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A look into StumbleUpon and Fast Pitch Business Networking

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I launched the GST Media Blog with the intent to write about how entrepreneurs and business professionals can leverage free social media to increase brand recognition, cash flow and website traffic. I have researched and sampled hundreds of web 2.0 tools and platforms in order to educate all our clients and readers on the best tools and methods to use for search engine optimization and other reasons mentioned above. It is clear that you can utilize free social networks, blogs, video networks and other tools like twitter to strengthen your web presence, but let's talk about money.

Everyone loves the word free, especially when the free object holds value for you and your company. But, I came to the conclusion that I desperately needed to start thinking about the cost-benefit analysis of decisions, instead of thinking free is always most beneficial.

Having started two companies under the age of 21, I will be the first person to advocate using as many free tools as possible. However, in this specific instance I am making an exception. Over the course of my years as NAI Global's chief SEO and web 2.0 specialist, I tested thousands of web 2.0 tools, services and products. Many of the tools I utilized were free and I encountered a range in the value added through utilizing specific tools. I signed up for social networks that lacked any type of differentiation and/or value and needless to say I never returned to complete my profile. I have submitted blogs and websites to thousands of directories and in doing so I came to the conclusion that 95% of the directories' offered worthless inbound links that held absolutely zero value (some of them probably hurt me because of their bad reps with search engine spyzers). Sifting through the mess of invaluable social networks, blogs and social media sites, I managed to find a few free web 2.0 tools that help the type of cost-effective value I was searching for. Platforms, like LinkedIn and Twitter gave me a much-needed boost in Google, but I was not even close to satisfied.

One day I woke up and decided to spend some money. So I decided to broaden my web 2.0 and SEO vision and found a whole new venue of innovative tools. I am going to spotlight my two favorites in this article.

StumbleUpon is simple in concept, but they have created a valuable tool and asset for all bloggers, marketing teams and website admins. The platform allows you to discover and share blogs/sites you like by clicking a thumbs up or thumbs down button you install on your browser's toolbar.

The more people that give a site thumbs up, the more stars it will have next to the website name in search results. They currently have 6.428 million members discovering the latest and greatest websites and blogs. The real value is the advertising campaigns you can run, once you are a member. To start, you type the page you want to promote, which would most likely be your blog, and then you pick the user interest groups you want to target. Once that is set you add funds to your account on StumbleUpon and set a daily budget. The beauty is that you do not have to bid for ads, which is the model on Facebook. To advertise on StumbleUpon you have a flat rate of \$.05 per click, which is amazing for those of us with tight marketing budgets. If you choose a daily budget of

\$25 you will attract 500 targeted visitors in one single day! The other beauty of StumbleUpon's model, is that you actually get the total amount of visitors you want. I have run six campaigns on StumbleUpon and every time I got every single visitor I expected. You get a detailed analytics chart to look over during and after your campaign, which is a nice touch.

Fast Pitch Business Networking: This membership fee based social network has really grown on me lately. When I first heard about I was somewhat hesitant to fork over \$81 for a quarterly Platinum membership. I am currently about one month in to the start of my membership and I have seen more noticeable results through my Platinum status here than on any free social network I have used over the last four years. They do offer a basic free membership and a \$9 a month premium membership. The first point of value is the fact that the community itself is a niche and all the members are very professional and goal oriented when logged into their profile. Each level of member is marked with a certain number of stars, which makes finding credible and serious professionals an easier task than on any other social network.

I will now fill you in on the benefits of paying to be a Platinum member on Fast Pitch:

- * Highly customizable user profile
- * 3 stars next to name and picture when people search the network or visit your page, which is the most stars you can have based only off membership
- * Ability to run large scale email marketing campaigns (50,000 emails a month)
- * Ability to create and run powerful community groups
- * Ability to create and mass promote press releases
- * Full integration of your blog into the network and ability to promote it to 100,000 members instantly
- * Ability to create, post and distribute classifieds for you business to the whole community
- * Personalized search engine optimization, which allows you to input specific tags and links in order to leverage Fast Pitches Google Page Rank of 8 and close relationships with the search engines. Because Platinum members are using the platform's page rank, they have quickly get picked up in search engines for several competitive keywords and eventually get to the first page
- * Access to research reports specific to your individual profile that shows you who visited, how many clicks there were and more data

Well sorry for the lengthy post, but this is material everyone should have a grasp on because as I have said several times in past posts; web 2.0 and SEO are not trends...they mark an evolution in our society and economy. If you remember that and take it to heart you are all set for the future.

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