

February 2010

Featured Article

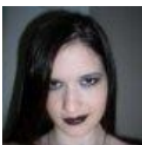
Pixilated Professional: *Create a Business Persona for Any Lifestyle*

I was ecstatic when I first figured out how to use the internet. It's full of misfits like me, and I can find anything from information on the official Jedi religion to where I can meet other goths in my area. But the best part about it is that I've been able to cultivate my business online and bypass any stigma associated with my particular interests. That's not to say I revealed all my personal information to the whole world. It's important to know how to handle yourself on the Web, especially if you're using it for business.

If you're using the internet as a way to conduct traditional business without having to ditch your piercings, you need to be especially careful. Your professional website is not the only thing that needs to look crisp and clean. Your email address and all of your social media - Facebook, Twitter, etc. - need to portray an ideal businessperson. Anything associated with your name or face should be cleaned up. Keep in mind how easy tools like Google make researching a potential business partner; if you use the screen name FutureCEO99 with a professional profile, but also use it on an MMO forum, anyone who wants to look can connect the two. A better idea is to keep your professional and personal identities separate. If you want to use social media to network, make a professional page for that purpose. You can keep a separate personal profile with no identifying information or images to chat with your friends.

The internet can be just as useful for alternative-style businesses. If you know what you're doing, you can easily hook up with all those small alternative businesses that actually want their employees to have blue hair and fifteen tattoos. Finding them is pretty simple: just a few Google searches and some networking through Facebook or its professional counterpart LinkedIn. Just keep in mind that it's easy to corner yourself into a particular market, especially if the subject you're working with is very extreme. It might be hard to branch out into home and garden articles if everyone knows you as an erotica writer. If you have broad interests, you might want to use a pen name or create two separate companies.

Whether you flaunt your alternativeness or hide it, there's one aspect of your image that you must constantly be aware of. As much as it changes, the internet is a world of permanency. If you write, say, or do something on video, and it's on the Web even for a little bit, then it's potentially out there somewhere forever. So most of the time it just isn't worth it to chew out the noob on your favorite gaming forum, especially if the profile can be traced back to you or your business. Don't let the anonymity of the screen fool you; the internet is a public place. But if you use it to your advantage, it can get you all the right attention.



Melissa Lytton is a freelance writer, artist, and model who specializes in alternative-styled content. She can be found online at happygothproductions.com.