

Is Social Media a Necessity for Your Welding and Fabrication Business?

Leading research firms are reporting that the use of social media among B2B companies has skyrocketed to nearly 81%, however if you're like most of us, you are probably still scratching your head looking for its practical application for your welding and fabrication business.

With over two years of real world trial-and-error testing behind us, I now know two things;

1. Social media really does hold the promise of impacting the bottom line
2. Arriving at a strategy that impacts the bottom line requires a significant amount of time and effort—scarce commodities for today's welding and fabrication shop

In an effort to help you cut to the chase, we offer three social media strategies that have delivered concrete benefits for our B2B marketing efforts.

Fill the Funnel with LinkedIn



The power of LinkedIn became apparent to me a few years ago when our company was in the middle of an expansion project. A colleague from a previous job called me hoping to introduce a friend that was in the office furniture business. Through our discussions I learned that LinkedIn has been the catalyst for the call—that had ultimately led to a sale for my colleague's friend. As the story goes, while driving home from work my colleague's friend had observed construction on our building. Making a mental note he went home and put our company name into LinkedIn to see if anyone in his network either worked at or knew someone who worked at our company. Upon discovering the connection and a few quick calls, he was able to cut endless cycles with our efficient front desk 'gatekeeper' and connect with a decision maker in our company to make the sale.

The power of LinkedIn as a networking tool is amazing. Through the magic of social media your network of just a few hundred contacts can be exponentially expanded to millions. Just imagine tapping a network of millions to gain entry into a target account. Just like the popular pop culture game, 'Six Degrees of Separation', you'll probably find that most of the people you want to reach are only a few acquaintances away.

LinkedIn also provides an opportunity to join relevant groups such as the Fabricators & Manufacturers Association which will help you stay informed of the latest industry trends. Joining groups like this can also allow you to position yourself as a knowledgeable industry source by answering community questions. For example, answering a question about bend

tolerances or welding techniques could help you win business that would have otherwise flown under the radar.

If A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words ...



One of our top salespeople once told me “If I can get a customer to personally tour our facility—the order is as good as booked.” Although there might have been a bit of exaggeration in the statement, I think there was also more than a thread of truth. Unfortunately, in today’s time challenged environment, getting a prospect out of the office to tour your facility is difficult. Thankfully, inexpensive video and the proliferation of social media sources like YouTube make bringing the tour right to your customer or prospect’s office.

As a result of our salesperson cluing us in on this epiphany, we began dipping our toe in the water of low cost video. For a surprisingly small investment, we began filming the people and equipment that turn out our quality products and posting them to YouTube and our website. Within our first week, we had a major win with an existing customer that doubled their business with us as a result of watching a video highlighting a service that they were previously unaware we offered.

Since that time, we have continued to invest in videos which highlight the people and equipment that we believe make us the right choice for our customers. A little research in your area can expose a community of video producers that will be anxious to partner with you and work within your budget. We found a local technical school that was excited to work for small donations to their class’s field trip fund. If you’re a bit more technologically inclined, you’ll be amazed at what you can produce with the camera on your phone and a desktop video editor.

Get Found!



It’s no secret that in today’s technologically evolved world our search for most products begins online. While a consumer searching for a grill or a new pair of shoes was more likely to begin shopping on Google or Bing than a purchasing agent searching for a fabricated part—things have quickly changed. Our own website statistics tell us that this is the predominant method that our customers are using to find the metal they need.

Gaining top billing when your customer searches for your product online is every marketer and business owner’s dream. Unfortunately achieving that prized position is a bit of a black science. Each search engine has a complex, ever-changing algorithm that they use to determine each website’s placement on their search result pages. Computer programs known as spiders make use of these algorithms as they crawl web content to determine a site’s relevance on a given

topic. Even though readership by 'living breathing' humans may not be significant, readership by the web spiders might be very significant to increasing your search results position. As a result, publishing regular, relevant content to social media sources makes a difference. But don't stress yourself out writing volumes of content—social media is oriented towards short relevant bites of news and comment. Unlike your high school essay questions, there are no style points for word count.

It's hard for me to believe that during my ten years in the industry I've witnessed the search for services like welding, fabricating and machining move from exhaustive searches within heavy printed directories to simple key taps on a cell phone or mobile device. It's a new day! Finding new customers and keeping existing ones relies on a whole new set of marketing strategies.

As a leading provider of specialty stainless and high performance alloy sheet, United Performance Metals is committed to the success of welding and fabrication businesses the world over. While quality and availability remain the pillars of our value proposition, creating an open dialog with our customers regarding experiences and best practices of business operation is one more way that we can partner for success. It is our hope that the United Performance Metals' white paper library provides fuel for thought—a spring board for ideas that help our valued customers in their continuous pursuit of success. We encourage your comments and feedback.