



## **Oxford Economics: The Return on Investment of Business Travel Tips for Member Participation on Social Media Platforms**

As you may know, business blogs have emerged as one of the most trusted sources of information about business issues in the country. While still a relatively young outlet, the online business community has grown to be critically important to educate audiences and raise awareness around important business issues, and business bloggers have the capacity to reach and influence millions of readers every day from blog posts, Twitter updates and even crossover into traditional media outlets, such as *Portfolio*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*.

Given the importance of the Oxford Economics study on the ROI of business travel, it will be very important to speak to the benefits of business travel from both an industry and individual standpoint to online business leaders in your community. To build a conversation on the benefits of travel for business purposes, we recommend that you speak to blogs that are prevalent in your community or with whom you have familiarity that reach your clients and local business leaders. By participating in discussions about business issues on business blogs and other social media platforms, you will be able to spread the value of the study to business audiences in your own words and discuss the benefits of business travel to give the issue greater visibility.

However, because blogs, Facebook and Twitter have large audiences who participate in discussions every day, it is important to know how best to approach prominent business bloggers and their audiences. Below please find tips for outreach about the study on social media platforms.

### **Be respectful of the community**

Respect is the most important piece to online communication. When responding to blog posts in the comments section, it is crucial to be respectful of both the blogger and his or her audience reading your response. Blogs, in particular, are viewed as credible sources of information because all participants have the opportunity to voice their opinions on any given issue. In order for others to view your statements as legitimate on online forums, they will have to be delivered in a way that encourages them to understand and even side with your opinions—that means providing information that is relevant to the discussion and delivering it in a respectful manner.

### **Transparency will go a long way with online communities**

Online communities can be wary of corporate or impersonal messaging, so blogs serve as important outlets to reach communities that might otherwise ignore these types of messaging. By interacting with online communities on blogs, you are attempting to enter the online space – on their terms – to participate in a dialogue that already has started without you. Bloggers will be much more accommodating if you exhibit transparency and a willingness to listen to other opinions.

### **Know where your target audience goes to find information about important issues already**

Not all blogs, Twitter feeds or Facebook pages are created equal. With most online communities, discussions are led by a small number of true “thought leaders,” or those who are respected as experts on issues and can command large audiences. By using search engines such as Google, Technorati (<http://www.technorati.com>) and Blogpulse (<http://www.blogpulse.com>), you will be able to find the most visible and influential blogs discussing business issues directly in your community. To get started, we recommend looking at the blogs hosted on the bizjournals network (<http://www.bizjournals.com>) as well as the blogs hosted on your community newspaper’s Web site.

### **Be knowledgeable about the study...but explain it in your own words**

It is important to learn as much as you can about the study before talking about it with online communities. By serving as the credible source of information about the study, and about business travel in general, you will educate the audiences you want to reach and become an ambassador for the industry to your community. It is also important to explain the study in your own words. Your individual participation is critical to spreading the right information about business travel in your community, and it allows you to be the face of the issue to the audiences with which you interact.

### **Become a valuable member of the Twitter community through active participation**

Twitter updates allow Web users the opportunity to post what they want, when they want. The only limitation lies in the 140-character limit. We recommend posting updates to the study, attaching photos and videos to the Tweets, and interacting in the community by “reTweeting” (or “RT,” in Twitterspeak) interesting or relevant updates from your followers or the people you follow. The goal is to become an active participant in conversations about business travel, and the only way to do this is to contribute effective and engaging Tweets to the community.

### **Establish yourself as a valuable contributor on Facebook**

Because most of the content on Facebook is on “locked” accounts, the most effective ways to reach and connect with Facebook members is to do it on their terms – by creating Facebook group and fan pages and allowing them to join based on the content you provide on the pages. The Facebook community is notoriously skeptical of direct contact, particularly with regards to campaigns, so your outreach on Facebook will achieve better results with a public profile through a fan or group page.

### **Don’t over-think the interaction with online communities**

Understand that there is no such thing as “off the record” with bloggers and online communities, but don’t take that to mean you must be guarded with your communication and outreach. You likely will be introducing yourself to a group of people who care about common business issues, and it will be important to be upfront, accessible and willing to communicate. The mere participation in the social media space will present new online allies who will help both you achieve your goals, as long as both sides can begin a legitimate discussion about relevant issues.