September, we spoke to deputy editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, **Alan Murray**, who spoke about the newspaper's revamped online version and the way it was positioning itself as a social network for the business community.

At the time, Murray confirmed that whilst the *WSJ* had no plans to compete with other social networks such as **Facebook**, it was dedicated to enhancing user experience, which in itself meant a better system of inter-communication for its readers.

In the past year, the digital world has witnessed a boom in the number of social networks to hit the ground running, with the likes of more established sites such as **Facebook** and **MySpace** leading the pack with millions of users globally. Third in line is Twitter which, according to site **Compete.com**, has an estimated 6 million people registered. Launched in 2006 it is newer than both **Facebook** and **MySpace** and in the last year alone it has seen its **user base grow by more than 900%**.

The world appears to be embracing the digital age, notwithstanding the state of the world's markets, which has seen both consumer and investor confidence plunge to record lows. Yet, social networking is one area where investors remain positive - in February **Twitter chiefs accepted an extra \$35 million in venture capital**.

As well as simply serving as a social platform, it has also been tried, tested and proven to work as a news tool, complementing existing news-gathering technologies, with news organisations such as the *Telegraph*, **Channel 4** and **Sky News** already using Twitter to serve their own purposes. Social networking sites are also being implemented by local and regional papers, which are now able to connect to their communities in ways never before possible, with one Plymouth paper, *The Herald*, **recently launching its own networking site**.