

# Social Media as Sales Tool

## How Master Networkers Get Referrals

STORY BY DAN STALP | PHOTO BY KENNY JOHNSON



**Q.** *What role does social media play in sales efforts? Sheri Johnson, Senior Vice President, Morningstar Communications.*

**A.** Sheri, I know for a fact you are the expert as it relates to the “marketing and public relations side” of social media – in its simplest terms – how to get people to look your way. What I am about to share with our readers is the “sales side” of social media. I’ll start with a true story.

From 2001 to 2008, I was part of a “Top 10” group. We were about a dozen of like-minded business owners and sales professionals who met once a month.

Our homework each month was to prepare a list of 10 people in the community we’d like to meet. We would take turns sharing our Top 10 names, and then the other 11 people would weigh in on whether they knew any of the people.

**“IT HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER TO GET REFERRALS, BUT ONLY IF YOU ASK.”**

It was a successful group, yet all of us “closed” business from the group. So, why did we stop? LinkedIn!

“What do you mean?” you ask. Well, we stopped having in-person meetings to do what we could now do electronically, at any time of the day. All 12 of us in the Top 10 group were master networkers. Because we were master networkers, we

were accepting LinkedIn invites before we truly understood the magnitude of what we were doing. Who knew what LinkedIn could do for the business community in just a few short years?

By January 2009, most of us had 500+ connections. We found we didn’t have to meet in person once a month anymore. Instead, once we had a name, the first place we would go to was LinkedIn. If that person was on LinkedIn, we often had several options of people to introduce us.

Fast forward to 2013, and many of us have 1,000+ connections. Now, when I search for a person on LinkedIn, I may have 60 connections that could potentially refer me to the individual I want to meet. It has never been easier to get referrals, but only if you ask.

Also, how many of you reading this column have “networking” coffee

meetings turn into “netwasting” coffee meetings? In other words, you both leave the coffee meeting excited, and then nothing happens.

It’s largely due to the fact that neither of you left the coffee meeting with specific homework that is time bound, meaning there are one to three specific people that I am going to call on your

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behalf, and there are one to three people you are going to call on my behalf.

The goal of the phone call is, at a minimum, to determine if a phone call with the prospect is appropriate – even better would be his or her willingness to have breakfast or lunch with you and the person you want them to meet.

Some of you might be asking, “What about Facebook?” I personally think Facebook is great – just more appropriate for business-to-consumer sales rather than business-to-business sales.

If you disagree, then prove me wrong. Show me the stats that support your comment. One of the Sandler Rules is “inspect what you expect.” In 2013, it’s not enough to just feel like something is working. Feelings come and go. I want to know something is really working. The way to know if something is really working is to track what behaviors are producing what results.

With that in mind, you need to give what you are doing enough time to work. Again, your stats will be able to help you with that, particularly if you have been tracking for six months or more. **KCB**