



LinkedIn

Take Advantage of a Social Network Specifically Designed to Help the Motivated Professional Get the Most From His Efforts
By James L. Paris

LinkedIn is a social network, part of the social media landscape. It has a lot in common with Facebook, MySpace, and the other social media outlets that you may find to be very recognizable. That said, is LinkedIn *just* another social network, or is it something more?

There are a lot of things about LinkedIn that makes it unique, but perhaps the overriding uniqueness that it offers is that it's principally geared to business and businesspeople. That is, while the other popular social media sites are principally about non-business social connections and have business use more as a secondary priority, LinkedIn basically turns that around and has as its fundamental purpose the *networking* of business people.

Now, to be perfectly honest with you, I have never been a big net-

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Email Marketing

Social Media is Great, but Don't Neglect One of the Best Ways to See Actual Sales
By James L. Paris

We were all told that once social media kicked in... Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, etc...that email marketing was basically dead. Well, I'm here to tell you that I don't believe that for a minute, and, as a matter of fact, I will say that I believe my most beneficial business asset, outside of my proprietary website Christian Money.com, is my email list. Even though I have a presence on all of the biggest and best social media sites, there is nothing that has worked as well for me as email marketing. I still see email as the most effective way to make a direct contact or communication with someone. I don't know if you're like me, but I will occasionally receive a message in my Facebook inbox, and I just don't look at that as being as important or as urgent as an email that comes to me directly. Perhaps I should, but I don't, and the truth is that there have been extended periods of time wherein I have not checked my Facebook messages. Now, that may not be true with you, but in my experience with marketing, it has been the case that email marketing is my most effective marketing outlet. In other words, I can post something on Facebook, like that I am conducting a webinar tonight, or that I have a new product out, and I'll have a few sales that will come in...but I'll do an email blast and see a *bunch* of sales from that. For me, there's really no comparison.

What I want to address here are some of the top questions that I receive on the topic of email marketing. It's probably no surprise that I don't see the same vol-

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ume of questions on this subject that I did a few years ago, and nowhere near the same volume that existed *many* years ago. Back then, email marketing was huge; it was everything. That's no longer the case, and the advent of social media has principally been the reason for that, but there is no question that, in my experience, email remains one of the most effective ways to market.

Should I Buy a List?

I get this question 50 times a week if I get it once. You should *not* buy an email list. Even without the restrictive laws regarding spam, which basically say that you cannot send email to people who've not given you permission to *send* them email, you have to ask yourself how you would benefit from having a blind list of names. I'll get these emails into my email box that are totally ridiculous; they're for offers I know I did not give any permission to receive (spam laws don't work that well because frequently the violators are working offshore, hiding identities, and doing other things that have them working in the shadows, so to speak), and for products and services in which I have no interest; it's a complete waste of time (and money) for the sender.

Let's look at it like this: If you were able to buy a list of a million names and hit those people with an offer about your website, or about your ebook for sale...would you get some sales? Yes, you would probably get some sales (and you would also likely find yourself dealing with a lot of upset folks, as

well), but, in general, that approach is not going to work out for you. The reason is simple – a list of people who are not predisposed to buying from you is basically useless. The answer is not to buy a list; the answer is to *develop* your *own* list of people that know who you are and have an interest in your topic. One excellent way to do this is to make available a free weekly newsletter that people can sign up to receive at your website. The newsletter can be very simple, one or two pages, at most, but serves the super-valuable purpose of allowing you to collect email addresses of people who have a clear, demonstrated interest in you and your topic.

How Do I Get People to Add Their Names to My List?

If you go to Christian Money.com, you will see a small box in the right-hand sidebar of the homepage that allows people to sign up for my free, weekly, email newsletter. If you use any of the major, email marketing platforms, you can go in there and grab the HTML code to put an email sign-up box on your website. What makes this work is that people want the information you have to offer.

Think of this in terms of cold-calling. With the advent of the Internet, I don't even know if anyone solicits "cold" anymore, because there are now so many cheap and easy ways to get people to the stage of being a "warm" lead, but the biggest problem with cold-calling has always been that it is so unpro-

Jim Paris Internet Insider is published monthly by Premier Financial Communications, Inc. Known office of publication is 138 Palm Coast Pkwy NE, # 223, Palm Coast, FL 32137. Periodicals postage paid at Sanford, FL and other mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **Jim Paris Internet Insider**, 138 Palm Coast Pkwy NE, # 223, Palm Coast, FL 32137.

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ductive. In my earliest days as a stockbroker, I would have to cold-call many hundreds of people each day in order to find just a few who I could consider to be prospects. Looking back on those days now, it was, in relative terms, such a colossal waste of time.

What is the Difference between Email Marketing and Spamming?

The main difference between the two is that with email marketing, the person you're soliciting/emailing has agreed in advance to give you his email address, and you're complying with all of the federal rules and laws relevant to that email relationship. This is why it's so important that you use one of the professional email services that's available, because using that service will make sure you're in compliance; for example, your name and mailing address will appear at the bottom of the emails you send, as will a button that allows the recipient to unsubscribe if he decides that he doesn't want to receive any additional emails from you. In other words, it's not enough that someone signs up to receive your emails – the emails themselves have to meet certain criteria in their composition.

Why Do I Need an Email Marketing Platform?

Quick anecdote: I'm part of a neighborhood watch program in the development where I live, and I have been a part of a wide number of community-based groups for decades now. Nowadays, these groups use email to stay in touch, and it's sort of amusing to see what people who don't really know how to use email will do. When I receive emails from some of the other members of these various groups, it will often be one of those

emails where I can see all of the other recipient emails of the same mailing. In other words, what these folks will do is to collect the emails from other group members, type those emails into their address books, and send the email as a so-called group email, where everyone who receives the email can see the address of everyone *else* who receives the email.

That's not a good way to send emails to a large group, for a few reasons. First, you risk being out of compliance with some elements of the spam rules; also, it's unprofessional; lastly, it's not terribly respectful of the people on the list, as each of their email addresses are made known to everyone else in the group.

In order to send out a mass email properly, you can't really use one of the desktop email programs that you normally use, because they're not set up to deliver mass emails professionally the way the companies that specialize in this are capable of doing. Also, your Internet service provider at your home or office will have limits in place that prevent you from doing this from a desktop application – for example, it is frequently the case that an email that contains a large number of recipient addresses will get bounced back by the server.

When you deal with a professional email marketing company, you're going with an outfit that has gone to the trouble...and it's a lot of trouble...to become what is known as "white-listed." Being "white-listed" means that the company has agreed to abide by a set of rules and principles that allow for all of the different Internet service providers to let the huge number of emails sent through these outlets to go through without obstruction.

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So, when I send an email out to 20,000 different email addresses, that email is reaching those people on a wide variety of different networks, so it's imperative that I am using a professional email marketing service that will basically assure that all of these emails will be properly delivered without issue.

Do I Need Any Special Software to Get Started in Email Marketing?

The short answer is, "No." If you're using an email marketing platform, everything is going to take place "in the cloud;" that is, all of the relevant activity takes place on the server of the email marketing platform. In my case, I use a company called iContact (www.icontact.com), and so everything happens on their server as far as what I do logistically in the realm of email marketing – I don't have to have any special or additional software on my computer in order to do any of this.

Do You Have a Suggested Email Marketing Service?

There are plenty of them out there these days, but as I mentioned a moment ago, the one I use and have used for a quite a while now is iContact. They are one of the very biggest and very best, and I certainly have no complaints with their service. If you're starting out, and depending on how many names are on your email list as well as how many emails you send out monthly, iContact can cost you as little as about \$10 per month. Now, in my case, I spend several hundreds of dollars each month on my iContact service, and that's because I send out a lot of emails every month to tens of thousands of email addresses; assuming you're not yet at that point, you don't have to be put off of using

the service based on what I'm paying for it.

That said, as much as I pay for this each month, I have to tell you that I do not look at this money I pay as an expense, even though it's booked as one for accounting purposes – what we pay for a professional email service like this yields such substantial dividends to us that we look at the money spent as nothing other than a wise investment.

What is an Autoresponder and How Can It Be Used?

An autoresponder is a program (again, not a program that you install, but one that exists on the server of the email marketing platform you select) that automatically sends pre-configured responses to people who make email inquiries of you. For example, when people sign up at my website for any of a variety of free materials that I may have available at a given time, those folks will receive an email response back right away that thanks them for signing up and provides any other information I've deemed necessary at that point. What's particularly great about autoresponders is that they can be set up in ways that allow for pretty elaborate response campaigns from you. For example, when people sign up at my website for the ten days of free lessons in Internet marketing, the autoresponder sees to it that the right email for the right day of lessons goes out to the right person – I don't have to do anything manually (once I've put the initial system into place, that is).

Mark my words...email campaigning and email-based marketing *will* become the game-changer for you at some point, assuming you are earnest about pursuing your Internet business activities.

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working sort of guy. That takes some people by surprise, people who have known of my career for many years now and just assume that I would be one of those people who has a big Rolodex full of contact information for all sorts of important and influential people. In my case, that's just not so, and what's more, the whole process of networking has never been an ingrained part of my personality. Some people are natural "networkers," but I've never been one of them. Perhaps that has hurt the growth of my career – who knows? I know that a lot of networking has traditionally been about professionals in an employee status relying on one another as a means to securing better opportunities during the course of their careers, and, in my case, I've owned my own business for decades now, so that particular networking purpose just has not had the relevance to me that it might have for others. Also, I know that a lot of outside salespeople are big networkers, and I've never really been in that line of work. Still, I recognize that networking of some kind may have a beneficial effect for me in my own capacity, so it may be something to which I should give more thought.

I will say, also, that the advent of the Internet makes the idea of networking a little more palatable to people like me. Again, I am not a natural networker, and before the Internet age, networking involved a lot of direct, personal (meaning, face-to-face or over the phone) contact that I've not traditionally had the inclination toward (again, something that might surprise a few of you). The Internet has changed networking and the way in which networking can be done, just as it has changed so much about the way we have traditionally done so *many* things.

So why should you have a LinkedIn account,

exactly? Well, the two reasons that jump right out immediately are that it is free, and it is one more established, popular way by which people can find you. Free is always a good reason, but things that are free are often worth not even that cost...but LinkedIn has the potential to be different that way. It is an established, well-trafficked, well-used business social media site. It's also another way that you can secure an inbound link to your website. As a matter of fact, in your profile, you can link three separate websites to your profile.

Beyond your personal profile, you can set up separate profiles for your business entity (ies). The way I see it, if you have three different websites, each one of those represents a business, and you can have a LinkedIn profile for each one of those *in addition* to the one you have for yourself.

It's very easy to set up a LinkedIn account, and heading over to www.linkedin.com will get you going. Now, you should know that LinkedIn has a stipulation that you have to have made at least three connections before your profile is considered to be 100% complete. I don't want to spend time on the sign-up process here, simply because it is so easy. What I *do* want to focus on is giving you an overview of the platform and point out some things that you may not come to know without a little digging.

For starters, you want to be sure that you have listed all of the different schools you have attended, as well as all of the companies for which you have worked. Why is that so important? Well, beyond simply sharing your history to interested readers, it is through listing as many relevant entities as possible that the greatest number of people

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find you; this is how the LinkedIn network works – it feeds off of the entries in your profile and helps direct people with the same entries to one another.

Connections

Something cool: Under the “Contacts” tab that appears at the top of your LinkedIn page, you will find a button for “Network Statistics,” and when you click on that, you will be taken to some eye-opening information. Basically, what is provided is information that tells you how close you are to having connections to people of a number that is much, much larger than you might have imagined.

Let’s use me as an example. I have, at this writing, 228 “Connections.” These are people who are defined by LinkedIn as being “trusted friends and colleagues,” and are basically like the “friends” we have on Facebook; they are the people who are formally listed on our profiles as a result of having officially completed the process, in one direction or another, of asking to be connected and accepting a connection request. Anyway, I have 228 of those. An additional piece of information that’s provided is the number of connections that are, as LinkedIn puts it, “two degrees away.” This is the total number of people who are the connections of my connections. How many of those do I have from my 228 primary connections? A little over 21,000.

LinkedIn keeps going – it also lists the number of connections I have that are “three degrees away,” which is the number of people who are connections of the connections of my 228 primary connections. For me, it is about 1.8 million, off of having 228 primary connections on my LinkedIn account.

Answers

Probably the coolest feature I have found with regard to this site can also be found under the “More” tab. From there, you will click on “Answers,” and you will be taken to a page that provides you with the opportunity to ask questions and get answers to those questions from other LinkedIn members. Now, when I say “questions,” I mean any kind of questions: Should I refinance my house? Should I break up with my girlfriend? You can ask anything you want, and you also have the opportunity to answer questions yourself. The more questions you answer, and depending on the ratings you receive from people who review your answers, you can begin to build social capital. The more and better of each that accrues to you puts you on the path to becoming an expert. This can be a great way to get clients. If you’re in any type of consulting business, you might want to carve out a little time each day to answer questions posted in your area at LinkedIn, and make an effort in this way to become regarded as an expert in a field that is already composed of businesspeople. The goal here, of course, would be for people who see your quality advice to decide that you are someone they should retain professionally for assistance they need in your chosen field.

You may have decided a while back that LinkedIn just doesn’t have the same “sizzle” that exists with other social media sites, and I suppose that’s true. Remember, however, that the reasons for that are going to revolve around the fact that it is principally a business site, which is precisely why it *should* be garnering more of your attention. If you’ve been discounting it up to now, do yourself a favor and spend some time checking it out.

Five Tips to Help You Write Every Day

By Robert G. Yetman, Jr.

Whether you fashion yourself a regular producer of ebooks (or even traditional books), or you are someone who simply needs to produce content for your website on a regular and constant basis, you need to write. There's no way around that. The work will not get done for you (I'm excluding the option of paying for content production here), and it has to be done every day in order for you to be successful. In my own experience, I've rarely, if ever, come across anyone who is successful at writing and otherwise producing content on a steady basis that doesn't do at least some writing every day.

A cautionary note: In order for this to work, you should enjoy writing at least a little. I'm not saying you have to love it, but if you don't enjoy it at all, you may have some problems here. Does this mean that if you don't like to write that you cannot be successful as a producer of ebooks? Unless you want to have someone ghostwrite your books for you, the answer is probably, "No, you cannot." Those who do not enjoy writing at least a little bit will look at the task of writing as a chore, and who likes do to chores? Those who need to write in order to produce content for a website or blog may not have to like it as much, but they can't really hate it. The point is that the Internet is largely about content, and written content is still the principal type of content that occupies Internet space.

Still, even if you have passed the first test, and you like writing well enough to do it on a regular basis, you still have to find the time

to do it. This is not always easy, especially if what you're trying to do is make money at this on a part-time basis. Whether you work full-time outside of the home, or you work full-time as homemaker, you already have a full-time job, and that means that you will have to make an extra effort to carve out some additional time each day to dedicate to your writing...but make no mistake, if you want to be successful, you have to do it.

That said, here are 5 tips to help you stay the course in your writing...and, more specifically, to help you stay the course in achieving what should be your goal of doing at least some writing every day.

1. Make a daily appointment with yourself to write. I write just about everything I have to do in a given day in my daily planner, and when I do, I almost never miss any of it. If you would like to dedicate at least 30 minutes each day to your writing, do the same thing; find the best time of each day for you to carve out the time, and make that your daily, written appointment to write. If it's early in the morning, do it then; if it's later on when the kids are in bed and everything else for the day is done, do it then. The point is that you want to formalize your daily, scheduled commitment to your writing task.

2. Turn off all unnecessary electronic communications equipment. No distractions. The problem with distractions is that even if they are momentary, enough momentary distractions over the course of a 30 minute time window reduces your actual productive writ-

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ing time to just a handful of minutes. To write successfully, you have to get a good intellectual “flow” or rhythm going, and that won’t be possible if you’re looking up at the TV every few minutes, or checking emails as you hear them come into your mailbox, answering text messages, or otherwise indulging any of the other electronic distractions that are not necessary to write.

On the same note, you may find it helpful to completely segregate yourself from all such distractions by working in a location that contains few or none. For example, a spare bedroom that is rarely used (and so won’t likely have any distractions *in it*), with a door that can be closed is perfect.

3. Give yourself a daily production quota of some kind. If you find that the mechanism of devoting a minimum amount of *time* is not proving to work for you, you can, as an alternative, set a minimum standard of productivity. This can be defined any number of ways, from a word count, page count, chapter count, section count, or whatever other measurement might work for you. If you tell yourself that you are not done writing for the day until you’ve put down at least 300 words, then there you go. I actually prefer a production quota to a time quota. The problem with time quotas, at least for me, is that I want to be sure I’ve made real progress by the end of a writing session, and seeing a quantifiable level of output is the only way I can do that.

4. Remember that even “bad” writing is still writing. Some days, the creative juices are really flowing, and you’re putting down some well-written, insightful things, while other days, your writing brain just doesn’t seem to be working as well. Don’t sweat it;

just write. The discipline of writing is more important than the quality of any given day’s output, and what’s more, rarely is it the case that a day of just so-so content is not something that you can’t go back and improve on at a later time, so it’s still useful, ultimately.

5. Make sure those around you know what you’re doing. Nothing helps to ensure that you will stay the course with an ongoing task that you’ve handed yourself more than the risk of a little embarrassment. In this case, I’m talking about making sure that those around you...spouse...kids...friends...are aware of this daily writing commitment that you’ve made to yourself. By letting them know that you’re “going off to write,” they will have an expectation of seeing something for that time you’re taking, and if they don’t, they will be sure to let you know about it. As a matter of fact, if you have a Facebook account, always make mention of the times when you’re going off to write, so even more people will come to have that same expectation. It’s a strategy that will help to keep you honest with yourself.

Even those who love to write will often need little “helps” to keep them from straying from the path of writing each day. Loving to write does not insulate us from the numerous, daily obligations we each have to other people, jobs, and tasks, so we have to make writing *one* of those commitments. It’s said that “writers write,” and there is a certain, profound wisdom in such a simple statement; it means that the most important thing is for you sit down and plug away, regardless of the quality of what you’re producing during any given session. While it’s always important to produce the best-quality work you can, the discipline, more than the quality, will ultimately be the key to your success.