

SONOMA SOCIAL

Trends on the Internet and How Sonoma Can Benefit

Volume 1, Issue 1

April 5, 2008

Executive Summary

Emerging social trends on the Internet provide a unique opportunity for the Community of Sonoma's established businesses. A cumulative return on investment can begin within 6 to 7 months, and continuous growth thereafter by virtue of constant Public Relations care at the keyboard. This job is shared by all businesses, lending ourselves to a new climate of networking on Facebook and MySpace. These suggestions provide traffic potency in three ways:

- **Trust:** "My friend recommended it."
- **Dynamics:** "We can share our stuff."
- **Numbers:** Combined traffic on Myspace and Facebook are double that of Google

Three strategies combine for maximum effect: *Client Retention, Social Networking & Promotion, and Reputation Management.*

A unified effort can even produce new revenue streams for local business, a higher profile for Sonoma as a whole, and an entirely elevated presence on the Internet which translates benefit to Sonoma's brick and mortar community.

The rising tide lifts all boats.



Asking our visitors what they want, making them into friends, and sharing their experiences expands customer loyalty and return business opportunity.

An Unprecedented Opportunity

Americans are poised to stay within national borders in droves this summer, with prevailing financial conditions causing tourism decisions to reduce international travel.

It is not a stretch too far to consider that the city of Sonoma and its Plaza are assets well-remembered by many *soon-returning (not to mention, discovered by)* new tourists.

The community of businesses which support Sonoma County's second largest industry (tourism) are at a happy brink of newly being able to create the relationship with the traveler. The possibility both sells to the traveler and causes repeat business when they return to their homes. Moreover, the newly motivated traffic from local residents is also well within reach, via promotions occurring both on-line and off.

The opportunity is driven by the "Social Media" aspect of the Internet, hailed as "Web 2.0" to mark the evolution of ten years since the beginning of on-line life. In those ten years, adaptation to the new environment has meant transition for newspapers, for the Yellow Pages, and for public relations of every variety.

Newspapers are watching their once-exclusive hold on journalism become a new



Social Sonoma, continued

social trend, “citizen journalism,” and their circulation and advertising dollars waning in proportion to the success of Craigslist. The Yellow Pages is no longer where any fingers do the walking: Google’s algorithms have made “search” the new kingpin on-line. Public Relations may no longer dominate the conversation on any brand. Reputation Management has become the new PR by-word.

Client Retention

The solution lies in a new understanding of Social Media, which marks out a landscape of “the next big thing” and provides the opportunity for a group to establish itself as more powerful than its individual members.

The challenge to exceed yearly sales figures puts certain marketing principles more starkly into profile, even after the first decade of the Internet. The on-line world has certainly not changed the first principle of repeat business: *Create a relationship to the customer.* Whether the relationship is with someone from afar or with a local resident makes no difference. The value of that contact resolves about 70% of the marketing battle. The successful relationship has conquered the trust of the customer, and its value can be measured over a lifetime. (An authentic friendship is not that much different.)

How is your group of businesses causing newly connected relationships (friendships all!) with the returning customer? In a way, this is a Second Chance to connect with so many returning to the Valley of the Moon.



Catering to the needs and tastes of visitors, as well as educating them, can occur on-line as well as in person.

First & Spain Streets, Sonoma: The Legacy Social Space

Meeting friends on the street corner has become rare. We don't bump into each other like we did in High School. But, with the advent of on-line social interaction, we are back in that serendipitous flow.

Conversely, Google’s pay-per-click method of developing On-line traffic has reached a maximum benefit, and is no longer is the “little man’s” opportunity; the prices of the most desired keywords are shot far into the blue Sonoma sky. Yet, in the midst of this trend, the new opportunity shines brightly. And it has a reduced budget attached -- except for human labor: *Another analogy to friendship.* These new trends are more favorable to the small and the local. Google is spending extra time and money on micro-concentrations of commerce in highly localized area, using

much more than a zip code to target searches for what any returning client desires. **The search engines favor the social sites** because these constantly update. *Your keyword search will more frequently show up appearing in a social website before your site shows up in the search engines.*

But the maximum power comes from the group, the associations, who use the Social trends in a new Internet environment. Web 2.0 is the new buzz-word for the socially-driven traffic that has in effect,

Most people under 30 know the value and fun of finding their social connections on MySpace, and sharing group interests. The same experience transfers to our visitors.



The Legacy Social Media, continued

reduced the overall importance of Search Engine Optimization. We still want to hit high in search engine results, but with social trends, we are no longer stuck in the "Google Sandbox" (the phenomenon of watching former rankings constantly slide).

The Sonoma Valley tourist is poised to keep in touch with their favorite experiences, businesses and connections, via Facebook, where a myriad of focused social activities create involvement: Groups, Fans, and Friends on both sites tie together for a massive group dynamic. This is as yet unproven ground for the ideas that follow, but the clues line up to tell a story that will surely affect the region's reputation.

Facebook and the Sonoma Valley

The Web 2.0 environment suggests a new strategy for taking advantage of trends online to benefit your group and our community. On Facebook, a major opportunity exists beyond the usual profile. *Facebook now offers "Pages."* This is a distinction apart from a "profile." A page on Facebook is intended to focus on micro-interests of the Facebook



To find something special through the auspices of a friend's recommendation is the pleasure extended via Facebook or MySpace. Trust and credibility are built in where friendships, interactivity and shared interests may prevail.



member. Our Facebook pages should encompass the "favorites" of the traveler by presenting "tips," "hikes," "harvests," and "zinfandel" (to name only a tiny number of possibilities). Your group may engage travelers, clients and clubs to join, to interact and to tell their friends. On Facebook, your organization can meet and greet individuals and approach them, not based on the singular presentations of your sales website, but on the basis of their social interests

which intersect to your web presence.

By asking a client what they want and what they are hoping to find, we approach the Web 2.0 conversation, in a two-way, interactive connection which engenders a powerful new relatedness

between your group and its "fans" interests. We can ask for a whole new style of interactions from the people who come to enjoy Sonoma and their own particular pleasures! Possible "pages" in Facebook could generate social interactions:

*Wine Country Spas
The Zinfandel Group
The Lavish Me Group
The Country Getaway Group
The Sparkling Wine Group
Luxury Accommodations
(the list of what our visitors want will go on forever...)*

Promote your Facebook presence on your website! Promote your Facebook profiles, pages and groups with links which, in summary, say to your



Facebook, Myspace and the Sonoma Valley, continued

website's visitor: "We have pinpointed your exact interests here." Once the visitor is on your Facebook page, a set of social behaviors become second nature: discuss, share photos and pass notes. They become a "fan," they enter into discussions, asking questions, and best of all, they may upload pictures, and interact with the members of your group. They may even make a movie about you!

You might ask, "Why would you want to take someone off my website on which I worked hard to get them there in the first place?" Because, instead of just popping into your website only once and leaving, when anyone joins you on Facebook you have the opportunity to make repeated exposures and more easily enroll them in the conversation which surrounds your business. Moreover, their friends also see your announcements. When someone becomes enrolled in the social manner of shared interests we are no longer just selling our stuff. We are managing relationships like any other: offering advice: Best food and wine pairings? Where to hike? Socially-derived traffic is pre-sold. When these visitors arrive on business websites, they are ready to buy. My own websites experienced this in an immediate fashion. A motivated visitor means a better year for our local businesses!



The value of having your clients make your "commercials" is priceless.



Contests

The most interesting trend in the Web 2.0 wave centers around "user-generated" content. YouTube.com is one exciting entrant in that category, dominating even Google for traffic.

Your websites, your Facebook presence can be dramatically enhanced with much more traffic because of the social nature of these user-generated content sites. In fact, socially-networked sites can generate twice the traffic of even Google Ad Words in the first six months of constantly using them as places for meeting and posting for your fans.

On-line Promotion

Ask visitors to make a movie about their experience and post to YouTube.com.

Call it, "*Your favorite activity under the Sonoma Sun*"

A successful promotion of Sonoma Valley threads all the previous suggestion into one empowering effort: Ask a client for their email and name (only) in exchange for entering them into a contest for a really fabulous prize. Send an email with the contest rules and prizes. (Off-season four days and nights, you know the rest). To compete, the client must "friend" one of the organizations on Facebook.

We now have a "fan" and a contest entrant. To enter the contest, the "fan" must make a three-minute movie of their favorite activities in the Sonoma Valley, and upload it to our group. (Yes, on YouTube we must have our own "group") for all the other



Facebook, Myspace and the Sonoma Valley, continued

“fans” of our Facebook “pages” to vote. This can easily be set up with links and announcements on each page.

The winner’s video is publicized through the usual mediums as well as in the Facebook pages. Naturally, local businesses will want to enlist their own clients. I suggest a post card printed by the group with official rules to be distributed in all the local businesses, and a page upon which each business may daily enter the new information gathered on their location. To the group, we publicize the message: We can all find ways to charm our guests to enjoy the views and remember us in their videos... especially if they are charmed by the Sonoma Valley and its people.

The kicker comes in when the greater numbers of businesses in Sonoma are participating by creating “fan pages” on Facebook. Now we have a huge community of socially-networked people. This is where the power of the group to cause a much larger visibility for promotion can take its positive effect.

Building our on-line presence socially enhances every aspect of promotion, whether in general or singularly, because all of these share a geographical location. And we have a list of “fans.”

Reputation Management

To a business in Sonoma, reputation management means saving a bad experience from becoming a part of this valley’s “legend” through services available on-line. Such a service is a subscription-based addition to any website, which is the first line of defense of any business, as the unhappy customer will next try to contact the website if management has not first heard their complaint.

A third-party “complaint manager” can restore trust after “hearing” the complaint in a detached manner. The service then contacts the manager, and the opportunity to create a new “friend” is on our desk.

A successfully handled complaint can generate even more good will. And certainly, the worst is what we can expect when such a complaint goes unheeded. Examples abound on the Internet of companies whose customer service departments brushed off the “small complaint.”

“WalMartSucks.com” and YouTube.com movies of failed sales tactics are the subject of many blogs who like to get in on the *Schadenfreude* for such management errors.

We cannot afford this, not in a boon year, not ever. It doesn’t make sense to allow any complaint to go unintended. Each professionally treated complaint is in fact an opportunity for the story to grow *about our responsive people.*

In the Sonoma Valley, a reputation can mean all the distance between prosperity and *well, less.* In promotions we work hard to create the opportunity, the publicity to put a “face” on our



Reputation Management, continued

Valley. Years of hard work can be made moot without the addition of a service for Reputation Management, especially for our business websites.

With excellent client retention, client participation in our promotions and reputation management as a concerted effort by the booster organizations of the Sonoma Valley, we can enter the "hearts and minds" of visitors, for the cost of several full time employees. Eventually, it will prove to out-traffic any media buy.

The overall effect is to continue the contact with the Sonoma-loving public *as if they were visiting the Square*: They will buy from us because they trust us. They will trust Sonoma to be the right place in spite of any financial considerations, because these relationships exist on a plane of higher value, having been effected with such associations as afforded by the Social Atmosphere. Our benefit is accessed from every unexpected place. Now they are our friends, wanting what we offer: A serene sunset and the warmth of a beautiful valley, a glass of wine, and us.

Claire-France Perez



web developer

Internet marketer

author and publicist

Former fashion editor and Los Angeles publicist, Claire-France Perez has lived in Sonoma since 1992, is a regular volunteer at the High School Grad Night, and has experience in numerous wine tasting rooms.

She has designed websites for six years and has created promotions, graphics and copy since 1976 when she graduated from the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (LA). She uses her trend-orientation to lead her clients always toward what is new and vital in the annals of business promotion and publicity.



**Claire-France
Perez**

Perez looks forward to offering a free presentation to provide an insight of her Internet discoveries, and help the community to create a positive future in the midst of what may seem like a negative economy. "The economy is dependent upon our vision to create a better one, and that is where we need to focus," she says.

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