



Social Networking to Play Bigger Role in 2011

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This year was a learning curve year for small businesses delving into social networks, but next year will mark an increased push into that realm, according to a survey by SaleSpider, the small- and medium-sized business social network.

In the past, social networking had always been about social and now it's increasingly about business networking," said Russell Rothstein, CEO of SaleSpider. "Small businesses are going to spend more and more time on social networking."



According to SaleSpider, which polled 384 small and medium business owners, 75 percent plan to make social networking a larger part of their marketing mix in 2011, while two-thirds said social networking has already served to boost sales and revenue.

The survey also found that nearly half of the small businesses that reported social networks have already boosted sales are using social networking in multiple business development and sales capacities including identifying requests for proposals, networking with new and existing customers, and promoting their own business. In fact, 40 percent of the small businesses that think social networking is boosting sales said the sales increase was "significant."

The big trend is all about doing business on the social networks," said Rothstein, noting small business owners aren't going to use social networks to post what they are doing on a personal level. He said small business owners plan to use social networks as a venue to network, as well as a lead generator for new business.

While an increased push into social networking doesn't mean small business owners are going to open their purse strings, it does mean that small business owners will dedicate more time to their social networking strategy, said Rothstein.

"Social networking is not a costly pursuit, it's a time purist," he said.

According to Rothstein, small business owners don't have to spend their entire day online. He said social networking efforts can be done during the work day in small intervals, and that small business owners only need to spend about twenty hours a month on it.

Indeed, 83 percent of survey respondents said they will devote 11 percent or more of their marketing resources on social networking in the New Year.

Mobile Apps to get more interest

With smart phones proliferating and new tablet devices like the [iPad](#) gaining in popularity, it's not surprising that next year will mark an increased focus on mobile social networking by small businesses, according to SaleSpider. The survey found that 53 percent of respondents are using or plan to use social networking sites from their mobile devices via a mobile app. In addition to using a mobile app to access social networks, small business owners are expected to increase their usage of mobile apps that help run their business whether it's an app to manage contracts or an app to input sales data on the go.

More education needed

Social networking will be a main focus for small businesses in 2011, but it doesn't mean that more education isn't needed. People know how to use a social network, but Rothstein said they may not know how to use it effectively to boost their business. He said small business owners should avoid engaging in social networks from a personal perspective and keep the profile and pictures professional. At the end of the day, Rothstein said, small business owners just have to take the leap.

"Engage. Everyone is jumping into it, so you might as well jump into it," said Rothstein.

Source: <http://www.foxsmallbusinesscenter.com/networking/2010/12/27/diving-social-networks/#ixzz1A5JweQKh>