

Finding a vendor

How do you find a vendor? It is important to know this because it can inform marketing. Depending on what I am looking for, I used Google, LinkedIn, listing services, reviews or Twitter. I am sure you use other tools (and would appreciate your insights in the comments).

For example, yesterday I was searching for a freelance editor. I used Google, and found (remarkably) few individuals had websites, whether I searched for “DC freelance editor” or “Maryland freelance editor.” I did find a couple, and one of them, had a very nice website and clearly defined rates. I searched for her on LinkedIn, and discovered that her background was very technical—no editorial. Made me think twice about her skill set. Another one had very strong writing credentials, but absolutely no social media (and she explained she is not into it). It made me question whether she gets it. I also Tweeted it out, and got a response from a colleague (good word of mouth). But, no freelance editors even picked up on it. Obviously, not using Twitter search to find business.

Tool: Google

Marketing lesson: Websites are important. Google profiles are helpful. If you are in an industry that is reviewed, having positive reviews is important since Google finds results from Yelp and others.

Tool: LinkedIn

Marketing lesson: If you aren't on LinkedIn, you are at a disadvantage. The quality of your profile (both for individuals and companies) is important. For individuals, testimonials, number of connections and your background do matter. Don't make stuff up, but bone up what is there.

Tool: Twitter (or other social media sites)

Marketing lesson: How you present yourself, and even if you are on social media, says a lot. What does your Twitter profile, stream, followers say about your business or you?

Tool: Printed materials (brochures, business cards, etc.)

Marketing lesson: How your marketing materials look (are they printed on quality stock, are they black/white or color, do they look professionally designed), can give an immediate impression. How your marketing materials read—what information you provide—can seal the deal.

Tool: Using the telephone

Marketing lesson: Are you reachable? How do you/your company answer the phone? Do you even answer the phone? Some people will want to talk to someone in real time.

Tool: Word of mouth

Marketing lesson: Each and every customer who has a positive interaction with you can be an ambassador, and each and every customer who has a negative impression can be a detractor. Watch your customer interactions. Improve your customer service.

The bottom line is that if you are marketing yourself/your company, you have to understand how people find you, and how they decide whether to contact you or not.

Your thoughts? What makes you decide on a vendor? How do you find a vendor?

Web 2.0 Squared

If you have ever doubted that blogs are important then take a look at Pete Snyder. Snyder, at 35, is a multi-millionaire today because he understands the importance of blogs and created New Media Strategies, a firm devoted to checking up on what blogs are saying about its clients. "Trolling" if you will. I have written about this phenomenon before, but had no idea a single person made so much money checking up on online mentions and reputations. Read the entire Washington Post story [here](#).

More and more, we will hear about Web 2.0. In fact, I am not sure that traditional public relations moves such as sending press releases will continue to work at all. Many people no longer read newspapers, unless they are online. Newspapers are consolidating and there are fewer reporters to target. Small community newspapers may still pay attention to press releases, but overall, people are using the Internet more often to obtain and disseminate news.

Recently, I attended a meeting with other writers. Some of them were woefully uneducated about the powers of social media. Indeed, if there is a Networking 2.0 it is social media. I know people who have hundreds of connections on LinkedIn and/or Facebook. These networks are the new Rolodexes. People who refuse to join will simply be tapped out of the new currency. It's like people who refused to have cell phones. It also always surprises me to find businesses without a website. What is that about? It seems today that aside from Mom and Pop neighborhood shops (drycleaners, card stores) everyone has to have a website. How else to find out more about someone?

All in all, the Web is the place. How many people have flocked to the iPhone because they want access to the Web wherever they are?