

## TECH NEWS

## Marketing in the Digital World

Here's how to craft a smart online strategy

**FOR MANY ENTREPRENEURS AND SMALL BUSINESS** owners, the term "social media" conjures up the image of a daunting Tower of Babel. Adopting digital as part of an overall marketing, sales, and branding strategy can be intimidating at best and a disaster at worst if implemented incorrectly. But

simply ignoring social media tools can be costly. According to an Arbitron Inc. and Edison Research report, 48% of all Americans 12 and older have a social networking profile. This means millions of potential clients, listeners, and viewers are waiting to do business with you.

## THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE RIGHT JOB

Still you have questions: How do I find an audience? Which tools should I use? More importantly, how do I make money? "When clients come to me, that's usually the first question they ask," notes **Alandis K. Brassel**, 25, founder of Go Forth Music. His New York City-based company develops digital marketing and branding strategies for independent musicians.

Brassel says that entrepreneurs need to first understand their target audience and should



assess their online presence before jumping onto multiple platforms. Once Brassel establishes a digital home for a client, typically a WordPress site, he uses e-mail and text messaging campaigns and social networking to establish brand consistency.

"It's about picking the right tools," he says. "You don't have to be on everything—Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, or the new thing coming out next month."

## BETTER NOT BIGGER

A plethora of tools, the prevalence of "experts," and too much "noise" in the marketplace can lead to anxiety for entrepreneurs who think that in order to reach clients, they must be everywhere.

"Clients often come to me and want to know, 'Can you get me a lot of followers?' But the followers have to be in your target market, and you have to build a relationship," says **Tasha "TC" Cooper Coleman, Esq.**, CEO of Upward Action L.L.C., a brand development, social media, and digital marketing agency in Caldwell, New Jersey. Coleman, 35, has a client roster that includes NASA, United Negro College Fund Special Programs Corp., and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers Inc.



A good strategy begins with the basics. "A successful digital strategy has to be integrated into your traditional marketing strategy," Coleman says. "Invest in someone to help you create a strategic plan of action in the beginning, even if you decide to execute it yourself—but only after you have a clear strategy and a clear direction."

Coleman uses a variety of tools with clients but finds value in HootSuite ([www.hootsuite.com](http://www.hootsuite.com)), which lets users manage multiple accounts; Ping.fm, which lets you update multiple social profiles (Ping.fm was acquired in January by Seesmic, which helps Twitter users manage contacts and updates); and TubeMogul ([www.tubemogul.com](http://www.tubemogul.com)), which lets clients distribute, track, and measure user engagement with their videos.

## EMBRACE MULTIMEDIA

For many entrepreneurs, video is the final piece in a cohesive marketing strategy. It's also unfamiliar terrain that provides multiple opportunities for missteps.

It's crucial that those engaging video as part of an overall strategy get it right, says **Mary Spio**, 37, co-founder and president of Vidaroo Corp. (formerly Gen2Media Corp.), a video technology, production and marketing company based in Orlando, Florida, with offices in New York City (Read "A View to a Killer Business Model," Techwatch, December 2009). Why is it crucial? A 2009 report by the Pew



Internet & American Life Project shows that online use of video sharing sites is growing: 67% of adults ages 30-49 and 90% of adults in the 18-29 age range now use video sharing sites.

"How-to videos are effective," notes Spio. "Even product demonstrations should be considered. Being able to demonstrate your products or offering your expertise through tips or telling your story can be valuable."

Still, there are lots of myths about video. The major misconception: it's expensive. But Vidaroo, for example, offers solutions starting at \$99. ▶