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Social Media Benefits for Designers and Creative Professionals

You've probably heard all about "social media," but are they relevant to graphic designers, or are they just a fad that takes away from productive work? While there are many skeptics, social media are quickly becoming important ways for creative professionals to build peer networks, to find service providers, and to gain new business. On top of all that, more and more of your potential clients are using these sites to find their own service providers.

A good social networking site provides a centralized marketplace where individuals and companies who need graphic design work can go to find a creative pro who will be a good fit for a given project. In addition to the mainstream social media sites—LinkedIn®, Twitter™, Facebook®—there are many designer-specific social networking sites, such as WhosCreative.com, CreativeHub.com, FreelanceDesigners.com and CrowdSpring.com. The best of the designer-specific sites offer the ability to create profile pages and post portfolios, interact with other designers and potential clients, and bid on jobs. Some of them—like CreativeHub—are more hands-on, and try to match the right designer to the right job, and work actively with marketers and advertisers.

However, the worst of these sites offer little more than a "race to the bottom"—a place where cost-conscious clients post how much they are willing to pay for a given job and see who bites. Some of the more controversial sites require that designers do a job (or at least produce a comp) first, then a client compares all the samples submitted and chooses one. There are few designers who would prefer to work this way. As a result, choosing one of these sites requires some degree of due diligence.

One advantage to most of the social media sites is that they are free. Some of the designer-specific sites have a basic free service, but charge for packages that offer more features and capabilities.

Social media might seem like a fad or waste of time, but they're becoming more and more important, and more of your customers' eyes are focused on these media. They're not going away anytime soon; they might evolve, but they won't disappear. Social media are an increasing part of today's marketing mix and should be on your radar.