

# Faces, Spaces, Links, Tweets & Dots: How Social Networking Sites Help Promote Your Studio



**Above:** An image from a 2007 shoot, most recently on Safeway.com. Photo Copyright © Kelly Cline Photography.

**Below:** Facebook and MySpace have become the premier social media of the present.

Social networking sites—once the exclusive domain of teens—are gaining grow-

ing popularity with businesses looking to expand their client base. To explore this emerging marketing terrain, I recruited a couple of tour guides familiar with the landscape: Joan Stewart, who publishes “The Publicity Hound’s Tips of the Week,”

a free e-zine on how to generate thousands of dollars in free publicity, from her website, [www.publicityhound.com](http://www.publicityhound.com); and Catherine Brown, director of business social networking at Dotster Inc., an online business services provider that recently debuted Dotster Connect, [www.dotster.com/connect/smb](http://www.dotster.com/connect/smb), dedicated to small business. I also spoke with photographers who are making these new outlets work for them.

## 1. Facebook: Networking Frontrunner

Long one of the top personal networking sites, Facebook has developed a growing business following. Stewart advises, “Before you start promoting your business, introduce yourself and start the conversation. When you host a special event, such as an open house or webinar, create an online event from Applications on the right side of your homepage. Invite friends and followers by email. If your target audience is within a narrow niche, say, nature lovers if you’re a nature photographer, select people from your target group, invite them to be friends, or write on a person’s page or wall.”

Seattle-based food photographer Kelly Cline ([www.kclinephotography.com](http://www.kclinephotography.com)) uses Facebook frequently to cross-promote her work and business via feeds, links and photos. “For the past year, I have used Facebook daily to stay in touch with other photographers, clients and industry people,” she says. “I noticed an increase in hits to my business website almost immediately when I added site information to my profile.” Prior to accepting or rejecting a request, she emails asking who the contact is and how they know her. “If someone is just looking for a date, I explain nicely that I’m not interested and decline the request,” says Cline.

Paul Steven Finkelstein ([www.paulstevencphotography.com](http://www.paulstevencphotography.com)), a South Florida-based portrait photographer, uses Facebook as a form of free advertising for his 30-foot mobile studio. “I started separate groups for my high school and college (Rochester

Sign Up Sign up for Facebook to see more and connect with Facebook. Already a Member? Login

Facebook Browse more Products

facebook

Founded: February 4, 2004

Information

Website: <http://www.facebook.com/>

Company Overview: Facebook gives people the power to share and makes the world more open and connected. Millions of people use Facebook everyday to keep up with friends, upload an unlimited

Fans  
6 of 790,947 fans

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Institute of Technology) contacts. This has helped my business because they know people from their local communities and online, and you never know when they're going to see my company logo on Facebook or around town. Overall, I've found that people buy from people they know, like and trust—in that order—so start by building relationships, not by selling.”

Dennis Kelly ([www.dpkellyphoto.com](http://www.dpkellyphoto.com)), a New Jersey photographer specializing in senior portraits, designed a personal page on Facebook in March with a promotional message and photos of local teens. “We ‘friend request’ the teens who are the appropriate age for senior portraits in the schools we want to reach,” says Dennis. “To succeed, have a younger woman run the site. Teenagers won’t accept friend requests from 50-year-old male photographers.”

## 2. LinkedIn: Leading Business Connection

The key website for business networking, LinkedIn lets you make connections with people you know and trust, and shouldn’t include Facebook-type personal information. Says Stewart, “A short list of quality connections can be more powerful than a list of several hundred connections you barely know. To promote your expertise, answer photography questions in the Q&A section. Questioners can flag the ‘best answer,’ so if your answers regularly stand out, your profile will reflect the number of ‘best answers’ you have accumulated. Great PR for your business.”

Since Cline joined LinkedIn in 2007, the site has reconnected her with former clients, associates and prospects. Yet, says Cline, “Invitations to connect can go unanswered for long periods of time, because most people are not camped out on LinkedIn day in and day out. It’s a very passive site.”

## 3. Twitter: Nothing to Tweet At

Many consider Twitter trivial, but site veterans are finding ways to turn posts into profits. The site specializes in minimal communications, posts or “tweets” not exceeding 140 characters. Says Stewart, “From my own experience, I know Twitter



**Above:** Chef image, 2007, featured in trade and educational literature. Photo Copyright © Kelly Cline Photography.

**Below:** Taylor Swift image, July 2008, at Summerfest in Milwaukee, for [onmilwaukee.com](http://onmilwaukee.com). Photo Copyright © Deone Jahnke Photography.

makes the cash register ring. When I wrote that I would be offering a teleseminar series on LinkedIn, people who follow me on Twitter started to tweet about it and signed up for the event on Twitter. Use this site

wisely, and you’ll sell more photos and services, and draw more clients.”

Again, keep people posted on your personal life before you start promoting your business. Then consider writing about a class you’ve taken or are teaching, discuss projects you’re finishing, shows where you’ll be exhibiting and link to articles you’ve written.

“With Twitter, hits to my website have risen and my business network has exploded,” says Cline. “People in food styling and photography who were out of reach are now part of my network. I generate interest and buzz by sending polls to those who follow me.”

Adds Finkelstein, “Aside from getting this magazine’s attention, I drew the attention of the *Palm Beach Post*. I sent a message through Twitter about featuring me in an article about my mobile studio and received a reply saying they would see what they could do.”

## 3. MySpace: For Music Lovers

Although it has fallen out of favor with business people because of its increased sexual content, MySpace is still the site of choice for musicians and artists. Says Jahnke ([www.deonejahnke.com](http://www.deonejahnke.com)), Milwaukee, WI-based photographer for the arts and music fields, “Music lovers gravitate to MySpace to find bands and performers, and that’s where the record labels and publications go. I post my portfolio on the Pics section of my page and cross-promote my clients by featuring folks who’ve used my pictures in my Top Friends section.”

## 4. Flickr, PhotoBucket, YouTube: Vivid Visuals

Primarily featuring photos taken by amateurs, Flickr and PhotoBucket are great places for pro shooters to get exposure for their work and link back to their websites. Says Cline, “Using Flickr, I have been sought out by buyers and journalists who want my images for their projects.” Suggests Stewart, “Carefully read the terms of service at each of these sites, which includes choosing levels of security and deciding if you want to disable comments.”

Adds Cline, “Although iStockphoto is more of a crowd-sourcing site than a social networking site, I rely on it heavily to net-

work socially with clients and colleagues.”

Uploading videos to YouTube and other video-sharing sites is one of the most powerful ways to draw traffic to your website. “Create short videos, up to two and a half minutes, about yourself and your business, at work in your studio, or offering lighting tips for young pros,” suggests Stewart. A simple flip video camera costs \$150 and works well enough.

## 5. Dotster: Business Networking


I was intrigued to learn that online business service providers are starting to help small businesses create their own social networks, as standalones or as tabs on their current websites. Dotster’s Catherine Brown explains, “Using a community platform, you can create a site with your company’s look and feel, and features your customers want. Direct them to your site and your own community, where they can blog or participate in forums.” This is a welcome option if you are uncomfortable sharing personal information with online strangers, which is key to most social networking sites. Adds Brown, “Once you get the community started, it will help build your brand, generate customer loyalty and spread the word about your business.”

## Closing Comments

A few final tips for success in the social networking environment:

“Write a strong business profile for yourself; when someone invites you to an event, respond whether you can come or not; consider creating your own group devoted to a specific topic; and once you create your page on a social networking site, check back at least weekly to read and respond to notes left for you,” says Stewart.

“Brand everything you make and put on the Web; watermark it, make sure the world knows it is yours, and how to contact you; keep your work up to date, your content fresh; and only bite off as much as you can chew,” concludes Cline.

Now, I’m off to tweet on Twitter. 

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*Alice B. Miller is the founder of Plum Communications (www.plumcomm.com), an editorial and marketing communications resource for the photo-imaging industry. Formerly editor of Studio Photography magazine, Alice has a clientele that includes photographers, manufacturers, publications and associations. She is a vice president, board member and Director of Public Relations for the International Photographic Council.*