

Facebook and Twitter have truly become the modern modes of communication. A recent article posted on www.brandrepublic.com (see <http://www.brandrepublic.com/News/964910/Youth-flock-Twitter-Facebook-users-start-show-age/>) gauges the average age of Facebook users jumping from 26 to 33, while Twitter's average user is age 31. What's more, Facebook is now counting 300 million users, with the fastest growing demographic at 35 years and older. Mashable.com estimates that Twitter will grow to 26 million users by 2010.

No longer catering to teen and college crowds, social media is a growing trend with users of all ages and a useful new business tool.

Businesses are beginning to see it is a worthy means to reaching new clients, and staying connected to existing customers. It opens a new dialogue and offers a way to monitor what is being said about your business. No longer are we restricted to office hours. Clients can follow us on Twitter and connect to our Facebook Company page to ask questions, seek information or gain insight. It provides that accessibility in a personable way. No one needs to feel intimidated to ask a question or seek out background about our business. We're there to help, as we've always been.

And we're not alone.

The Big Four CPA firms – Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, Ernst & Young, KPMG and Pricewaterhouse Coopers – are invested in social media. Even the National Society of Accountants has established a Facebook account.

By building accounts for Bultynck & Co. on Facebook and Twitter, we are reaching out to a new audience. We are connecting to people who are searching for financial advice. We are becoming part of an ongoing conversation. By interacting online, potential clients have a chance to learn more about our company and decide whether our services fit their needs.

We use social media to post content we consider beneficial for our online following. As we approach tax time, we have outlined tips to help people, "Make decisions today that translate into tax savings tomorrow." We also shared those tips individually on Twitter under the hash tag "taxtipsfor2010."

Social media allows you to connect instantaneously – whether it's with 140 characters on Twitter, or a status update on Facebook. Only those who find your information useful will continue to follow your updates, so it is important to know your audience, share useful information, and do so regularly. Social media is not a substitute for talking directly with a client, but rather a place where current and prospective clients can learn more about you and your business.

Social media is an investment. Though the sites are fee-free, it takes time and energy to maintain them. Just as it is important to have a functional and informative Web site, it is possible to augment your reach and grow your business by using these tools. They allow your company to reach a market or audience that otherwise may not be aware of your services. Choose the social media site or sites that best suit your business and move forward with confidence.

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