

Vancouver confident about 2010 transport plan

Passenger vehicle traffic to be reduced 30 percent

VANCOUVER (Reuters)—Organizers of next year's Winter Olympics in Vancouver unveiled their final transport plan on Wednesday, saying they are confident residents will help prevent traffic gridlock for athletes and visitors.

Organizers said they have also learned a lesson from Salt Lake City, which asked residents to stay off the roads during the 2002 Winter Games, thereby depriving many retailers of customers. They reminded Vancouverites that businesses remain open for regular customers even while the massive event is under way.

Vancouver is the largest city ever to host a Winter Games and because competitions will be held at various locations around town and at the mountain resort of Whistler, about 125 km (78 miles) away, transportation is considered a potential Achilles' heel.

Transportation planners want to reduce Vancouver's passenger vehicle traffic by 30 percent to prevent traffic jams in the often congested downtown core.

Residents and visitors will have to use public transit to reach all the Olympic events, including the opening and closing ceremonies. The Games start on February 12.

"Based on the feedback we're getting, that 30 percent is not in jeopardy, we just have to get the word out," said Terry Wright, a Vancouver Organizing Committee vice president for Games operations.

Organizers will urge residents to change their travel habits with the message that good transportation during the Games is important if the world is going to see Vancouver in a positive light.

"People have a lot of pride in this region, and they're going to help us show that pride to the rest of world," Wright told reporters.

Social media marketing meets huge growth

By CINDY CHAN
Epoch Times Staff

As the digital age offers burgeoning choices for people to network online, businesses are increasingly turning to social media like Facebook, Twitter, and blogs to do their advertising and marketing.

Combined with or as an alternative to traditional print, radio, and

"It's created an opportunity for companies ... to communicate at a frequency that's never been seen before."

— Dan Martell, co-founder of Flowtown

television, social media marketing is "a market that's in huge growth right now," said Dan Martell, an award-winning entrepreneur in the field of social networking innovations.

"We call it 'digital word of mouth,' because with social media, if you have a compelling message, with the new tools it allows people to share and essentially create a 'word of quick marketing' using digital online as a platform."

Mr. Martell's expertise has helped his brother's company in "an industry that's very old and archaic" thrive in leaps and bounds.

Pierre Martell owns Martell Home Builders, a construction company in Moncton, New Brunswick, that specializes in the promise that it can build a new home in 99 days.

The company is on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube; runs a blog; and lets buyers follow their home construction progress online, get pictures, and post comments.

"Not only has [Pierre] seen amazing results in his ability to engage with his customers in the market,



TWEETS: Twitter co-founder, Biz Stone, at the Twitter Conference in Los Angeles on Sept. 22, 2009. The free social networking and micro-blogging service allows users to post messages of 140 characters or less, known as 'tweets.' It has attracted tens of millions of users since its launch in August 2006. MARK RALSTON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

he's also seen that translate into real dollars and cents where he's one of the fastest growing home-builders in Canada right now," said Mr. Martell.

Social media is changing the way business is done, he said.

Beyond providing one-way information to the public, "it's created an opportunity for companies that have the right culture and right brand to build a culture of transparency, and communicate at a frequency that's never been seen before."

Companies can have personal dialogues with contacts, resolve problems in real time, and improve their services all around.

"It allows people to know, like, and trust them at a faster pace."

FIND THE BEST FIT AND PLAN IT OUT
Chris Burdge agrees. The presi-

dent of BWEST, a Victoria, B.C.-based consulting firm that helps companies market their business using social media, email, and emerging web technology, Mr. Burdge said that for best results, companies must plan their entry into social media carefully, build a strategy, and then dedicate the resources.

"It's like any other marketing vehicle. You want to figure out 'who are we talking to,' 'where we are best going to reach them,' 'how it's going to be most effective,' and plan it out."

While social media is free, an investment of time—and lots of it—is necessary if it's going to be used as a marketing channel, Mr. Burdge said.

With the vast range of social networking tools and sites available, which one is the most effective?

"You really need to figure out what social platform is best for the characteristic of that person or that business owner," said Mr. Martell.

He suggests Facebook for people who like to share information about themselves and things that interest them. For example, customers can follow a company's fan page as it provides daily updates about its business and ways that people can save time and money in that industry.

YouTube would be a good option for those who like to be in front of a camera, he said. Companies can post corporate videos, everything from executive presentations and event highlights to segments for marketing, training, and customer self-help.

Those who like to write may consider setting up a blog or going on Twitter, which allows people to write short messages of up to 140 characters.

Companies can also post audio and video podcasts on their blogs and have updates instantly delivered to subscribers, Mr. Burdge said.

Among the numerous social media networks out there, LinkedIn has been around the longest,

he noted. Over 45 million people worldwide use LinkedIn to make business contacts, according to its website.

And with a service called Ning.com, people can create their own Facebook-like social networks for their own business, hobby, or other interests, said Mr. Burdge.

BUSINESSES OF ALL SIZES ON BOARD

While Canadians are the heaviest users of Facebook per capita, "there's no more time investment for [someone] to communicate with one customer who is following him on Facebook, or 10,000," Mr. Martell said.

To incorporate all this information into a company's or an individual's knowledge base, Flowtown, a firm that Mr. Martell co-founded, has built a tool for analyzing the emails of contacts so that connections can be automated and relationships further developed.

Last year, at age 28, he was among 12 winners of the Business Development Bank of Canada's Young Entrepreneur Awards during its annual Small Business Week. This year's Small Business Week takes place October 18 to 24.

But social media marketing is not only flourishing among small and medium-sized businesses. Big brands and established companies are also using it, such as Dell, General Mills, Ford, Cirque du Soleil, UPS, Home Depot, Coca Cola, Virgin America, and others, offering special deals as well as forums and other channels to interact with their communities.

U.K.-based comScore did a study in May 2009 on the 1.1 billion people age 15 and older in 40 countries who accessed the Internet from a home or work location.

It found that two-thirds visited at least one social networking site that month, and ranked Canada as the third most engaged social networking audience, following Russia and Brazil, with visitors each spending an average of 5.6 hours and viewing 649 pages per month.

Nation Briefs

Court quashes case against terror suspect

OTTAWA (Reuters)—The Federal Court of Canada on Wednesday set aside the last of the tough restrictions against a Moroccan man the government wanted to deport because of alleged links to al Qaeda.

Ottawa had imprisoned Adil Charkaoui or kept him under surveillance for six years under a security certificate, based on classified information from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). The government was seeking court approval to deport Charkaoui, a Montreal resident who emigrated from Morocco but was not a Canadian citizen.

Based on information from CSIS, Ottawa had claimed that Charkaoui had trained at an al Qaeda camp in Afghanistan.

But because the court had ordered that the information from CSIS be made public, the government decided to withdraw it rather than endanger the spy agency's sources.

Once the information was withdrawn, the Federal Court lifted restrictions on Charkaoui last month, and on Wednesday it declared the security certificate itself to be void.

Afghanistan a serious, desperate situation: Vance

OTTAWA (Reuters)—Afghanistan is in a "serious, desperate situation" which constitutes a major emergency, Canada's top commander on the ground said in a frank interview broadcast Wednesday.

Brigadier-General Jonathan Vance made his remarks at the end of a 25-minute interview with the CBC which looked at the tasks confronting Canada's 2,700 strong mission in southern Afghanistan.

So far 131 soldiers have died and a recent poll showed more than 50 percent of Canadians oppose the mission, which is due to end in 2011. Vance said one of his greatest challenges was communicating to Canadians what the troops were doing in Afghanistan and why.

"It's not to sugar-coat anything, and it's certainly not to make the mission seem better than it is. It's a serious, desperate situation. It's a major emergency," he said.

"But (I) ... try and put all of that into some sort of context such that people—whether they believe we should be here or not—at least they understand."

Parliament voted last year to extend the mission to 2011 from the original 2009 end date. Prime Minister Stephen Harper says he has no plans to ask for another extension.




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