

Empowered

A monthly online publication published by Thompson Management Consulting, LLC for small business change makers – July 2014

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Social Media Branding

Malika Bowling



Whether you are a small or large size business, you can't ignore social media. So many businesses view social media as a "must do" yet put little thought into a plan or strategy. They simply want to check a box. For me, it is a "must do well" to continue to build my brand and my business.

Back in 2008, I was laid off from my marketing job. At that point, I carefully re-evaluated what I wanted to do with my career. I quickly came to the conclusion I did NOT want another corporate job and began educating myself on social media, which is what got me started blogging about food.

I figured anyone can put up a website and spout off jargon claiming to be a social media expert. Rather than do the same thing, I had to figure out some other way to put myself in the spotlight while demonstrating expertise with social media. I wanted to use a topic I felt passionate about (food) and use Facebook, Twitter and other social media channels to drive traffic to my site. Six years later, I've carved out a nice niche for myself. I have a comfortable mix of clients and freelance writing assignments which allow me to indulge in some fun work-related travel.

My "Hire Me" page listed on my site describes the services I offer and invites prospective clients to contact me so we can discuss working together. From this, I've gotten new clients because I've demonstrated my ability to use social media effectively.

Besides landing clients for social media work, I've been able to capitalize on the relationships that brands like to form with bloggers. With a steady stream of business from both these areas, I'm never at a loss for work. Even better, I don't have to sell my services (one of my weaknesses). I've got people coming to me to work with them.

Plus, because I've built up my brand using social media, I've been invited to speak on panels, be a judge at culinary competitions and even author a book. My name is consistently "out there" which is crucial to continued success and achieving your goals.

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As a brand, whether you are a business or a personality here are some key points to keep in mind when it comes to social media:

- Tout your successes
- Cultivate relationships
- Worry less about numbers and more about engagement

Social media is still relatively new and while there aren't absolute rules some of the truths I found is that you should really try to engage your audience and form relationships. While I am vetted on my skills via my blog and social media, I have gotten recommendations from people I've connected with through social media.

When I hear friends complain about how tough the job market is, I think, don't dwell on finding a job, focus on creating one. Sure, it requires some hard work and dedication in the beginning, but once you get going you've got an income tool that no one can ever take away.

About Malika Bowling:

Malika Bowling is the author of Food Lovers' Guide to Atlanta and Food Blogging 101 and founder of Atlanta Restaurant Blog. Malika has served as a judge at various culinary competitions and food festivals, including the Taste of Atlanta. Malika holds the title of President of the Association of Food Bloggers. You can follow her on twitter @ATLEatsNTweets and on Instagram @malika_bowling.

Hiring Friends and Family

Austin E. Thompson, Jr.



You have been in business for a while and have realized the need to expand your staff by one or two people to meet increased demand. This is a great milestone in your business cycle, because increased demand is a result of effective marketing efforts, which is driving increased sales and revenue. However, without increasing the size of your staff, you will be challenged with a limited bandwidth to keep up with growing demand for your service. So, you consider your options on identifying qualified candidates to increase your capacity. As a small business owner, you don't have the luxury of an HR department to manage and oversee your recruiting needs, so you now have to switch hats and put on your recruiting cap.

You consider placing an ad in the local paper, advertising the availability on social media, placing a help wanted sign in your store front window, and utilizing other channels to announce the need for workers.

During the process, you remembered the friend who called you two weeks ago and told you he was laid off from work, and asked you to keep him in mind. Well, you and this friend have been acquaintances since high school, and attended college together. You recalled great times and a close bond as friends, and all the exciting moments you two had together. However, there is that one little thing that stood out about your friend. He hates early mornings and has a very short attention span, especially when the two of you had to work on senior projects together. Many times he left you short-handed to complete a project by yourself, while he went out partying, knowing you would be dedicated and committed to finishing the assignment, and you would still grant him his half of the credit without any fuss. You think that, despite his irresponsible behavior during college, time has passed and he obviously has matured since those care-free college days. It has been ten years since graduating from college, and he is now at a matured level to handle responsibility. You are still loyal to your friendship with him, and have moved him up on the list of potential hires. You figure he is your friend, you know him, he knows you, and you had great times together in the past. Life has taken you both on separate paths since graduation, but have always kept in touch via Facebook, and sporadic brief phone calls. Nevertheless, he is your friend, and who else is better for the job. Besides, he is out of work, and as a friend, you feel obligated to help him out.

Your loyalty to your friend is commendable, but you should not ignore the experience you had back in college. Also, your friend did not tell you the entire truth. Yes, he has been dismissed from work, but not due to downsizing. What he may not have told you is that those same qualities he displayed in college were the reasons for his dismissal from work. When placed in a team situation, he did not deliver, and left his team devoid of this input during critical times. When meetings were scheduled in the morning, he was excessively late, always giving an excuse for his irresponsible tardiness. After repeated warnings from his boss, they decided to release him for less than mediocre performance. This pattern has left him in the same situation with two previous companies. So, although you may have sympathy for his situation, the underlying truth that abetted his dismissal is still kept with him. He has not told you the truth about his job and why they let him go.

This is the person who has moved to the top of your list of candidates, based on friendship, and you are totally overlooking past experiences and questioning whether those same qualities you remembered back in college could have played a role in his unfortunate situation.

Hiring friends and family is a great thing, and not all experiences will turn out disastrous. You can definitely have a successful experience and working relationship with family or friends, but you have to be honest with those you consider to work with. It is a business risk, which you must identify. Here are a few things to ponder, when considering hiring family or friends:

1. Be honest about those you consider. If it is possible that your friend or family member may cause you trouble, do not consider that person.
2. Go beyond looking at the person as your good friend or family member. If this person has taken you for granted many times in the past, they will take you for granted when you hire them.
3. If your friend or family member respects you, and has been there for you as a genuine friend, they will be there for you as a genuine employee.
4. Nepotism can kill your business. Showing favoritism for a family member or friend, over a more qualified candidate, can be a risk from which you will not recover. It can cause you loyal customers and revenue.
5. Capitalize on the strengths of your friends or family members, if you consider this route. Those who have the training and education from which you can leverage and add to making your business successful, consider those who are sincere about working for you, and are serious about helping achieve your business objectives.
6. If you decide to hire family and friends, be careful to have clear defined roles for these individuals. Each person must understand his or her responsibility, and respect your direction. At the end of the day, being committed to the overall business objectives should drive everyone to perform at a high level, regardless of relations.
7. Make the hiring process official and consistent for family, friends, or otherwise. Everyone should be held to the same standard when applying for the position. Issue an application, and whatever other step in the process you would consider if the candidate was not a friend or family member.

The goal is to standardize the hiring process, and to show that you are serious about adding value to the position and business operation.

8. Talent acquisition is important when filling a position. This person or individuals should contribute to making your business successful. If a candidate, who is not a friend or family member, presents a resume that is of high consideration, hire that person.

In conclusion, make your decisions valuable. Hiring family or friends is not a terrible thing, because they can make a valuable contribution to your business. However, review and finalize your selections with open and honest decision-making. You ultimately will have to live with the choice you make.

FAITH: What Is Its Significance In Building Business Success?

Austin E. Thompson, Jr.

When you ask most people the one thing they must have in order to build a successful business, they would say “faith”. They will say you must have faith that success will come with hard work and dedication, and you need to have faith in yourself. They will also say that if you have faith, no amount of challenges will deter you from reaching your goal. Faith seems to be that one ingredient in which many entrepreneurs possess to drive business success. These entrepreneurs strive to build a successful business, grow their operations, and reap the benefits of all their hard work and dedication to building a successful venture, all based on their faith.

What is faith? If you look up this word in the dictionary it will say that faith is a strong or unshakeable belief in something, especially without proof or evidence. It also makes reference to a belief or complete trust in God and in one’s ability to overcome adversity (Merriam-Webster). Many entrepreneurs seem to have a high level of confidence built on strong faith in their ability to overcome whatever challenges are present in their path to success. You will hear certain references like “have faith that your loan will be approved”, “have faith that customers will find you”, “have faith that no matter how bleak the economy looks, your business will survive”, “have faith that the outcome of your hard work is a reflection on how much effort you put into growing your business”. Of course there are many others, but these are a few representations.

Why do so many of us place our business success solely on faith? Is it acceptable to have faith alone without, or in place of proper preparation and planning, and expect positive results? I have witnessed entrepreneurs executing their businesses without proper planning, allowing faith to determine their destiny. Just build it, and they will come. Never mind the absence of effective planning and preparation, but a strong sense in faith will deliver abundant success. This is the credence by which many entrepreneurs live. There is a strong confidence in the belief that by having faith in personal judgment, success will be realized.

In summary, there should never be an absence of effective business planning, which incorporates all necessary processes to drive your business success. Whether it's marketing, promoting, projecting revenue, projecting sales, optimizing operations, reaching new target markets, finding new channels to market your business, or any other business activity, you can't leave success in the hands of faith without a proper plan for how you will realize a desired outcome. Having faith in one's self is good, because without a strong belief in your ability to be successful, realizing your goal will be difficult. Have faith in your ability to deliver, substantiated by a well-designed path for the way forward. Faith plays a significant role in building a successful business, because the attitude suggests a high confidence in one's self to deliver a desired outcome. However, reinforce this significant quality with planning and preparation, and you will realize greater success in growing your businesses. Tune in to the Carib & Company Show on Saturday, July 12, 2014, where I will be a guest host discussing this subject with the audience, and we will have Entrepreneur, Mr. Don Clark in the studio. The frequency is 1420AM, or you can listen live at www.watb1420.com, and click on live streaming.



With

Austin E. Thompson, Jr.

CEO - Thompson Management Consulting, LLC

WATB 1420AM

www.watb1420.com

Saturday, July 12, 2014

4:00pm - 5:00pm

"FAITH: What Role Does It Play In Building Successful Businesses"

Lecture Series and Book Signing

Atlanta-Fulton County

Library System

A BRAND New You:

**Taking Ownership of Your Personal
BRAND**

Monday, July 14, 2014

6:00pm – 7:30pm

The Kirkwood Branch

11 Kirkwood Road

Atlanta, GA 30317

Tuesday, September 16, 2014

6:00pm – 7:30pm

The Fairburn Branch

60 Valley View Drive

Fairburn, GA 30213

Wednesday, September 17, 2014

6:30pm – 7:30pm

The Wolf Creek Branch

3100 Enon Road, S.W.

Atlanta, GA 30331

Ordained For Success:

**Don't Settle for Being Average
(Summer 2015)**

Tuesday, October 21, 2014

6:30pm – 7:30pm

The Wolf Creek Branch

3100 Enon Road, S.W.

Atlanta, GA 30331

Author and speaker, Austin E. Thompson, Jr. leads a dynamic and thought provoking discussion on building and maintaining a winning personal brand, and shares insight from his soon to be released book.

For Information: Contact each library location listed above or call (404) 587-3949

Entrepreneur Spotlight

Ms. Carmelita Marcia

Co-Founder

Gwinnett Association of Business

Entrepreneurs (GABE) &

CEO of Accessories A Go-Go



GABE, Gwinnett Association of Business Entrepreneurs, is a networking group for Gwinnett and surrounding counties, small business owners and entrepreneurs looking to establish and/or grow their business in the area. GABE was started 5 years ago, this month, July 2009, in one of our former founders' living room, Ms. Wendy Hughes. The four of us, Carolyn, Sylvia, Wendy, and I would meet and share our businesses together with local women we knew in the area. All of us were looking for a way to get out of our 9 -5 and grow our business.

I had just moved back from NY and met Wendy at a contract job we both were working at. Wendy is a retired school teacher and I told her I was a Substitute and College Professor and we hit it off instantly. Within a few months, we quickly outgrow her living room and we started hosting our monthly meetings at Wine Styles Venue at Web Ginn shops.

It grew from 10 ladies to 20 – 30 women and men networking and sharing their businesses and looking to grow with one another. From Wine Styles, other venues asked us to come to their establishment to help them grow their dinner crowd and share with the group specials they may have.

Jennifer Rocker joined the group after Wendy left and moved to North Carolina, to help take care of her Mom and we've been rolling strong ever since! GABE has been all over Gwinnett and Atlanta at premier venues and we are honored to call Gwinnett County Home.

Today, GABE meets twice a month on Mondays at our partners – Carolyn Wright and Sylvia Culbertson's art gallery – The Lona Art Gallery in Downtown Lawrenceville on the Square – 176 West Crogan Street. You can join us on Facebook – GABE and meetup.com – GABE. We meet from 6:30 – 8:00 pm and feature Guest Speakers and Vendor Tables Spotlights for small businesses to advertise their business with the group. We have over 200 Members and are still growing

Accessories a GO-GO is my baby, your one stop accessory online boutique for all of your fabulous accessories that you won't see no one else "Rocking". I'm inexpensive and have a fashionable quality selection that appeals to ladies of all ages (15 – 60 years of age). I started Accessories a GO-GO in 2003, selling Vintage clutches, and from there, grew the jewelry and handbag line.

I would go home (Washington, DC and NY) and come back, and get stopped out and about, or at an Event "Where did you get that from?" I would always say, "Back Home" and people would ask me if I would buy one for them.

Thus, started Accessories a GO-GO. My first sale was to a white woman from Chattanooga, Tennessee, who came to Atlanta one weekend to shop. She wrote me a check for \$100. I still have that check (LOL), because she was my First Customer. It's my motivation, you can do Anything! I sold her three or four pieces of jewelry out of the back of my car trunk, just because she stopped me and asked me where did I buy the necklace I was wearing. From there, I started vending at Trade shows and Fashion Events in Atlanta, New York, and D.C., accessorizing ladies to create a fabulous look.

I like to wear pieces that you won't see anyone else with. I love standing out from the crowd, and I don't like to look like everyone else (LOL). After I started selling accessories, I moved to New York for a little while, where I enrolled in FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology) and took some courses in Product Development and Handbag design to learn more about selling and designing a line. Thus, the "Carmelita Marcia" clutch was born. My bags are customized leather or fabric, and stitched with label in "Green", my signature color. My leather comes from the garment district and my seamstress, Maria, is still in NY (Brooklyn, now Queens).

Accessories a GO-GO has been in business for 11 years. Blood, sweat, and tears were invested in developing my business. I'm motivated by GOD and seeing other Entrepreneurs and Designers make it happen. It inspires me to keep pushing. You can purchase online at www.accessoriesagogo.com or check me out on Instagram – accessoriesagogo, because everything isn't posted on my website.

FASHION is MY PASSION! I've also been blessed to teach Fashion at three different colleges/universities (See Bio) to upcoming designers and students who want to learn more about the industry. My next venture is a small store front to share with Atlanta and a place where women can come in and just have a cup of coffee and unwind from the week and talk FASHION!

Business Marketplace

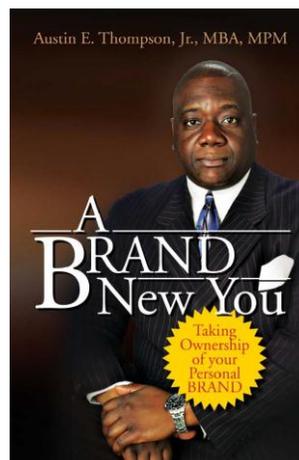
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Gwinnett Association of Business Entrepreneurs – GABE

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176 W. Crogan Street, Lawrenceville, GA 30046

June Meeting Dates: 7/14/14 and 7/28/14 – 6:30pm to 8:00pm

For Information: Carmelita Marcia (404) 509-0690



Please join Austin E. Thompson, Jr., Co-host on the Carib & Company Show for a discussion on **“FAITH: What Role Does It Play In Building A Successful Business.”** We will have Mr. Don Clark, Entrepreneur, joining us in the studio to discuss how faith drove his entrepreneurial curiosity, which lead to starting several business ventures.



Tune in this Saturday, July 12, 2014 at 4:00pm on 1420AM, or join us online at www.watb1420.com, and click on listen live. Thank you very much for your support, and we look forward to a progressive discussion.

Seeking Professional Articles

As a newsletter supporting small business and economic development, we seek your valuable professional input and interest in contributing articles in Empowered. If you would like to submit articles and promote yourself, please contact us at info@tmconsultingllc.com. Be a change maker and join the movement of small business owners and entrepreneurs who are making a positive impact in business innovation.