



Blogs and Microblogging Can Be Valuable Tools for Tech Transfer Offices

By Fuentek's Jack Spain

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The task of developing a social media strategy for your organization may sound daunting. So much of the hype of social media tools appears to be focused on consumers or business-to-consumer (B2C) applications. After following this trend for the past several years, I am seeing many organizations beginning to analyze and even embrace social media tools for business-to-business applications (B2B).

There are an abundance of social media tools available today, but I am going to focus on two specific tools that can deliver real value to a Technology Transfer Office (TTO) – blogs and microblogging.

Blogs

Blogs (or web logs) can be an effective vehicle for communications today in a time when information travels at the speed of the Internet. Blogs can be used by TTOs to:

- Communicate valuable expertise and experiences with technology commercialization
- Broadcast information on key intellectual property and licensing opportunities across your institution or enterprise
- Share critical needs for collaboration and partnerships—an important component of Symbiotic Innovation
- Improve overall awareness of your organization

Microblogging

While microblogging tools (dominated by Twitter today) have considerable limitations, they offer the potential to be an effective communications vehicle. Microblogging can be utilized to:

- Announce new blog postings and other relevant announcements
- Provide your organization with a communication tool to quickly and cost-effectively extend your reach to prospective licensees and partners
- Expand and extend your current professional network of contacts



Earlier this year (2010), it was reported that more than 50 million [Twitter] tweets per day were being generated. That's 600 tweets per second. I characterize the more than 100 million registered Twitter users today as follows:

- **Public figures**, including politicians, public servants, celebrities and sports figures. These individuals currently dominate the Top 100 lists and some have attracted millions of followers. I believe that their dominance of this medium will likely shift over time.
- **Media professionals** across all sectors, including journalists, media outlets, and the trade press. The media at large has really embraced microblogging over the past 2 years. This category will continue to expand rapidly into the future, as it has provided an innovative new medium to share breaking news stories as well as editorial content on a timely and virtually continuous basis.
- **Messaging professionals**, including consultants, professional speakers, and various subject matter experts. Microblogging has provided a cost effective megaphone for independent consultants and organizations with large and small advertising budgets to have a voice in a very crowded space.
- **Marketing professionals**, both internal to an organization and the external service providers they hire to support them (i.e., media, public relations, e-mail marketing, and advertising agencies). This category includes forward-thinking TTOs that are creative and looking for innovative approaches to market their capabilities and intellectual property (IP) portfolios for technology commercialization and licensing.

Of course, there is also a sizeable category of “**Other**” individuals with abundant opinions and perspectives for anyone willing to listen.

TTOs have the opportunity to capitalize on this new communications vehicle as another tool in their marketing toolbox to supplement their current IP marketing efforts.

Guidelines for Blogs and Microblogging

I offer the following guidelines to position your organization to capitalize on the use of these two and other social media tools.

1. **Plan.** Establish a plan that links the use of blogs, microblogging, and other social media tools to specific goals, objectives, and challenges within your organization. Establish metrics (hard and soft) to monitor the effectiveness of your use of these tools and their impact on your goals. For more about metrics, check out our paper “How’d We Do?: Establishing Useful Technology



Transfer Metrics” (available in the Insights section of <http://www.fuentek.com>).

2. **Connect.** Proactively expand and enhance your professional network on an ongoing basis. Tools like LinkedIn, Plaxo and even Facebook can assist you in identifying the right person at the right place at the right time that may be your next licensee or business partner. These tools are a natural extension of the relationships that you are continuously cultivating via professional associations and your internal interactions.
3. **Integrate.** Become an active (rather than a casual) participant and establish accountability for doing so. “Institutionalize” your use of these tools, so that daily disruptions do not cause you to constantly put off these tools until “tomorrow.” Establish a schedule each day when you or a member of your staff is tending to the care and feeding of your social media platforms.
4. **Listen.** Social media is extremely dynamic, with new trends, technologies, and applications emerging monthly. Observe the emergence of these new trends, capitalizing on new sources of information and professional relationships. And remember to listen to what others are blogging about that provide insights on new trends in technology commercialization and licensing of intellectual property.
5. **Engage.** Identify opportunities for you and your organization to deliver value to your subscribers. You should continually seek opportunities to maximize the value they return to your organization.

As you plan to leverage social media tools, think beyond the written word and your traditional communication methods. When feasible, take a multi-media approach, incorporating pictures, audio and video to represent your technology portfolio beyond a static Web site.

Social media tools are clearly not a fad and will continue to evolve and improve as a key communications vehicle for organizations across the globe. If you have not already embraced these tools, I encourage you to dig in and begin your planning process.

If you would like to discuss the concepts presented here in further detail, please contact Fuentek at info@fuentek.com or 919-249-0327.