

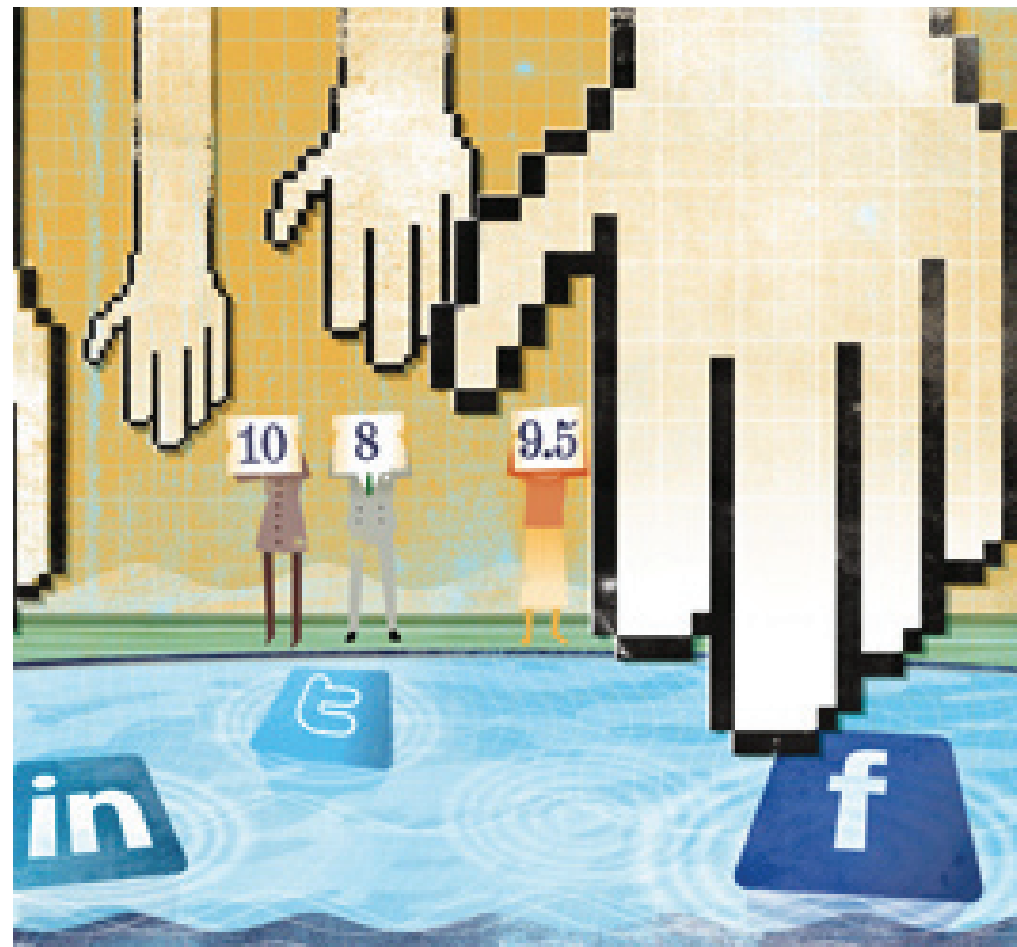
# Joining the Party

By John Anderson

## Growing Business Through Social Media

**W**hat do Bill Gates, Hugo Chávez, Lady Gaga, NASDAQ, and Ben & Jerry's have in common with a growing number of SMBs? To achieve their objectives, they actively use social media, a form of media that has exploded in use since its emergence in the mid-2000s.

The rise of social media offers new opportunities for SMBs to add customers and revenue. But security remains an ongoing issue. According to a survey by AVG and the CMO Council,<sup>1</sup> users of social networking sites are increasingly vulnerable to cyber attacks, with 47 percent of respondents claiming to have been the victim of malware, 55 percent seeing phishing attacks, and almost 20 percent experiencing identity theft.





Matt Zurn, General Manager, Zurn Plumbing Service, and Andrew Katz, Director of Digital Presence, BlueWave Computing

**Zurn Plumbing**

Founded: 1985  
 Location: Chamblee, Georgia  
 Employees: 16  
 Symantec Partner: BlueWave Computing, [www.bluewave-computing.com](http://www.bluewave-computing.com)  
 Website: [www.zurnplumbing.com](http://www.zurnplumbing.com)

**Getting started**

Social media sites offer tools and tutorials to help SMBs and other organizations interact with cus-

tomers and gain value. Twitter, with 100 million users worldwide,<sup>2</sup> offers a special guide for businesses, Twitter101, on why and how a business can best use their service, including best practices, case studies, and tips for getting started.

Facebook has 500 million monthly unique visitors<sup>3</sup> and allows companies to build their own business-specific pages, including detailed information on everything from driving customer awareness to finding new fans. And a number of sites, such as Mashable.com, help businesses enhance the usefulness of their Facebook page.

SMBs can take advantage of other social media platforms such as LinkedIn, a business-oriented networking site of 65 million users, increasingly used as a recruiting tool. YouTube, a video sharing site with

more than 2 billion views per day, allows companies to upload and distribute videos, or link them to a website or Facebook page.

**The most interesting page on the Internet**

It's important to use social media appropriately, which calls for a different marketing strategy than used in "push" media such as TV or magazines. Traditional marketing is a one-way conversation and overt in its approach; social media marketing is a live, interactive format where marketing messages need to be subdued.

"The point of social media is not to sell; the point is to communicate, to have a conversation," says Austin Lee, director of storytelling at Eyespeak, an Atlanta-based agency offering social media marketing services to small and midsized firms. "It's like a party. Nobody wants to talk to the guy who only talks about himself. The person every-

**Podcast**  
 Zurn Plumbing Service uses social media to grow its business, with help from Symantec Partner BlueWave Computing.

MICHAEL BRUNETTO

Virtualization Feature



Social Media Feature



Case Study



Cover Story



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one likes is the one who's interested in what everybody else is saying. And that's the person your company should be on social media."

### Opportunities for the SMB

Social media success stories are numerous and well-publicized for enterprise businesses. Dell Outlet, for example, has more than 1.5 million followers on

Twitter, generating more than \$6.5 million in revenue attributable to its Twitter posts. But SMBs, which lack the marketing strength of large enterprises, may have the most to gain from social media.

"Larger companies have always had an advantage finding out what people want and need in the marketplace," says Lee. "But with social media, the playing field gets leveled because

people are out there talking about your company and industry, and they'll tell you the same thing a focus group would tell you, without the fees." Armed with this steady flow of information, Lee adds that SMBs are able to take advantage of shifts in public opinion more quickly than their larger counterparts.

And because social media is basically free, short of the time required to participate, it's easy for an SMB to dip a toe in the social media pool without committing too many resources.

"With social media and Internet

advertising, you can test things pretty simply," says Andrew Katz, director of digital presence for Atlanta-based BlueWave Computing. "It's not like putting up a billboard and having to come up with the creative. Social media is a great tool to test different strategies and learn."

### Shaping the conversation

With social media so widespread and growing, not participating can be a detriment to a business, especially when online content about a company's products or services turns negative, whether deserved or not. Indeed, according to a recent Harris Poll, 34 percent of adults say they have used social media as an outlet to rant or rave about a company or product.

"There's a danger that when you mess up, it can be glaringly reproduced over and over again online," Lee says. "But what would you rather have? Everyone talks about it online and you're not there



#### Podcast

June 2010 [State of Spam and Phishing Report](#) provides a deep dive on social network spams.

### Top Tips to Social Media

Ray Wang of Altimeter Group offers these tips for getting the most out of social media

- > Rediscover where your market is by joining your customers' conversations.
- > Listen and engage with customer conversations with monitoring tools such as Scout Labs, Visible Technologies, Radian 6, and Alterian.
- > Use contests in your online community for new project ideas and to grow advocacy for your products.
- > If you're offering insight, you're building a community, things will happen naturally. It takes three to six months to build a sizeable community.

Source: Ray Wang, Altimeter Group





Austin Lee, Director of Storytelling, Eyespeak

**Eyespeak**  
 Founded: 2005  
 Location: Atlanta, GA and Buenos Aires, Argentina  
 Employees: 24  
 Website: [www.eyespeak.com](http://www.eyespeak.com)

to do anything about it, or you use it as an opportunity to fix the things that are wrong in a very public forum.”

**Well-honed strategies**

Getting the most out of social media requires more than simply signing up on Facebook and Twitter. And while it may

“The point of social media is not to sell; **the point is to communicate**, to have a conversation.”

– Austin Lee, Director of Storytelling, Eyespeak

seem difficult to get started, one option is to use an independent service.

“We started with social media well over a year ago, but found we really didn’t know what we were doing,” says Matt Zurn, general manager of Zurn Plumbing Service in Atlanta. “We would try to come up with things to put on there, but we weren’t very good at engaging people.”

To get more out of social media, Zurn turned to Symantec Partner BlueWave Computing and its dedicated social media expert Andrew Katz. “When we came in four months ago, our strategy was pretty simple,”

says Katz. “We don’t want to sell with social media tools; we want to build trust and engagement. We want to build a nice following.”

BlueWave’s social media strategy for Zurn changes depending on the portal. “Platforms require different content,” Katz says. “For Twitter, we’re positioning Zurn as a thought leader in the plumbing space by posting tweets that show off their knowledge.” The audience is different for Facebook, he says, “where the strategy is to build engagement: conduct contests, provide give-aways, solicit input, and get people to upload pictures of their crazy plumbing design.”

**Thought leader**

Blogging is another tool to establish thought leadership, especially for industries where expertise is at a pre-

MICHAEL BRUNETTO

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Dan Harris, Founding Partner,  
Harris & Moure

**Harris & Moure, plc**  
 Founded: 2005  
 Location: Seattle, Washington  
 Employees: 14  
 Website: [www.harrismoure.com](http://www.harrismoure.com)

mium. Dan Harris, founding partner of Harris & Moure law firm in Seattle, started *chinalaw-blog.com* in 2006, leveraging his experience in international law and business issues in Asia. He posts several times per week with titles such as “On The

“Don’t try to get business; **try to help people and be respected**, and business will follow”

– Dan Harris, Founding Partner, Harris & Moure

Relevance Of Hong Kong To China” and “China Outsourcing Tips.”

Over its four years of existence, *chinalaw-blog.com* has grown to become the ninth most read law blog, according to *avvo.com*, a legal resource website. It’s

also resulted in even greater media exposure for the firm. “What happens is the media finds out what we’re talking about on the

blog, whether through LinkedIn or Twitter, and they contact us,” Harris says. “We show up in the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Forbes*, and then business comes from that.”

The strategy Harris takes with the blog is to speak directly to the needs of his readers.

“Before writing each blog, I always ask the question, ‘Is this something that’s going to be either interesting or helpful to the small or medium-sized business either conducting business, or looking to do business, in China?’” he says.

**Building a network**

With social media, savvy consumers have the ability to choose their communities and online associates, which accounts for the heightened trust level in social media interactions. For SMBs, it’s an opportunity to build a large and loyal following.

And for those SMBs using social media, building trust is paramount to a successful marketing strategy. Besides the importance of offering candid interactions, a company can





## Top Social Media Security Threats

- 1 Hidden URLs:** Consider the source before clicking on shortened URLs on Twitter, they may take you to malware sites.
- 2 Phishing Requests:** Beware of links from friends with alluring titles, such as “Share my Vegas winnings.”
- 3 Hidden Charges:** That Facebook quiz may sound like fun, but it may not be as free as advertised.
- 4 Cash Grabs:** Requests from a new Facebook friend in dire need of a loan may be a cyber criminal looking for easy money.
- 5 Chain Letters:** They’re back, and more dubious than ever. Retweeting for a good cause may help a spammer gather up “friends.”

To read more, [click here](#).

attract followers by offering incentives such as coupons and giveaways and providing free information from its knowledge base. Zurn, for exam-

“Social media is a great tool to **test different strategies** and learn.”

– Andrew Katz, Director of Digital Presence, BlueWave Computing

ple, has a tip-of-the-day video on its Facebook page, with free advice on basic plumbing issues. “The point of the tip-of-the-day is, ‘don’t call us—it costs us \$100 to come out. Save your money,’” says BlueWave Computing’s Katz. “That’s how you build trust.”

Harris is constantly offering what might seem like free legal advice on *chinalawblog.com*, but says he’s been more than rewarded for it. “There’s just a lot of give and take out there, and by having a blog, you’re part of a community,” Harris says. “My view has always been that business will follow if you focus on helping people and being respectful. It pervades the way I’ve always done business, which is why I like social media so much.”

### Quantifying success

While it can be easy to measure how your social media strategy is working in

terms of gaining followers and readers, with detailed demographics available through features such as Facebook analytics, it’s often difficult to measure how that translates into increased business and sales.

“That’s the biggest mystery right now is measuring the benefits,” says BlueWave Computing’s Katz. “It’s not like pay-per-clicks—measuring how many clicks you get and how much money that makes. When it comes to the bottom line, it’s not something that’s immediate. It’s like measuring the value of your phone.”

But Lee of Eyespeak had another experience working with a fledgling non-profit agency. By adding 500 fans to their Facebook account in one month, the organization is seeing a dramatic



### Webcast

Is **Social Networking** Foiling Your Security Practice?

## Hidden Dangers of Social Networking

According to Kevin Haley, director of security response for Symantec and other experts, the following are ways to avoid social media fraud:

- 1 Buy, install, use, and train your employees on some top-notch small business security software. Install an integrated security solution on all desktops, laptops, netbooks, etc. Make sure the suite prevents virus attacks, blocks intruders, protects privacy, and stops malicious programs.
- 2 Educate employees not to use file-sharing programs or download free programs from the Internet.
- 3 Monitor your social media accounts for suspicious activity.
- 4 Password protect your wireless network.
- 5 Change your passwords often.

To read more, [click here](#).

increase in its business. “Some of these fans started talking with us and started contributing, and then started telling their friends,” Lee says. “We’re now on target to double the agency’s revenue for the year based on some of the fans and the organizations they’re a part of.”

Likewise, Harris says he gets at least one new client per month directly attributed to his blog. “We get a lot of business from people who learn about us either directly or indirectly from social media,” he says. “Sometimes people will say ‘I read your blog post regarding x, y, and z, and I need someone to help me with x, y, and z.’”

### Security concerns

As social media use has skyrocketed over the past several years, both in personal and business use, so too have concerns over privacy and security. According to a recent Internet Security Threat Report, Volume XV, published by Symantec, cybercriminals are leveraging personal informa-

tion gathered from social networking sites to target key personnel within companies.

“Every day something new comes out where somebody’s sending a direct message on Twitter that turns out to be a virus,” Lee says. “Or a link received through social media will take you to a website that looks real, but it’s not, and you’ll lose all of your money and information. It’s a very real risk. The problem is in identifying what’s a risk and what isn’t—issues that can be avoided by having security best practices and procedures in place within a company.”

As Zurn’s online visibility rises through social media networks, its exposure to malware increases as well. “We chose Symantec Endpoint Protection for Zurn because it’s a newer application with more capabilities and a robust antivirus engine, with the ability to catch even very sophisticated viruses,” says Giedrius “G” Stankevicius, Ph.D., MCSE, team leader at BlueWave Computing.



“We’re now on target to **double the agency’s revenue** for the year based on the fans.”

– Austin Lee, Director of Storytelling, Eyespeak

Stankevicius adds that features such as Symantec TruScan Proactive ThreatScan enable Zurn to protect against zero-day threats—which don’t rely on a virus signature. As a result, “We’ve never had a major security breach with Symantec Endpoint Protection,” says Zurn. “In combination with our firewalls, Symantec Endpoint Protection gives us the protection we need.”

Social media networks also offer a greater inroad for socially engineered phishing scams—with heightened trust in social media contacts, users are more likely to follow bogus links from a seemingly reliable source. Spam filtering features of Symantec Endpoint Protection provide users an effective tool against such scams.

Ultimately, best-practice policies can be the best preventive against

social media-borne malware. And while Stankevicius says these policies should come from top management within a company, he can offer several recommendations. “Check the validity of a message, even if it’s coming from a friend,” he says. “Be very careful of the websites you visit—employee training is a must. Just common sense, this is what people have to use these days.”

In the event a virus is picked up through social media, Stankevicius recommends companies like Zurn have a backup system in place to protect their data. “In addition to Symantec Endpoint Protection, we sometimes deploy Symantec Backup Exec System Recovery,” he says. “It’s a good tool in an actual disaster if we would need to completely wipe off everything and restore it. And it’s so

much quicker than traditional backup and restore methods.”

With social media growing, and more business opportunities becoming available, the possibilities seem endless. For SMBs who follow a thoughtful strategy, and are diligent in security matters, social media can be a potent marketing tool for gaining both positive exposure and customers. ■

<sup>1</sup>“AVG and the CMO Council Survey,” September 1, 2009

<sup>2</sup>“Twitter snags over 100 million users, eyes money-making,” Reuters, April 15, 2010.

<sup>3</sup>Erick Schonfeld, “Facebook Closing In On 500 Million Visitors A Month (ComScore),” TechCrunch, April 21, 2010.

*John Anderson is a writer at NAVAJO Company. His work has appeared in the San Jose/Silicon Valley Business Journal, Orange County Register, and The Miami Herald.*

### Symantec Protection Against Threat Exposure

- Symantec Endpoint Protection
- Symantec Protection Suite
- MessageLabs Web Security
- Symantec Data Loss Prevention
- Symantec Brightmail Gateway
- Symantec Brightmail Traffic Shaper
- Symantec Brightmail Message Filter
- Symantec Mobile Security

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