

Here's the skinny on online and social networking communication tools

By Jim Morris

Staying in touch with your customers has become faster, easier and more personal through today's high-tech communication tools. Although there seem to be new services almost every day, here's the 411 on some of the most popular sites. (To see how roller skating center operators are using these tools, see Jim Morris' Roundup in the November-December, 2009 issue of The RINKSIDER.)

-- **Facebook (facebook.com)** Free: "A social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them." It can be used to send personal or business messages. It also has a paid advertising section.

-- **Twitter (twitter.com)** Free: "A social networking and micro-blogging service utilizing instant messaging, SMS (text messaging) or a web interface. Share and discover what's happening right now, anywhere in the world."

-- **MySpace (myspace.com)** Free: "Find friends and classmates, meet new people, listen to free music and build playlists, share photos, watch videos, start a blog, read celebrity news."

-- **tXtBlaster (txtblaster.com)** Free: "A free mass text messaging tool

used by thousands of groups nationwide to stay updated and connected. tXtBlaster text messages are sent from online or your cell phone to your entire group, subgroup or selected individuals."

-- **Constant Contact, Inc. (constantcontact.com)** Paid: It "helps small businesses, associations, and nonprofits connect with their customers, clients, and members. Makes it easy to create



professional HTML email campaigns with no tech skills. Launched in 1998."

-- **Email Blasting Service (innovations.com/service-email-blast)** Paid: "Provides a quick and simple way for you to send bulk emails to your leads and customers."

-- **BuyerZone (buyerzone.com)** Paid: "You can reach thousands of people at once and get a faster response than you would through most other

marketing campaigns."

-- **SendBlaster (sendblaster.com)** Paid: "You don't have to recurrently pay high prices for every email shot you send out, even if your prospect number grows you pay one time for full bulk email marketing program license." Downloadable software.

-- **Yelp (yelp.com)** Free and paid: "A Web company that operates a social networking, user review, and local

search web site of the same name. Over 25 million people access Yelp's website each month."

-- **Judy's book (myjudysbook.com)** Free: It "has over a million nationwide write-ups, reviews and ratings on local businesses to help you make informed decisions."

-- **Bing (bing.com)** Free and paid: "A search engine that finds and organizes the answers you need so you can

make faster, more informed decisions." Part of MSN.

-- **Google (google.com)** Free and paid: Google Inc. is an American public corporation, earning revenue from advertising related to its Internet search, e-mail, and online mapping." Perhaps the most popular search engine.

-- **Yahoo (yahoo.com)** Free and paid: "The world's most-visited home page. Quickly find what you're searching for, get in touch with friends and stay in-the-know with the latest news and information."

-- **Yellow Book (yellowbook.com)** Paid: "Your nationwide official source for local yellow pages and white pages information."

-- **Business.com (business.com)** Free and paid: "The leading business search engine and business directory designed to help its users find the companies, products, services, and information they need."

-- **411.com (411.com)** Free and paid: "The white pages phone directory is your source for free people and business searches in the U.S. and Canada."

Note: all passages in quotation marks are directly from that service's Web site.



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