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PLUS...

 **RAVINIA**

2012 Season Calendar Inside

What's the Business of

“ You say you want a revolution, well you know, we all want to change the world ... ”

– John Lennon

Welcome to the social-mobile revolution! Social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs, Pinterest, and others have revolutionized today's business and social practices. The large-scale adoption of social media by both businesses and consumers is changing the world of communication. All discussion is open to the entire global community. Word of mouth spreads exponentially. And it can all be in the palm of your hand.

Research has shown that more people are using social media as a way to make an initial contact with a business as a landing 'point' vs. a traditional website. Research also shows that over 91% of mobile internet access is to socialize. Therefore from a business perspective, there are many advantages to joining social media sites: engaging and involving people in dialogue, turning negative experiences into positives with prompt responses, growing a customer base, and enhancing the overall customer experience. Social media sites provide the platform to connect local business to their customer base, as well as networking between businesses and employees.

Social media expert Larry Bloom of **ATI Graphics, Inc.**, believes LinkedIn is “an amazing tool and great connector for networking, marketing, job searches for employers and job seekers because it

gives them the who, what, where, and when. LinkedIn is a massive and highly optimized database of information about professionals, and is designed to get information about jobs and job seekers in front of people. “It is a tool that can be used as a part of a larger marketing strategy,” according to Bloom.

Social media expert Barbara Rozgonyi of CoryWest Media, LLC, agrees with Bloom's assessment of LinkedIn. She feels it is the “foundational social network” because of all it offers to employers and job seekers. Rozgonyi also likes blogs. “A company blog acts as a home base that sends information

to subscribers, social networks, RSS feeds, and search engines. Done well, a blog will raise visibility, increase influence, and attract business partners,” according to Rozgonyi.

Photo: Jonathan's Portraits



Agreeing with Bloom and Rozgonyi is social media expert Amy Spitzer of **The Spitzer Internet Strategy Group**. Spitzer feels blogs help “establish people as thought leaders. It is how

you become an authority in your industry.” She advises businesses to write three to five paragraphs talking about their business, and keep them updated. She thinks the blog will be enhanced if attached to Facebook and LinkedIn. Spitzer helps clients create a blog and design a marketing strategy with a unique identity.



Taking these aspects of social media into account is the **Highland Park Chamber of Commerce** headed by Executive Director, Ginny Glasner, who says that, “It isn't enough for a business to just jump on the social media bandwagon. The key is to have defined goals and a strategy to achieve them.” A sampling of Chamber members from the various Highland Park business districts tell how they are charting their way through the social media landscape.

As part of their social media marketing strategy, Arden and Earl Edelpup from **Ross Boutique** (625 Central Avenue) use LinkedIn and Facebook. “I use LinkedIn to find employees, research

business seminars, and reach out to other business owners,” says Edelpup. She uses Facebook to connect with customers since “customer service is a must.” Ross Boutique does a huge summer camp business. Edelpup engages in conversations with her Facebook fans on the needs and wants for a successful overnight summer experience.

facebook.com/pages/Ross-Cosmetics-Boutique-For-Saavy-Women-Who-Love-to-Save/216471075086



Susan Schwartz of **Sunflower** (1882 Sheridan Road), a women's clothing store, favors using her blog over a traditional website for advertising sales, special events, discounts, and new merchandise. She uses both her blog and Facebook to post pictures of new clothing lines and to discuss new styles. She draws customers in by setting up a special word on Facebook, which gives customers a 20% discount if they mention the word when checking out. Schwartz feels her Facebook page is “a place where our customers can interact with us.” Adding a personal touch to reach her customer base, Schwartz calls customers who do not use social media to advise them of what is going on in her store. This allows Sunflower to reach customers through the customer's own preferred method of communication.

Sunflower's Blog: sunflowerboutique.wordpress.com



Photo: ATI Graphics, Inc.



Photo: Bohringer Creative



Social Media?

Nick Pullia, Director of Communications at **Ravinia Festival**, was an early adopter of social media. With Facebook, blogs, Twitter, and YouTube being used throughout the park, Pullia incorporates a strategic, multi-layered marketing approach. On Twitter, Pullia posts scavenger hunts listing the clues for people coming to the park that evening. There is a large screen on the lawn known as the “Twitter Wall” where ticket holders post their immediate experiences at Ravinia, be it meeting old friends or enjoying a lovely dinner. Also, a photographer from the park snaps random pictures of guests and posts them on their Twitter Wall. This adds to the evening’s enjoyment for ticket holders since Ravinia “engages them” in immediate gratification. Ravinia has a full-time social media person monitoring all the sites used and responsible for responding and engaging members in conversation. Pullia also engages customers by using “conversation starters” which he posts on Facebook. He might say, “during my first concert at Ravinia, I saw John Williams perform. What was your first Ravinia experience?” According to Pullia, “responding to my Ravinia customers is more about listening than talking.”

[facebook.com/pages/Ravinia-Festival/27539998077](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ravinia-Festival/27539998077)

If listening works for Pullia, ‘playing’ helps engage customers of **Carol’s Cookies** (1480 Old Deerfield Road). Still making dough after 34 years, Carol Goldman uses social media to engage her customers, and to learn where



around the country they are located and finding her product. They give her feedback on flavors and packaging. Through YouTube, some fans have been the lucky recipients of a special birthday treat – Goldman will play ‘Happy Birthday’ on her saxophone! YouTube videos

www.chamberhp.com



Photo: Ravinia Festival

also show Goldman demonstrating how to make pizza cookies, piecrust, and mini muffins out of her cookie dough. Carol’s Cookies is unique in that her location is a warehouse space that is atypical for customer interaction. Yet, she creates a virtual storefront using her social media sites.

[facebook.com/CarolsCookies](https://www.facebook.com/CarolsCookies)

A defining feature of social media is its immediacy, say the social media experts. “Any kind of engagement is a positive,” says Bloom. Whether comments are positive or negative, it is necessary to promptly respond. Bloom feels it is especially important to be on top of negative comments before they get out of hand. “A bad experience by a customer can be turned around with a prompt and personal response.” Rozgonyi feels “redirecting negatives into a positive is a win-win for both parties.” “Winning back customers with prompt responses, can also influence future customers,” according to Spitzer.

In agreement with the media experts, Dan Buss of **D&R Autoworks** (2366 Skokie Boulevard) uses and monitors his Facebook and Twitter sites daily. He believes “customer service is our #1 business.” He does not want any negative comments to slip through the cracks so he

Looking for help with QR codes or PURLs to attract new business?

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Photo: D & R Autoworks

addresses them immediately. Buss puts coupons and special deals on Facebook for his fans. He has given away an iPad in a random drawing, also gas certificates, and business services.

[facebook.com/pages/DR-Autoworks-Highland-Park-IL/96463137886](https://www.facebook.com/pages/DR-Autoworks-Highland-Park-IL/96463137886)

Keeping the conversation going is a must for Liz and Mike

Bearwald, owners of **Bent Fork Bakery** (335 Waukegan Avenue, Highland). Bearwald posts photos of new items advertising daily specials.

Sometimes, she slips in a bit of trivia on their Facebook page. Bearwald feels Facebook "creates a nice community between the store and their customers." Monitoring her social media sites daily allows her to regularly respond to comments posted, and provide customer service. Bent Fork Bakery held a contest on Facebook to design its store logo. This involvement in branding and promotion can create a sense of partnership.

[facebook.com/bentforkbakery](https://www.facebook.com/bentforkbakery)

Businesses that use social media successfully agree that there is a time commitment required to achieve the best results. Creating relevant content takes time and thought. Monitoring sites is a must. Social media is about emotion, relationships, connections, and clarity of purpose. A bland or neutral presence will not draw people in and keep them engaged.

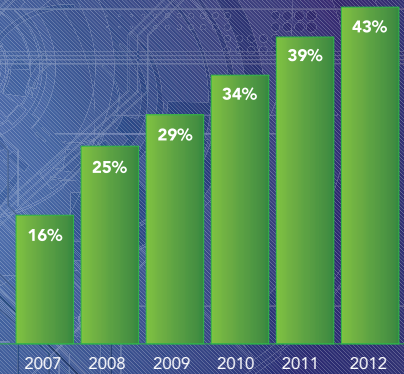


Companies & Social Media

Companies Using Social Media (Percents)



Companies Using Blogs for Marketing (Percents)



Jordan Rappaport and Pete Rauser of **The Baker Boys** (733 St. Johns Avenue) agree with the time factor. Rappaport, a professional pastry chef, posts what he is working on daily with pictures, videos, and advertises specials on Facebook. "There are no shortcuts in baking as well as no short cuts in monitoring and maintaining our Facebook page. It all takes time," according to Rappaport. "It is important to keep the conversation going with customers, and make the page fun. This helps keep customers engaged in what we are doing, and reminds them that we are baking daily," says Rappaport. The division of labor at Baker Boys is easy; Rappaport bakes and Rauser sells.

[facebook.com/bakerboyshighlandpark](https://www.facebook.com/bakerboyshighlandpark)

Another important feature to social media is reposting or secondary posting, which can greatly increase the audience reach. According to Bloom, "sometimes I post information for fans on my Facebook page. I give them industry related information, but not necessarily about my business. If fans like the post, they share it and pass it along. This gets my name and business out there from my Facebook fans to possible new clients, and helps build my fan base."

Taking a cue from Bloom is Earl Slavin from **Crossroads Car Wash** (64 Skokie Valley Road). Slavin puts information about other businesses on his Facebook page. "This gets the word out twice, and other companies do the same for me, so I am building my fan base. It is a win-win for all of us." Another idea Slavin uses is to ask his Facebook fans questions like, "Seen any clever license plates lately?" He then posts photos of fun license plates seen around town. He also posts pictures of interesting cars like a Rolls Royce and asks his fans, "guess the year of this car." It

is his way of engaging his fans in a contest, and in a conversation. Since Slavin says cars are his passion, he will post anything related to cars on his page, also hoping it will be reposted. "The more you put on your Facebook page, the more you monitor it, the more you respond to it, the more you get out of it," said Slavin.

[facebook.com/pages/Crossroads-Car-Wash/138881022795295](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Crossroads-Car-Wash/138881022795295)



Photo: Crossroads Carwash

A relatively new social media site is Pinterest. It has exploded on the media scene with 11 million users, according to Spitzer. Pinterest is an online bulletin board. It depends on visuals to promote itself like storyboards. "Pinterest is changing the way people design websites," says Spitzer. It lets people organize and share all the beautiful things found on the web. People plan weddings, decorate their homes, and organize favorite recipes on Pinterest. Browsing pinboards is a way to discover new things and get inspiration from people who share your interests.

Although not social media, the QR Code (abbreviated from Quick Response Code) is popping up in many businesses. The result is the QR Code has become a focus of advertising strategy, since it provides quick and effortless

Social Media?

access to the brand or business website. With smartphone usage up and users snapping a picture of the QR Code, it has put a barcode reader in everyone's pocket. The system has become popular in business due to its fast readability and large storage capacity. It is a type of matrix barcode or two-dimensional code that has become common in consumer advertising and packaging.



ArrivaDolce Gelato & Coffee Bar

(1823 St. Johns Avenue) owners Jill Gross and Amy Touchette value the quick message their QR Code sign in their storefront window sends to its customers. "We get a lot of interest in our business from that sign, It is a way for customers to easily access our website," says Touchette. They use Facebook to advertise their gelato and coffee bar that also includes soups, homemade baked goods, and light lunches.

[facebook.com/pages/ArrivaDolce/201272416579320](https://www.facebook.com/pages/ArrivaDolce/201272416579320)

So, how does a business know if their social media strategy is working?

According to Susan Sampsell Director of Finance and Administration at Penn State University, "Communication is a measurable asset." One source on how to measure social media communication in business is to connect with the Klout website www.Klout.com.

Klout provides social media analysis to measure user's effectiveness across their social network. Data are taken from sites such as Twitter and Facebook and measure the size of a network, the content created, and how other people interact with that content. Klout uses this data to create a Klout Score that is a measure of online influence. Social media marketers use the Klout Score as a barometer of influence, which is the ability to drive action.

The combination of interaction, immediacy and influence through social networking can be a key to real business and community success. Good customer feedback is the ultimate measure of any business interaction. While the use of technology is essential to doing business, we can take a lesson from Starbucks guru, Howard Schultz, who believes that, "Especially in our digital age, the power of talking to people in person is exponential." Chamber Director Glasner agrees that "with high technology comes the need for high touch. There is a human component to all relationships that must always be paramount." It is a lesson that our Chamber Board of Directors, Staff, and Ambassadors learn every time they have a one-to-one conversation with our members. It is a lesson we hope to never forget.

Special thanks to our three social media experts, Larry Bloom, Barbara Rozgonyi, and Amy Spitzer for their time, input, and creative advice. Visit them on facebook:

Larry Bloom:
[facebook.com/pages/ATI-Graphics-Inc/142879575757614](https://www.facebook.com/pages/ATI-Graphics-Inc/142879575757614)

Amy Spitzer:
[facebook.com/TheSpitzerInternetStrategyGroup](https://www.facebook.com/TheSpitzerInternetStrategyGroup)

Barbara Rozgonyi:
[facebook.com/wiredprworks](https://www.facebook.com/wiredprworks)

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