More B2B Marketers Embrace Social Media Efforts

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Benefits include lead generation, awareness-building and thought leadership

More business-to-business companies are using social media as part of their marketing mix. Some have found that sites for professional networking, like LinkedIn, are an effective way to generate leads, while more casual social media mainstays, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, are helping B2B firms reach customers in new ways.

â€œLeveraging social media for branding and awareness-building can help humanize B2B companies, establish them as thought leaders, and offer new touchpoints for connecting with customers and prospects,â€• said Kimberly Maul, eMarketer writer/analyst and author of the new report, â€œB2B Social Media: A Growing Focus for Marketers.â€•

As of May 2011, 89% of US B2B companies were using social media marketing, according to web survey company iTracks. The survey was conducted among Business Marketing Association members who were B2B business owners, CMOs and other senior employees overseeing marketing programs.

Survey respondents often cite LinkedIn as the top social media site for B2B marketers, but others put Facebook and Twitter above the business-minded social network. According to Sagefrog Marketing Group, in summer 2011, 58% of US B2B marketers that used social media used LinkedIn, compared to 50% for Facebook and 43% for Twitter.

While LinkedIn has proven successful for reaching customers and demonstrating thought leadership, B2B marketers are also working to leverage it and other third-party social networks to attract customers back to their own community sites and forums. Likewise, they are learning how to connect their social media outreach efforts to leads and sales.

â€œIn addition to exposure metrics and engagement, marketers will need to develop strategies and goals with measurement in mind and follow their customers throughout the buying cycle to make that connection,â€• said Maul.

The full report, â€œB2B Social Media: A Growing Focus for Marketers,â€• also answers these key questions:
~ How can leveraging social media for branding and building awareness help B2B companies?
~ What sites, tactics and strategies are B2B marketers including in their social media outreach?
~ What can B2B marketers learn from companies such as Intuit, Sysco, Cisco, GE Healthcare and AT&T about how to effectively use social media?

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