


5 Keys to Connecting


with IT Pros in
Social Communities



A network diagram in the top right corner of the page, consisting of several blue dots of varying sizes connected by thin blue lines, set against a solid blue background.

Sure, you understand the fundamentals of social media, but truly connecting with tech purchase decision makers requires more than just the basics. It requires you to be an active and authentic participant in the social communities where these IT-types are interacting with their peers.

Here's what we've learned firsthand at Spiceworks, where over 6M IT pros spend their days talking tech, sharing insights, and helping each other solve IT problems.

A large, orange-outlined speech bubble with a white interior, containing text. A thin grey line extends from the top of the bubble towards the top right of the page.

So, how *do* I connect with **IT pros** in a social media setting?



1 Win them over by being human... & humorous!

IT pros are a self-deprecating sort. They often talk to one another in a tongue-in-cheek manner and tend to poke fun at themselves and their peers. But, when you read between the lines, you'll see that by cultivating these peer relationships they're also learning how to do their jobs better.

Some of the humorous IT "themes" you'll see in social communities may, believe it or not, revolve around random things like bacon, zombies or unicorns (yep, we're serious!). Or, they may even be poking fun at a product or service (or how it's marketed). What's the easiest way to connect with them amid these off-the-beaten path topics or respond if you're the target? Dive in, be human, and poke fun at your own company! You'll be surprised how doing so will build authenticity for you and your brand in the eyes of these IT guys and gals.

Bacon!

Cooking with Spice Group

Steve M. IT Pro



OK, so the word around the IRC channel recently has quite simply been bacon and lot's of it! This made me think of some questions just for fun. I'll start:

Do you like bacon?
Yes!

What do you have bacon with? (Fav recipes)
A toasted bacon and hash brown sandwich goes down well. Also, bits of bacon in pasta bolognese is nice too!

Smoked or unsmoked?
Smoked!

Ensure your DR Plan is ready for a Zombie Apocalypse

How-tos

Justin D. IT Pro



1. Have the right equipment in stock and accessible

Have you ever tried to find your chainsaw and sawed off shotgun in a disorganized mess when you really need them, not fun. In advance of a zombie apocalypse make sure that you have chain saws, baseball bats, shotguns, and plenty of ammunition stocked in both your server room and office in well organized cabinets. Break out the P-Touch labeller and make sure everything is well marked. Have a sign out sheet on the cabinet and make sure you restock anything that is taken regularly.

The Zombie Apocalypse and You

Backup Group

Katie D. IT Vendor



I know I'm not the only one who's seen news articles about the CDC's latest comment on the zombie apocalypse. First they said there is one, and now they claim there's nothing to be worried about. I took a few moments to give you my view of the situation. What do you think?



2 Don't shy away from a healthy debate.

IT pros love a good debate. Not because they like to argue, but mainly because they love to be right. Their specialized skills and technical knowledge are a badge of honor and they're not afraid to wear it on their sleeves – or to tell you if they think you're wrong!

The key is to respond, not react. It's not about being aggressive or taking a defensive posture. It's simply about making your first response one that shows you're listening and open to discussing and debating – not simply defending. Share technical facts and figures, but also ask them for more feedback.

In the end, talking *with* them instead of *at* them will work wonders. And your willingness to engage in a good, healthy debate is an important first step in gaining credibility and winning their trust and loyalty.

Rant warning... I'm DONE with ...

Backup Group

- Keith C. IT Pro



One of the worst experiences I've ever had with an upgrade ... EVER!

- Matt S. IT Vendor



We can learn a lot more by listening to the group than we can by rushing into rebut points we may not like or agree with.

- Keith C. IT Pro



Good merit shown by joining the discussion



3 Stay away from the marketing-speak.

If you act like more of a marketer than a person and try to “spin” instead of directly address an issue or answer a question, IT pros will call you on it.

Being human and fully transparent will go a long way. Respect them and their technical savvy. Stay away from buzzwords and canned marketing messages and stick to facts. If you don't know something, don't be afraid to tell them so. And let them know you'll find an answer for them. Not only will they appreciate your honesty, they'll also appreciate your efforts to help them get the info they're looking for.

One IT pro provides a candid review of a white paper ...

Reviews

★★★★★ RoguePacket

Marketing-speak on endpoint “security”. Imprecise on how exactly it is operating, and if it is a stand-alone product or part of a layered strategy.

Another IT pro lays down the law ...

“ No marketing speak! We're IT guys, we're not interested in making it sound good to the CEO. We're interested in how it works and how it makes our lives easier. ”

- *Kenneth M. IT Pro*



4 Give 'em a peek behind the curtain.

IT pros love to tinker. They're the kids who took the radio apart and (maybe) put it back together. This fascination and natural curiosity on how things are built led them to becoming the IT pros they are today.

Indulge this curious nature by giving IT pros a "glimpse inside" of something at your company. Whether it be the interior view of a product or the longer-term view of a product roadmap, IT pros love getting to feel like they're getting special privileges like exclusive access or sneak peeks.

But don't stop there! Ask them for feedback and insight on what you've shown them. Then, use that feedback and let it guide further discussions or even product planning and marketing campaigns. Aside from a real-time focus group, you'll gain an entirely new level of loyalty and "followership" when you actually incorporate that insight directly into your initiatives.

Inside the Data Center with OnRamp

Data Center Group

Tell us about your datacenter. How do you keep it up and running securely? What's unique about OnRamp?

Power Usage: We became the first data center in Texas to be powered by 100% green energy.

What makes OnRamp unique is that we take the time to understand the business requirements and help translate them into customized solutions.



- Don W. IT Vendor



5 Close the loop with your own feedback.

Our Response to Bloatware/Trialware

OEM Group

- Priscilla J. IT Vendor



Behind the scenes, one of our executives and a manager continuously encouraged me to pass on feedback from Spiceworks about bloatware which I did. We listened!

Don't leave 'em hanging. If you ask for insight or feedback, make sure they know that their input is appreciated and will be acted upon. Then, don't just tell them that you've listened, *show* them by sharing what you've done to change a product, service or communication.

Did you change your product specs or service offering or make changes in how you communicate based on feedback from users? Let 'em know. They appreciate being asked for their opinions in the first place. But they'll love you for actually listening and doing something meaningful with the info.

Now, get started...

Keep the lines of communication open and consistent with your strongest advocates. They'll continue to talk about your company and products and share what they know with other users – your prospects!

The more you engage with IT pros on their turf (and on their terms) – the more hearts, minds (and followers!) you'll win. You'll find the effort you put into social community outreach takes your brand, your products, and your company that much further. In the end, you'll be more effective at getting your messages in front of the people who are managing the purse strings for their company's tech spend.

About Spiceworks

Spiceworks is the professional network more than 6 million IT professionals use to connect with one another and over 3,000 technology brands. The company simplifies how IT professionals discover, buy and manage more than \$525 billion in technology products and services each year.

SPICEWORKS
Where IT goes to work.™