

Social Media Networking for Small Businesses in the Defense Industry

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When it comes to networking in the time of COVID-19, social media is a vital means of staying connected. For many individuals and businesses operating in the landscape of the defense industry, proceeding with relationships forged on social media brings up questions and security concerns.

Let's look at some tips for safely connecting with others and evaluating connections on social media as we are forced to conduct business virtually.

About Social Media and the Defense Industry

Social media is filled with advantages and disadvantages for anyone in the defense industry. If you're hoping to sell or transition a technology as a small business (or looking for one as a government representative with a specific technological need), it's an essential place to find a fit—especially during the pandemic.

As many servicemembers and veterans understand thoroughly, those in the defense industry should use social media with caution. Any person anywhere in the world can make a profile and pretend to be somewhere else. Most social media platforms have "verified" checkmarks. In the below example, note the blue checkmark next to the Department of Defense's official Twitter account.



LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the primary social media platform for professionals in the defense industry. LinkedIn is a professional social media network, meaning most of the content on it is related to business and industry. LinkedIn allows users to endorse each other.

In the defense industry, LinkedIn is the best place to find virtual and in-person event promotions, follow specific influencers and officials, and identify trends. This includes content about current events and thematic months, such as [Cybersecurity Awareness Month](#) (October).

LinkedIn is also a fantastic resource for small businesses recruiting for open positions. Graduates from colleges, universities, technical institutions, and military colleges are especially active on this platform, as are jobseekers of all career levels. There is an option to include a clearance level on LinkedIn; however, we do not recommend advertising your clearance.

On LinkedIn, connect with the following SBIR / STTR-related accounts to stay in the know:

- [United States Department of Defense](#)
- [Navy Forum for SBIR/STTR Transition \(FST\)](#)
- [US Small Business Administration](#)
- [Department of Navy SBIR/STTR Program](#)
- [Office of Naval Research](#)

When you fill out your LinkedIn profile, more information yields better results. LinkedIn is itself a search engine. If you have a Phase II SBIR and you list it as an area of interest in your profile, those searching for people with SBIR in their profile can find you. The same is true for any esoteric area of business or technology, or any institutions with which you may be involved.

LinkedIn is basically a worldwide rolodex, and the more connections you have, the more information becomes available to you. If you're looking for a connection at a prime, you could look up a role at the company. For example, in the search bar, type program manager at Lockheed Martin. You will find people with that job title as well as some job opportunities and openings. If you're connected to any of the project managers listed, they'll appear first, and you'll be able to figure out your connection. In this fashion, you could ask for an introduction from a mutual connection: a must in an industry that operates on trust.

In terms of engagement, you'll likely find the most on LinkedIn. Engagement metrics such as post likes, post shares, and comments indicate sincere interest in your posts, and they're extremely valuable when proving the ROI (return on investment) of social media performance.

Twitter

Twitter is a useful networking tool in the defense industry. This platform relies heavily on hashtags, or words preceded by a #. We recommend following hashtags such as:

- #DefenseIndustry
- #DefenseTechnology
- #SmallBusiness
- #SBIR
- #STTR

By doing this, you'll find out about informative events and conversations.

Twitter is dominated by pop culture trends and politics, however, making it a less ideal networking choice. Twitter is more about staying informed and getting the message out.

Facebook

While having a Facebook page for your business is useful, most people outside of the marketing industry primarily use this social media platform for personal purposes. Recently, Facebook has made more advancements and opportunities for businesses, but ultimately you need to pay for exposure on Facebook as a business.

If you're interested in paid advertising in the industry, LinkedIn is a better bet as you can target specific individuals.

YouTube

YouTube is primarily an entertainment platform, but it's also ideal for businesses of all stripes. YouTube can host interviews, testimonials, and professionally produced content showcasing your product or technology within the defense industry. You can also leverage YouTube to find official footage of military or commercial equipment on which your technology is installed.

Additionally, YouTube serves as a repository for video content, and it is its own search engine, making it easier for you, your employees, and others to find your videos.

Pinterest, Tik Tok, and Instagram

These visual and short video platforms are less relevant for the defense industry. Unless you frequently post images of your technology and processes, it's best to skip these. You can instead post live video and captivating pictures on networks such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook.

Video Success

Video is key to a proper outreach and marketing strategy, but it's an area in which many small businesses in the defense industry fall behind. When it comes to video, you could post interviews with your executives or engineers, information discussing your goals with your technology, and more. It helps potential contacts to put a face to the name, or to see who is behind the technology.

If you're involved in the Navy STP and have a streamed or recorded Tech Talk from appearing at a Navy FST, please feel free to contact us for the video link. Sharing your Tech Talk is a great first step in video.

Native Video Upload

Uploading videos natively is always better than sharing them in the eyes of social media. What does that mean? A native upload means you upload the original video uniquely to each platform. Facebook would much rather its users share Facebook videos than have you post an off-site link to YouTube: They want to keep their users on their platform.

Post or share videos from the same platform you're on to avoid a platform's algorithm penalizing you.

Proofread Your Social Media Profiles and Communications

As a business, your social media profiles should reflect your technology. They should be clean, concise, and clear, explaining briefly what you do and where you're located. Ensure a professional copyeditor from your marketing department (or a freelancer) reads your social media profile copy before you post it to avoid any embarrassing errors.

This also goes for press releases or any lengthy pieces of information you post. If you're not the world's best speller, there's no harm in having a proofreader look through your social media posts and letters of introduction before you send them electronically.

Looking for ways to stay connected? Follow Navy FST and Navy STP on social media to learn the latest about virtual events and goings on in the defense industry.