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## A Sales Social Network

Forget liking and photos—respond and sell something. SalesSpider is all about connecting for sales.

Posted by [Howard Greenstein @howardgr](#) at 3:30 PM

Start-ups and small businesses are always looking for ways to sell what they have more effectively. [SalesSpider](#) CEO [Russell Rothstein](#) knows this, and created a small business social network for early stage and growth companies. SalesSpider is the largest networks of its kind, with over 750,000 members, and a growth rate of 20 to 30,000 users a month.

“The number one issue for small business in first 18 months is cash flow,” said Rothstein. “You need to make money to pay rent to keep going, you need revenue and you need leads. We provide qualified opportunities where you connect with buyers. It is up to you to close the buyer and prove your value. But it is tough for small businesses to meet qualified buyers.”

That’s where SalesSpider seems to help. It lets you connect with people who have specific needs, based on categories, keywords and locations. Sellers and buyers can list their offerings and properly categorize them. If you’re a buyer looking for widgets in [Colorado](#), you can search for and send a message to a seller about the opportunity. You can update your keywords or location for searches daily. Alerts and messages can come in during the day or be set as a digest.

The site has some premium features, but sign up and most features are free; members will see ads on bottom of messages as well as the on the site. The company allows list rentals, but members have to opt-in. “We have a high return rate for advertisers because the users are very targeted. Small biz owners are a hard group for people to reach,” said Rothstein.

The network looks like a cross between [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#) with a business tool site. According to [Robert Blatt](#), sales and marketing executive with [Acces Communications](#), a 2 way radio communications and telecommunications vendor, SalesSpider is “another tool for generating our online presence.” The site aggregates available government contracts for state and the federal agencies, and Blatt told me this feature saves him “hours” a week having to track down all these potential places to bid. “They have a good search mechanism by keywords—it does the filtering for us, and I get the bids I need within a few seconds. Every Monday morning, I check the bids, see what’s there, sometimes there’s stuff of value and I contact the folks.”

Several emails came in when I asked about this tool online that were less positive. “Signed up for SalesSpider a few months ago. I don’t even check the inbox anymore because most of the messages are spam. There’s not enough time to log in and sort it out. Maybe I’ve been generating leads, but I don’t care,” read one response. A start-up wrote that “Since launching last week, we’ve received a few inquires and

requests for RFPs from SalesSpider. At first, it looked interesting, but the work required to find out more, and the level of aggressiveness (sic) of the sales people turned me off. If I find out they actually drive leads, I'll reconsider."

Blatt disagreed and told me it is a helpful tool. "It is an ad-on service that I benefit from, that I use to get additional sales." Blatt has not seen any problems with off-topic or spam-like solicitations.

SalesSpider's spokesperson responded that they have "766,228 members and [we are] growing 20,000 new members a month. That being said, you're going to have some positive and some negative reviews." SalesSpider limits the number of mails people can send per day to stop spammers.

Rothstein's comment during our interview probably nails the discussion: "People will always be doing self promotion—but you're getting information for local opportunities and specifically for you. This isn't just about business networking—it's about sales."

The notion of SalesSpider and similar tools is that your small businesses can grow businesses without spending money, by responding to bids in a network that's more specifically targeted to sales than LinkedIn. What has been your experience? Are you using SalesSpider or a similar tool to generate leads? Let us know in the comments below.

SOURCE: <http://www.inc.com/howard-greenstein/a-sales-social-network.html>