



FINANCIAL STANDARD
SMILEYS
Q&A

2013 SOCIAL
MEDIA INFLUENCE,
LEADERSHIP +
EXCELLENCE
SCHOLARSHIP

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Former winner of the Smileys scholarship talks to *Financial Standard* about social media and how entering the competition helped him realise his social goals.

Tell me why you decided to enter the smileys and about the prize that you won (FS Smiley Scholarship)

At the time of the award I was working closely with the team at the Social Adviser and it was on the basis of their encouragement that I entered. There were a small group of financial planners that were fully embracing social media to improve their client value proposition. Through our collective interest in using technology to improve what we do we have all become friends and we follow, support and help each other using these mediums.

Tell me about your application

The application process was a little daunting as at the time I was unaware of who was doing what in the area, and how my activities actually compared to others. In the application my focus was on trying to convey what I had done and why I had done these activities. At the end of the day we are financial advisers first and foremost and social media is just a tool to help us run our businesses more efficiently. In the application I tried to emphasise how I was doing that at ground level.

What effect did entering/winning the smileys have on your business?

Winning the award was a surreal feeling as it was something that I wasn't expecting, but having said that, it was a tremendous honour to be recognised as a pioneer in this area. From a business point of view most clients and centres of influence were already aware of how I used the technology so there was no major impact at that level. However the award has led to numerous speaking engagements at national conferences which is an area I enjoy, and giving you credibility in this area to connect and engage with global thought leaders. In that sense it has had an enormous influence on me personally.

Has your social media strategy/ presence changed over the past year?

Over the last 12 months I have become more targeted in what I do, rather than trying to be all things to all people. Whereas in the past I tended to adopt a "machine gun approach" I am now more knowledgeable on what works and what doesn't in this area.

How has social media impacted your business?

Social media has been a major driver of new business, but it can also detract from your busi-

ness if you are not careful. It is just like in the offline world your activities can either benefit or detract from your business.

What are your latest discoveries on social media, any new favourite things?

As you may have noticed I have a passion for this area and subscribe to a number of podcasts, blogs and webinars to keep abreast of the latest developments globally in this area. The focus of late has been on how you can improve your efficiency to maximise your output and there are a number of iPad apps such as newsify, wrike etc.

What do you think the future of social media will look like?

At the end of day a professional services business is all about people, so whilst we can get caught up talking about technology, you still need to relate to the people you deal with on an everyday basis and technology can never replace that one on one time. Whilst the social media provides enormous leverage and efficiency in running any business how you relate and interact with your clients will determine how successful you are. Social media will continue to be a useful tool but is not the silver bullet many people think it is. **FS**