

THE SOCIAL MEDIA SKILL SETS A CIO'S STAFF WILL NEED



The question is no longer 'who is on social media?'; it is 'who isn't?' Nearly 20 million Canadians communicate via social media. One in two online Canadians visit a social media site at least once a week, and 35% of us do so every day. Emerging technologies in the areas of mobile technology and app

development are giving us new social platforms to express ourselves; they are shaping our consumption behaviours. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are among the biggest corporate brands out there. Arriving amid great fanfare, Google+ will doubtlessly be amassing a large following as well. Social media is used for recruitment by 4 out of 5 companies, and LinkedIn is used almost exclusively for this purpose.

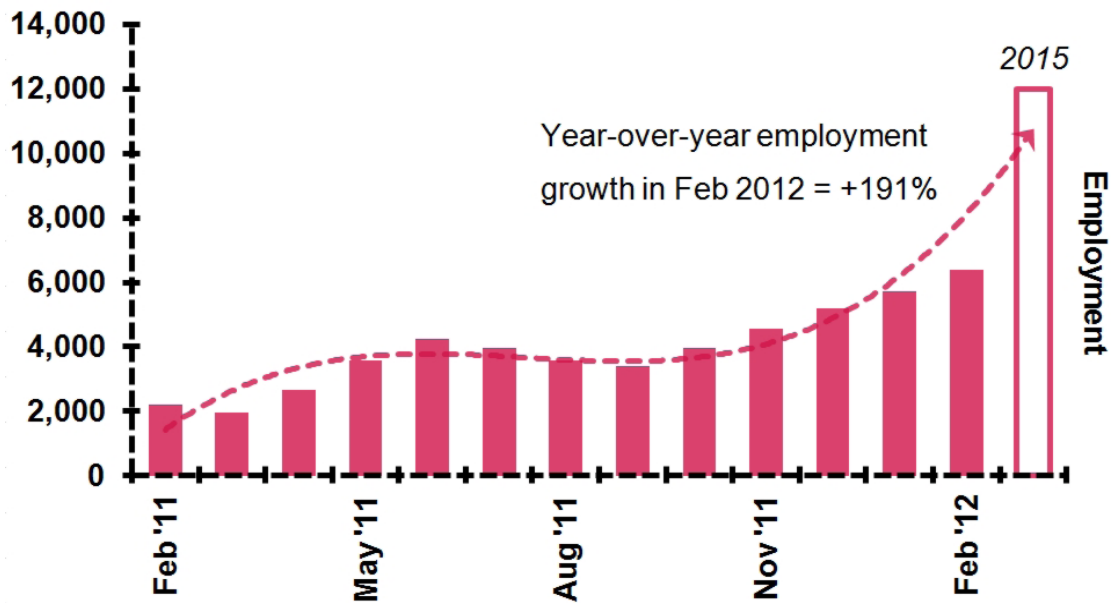
And why not? For companies, social media presents new channels and avenues of reaching clients. It gives companies visibility and relevance. The wave of change is fast sweeping the entertainment, health, finance, communications, video gaming and many other sectors of the economy and driving persistent change in business practices in Canada and around the world. Social media is used so extensively, for a variety of reasons and purposes, that the users of social media, perhaps, reached a comfort zone and consequently are becoming less guarded in sharing information. Those who mean to take advantage are never too far away. It seldom registers with us that we are the ones revealing the most information about ourselves and putting our security, our jobs, or our companies at risk. Being aware of these risks, using appropriate precautions, and remaining strategic in this new paradigm is vital.

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Managing a company's reputation has taken added significance, for any negative publicity can go viral. Swiftly identifying occurrences such as brand hijacking, product counterfeiting, lifting web content, network intrusion, industrial espionage, domain name abuse, and deliberate smears is the first step. It has to be swiftly followed by fixing the attack outlet, reassuring the clients, and keeping them updated. Good thing is that this battle does not have to be waged alone, as there are firms such as Cision and KnjOn that provide media monitoring and related services. Employment growth in occupations that work in this sphere is substantial in Canada. For example, 6,700 Systems Security Analysts were working in Canada in February 2012, compared to only 2,300 in February 2011, reflecting a year-over-year employment growth of +191%.

Companies are in need of social media specialists and security specialists. The demand will far exceed the supply in the not-too-distant future. The problem will be exacerbated by the fact that there are systemic shortages of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) workers with the required capabilities – a skill set of technical, business, and interpersonal skills – that Canadian employers need in order to be competitive in the digital economy. In order for Canadian companies to succeed globally, they need multiple avenues for

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attracting the right talent. Canada's diversity, including programs that target immigrants, Aboriginals, women, and youth, needs to be utilized to the fullest.

To keep up with the very real threats of intrusion posed by exploitation of social media, companies need to create a social media policy and continue to update it with changing technology and times.

Companies also need to allocate resources to provide their employees with the necessary training. These actions would go a long way in protecting companies from data theft or leakage from sources such as malwares and other viruses.

Continuing on the policy theme, establishing clear, company-specific internal policies that outline do's and don'ts with respect to social media and what should and should not be shared

in that space, is very important for control over corporate content can be lacking otherwise. Posting inappropriate, improper, or wrong information about a company on social media can be just as damaging.

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As companies strive to get real time feedback from their clients, it is crucial to remember that clients also come to the social media space with expectations that the discussion will be interactive and bi-directional. To meet this, the number of staff dedicated to oversee the social media needs to be adequate. Providing employees with the necessary training to be able to handle the social media traffic, being clear and direct with clients about response timeline are some of the steps that can help companies ensure

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customers continue to engage with them and receive customer satisfaction. Employment growth in this area, particularly among Interactive Media Developers, is very strong in Canada. 26,000 workers are working in this profession today, compared to half as many only two years ago. Joblessness among this group is virtually non-existent.

Another challenge of leveraging social media to corporate benefit is that a company can sometimes lose control of the message around which they want the discussions to revolve. When the conversation is in the hands of the social media participants, what gets said can become unpredictable. To combat this, companies need to prepare discussion points and responses in advance, since any unexpected or unwanted discussion can become magnified by the extended conversation through social media.

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From an individual's perspective, the disadvantages of social media can be just as damaging. Many of the considered threats to the company emanate from employee indiscretion. More than enough personal information is available on social media to aid social engineering as well. Occurrences of people impersonating as co-workers and stealing vital information, including passwords, are common and need to be guarded against. A lot of information about a company is available on its corporate website and helps impersonators do a convincing job. They can also send hacking devices under the pretext of wanting to share

information, for example photos from the company Christmas party. Finding the name of a co-worker whose email would be trusted is not too difficult, again 'thanks' to the social media.

Using personal social media accounts to post work related information, using social media excessively to the detriment of productivity, posting damaging information, accessing social media from vulnerable locations using exposed devices to aid data theft are all deeds that are sure to land someone in hot water, sooner or later. The key point to always keep in mind is that social media can be a double edged sword and it is imperative to adopt wisely both as individuals and as organizations.

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