

**On September 1, 2009, the eMarketing Special Interest Group (eM-SIG) hosted a chat with Carol Wolicki, Director of Marketing at Ennect, on the eM-SIG Professional Network, [www.emsigcommunity.com](http://www.emsigcommunity.com). The purpose of this chat session was to explain how adding some basic social media initiatives can help you raise awareness of your event, your speakers and your sponsors.**

**Transcript of Chat with Carol Wolicki:  
Tying Social Media into Your Event Marketing Efforts**

**Carol Wolicki:** The FIRST thing you need to learn about social networking is that you have to be willing to explore!

So, let me start with a list of ideas of the different social media tools you can start to use. These tools include Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, blogs, and more. Twitter and blogs are related. Twitter, after all, is a micro-blog. You have 140 words to say what you want. With a blog, you have a lot more space and flexibility.

Tiny URL is another tool. With only 140 characters, it's common to shorten URLs in tweets. Here's a security tip for shortened URLs. Only trust shortened URLs from trusted sources OR open them only if you can preview the site beforehand.

Go to TinyURL to enable 'preview' mode for shortened URLs that come from this source. Here's the link: <http://tinyurl.com/preview.php?enable=1> . And when you shorten your own URLs in TinyURL, be a good Twitter citizen. You'll be offered two options for shortened URLs. Use the "preview" option. For example, typing "www.ennect.com/blog" into TinyURL gives two shortened results:

- (1) "<http://tinyurl.com/n7f6tb> " and
- (2) "<http://preview.tinyurl.com/n7f6tb>"

The second option will allow readers to preview your site. If you practice it going forward maybe more people will start to do the same thing too...safe practice is good.

Here are sites you can use to check URLs before opening them yourself.

- Sucuri.net (<http://sucuri.net/?page=tools&title=check-url>).
- Untiny (<http://www.untiny.ws/extra/>).

There are a few ways to use blogs:

- 1.) You can create your own.

2.) You can connect with other bloggers who might be interested in your event and see if they'll blog about it.

You should research blogs before approaching bloggers, however. Try Google Blog Search, Technorati, BlogPulse, FindBlogs, Blogger, or BlogCatalog. All of these have search capabilities to help you find blogs you might want to explore. You can search for location keywords to find local bloggers. Or use topical keywords to find bloggers who cover your particular industry or topics.

Also, Technorati Blog Finder will let you set up a Watch List so you can track trends and your event. The most important thing is to LISTEN. Read the blogs you find that you think would be interested in covering your event. Then approach the blogger with some ideas that are appropriate...add some comments to what he/she is writing about.

What kinds of comments? Well, for one, if you have topics or speakers of interest to his community, then offer them up for interviews. If you have free passes to give away, sponsor a contest on that bloggers' group if they'll let you.

You may still need to rely on some traditional tools – email, direct mail, etc.

Most importantly, you want ONE PLACE where people can go to find information about your event, register, etc. So, you should have a Web site. You can either build your own or you can use something like Ennect Event (cheap plug here!) or other registration software that allows you to easily create a Web-based site. You need some place to send people when you're tweeting or blogging, so that they can get all the information about your event, speakers, topics, etc. It's ONE PLACE that you're going to point people with your other social media tactics.

Let me talk some more about what you can do with other social media tools.

- Facebook – you can start a fan page. It's easy to do that. You can put your info on the page – add speaker's bios, lists of sessions, news, etc. But here's where Facebook is limited – you still have to provide SOMEPLACE for people to register.
- Local event sites – Here are some community sites where you can list your event: Zvents.com, meetup.com, festivals.com, and one very local one to me, <http://pittsburgh.bizjournals.com/pittsburgh/calendar/>. We just had NetRoots Nation in Pittsburgh. I was amazed at how little local promotion there was about it – until the very last week. The event planners almost exclusively focused on social media to get the word out...and it worked to bring in a lot of their general followers from other areas, but local people didn't know that much about it. So, don't forget the local calendar opportunities online to get your event known.
- LinkedIn – is a good place for business meeting news. LinkedIn will let you list your event...even if you're not the 'owner' of the event. On your 'home' page you'll see a listing of events in the right hand column. Click on "See events your connections are

attending” and it will take you to a page where you can list your event. So, that’s another way to promote your program. LinkedIn will also let you find and build targeted relationships with other professionals -- depending on what level membership you’re at. There is a FREE LinkedIn membership but the paid memberships give you more leeway and flexibility to do things. Use SEARCH to find people by keyword. You can also search by title, geography, in the company profiles and a number of other things. If your event is about ‘information security’, let’s say, then go into the search box and do “infosec” or “security” searches both for companies and for contacts. That will give you a list of companies you might want to approach for sponsorships, if your event has sponsorships, or approach as speakers. And the contacts list will give you:

- 1.) Some market research to see how large of a group there might be online and
- 2.) A starting place to make individual contacts. LinkedIn will ‘slap your hands’ if you’re not careful, though. When you reach out to people, you should have some connection to them. Otherwise, you might not be received well. So, go research groups as well. Join the ones appropriate to your event and LISTEN to the discussions, and then join in. Once you’ve done that, you can start to invite personal contacts and build your contact list. (I have over 600 personal LinkedIn contacts and I work at building and maintaining those relationships.)

Social media channels also complement each other...blog about your event, put it on your Web site, and then send a Twitter alert that points to the event registration page, speakers’ page, or session pages. Send email announcements out, too, and make sure to include ways for people to share your event information. For example, Ennect Event includes a “Share This” button that event planners can include to enable site visitors to send email to others, bookmark on Digg or Delicious, as well as tweet about.

They say that people need to hear something THREE times to believe it. So, you want to RE-USE your news any way you can. Here are some ideas:

- 1.) Pre-announce your event – Send out a news release, post it on your Web site, put a link in your blog and in your tweets. Put a message and the link on appropriate groups on LinkedIn.
- 2.) Send save-the-date announcements – do this via email and using social media channels.
- 3.) Get the local community involved – Post news/tweets/blogs about what’s happening at your event. Include information about the local surroundings and other activities occurring locally while your event is going on to keep people there after and get them there early.

**Q: What about using LinkedIn for a company that doesn't have those relationships but wants to build them?**

**A:** Start with search. Search on a topic that is important to your company. Start a discussion on the groups and actively participate. Once you have that going, send an invitation to connect – one of the options on the drop-down menu is “groups we share in common” – that gives you a way to introduce yourself. Then keep the relationship up....either in the group or on a more personal level. Once you've built a list of contacts you can download them into Excel and send them an email. (Also, see tips discussed above.)

**Q: How would you use StumbleUpon to promote an event?**

**A:** I am by no means an expert on StumbleUpon, but I use it in conjunction with a new service Stumble introduced: Su.pr. You have to register for both Stumble and Su.pr, and login to both separately. But there are benefits to doing so. Here are some ways you can use it:

- 1.) Besides letting you shorten your URLs in tweets, Su.pr also lets you send tweets from inside its interface. You can post a tweet and send it immediately or schedule to send it later. And you can see if others re-tweet it. You can keep track of tweets and re-tweets. And su.pr does one other thing... a bit convoluted, but it will tell you in a chart the best time to send your tweets. It actually keeps track of when people are most often reading your stuff.
- 2.) In Stumble, you go to a Web site and give it a “thumbs up.” So, you can “thumbs up” your event page or speakers page, categorize them, and this will allow others with similar category interests to potentially ‘stumble upon’ your sites, especially if they grow in popularity because others have given them a thumbs’ up.

**Q: Can you talk a little bit about how to use Twitter appropriately for business' social networking?**

**A:** First, you have to have something to say that others will value. Then, you have to build up a following. Again...SEARCH is an important tool here. Twitter bought Twitter Search (it was a standalone application previously) and incorporated it into their own interface. So you can go into your own profile/homepage and, using the search bar, you can search for keywords that are important to your company. You can also go to [hashtags.com](http://hashtags.com) and do a similar search. Hashtags (#s) are a way that twits (people who Twitter are called ‘twits’...nice, huh? There is another name for us that's a bit nicer: tweeple.) track specific topics. For example, and this is very pertinent to events, if you want to have people follow your event, set up a hashtag for it. Netroots Nation's hashtag this year was #nn09. If you do a search on Twitter for that hash, you'll find a bunch of tweets. If you go into Google or [hashtag.com](http://hashtag.com), you'll find video links, blog links,

etc. So, the ONE hashtag you set up in a Twitter account now has 'passability' to several other channels. I think it's a great tool. A few more things on business tweeting:

- 1.) Follow others...if they think you have something interesting to say, they will follow you back.
- 2.) Give 'shout-outs' by using the @NAME format to talk publicly to others or use DM (direct message) to send private messages. Help people by answering their questions. Thank people for following you. BLOCK the porn...it does none of us any good. And don't Spam; don't just send out lots of messages and ignore others. You have to learn to participate in order to be a good twit. LOL

**Q: We recently created a Facebook fan page and would like to create Facebook events to advertise our Open House programs, etc. The issue is we need students to complete a more detailed reservation form. Is there a good merge of Facebook RSVP and your own regular form?**

**A:** I had to do some research on this answer, so it's a bit different than what I was able to provide during the chat. At this point, we're not able to connect Ennect Event's interface with Facebook' RSVP, but it's a great idea, so we will look further into it. In the meantime, I think the best way to do what you want is to use the features that Facebook makes available. When someone replies to a Facebook RSVP indicating they are going to attend an event, they are sent to a page that has a number of text information areas. Two of these – "Other Information" and "Description" would allow you to type in the URL for your Ennect Event Web site. You can provide this along with instructions that tell attendees to go there to pre-register. This will save onsite registration time AND it will also allow you to showcase your event in additional ways – by showing off the sessions or by profiling your speakers.