

# In the Social Circle



**Y**ou may be surprised to hear this, but if you haven't already joined Facebook you should probably do so soon. Research shows that most business executives and CEOs will also be joining Facebook at some point this year. The fact is, social media is having a profound impact on businesses, and the corporate world is adjusting.

You may think Internet sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube are for teenagers to talk to friends and share photos—or perhaps you've never even heard of these before—but businesses and professionals are increasingly utilizing these technology platforms for a number of reasons, particularly the superb networking and branding opportunities they provide.

Still not convinced? Let's look at the past presidential election as an example. Many experts credit the Obama campaign's use of the Internet as playing a significant role in winning the election. Long before Barack Obama was even named the Democratic nominee for president, his campaign was utilizing the Internet to organize and collaborate with volunteers and supporters throughout the country.

Obama was able to connect with voters in unprecedented ways: an on-line answer center allowed voters to submit questions to which the campaign posted answers for all to view; interactive polls demonstrated exactly where Obama stood against other candidates; and supporters were able to donate money via easy-to-use websites. The Obama campaign also took advantage of YouTube for free advertising.

It is said that Obama used the Internet to organize his supporters in a way that would have in the past required an army of volunteers and paid organizers on the ground. His embrace of technology also allowed him to connect with young voters. These young Generation Next voters—the first generation to be raised entirely on advanced technologies—are now old enough to vote, are entering the workforce and are your new customers.

So the question is, how will you communicate with these customers?

The nice thing about sites such as Facebook and YouTube is that they are available to absolutely everybody and they don't cost a thing. By setting up a Facebook account for your dealership, you can provide information about who you are and the services you offer. You can also build your professional network and customer base through the social networking aspect of the site. You can include pictures of recent installations, and you can even use the site for follow-up correspondence with customers. The opportunities are endless as the technology continues to evolve.

Let social media be yet another platform to reach your customers. You will build brand recognition as well as your customer base, and you will connect with new, younger customers. After all, the technology is free and everybody is using it. You don't want to be left out of the social circle.

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