



Your New e-Rolodex?

by Scott Klososky

“What is an eCommunity?” It is a question I hear often, and it is usually followed by an answer that does little more than scrape the surface of this powerful tool. The term eCommunity has been used to describe Facebook and MySpace type networks, but this is a limited view of what has the potential to be a very powerful business networking and marketing tool.

Each of us has the tools to create a network (or community) of contacts and connections that is aided — or even driven — by technology. Your eCommunity is what used to be defined as your rolodex of personal relationships you could contact by phone or in person. The Internet has now provided a way for us to completely redefine our “business/personal community,” and more important, how we nurture and grow it. By making a conscious effort to leverage the new tools available, we can take dramatic strides in reaching our business goals.

“How do I begin?”

Sign up for Plaxo Pulse and use it to keep your contacts up to date.

Sign up for LinkedIn and use it to formalize your network contacts and connect to their contacts.

Build a Facebook profile and use it to communicate in a deeper way with your regular contacts. What’s more, this is a great way to introduce yourself to new contacts.

Join an industry eCommunity that puts you in the stream of conversations about your industry.

These four communities will provide you with built-in tools to build and manage your community. For example, LinkedIn allows you to contact prospects with a warm invite instead of a cold call. Plaxo Pulse

automatically keeps your contacts updated, so you never lose anyone and are always notified of useful data, including work anniversaries and birthdays. Facebook applications allow you to update your activities and projects so your “friends” (business contacts) can keep track of your progress and remain up to date on your professional projects.

Don’t be left on the sidelines

Business people who have invested in this new technology are seeing a significant return on investment. Recently, I helped a second-level contact gather information for a professional presentation. He was looking for stories from people who had recently experienced bad customer service. By reaching out to his eCommunity, he was able to gather the information he needed by sending one email. I also had success myself using LinkedIn to track down a former board member with whom I had lost contact. Upon reconnecting through LinkedIn, I called her, filled her in on my latest activities and was able to re-establish an important business relationship that will assist me with a current opportunity I am working on.

You, too, can have such success. Find some time over a weekend to set up your profiles, and get yourself started. Then set up a meeting with yourself for 15 minutes twice a week and take the time to further bolster your online presence and strengthen your eCommunity.

Don’t be left on the sidelines with only your Outlook contact list as your eCommunity. It takes only a small investment of time to have a tool that you can leverage for great results. ■