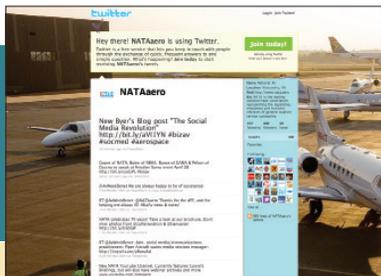


By Brad McAllister, Associate Editor

## e - Media: A look at Web-based customer service and marketing solutions



**LinkedIn:** A social networking website for business professionals.

**Facebook Fan Page:** A Fan Page is a public profile that enables users to share their business and products with Facebook users.

**Twitter:** A free social networking and microblogging service that enables users to send and read 'tweets' (text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the author's profile page and delivered to the author's subscribers, who are known as 'followers').

• Shannon Chambers, **National Air Transportation Association (NATA)** director of communications and marketing, told *AIRPORT BUSINESS* during this year's **Aviation Industry Expo** that she began utilizing social media for the association in September 2009. She started with LinkedIn by creating a professional public profile for herself, and then she began to research the Facebook and Twitter platforms.

"We use Twitter for some of the promotional things we do — to keep people informed about any new information we put out, or when press releases and new issues of our newsletters are published," relates Chambers. "I also like to tweet about things that our members are doing."

Chambers says she was pleasantly surprised to discover how many industry professionals were utilizing Twitter. "This is yet another way to reach out to our members; a noninvasive way for them to get the information they want," comments Chambers.

When asked if her goals in utilizing social media have changed since she began, Chambers replies, "Initially I thought this would be a really good way to reach our members and to get information to them, then I realized this is an even better way to reach the media.

"It's great for both, but in terms of being able to get our ideas, stories, and products out to the media, our efforts have been very successful in that respect."

NATA is currently in the process of asking its members, via a survey, if social media should be a future webinar or seminar topic. Remarks Chambers, "We want to create a webinar or webinar series for members who may not be able to travel as much. The response I have received back so far has been positive."

Ultimately, NATA members are using social media a little differently than Chambers does as an association, she says. "Members are using it to see what others in the industry are doing, and what is being said about their brand," explains Chambers.

"They are also using it to engage in conversation with other professionals, and to gauge their company's customer service abilities ... what do their customers like about a facility, don't like, etc.

"Our members are concerned about competition and may be afraid to post certain information for fear of giving competitors an upper hand.

"I do understand the business is very competitive, but at the same time, if there are a lot of companies having success utilizing social media, and getting publicity for it, then companies reluctant to use social media may miss out on potential customers."

Chambers relates two critically important factors when considering to jump into the social media sphere:

1) "You have to trust the people who are tasked with managing a company's social media efforts. It must be clear that they understand and support the company message, and the right way of going about delivering that message. Also, because this is something our members are interested in, the more I understand it, the more helpful I can be.

2) "Social media is something that, if you want to get into it, you have to commit to it. You have to monitor and actively participate with those who are using it. If your 'fans' or 'followers' are making comments on posts or asking questions and you're not responsive, you're setting yourself up for failure with this type of communication."

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NATA would like to know if your company takes part in social media, and if there are aspects about social media you would like to learn more about. Please visit the following link to participate in a short survey on the topic, [www.surveymonkey.com/s/7RKY3QL](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7RKY3QL); or visit NATA's social media sources webpage found at its home website, [www.nata.aero](http://www.nata.aero).