



## **Summary of *Virtual Fame – How the Internet Is Challenging the Rules of PR***

by Patricia Davidson, director of marketing, DMLO Certified Public Accountants

Oh, how the media landscape has changed for PR. At the AAM conference in June, Christine Nelson and Rachel Gold of Ingenuity Marketing provided insight on positive ways accounting firm marketers can use social media to expand public relations efforts. Here are some easy tips.

Start by being active in several so you can find out which ones your clients are actually using. Facebook is more social, like a country club, while LinkedIn is business networking like going to a chamber of commerce event. And Twitter is a place to share a new piece of information or a link to a great article. Get young staff members and engaged partners involved. Solicit their participation and feedback.

Many firms are using videos as recruiting tools. If you use YouTube, be careful not to submit random postings-- your video might find itself linked with unsavory neighbors. The best way to protect against negative associations is to host the video on your Web site and link it.

Set up a "microsite," which is narrowly defined as a site about a specific practice niche. These are perfectly suited to blogging and reputation building. Make sure content is incredibly engaging, relevant and be sure it links to your Web site, where you must be sure to ask the visitor to do something. Web sites should have a call to action on every page in order for these internal links to produce better results. Simply add "Call [firm name] at [phone number]" on every page.

Links are an important part of search engine optimization. SEO has evolved from being highly dependent on key words to using many other elements in Web sites as measures of credibility. Creating hard links from other credible sources to your Web site is a significant way to increase search engine recognition. Have your firm mentioned by bloggers and in social networking conversations. One way is to post comments to blogs you find useful.

Tell your accounting professionals to post upcoming speech information to their LinkedIn profile, and ask them to provide links to their host organizations. Post comments on LinkedIn. Presentations can also be re-purposed by recording them to post as podcasts on the Web site. The speaker can link to the podcast from their Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter pages.

As you expand your firm's use of social media, track mentions and what is being said about your firm in those media as well as in the blogs. In fact, once you identify an influential blog, it would be beneficial to get the blogger to talk about your firm. You might even try pitching a story to a blogger. Send press releases with embedded links and post these on your Web site.

Establish guidelines and a social media etiquette policy--the firm's image and message should be consistent and strong wherever it appears. Some firms have established policies forbidding accessing social media sites in the office, but the professionals at Ingenuity suggested allowing some business access would be perceived favorably by young professionals.