

"Generate 'Buzz' for Your Business... PR & Technology Tactics that Work!"

April 5, 2007

As stated in S2report last week, "When **Joe Hice**, a PR/marketing executive for places as varied as the University of Florida, Segway and Harley Davidson, talks about using the Internet to promote a business, he's not referring to any old website. Those days, says Hice, are over. The new trend is to use interactive websites that aren't stationary objects of what a business is selling, but instead allow a give and take between potential customers and entrepreneurs.

"Take advantage of the resources out there," Hice stated. "If you don't, I guarantee your competitors will."

The April 5 event attracted a sell-out crowd of over 100 business owners and entrepreneurs; hotel, restaurant and tourism marketers; and public relations and marketing professionals to the new state-of-the-art facilities at the USF/Sarasota-Manatee campus.

Hice provided a grocery list of websites to explore and join to connect your organization to prospective customers without spending much more than time.

- Create or update a profile on Wikipedia.com, a free and interactive encyclopedia founded by Jimmy Wales of St. Pete
- Read and comment on blogs, be aware of what is being said about your organization or business
- Join and setup a page on facebook.com, especially if your potential customer is a college student
- Upload video clips on youtube.com or photos on flickr.com
- Learn more about RSS (Really Simple Syndication) and automate your press release distribution

Next up was **Sara Quinn**, Visual Journalism Leader at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in St. Pete. The event attendees were only the second audience in the world to hear the details of the newly released "Poynter Institute Eyetracking Study of 2007!"

The key findings included:

1. People read a high volume of story text in both print and online. Biggest surprise, a larger percentage of text was read online (77%) than newspaper broadsheets (62%), or tabloid pieces (57%)
2. Alternative story forms like Q&As, timelines, and short side-bars, help readers understand content better than just using traditional narrative.
3. Large headlines and photos in print were looked at first, no surprise there. Online, navigation bars and teasers drew the

readers attention most.

Dr. **Jay Schrock**, Director & Associate Professor for the School of Hotel and Restaurant Management, USF/Sarasota-Manatee, focused on the shifting expectations and standards in customer service. He emphasized that the "service cycle" begins during the first 10 seconds of interaction. "People want to feel good about themselves, NOW! They anticipate defect-free service. Have a "recovery plan" for the inevitable errors." Learn to create "efficiencies" by polling front-line employees.

Art Lambert, Partner and Co-founder of LexJet, shared how he and his partner created perceptions in building their multi-million dollar, international digital output business. Art suggested you begin by defining the "competitive landscape" that your business is in or entering. Who dominates and why? Is there a better way, better pricing? "Perceptions you create should differentiate your company, represent value to your targeted audience, and put your competition on the defensive."

Art identified the following cost-effective suggestions for building name recognition and brand awareness:

- Cultivate relationships with editors, writers, and opinion leaders who write for publications in your industry.
- Be on the lookout for general human-interest stories and timely events in the news to which you can hook your company's story.
- Don't just send out product news, produce educational articles and publications that help explain complex topics.
- Advertise in major industry publications even if tie's just a few insertions per year.
- Seek and promote company and employee recognition.

The breakout lunch sessions included in-depth Q&A with the presenters, plus interactive discussions by **Lisi Liang**, of SRO Magazine and the event moderator, who shared "Attracting the Media... Creating Stories with Impact;" **Steve Smith** of Stephen A. Smith & Associates shared his expertise on "Your Brand is Your Lifeboat... never leave it!;" and **Jessica Moats** of GravityFree and **John Barron**, consultant, provided insight into the next wave of Internet marketing and search engines.

