

CASE STUDY: GRETEMAN GROUP

By Joseph Coombs, SHRM Workplace Trends and Forecasting Specialist

Social media has made it easier for Greteman Group to gain exposure, but the marketing company also credits that technology for keeping its operations leaner as the U.S. economy continues to recover from the Great Recession.

“Today, we would never think of proposing a marketing campaign that didn’t include a social media component,” says Carol Farrow, the Wichita, Kan.-based company’s HR manager. “We wouldn’t have survived the economic crash of 2008 without layoffs had it not been for our embrace of social and digital media. Clients had to tighten their belts and would have taken their business elsewhere had we not been able to provide new solutions. Our strategies helped them do more with less staff and financial resources.”

The 22-employee agency specializes in marketing and branding for aviation companies, but has also done work for the Kansas State Fair and cruise line Royal Caribbean International. Founded in 1989, Greteman Group had an early inkling for technological advancements and offered website development as far back as 1992, when many companies weren’t at all familiar with the World Wide Web, Farrow says.

As Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media forums developed rapidly in recent years, Greteman Group representatives became early adapters of those technologies, as well.

The company’s embrace of high tech came in handy in 2006, when commercial airplane component supplier Spirit AeroSystems called on Greteman to help conduct a worldwide hiring campaign for engineers and other key positions. Greteman officials moved the candidate search to the Internet and created connections between prospective employees and Spirit AeroSystems officials through a series of online forums.

“Those kinds of transparent, authentic conversations trump any ad that could ever run,” Farrow says.

When some clients, particularly multinationals, struggled with the rapid changes associated with social media technology, the Greteman Group was well-poised to provide counsel, Farrow says. Even inside the company’s walls, things have changed dramatically – the fax machine that was heavily relied on in the past for pushing out press releases probably gets used “once a week” these days. When new business prospects or potential new hires call the company’s offices, they have already checked out Greteman on LinkedIn and other social media forums, she says.

While Greteman Group has embraced social media as a pillar of its business operations, it doesn’t allow personal use of those mediums during work hours. Aside from using LinkedIn to add work-related colleagues to employees’ accounts, all other forums are off limits. One section of the company’s social media policy says, “If you just have to scratch the itch, write a post for the Greteman Group blog.”

Above all, social media has given Greteman Group a more solid connection with its clients, Farrow says.

“Marketing means engagement and relationships,” she says. “Consumers today demand to be heard, whether it’s to complain when service falls short or to rave when a product warrants celebration. Today, if you’re listening, you can see what’s being said – which gives you the chance to correct misunderstandings, or to say, ‘I’m sorry we fell short this time. Please give us another chance.’”