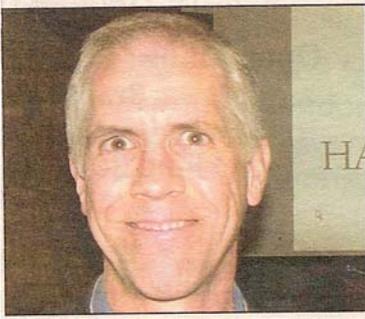


to connect our community



David Canton, a lawyer with Harrison Pens a, is one of the leading bloggers on legal, business and technological developments within London.

Entry into social networking is relatively easy with off the shelf software and templates readily available. The key will be understanding how to not only use these new tools, but also to use them effectively.

"The barriers to entry are low," Mr. Canton says. "It doesn't cost much to create these. It also means there will be a lot of changes. Who would have thought that Facebook would have taken off. You have to decide if you are there for just the social aspects. From a business perspective you have to have a strategic approach; what's my audience and goal."

Eric Karjaluo, creative director of SmachLAB from Vancouver, recently spoke to more than 80 registrants of the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario meeting in London on a designers guide to social media. He too sees the current and potential impact for professionals but insists that it needs to be approached with an end in mind.

"There's this great thing going on, but because it's all so new many of us are struggling to see how it fits into our lives," he



Louise Maxwell of London developed SoulfulEncounters.com, a social networking community for the disabled in 2006.

says. "There are cuenLly 112.8 million blogs tracked on Technorati and 66 million Facebook users. For companies, it's a shift from messaging or broadcasting to a dialogue through the collection of detailed information and feedback. As for why, it connects .with passionate users."

He recommends, "Get it out, test it, see what.yvorks and fix what isn't. It's still new so offer value not products, consider it a conversation, recognize the need to experiment, don't forsake traditional!l~dia and make it simple, one click rather than two or more.

"You need to figure out what people want so whether its companies who want to employ social media or the designers creating it, it's something that you need to experiment with but you need to know what you want. My worry with social media with everyone talking about it goes back to 1997 where everyone says they need a website without considering why they need one and what they'll do with it."

Like it or not it appears to be here to stay and its relevance will only increase as time moves forward.



Noel Rondinelli of London, with business partner Robin Anselm, developed NetVillage.ca, a social networking site with a Canadian focus.

"More people know the idea of me than know me. What I mean is that people go to and read my blog. You have effectively become a brand on your own and if you choose to do so the tools are out there. It's like catching a wave, you never will unless you're in the water," Mr. Karjaluo says.

"The problem is that there's an old school idea that the bottom line is everything. My point is that every time we do something well we make money. What's exciting is that they're building platforms and applications people are using. It's like plumbing, we don't see the infrastructure but we're happy it's there."

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• For more information about or to join NetVillage visit www.netvillage.ca.
• For more information on David Canton and to read his blog visit, www.canton.elegal.ca.

• For more information about or to join Soulful Encounters visit www.soulfulencounters.com.

• For more information on Eric Karjaluo and Smash LAB visit www.smashlab.com.

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