

laydoddnews

Season's Greetings 2013

Tax reminders

DUE ON 15 JANUARY 2014:

- Provisional tax for March, July or November balance dates
- GST
- Student loan payments
- Quarterly FBT

DUE ON 28 JANUARY 2014:

- Provisional tax for December balance dates



Engaging with your customers online via social media

It is now well established that customers are much better informed than they have been in the past. For the most part, they know their minds and spend some time researching the market online. If you want to understand your customers and give them more of what they want, what better way than to engage with them in a meaningful manner?

Over the past few years, social media has established itself as the new norm in engagement. The figures are staggering, with users measured in the hundreds of millions, across all consumer age groups, and conversations counted in billions.

We have reached the point where, love it or hate it, scorn it or fear it, businesses have no other option than to consider social media seriously, asking the question "How can we make it work for us?"

A Quick Summary of Social Media

- BLOGS:** A platform for casual dialogue and discussions. Blogs are usually date-stamped entries in a diary-like form and are typically managed by one person.
- FACEBOOK:** The world's largest social media network with over a billion users each month. Users create a personal profile, add other users as friends and exchange messages and photos. Brands create pages and users can "like" brands' pages.
- TWITTER:** A micro-blogging tool that allows groups and individuals to stay connected through the exchange of short status messages.
- YOUTUBE & VIMEO:** Video hosting and watching websites.
- FLICKR:** Image and video hosting website and online community. Photos can be shared on Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites.
- INSTAGRAM** A free photo and video sharing app that allows users to apply digital filters, frames & special effects to their photos and then share them on a variety of social networking sites.
- LINKEDIN GROUPS** A place where groups of professional with similar areas of interest can share and participate in conversations related to their fields.
- PINTEREST** A pinboard-style photo-sharing website where users create and manage theme-based image collections such as events, interests, and hobbies. Users can view other pinboards, "re-pin" images to their own pinboards, or "like" photos
- SPECIFIC FORUMS** There are many forums available for every industry and interest. Find those that are most relevant to you and your business.

Engaging with your customers online via social media.....continued

Getting started

- Familiarise yourself with the technology, rules and etiquette of social networking before you begin to promote your business online, or use the skills of someone who is proficient and able to assist you in developing and implementing your strategy.
- Find out what other businesses are doing in and outside your industry. Read blogs and sign up as an individual to Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Be prepared to search, observe and learn at first.
- Aim to become absolutely clear about what you want to achieve with social media for your business. Seek advice from professionals and others you can trust.



Building your Customer Community

- Find out where your customers spend their time online so that you can be there too. The easiest way initially is to ask them. You can use your email lists to find out quickly who is signed up to the main social media sites. Get help from friends and family who know how. There are also firms who charge to do this for you.
- Help your customers to find you online. Take every opportunity, once you are up and running, to get people to “like” you on Facebook, follow you on Twitter and LinkedIn. Provide these options at the bottom of your emails and on your website.
- Develop compelling reasons for your customers to join your online community. They need to know that they will be missing out on something they need or want if they don’t befriend or follow you. Find something relevant to your business that will make it attractive for them to join.
- Consider setting up your own blog. It is the most simple of the social media options to master. You are in control and it can be used as a tool to link people to your other social media pages, once you are ready to do so.
- Avoid getting involved in heated arguments, being defensive and saying nasty things about others. Know when to stay out of the discussion, when to back down, and when to be humble.
- Ensure that social media initiatives are not conducted in isolation. A cohesive and integrated strategy will help you to strengthen your brand, reinforce other advertising messages and support strategies you have in place. If you are in several places online, refer people from one to the other, boosting traffic on your website and generating more engagement elsewhere.

Keeping it Manageable

- Consider the potential benefits and decide what you are prepared to invest in this aspect of marketing. Create budgets for time and money, then set aside the time in your diary and make sure that it happens.
- Delegate as much as you can, but even then you will need to understand and follow what is happening due to the visibility and importance to your business. Also, customers will discuss it with you and expect you to know what is happening online.
- Observe and learn. Then start off small, and don’t bite off more than you can chew.
- If you plan to start a blog, you can begin with as little as one post a week, but you will still need to allocate time to tell people it is there. Advertise it on your home page and in your emails.
- If you are doing well and generate a lot of traffic and interest, you do not have to respond to every post – just enough to show that you have considered all relevant points raised. Be aware that there are some people (trolls) who deliberately place provocative, off-topic comments to create discord. Ignore these comments (“don’t feed the trolls”). Other people will recognise the comments for what they are.
- Think about what you will be doing a month or so in advance and plan your editorial calendar using Excel.
- There is software available (look up social media dashboards) that can help you manage your social media time more effectively. These allow you to set up alerts and notifications, create groups, skim activity quickly, and schedule updates so you can automate some of the process.

Encouraging employers to employ youth

The government has introduced a new initiative aimed at encouraging employers to recruit young New Zealanders, especially those who have been on a benefit. It allows the lower minimum wage rate – 80% of the adult minimum – to apply to a wider range of people. The new scheme came into effect on 1 May 2013.

The 'starting-out' minimum wage can be paid to certain categories of youth aged 16-19 years.

Currently the categories are:

- 16 and 17 year olds in their first 6 months of paid employment with their current employer
- 18 and 19 year olds who have received a benefit for 6 months or more and have not completed 6 months' work with any employer since starting on that benefit
- 16 – 19 year olds involved in a recognised industry training course of at least 40 credits per year

The starting out wage replaces the new entrant minimum wage and the trainee minimum wage for under 20 year olds. (There is still a trainee rate for those who are aged 20 years or older).



Is your workplace safe?

ACC levies will not be rising this year but that's not the only good news. If you run a safe work environment, you may be eligible for a Workplace Safety Discount from 1 April 2013.



In 2012, Cabinet agreed to expand the Workplace Safety Discount programme from the current seven high-risk industries to all industry groups.

This decision was made for a number of reasons but came about after requests were made from major industries to be considered for Workplace Safety Discounts. It aligned with ACC's goal to make health and safety incentive schemes attainable for all self-employed people and to all small to medium sized businesses in New Zealand.

Most importantly, the expansion of Workplace Safety Discounts is an opportunity to encourage small to medium sized businesses to increase their focus on health and safety systems and to raise their standard of safety management.

What does the expansion of Workplace Safety Discount mean for New Zealand businesses?

It means that all self-employed and small to medium-sized businesses will have the opportunity to apply for a Workplace safety discount, regardless of their industry. It's a way to save 10% on the work component of the levy.

Employee remuneration benefits

Much confusion arises over treatment of employee remuneration benefits.

We hope that the table below will help to clarify the current IRD policy for you.

Employee remuneration benefit example	FBT	PAYE	Exclusions
Laptop	No	No	Business tool exemption as mainly business use and cost less than \$5,000
Clothing	Yes	No	Exclusion for clothing with logo and clothing not normally worn for private purposes
Car	Yes	No	
Car Park	Yes	No	If the car park was provided at business premises there would be no FBT
Influenza vaccinations	No	No	Health and safety exclusion. Benefit can be provided onsite or offsite
Vouchers as prize or bonus	Yes	No	Exemption for under \$300 per quarter to each employee and under \$22,500 to all employees in four quarters
Discounted goods	Yes. A benefit arises if the price charged to the employee is below the lowest price that would be charged on an arm's length sale	No	Applies even if a family member of an employee takes up the discount

**Our office will close on
Friday 20 December 2013
and reopen on
Monday 13 January 2014.**

**We wish you all a safe, healthy,
and happy Christmas, and a
Prosperous New Year!**



Disclaimer

This publication has been carefully prepared, but it has been written in general terms only. The publication should not be relied upon to provide specific information without also obtaining appropriate professional advice after detailed examination of your particular situation.