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Use social networking to connect with consumers

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Cathy Millet, the studio business manager at Pilates Plus, asks D-D Flannery, president and CEO of Flannery Public Relations, about social media.

Most companies seem to be involved in social networking. How can a company differentiate itself from its competitors by incorporating a social marketing strategy into its overall public relations plan?

Businesses and organizations of all sizes and in different industries are now able to connect with their customers on a new level with the advent of social marketing. Social networking tools are most effective in differentiating a brand or company when used to: quickly share information; gather real-time market intelligence; solicit feedback; build relationships through shared interests; and to broaden your network.

Here are a few things you should remember:

- Be present on many different social platforms appropriate to your line of business, such as video/photo sharing, blogging, micro-blogging, RSS feeds and more.
- Interact with your visitors and engage in the online conversations.
- Stay informed about what people are saying about your brand, company and its leaders.
- Keep your sites updated with fresh and interesting content.
- Let site visitors know how to stay informed and connect with you.

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