

Hello fellow Toastmasters how are we all doing are we coping with these strange and challenging times that we find ourselves in.

Are you suffering from lockdown lethargy or like me is your wife, partner, significant other keeping you very busy with lots of decorating gardening and those just jobs that you've been putting off for years?

we had an executive meeting the other day via Zoom, another bit of technology and it was agreed that I would produce a video with suggestions on marketing, social media websites etc. I am not a professional in any of these areas but have used them over the years and they have certainly raised my profile. So when viewing please be kind to me and not too critical.

It became clear that not all of our members have got webpages, have used social media like Facebook or Instagram and also, because of the current situation are not able to attend wedding fairs or open days, so they will be just sitting at home at the moment wondering when the next job was going to come in?

Now is a good time to be working on your marketing I'm sure you are aware that for a lot of our wedding couples they are having to postpone and rearrange the weddings for next year, as a result of this it means that assuming we come out of lockdown this year, which is by no means certain listening to the Prime Ministers statement on Sunday. (I am recording this on the Monday 11th May following his statement) next year is going to be incredibly busy and a lot of venues will not have availability because they've moved functions from this year into next year and couples who are currently thinking about their wedding will be finding that venues that they particularly want will be booked up. so now is a good time for us to be promoting ourselves and encouraging couples to consider us before they find that we won't be available! I certainly have moved probably 20 or 30 of this year's jobs into next year which means that we're going to have a lot of duplicate dates which will need to be covered and if you are a popular Toastmaster you need to start engaging with your couples now.

Many of the couples planning to get married next year will be in lockdown at the moment and no doubt have got plenty of time to be putting together their plans for that ideal day. You need to be promoting yourself **now** so that the thought processes in their minds include thinking about a Toastmaster.

You should be planning now to ensure that you are ready to go forward when lockdown ends. you can either be an ostrich with your head in the sand and hope for the best or you can be the Phoenix doing the ground work now and ready to rise from the ashes of lockdown and raring to go. What will you be?

Firstly, let's talk about websites do you have one, is it up to the mark, how do you get one, why should you have one?

It's fair to say that websites aren't necessarily the first port of call for couples these days they probably use social media such as Facebook Instagram Youtube to do their first research. In particular the Wedding Group pages on Facebook which I will talk about later. However a website is still useful doesn't need to cost a lot of money and if you're like me, when I'm talking to couples who have never met me or never seen me I point them in the direction of my website with the line that they can see what I look like and show that I only have one head not two!

There are lots of free website builders on the internet can I suggest that you Google "how to create your own website free" and you'll find lots of them that will come up such as go daddy Ionos Wix and Yola. I have no preference. And I will produce a written list of things that I mention to go alongside this video which will be available on the Forum.

Many of you will have seen the adverts produced by Freddie Flintoff and Harry Redknapp showing how easy it was to do. If you do not already have one you will need a domain name but these website builders will help you choose one. Alternatively, you could use a website builder locally to you or I could recommend a chap called Mitch who has done the website for a number of Toastmasters and Toast master associations at a cost of between three and £500 depending on what you want.

Next let's talk about social media by which I mean things like Facebook Instagram Youtube Twitter LinkedIn amongst others.

None of these need to cost you anything and yet Facebook and Instagram and to lesser degree YouTube are probably the go to place for young people these days.

Apologies to those members who already actively using these methods of marketing but it is clear from looking through our recent membership survey, many of you are not. It maybe that you do not need any more

work! but I hear regularly from Toastmasters moaning that they haven't got much work but when you look into them you find that they are doing very little in the way of self-promotion. If you don't start selling yourself who else will?

First you need to register with each of the services and for Facebook you need to create a Facebook page. This is easier than it sounds and if you are not sure how to do it talk to your children or more particularly your grandchildren who will be experts. My eldest granddaughter set me up on Facebook many years ago.

Once you have your accounts set up, encourage all your family and friends and professional contacts to like your page and to become followers. The more you have the more your posts will be seen and hopefully liked and shared by others who will see your profile.

If you don't understand how it works let me try to explain. For every post that one of your contacts likes, all of their contacts, will see that they have liked it. So, for example if you have 10 friends and they all in turn have 10 friends and all of your friends like your post then you will reach 100 people. As an example I have 575 Friends on my personal Facebook and 370 on my business Page. On the post I put out there recently about not increasing my prices within two days it had reached 397 people.

In passing the reason that I referred to no price increases was following on from an interview that I heard on the Jeremy Vine show on Friday first of May with a bride who was having Great difficulty with her venue because of the current situation. From the interview it was clear that a number of the wedding suppliers were increasing their prices the next year because of the expected surge in bookings from those who couldn't get married this year. I took the opportunity to promote the fact that we were not increasing our prices for next year and posted this on my Facebook page and InstaGram page with a picture. You need to be able to react quickly and positively to such news items and in doing so you'll be promoting yourself. If you didn't hear the interview it may still be available if you go to the BBC radio two website look for Jeremy Vine show for 1 May and it starts one hour 29 minutes into the show

Once you have done this you will be able to add contents to your page in particular using photographs etc because posts with photographs always seem to attract more attention.

Use it to highlight good reviews that you have received, promote any special offers you might have, remind people of any wedding fairs or open days that you might be attending. Obviously not at the moment but as soon as we can get going again. It keeps your profile in the public eye.

Don't forget whenever you post something, where appropriate, finish your comments by saying "like and share" this encourages the reader to click the like and share tabs which spreads your message to all their followers.

The next thing to do is to become a member of the many wedding group pages throughout the country. Obviously the ones you want to join are the ones that are in your area. In most areas you will find there are lots of wedding groups that you can join again for free. Once you are a member you will be able to post Messages and adverts within those group pages promoting your services. To do this you need to go into the search Area and just type wedding groups in Manchester, Birmingham, Derby, wherever you want and a list of them will come up. You can then apply to join. You will be approved and you can then start commenting on things that you see within those groups. If you're lucky like me you will find that couples will request a particular service, of course in our case , Toastmasters and even if you don't see it if you have enough followers and professional colleagues like photographers cars etc that you work with they will recommend you and you'll get the message forwarded to you to see. You have been, In the parlance they use, tagged.

InstaGram is particularly good for photographs so use photos that you already have. When you are working encourage the professional photographer to let you have any photos that they have taken with you in to use on your social media. don't forget if they do let you have them i.e. to say "thank you" and then give them a credit when you post anything along the lines of many thanks to XYZ photographer for the photo.

Youtube is particularly good for videos so if you have any of you working again Open up of the Youube account for yourself again at no cost whatsoever and upload videos if you don't have any videos then create a Youtube message or video using some of the apps that are out there, where you can piece together photos that you have got with messages promoting yourself. Apps that you can use to do this are Animoto and Ripl. For examples of what I have done in the past just look me up on

Facebook under ToastmastersKent, Instagram as toastmasterjohn and on YouTube as Toastmasters Kent.

Having started down this road you need to promote the fact that you have got accounts with these services and encourage people to “follow “ you.

One of the easiest ways is through your emails to prospective and existing clients.

We all send many emails these days but what does your signature say?

Why not create a standard signature for all your emails that has the icons for all your social media accounts shown, together of course with your website address? These are connected by hyperlinks behind the scenes so that when a client or prospective client clicks on the icon it takes them straight to your respective social media page showcasing all that you do.

The service I used for this was Newoldstamp.com which I found very easy and more importantly free but there are lots of others. Again just Google “add signature to emails”

I think I have given you enough to be getting on with. And again please be kind to me, I am not an expert in these things but have been self taught over the last few years.

Don't forget I will put together a document listing the suggested links for you to look at on the Forum.

Constructive criticism welcome and If I can help in any way leave me a message on the Forum.

Don't be an Ostrich be a Phoenix and get going now with your promotional plans so that you are ready to take advantage of the work that will be there once we are released from Lockdown.

Good luck and Stay safe.

List of links to accompany Video on Social Media.

<https://www.facebook.com>

<https://www.instagram.com/?hl=en>

<https://www.youtube.com>

Website Builders

<https://uk.godaddy.com>

<https://www.ionos.co.uk>

https://www.wix.com/freesitebuilder/hiker-create?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=195454660^10375167100&experiment_id=wix^e^428036736209^&gclid=EAlaI QobChMliLXHuae96QlVVeDtCh2NuANbEAAAYASAAEgJie_D_BwE

<https://www.yola.com>

Mitch who is a professional website builder.

<https://www.ballynet.co.uk/index.html>

Video Apps.

<https://animoto.com>

<https://www.ripl.com>

Email signature creation

<https://newoldstamp.com>

My personal Social media links.

Facebook

https://www.facebook.com/toastmasterskent/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel&eid=ARByD-IH33-nqR_YhR87ulqH1G_Wo2hZDkazi-pqeWR_vt03TuzwGLYQmZ1HnSZPVHXYOixcKIB1h0No

Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/toastmasterjohn/>

YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UClyxd_Nx1aQyHH-dfzbqkqg