

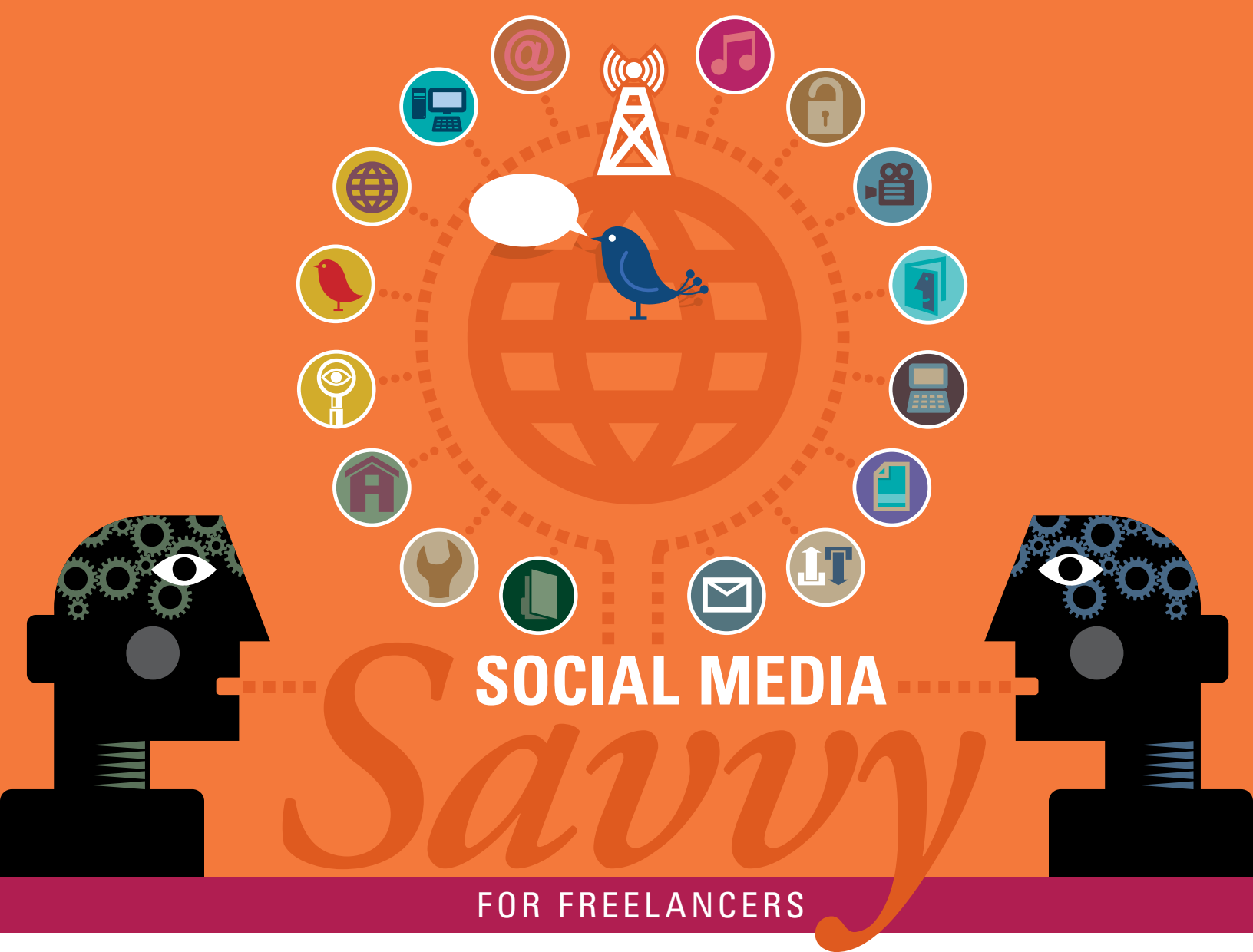
# SelfInformed

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*NASE Member Tasha Scott,  
owner of Scott Realtime  
Reporting LLC.*



By Kim O'Connor

According to a 2011 report on social media issued by research company Nielsen, Americans spend almost a quarter of their Internet time visiting social networking sites and blogs.

That means potential clients are far more likely to learn about your freelance business on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#)—the sites where they spend most of their time—than any other place on the Web.

In the right hands, networking sites are sophisticated marketing tools. Here's how you can maximize your time online to boost your professional profile.

*The key to becoming a social media maven is to focus on building relationships.*

## WATCH THE CLOCK

Keep in mind that any social media site will require extra effort on the front end as you establish yourself, connect with others and learn the lay of the land.

Once you're past that phase, try to keep an eye on the clock. Consider setting aside a block of your schedule each day to handle all social media so you can keep your time investment under control.

Additionally, it's important to make sure you don't spread yourself too thin.

The social media sites that best serve your business usually depend on your personality type, your industry and your clientele. Start by focusing your attention on one platform. For instance, a writer might dedicate most of her social media minutes to crafting substantive posts for her blog, and then use secondary platforms like [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to direct traffic there.



## THE NASE CAN HELP

Want to take a continuing education class to learn more about using social media for your freelance business? Need to attend a conference or seminar to polish your social media skills?

The NASE **Succeed Scholarship™ program** just might be able to help you gain the knowledge you need.

As an NASE Member, you can apply for a scholarship award of up to \$4,000 to pay for continuing education in social media, marketing, finances and other business skills.

The scholarship money can be used for:

- Participation in seminars and conferences that support the growth of your business
- Training courses for business certifications and licensing
- College or university courses, either online or through a local institution

Learn more about the NASE's **Succeed Scholarship™ program** and apply online today.

## SHOW OFF YOUR WORK

Social networking sites make it easy to showcase examples of your freelance work. Every platform offers some form of user profile or biography, which is a good place to link to repositories of your work (such as your website).

Unfortunately, most people in your network won't have the time or the inclination to scrutinize your profile. That's why it's important to let people know what's new with your business by providing more timely updates.

**Twitter** and the status update features in **Facebook** and **LinkedIn** are great ways to keep folks informed about what you're doing. A common strategy is to publish links to your latest projects. For example, writers might point traffic to publications in which their work appears, while photographers might link to a gallery of recent images.

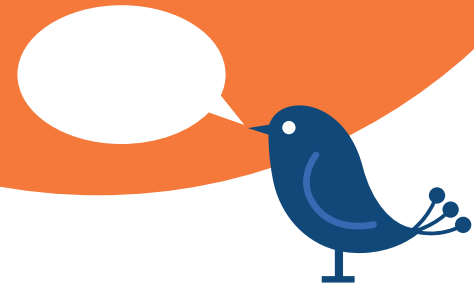
Of course, such updates are fleeting; eventually your link will be buried beneath other people's posts.

**LinkedIn** offers special tools (called **applications**) that let you showcase individual projects as more of a permanent fixture within your **profile**. The **applications** work by importing media from other corners of the Web.

For example, designers, advertising copywriters and other creative professionals can use the **Creative Portfolio Display** application to compose a gallery of their best work. Public speakers and consultants can use **SlideShare** or **Google Presentations** to share slideshows. Developers can use **GitHub** to show off coding projects. And just about any professional can use **LinkedIn applications** to import the latest posts from their blogs and **Twitter feeds**.

A word to the wise: Avoid syncing all your posts across platforms. If you publish the exact same links and updates to all of your social networking accounts, your posts will sound like spam.

Keep things fresh by posting different content on different sites. If something seems important enough to broadcast in more than one place, reframe it each time so you don't sound redundant.



## ENGAGE IN DIFFERENT KINDS OF CONVERSATION

Conversation is the lifeblood of online social networks. The key to becoming a social media maven is to focus on building relationships.

Real dialogue is a two-way street. That means using platforms like **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **LinkedIn** to talk *with* folks, not *to* them.

Whether you're commenting on a friend's status, reposting an industry expert's tweet or providing a **recommendation on LinkedIn**, there are many ways to interact with online communities.

Some freelancers mistakenly believe they should use online networking to communicate with people they already know—friends, acquaintances and clients. But you should also leverage social media sites to search for contacts in lucrative new markets, including companies where you might not otherwise have your foot in the door.

*Social networking sites make it easy to showcase examples of your freelance work.*

*Keep things fresh by posting different content on different sites.*



## PERSONALIZED ANSWERS FOR NASE MEMBERS

Get the one-on-one, confidential help you need from the NASE Business Strategy Experts.

These knowledgeable consultants are ready to answer your questions about social media, marketing strategies and other mission-critical business issues.

As an NASE Member you have online access to the Business Strategy Experts 24/7—at no cost to you!

Most mid- to large-size companies have a social media presence on at least one of the major platforms. **LinkedIn** alone boasts more than 2 million company pages. You can follow a company's page to stay current on its outsourcing opportunities, key contacts and organizational culture. To connect with individuals within the institution, visit people's personal profiles on **LinkedIn** or find them on **Twitter** using the **Who to follow** tool.

**Facebook** pages (similar to **LinkedIn's** company pages) and the **Groups Directory on LinkedIn** are other great tools you can use to engage in online communities. In addition to keeping an eye out for project leads, you can build relationships with colleagues, monitor the competition and generally stay abreast of the information flow within your industry. Such conversations can help you generate referrals, ideas and collaborations.

## MAINTAIN YOUR PROFESSIONAL POLISH

Make sure to keep things professional. Bear in mind that even the most casual comment or update represents you and your business. Always strive for a courteous tone and double-check every post for spelling and punctuation errors.

Some platforms blur the boundaries between your personal life and your professional presence.

Your **Twitter** followers, for instance, might consist of friends, family, colleagues, clients and strangers. Similarly, your blog might attract a wide variety of readers. Aim for content that is informative, entertaining or both. While you don't have to be all business all the time, avoid posting too much about your sick pet or your political views.

If you use **Facebook**, you can create a page for your business that is separate from your personal profile. But keep in mind that changing privacy policies (and the democratic nature of the Internet) make it difficult to completely segregate your private life from your public persona.

A good rule of thumb is to avoid posting anything that could tarnish your professional reputation. ■

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**Kim O'Connor** is a freelance writer and editor who frequently writes about social media.

## CONNECT WITH THE NASE

The NASE is also on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. Stay up-to-date, and connect with us and your fellow NASE Members.





# Ask The Experts

## **Q:** *What is the best way to establish a trademark for a business?*

**A:** There are two types of trademarks. One is filed at the state level with your secretary of state office. The second trademark is filed at the national level with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

The difference between the two is that one provides a registration only in your state while the national trademark provides protection throughout the U.S. To get a national trademark, you must be conducting interstate trade or intend to do so within one year.

As for the best way to get a trademark, that will depend on which trademark you wish to procure and the complexities of your trademark.

The first thing I suggest is for you to get an understanding of the trademark process. The book “Trademark: Legal Care for Your Business & Product Name” is available from **Nolo** either in print or as an e-book. It will give you the basics as well as explain how to apply for a trademark.

At the federal level, go to [uspto.gov](http://uspto.gov). In the trademark section you’ll find information on trademarks. You can also search the site to find out if a trademark is already in use. This is only a basic search site. Before you file, do a full trademark search using either a search service or an intellectual property attorney.

Go to your secretary of state’s website to find information about filing for a state trademark.

If you will be dealing with a complex trademark or there is the possibility that you might have an infringement issue, you will want to seek out the services of a patent and trademark attorney. ■

## GET MORE ANSWERS

The NASE’s small-business experts are here to help you understand trademarks, copyrights, patents and other legal issues. And access to these professionals is free with your NASE Membership!

Just go online to the **NASE’s Business Learning Center** where you can ask the experts questions about:

- Taxes
- Business strategies
- Retirement planning
- Business legal issues
- Health care reform
- Accounting and finances

The experts are available 24/7 and ready to help!

# Member Spotlight

## Learning Through Translation

*Tasha Scott has been an NASE Member since 2011. She owns Scott Realtime Reporting LLC in Montgomery, Ala.*

### **Tell us about your business.**

I'm a certified court reporter and started Scott Realtime Reporting in 2004. My business provides on-site and remote translation of the spoken word using a stenograph machine or keyboard.

Scott Realtime Reporting started out providing court reporting and medical and legal transcription services. Now, we specialize in CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) services and captioning.

We provide our CART services at conferences and corporate events as well as to students to provide equal access to educational opportunities to those who are deaf or hard of hearing. In addition, our assistive technology services have benefited individuals with learning disabilities, cerebral palsy and visual impairments.

### **Why did you start Scott Realtime Reporting?**

I've wanted to be my own boss since I was young. I started my business to help those who need the services I offer and to create job opportunities for others.

### **What challenges have you faced in running your business?**

The biggest obstacle was lack of planning and preparation. I knew how to get started, but I didn't plan for the growth. I reached a crossroads with my business where I had to make some tough choices: either close

the business or embrace the challenge to grow and take it to the next level. I chose to stay and grow. To help me do this, I enlisted the help of a mentor and reached out to the Small Business Resource Center at my local Chamber of Commerce.

### **How has being an NASE Member helped your business?**

I received an **NASE Growth Grant** in June of 2011. It came at a pivotal time. I was in the process of moving the business out of my home and needed capital to help my business grow. The NASE helped me tremendously during the transition.

### **What's your biggest success as a business owner?**

The fact that I am still here! I didn't do it right when I got started. I didn't have a proper business plan in place, but almost eight years later I am still here and have been blessed with an awesome opportunity to learn from past mistakes and move forward.

### **What's the best piece of advice you have for your fellow NASE Members?**

I would advise anyone desiring to start a new business to research, plan, be teachable and be patient. I would also recommend finding a mentor, someone who sees your potential and is not afraid to challenge you to be excellent in all you do, and especially in your business. ■

## GET PUBLICITY FOR YOUR BUSINESS!

Your business could be featured in SelfInformed's Member Spotlight or in another NASE publication. Let us know you'd like to be featured and tell us more about your business on our [Publicity Form](#).



# Congress Must Take Action

## For The Sake Of Small Businesses

By Kristie L. Arslan

For several months, the approval rating of Congress has been the lowest of the low.

Individuals across the nation are fed up with the body of lawmakers that cannot seem to compromise and make real traction on improving our economy. Last year's debates on the federal budget, the debt ceiling and the payroll tax cut illustrated the level of inaction.

Congress closed out 2011 by agreeing to a short-term extension of the payroll tax cut. Now that they are back in session, your lawmakers are wrangling to come to a longer one-year deal.

As they debate another payroll tax extension proposal, I again encourage them to put partisan politics aside and pass the payroll tax extension.

### Congress Must Pass The Payroll Tax Extension

It is important that our nation's smallest businesses have the tools and resources they need to serve the American consumer through this season and beyond. Passing the payroll tax extension will put that extra savings in the pockets of not only consumers, but also in the pockets of the self-employed and micro-business owners who serve as employer and employee.

This relief can help pay for additional supplies, phone lines and online advertising for small businesses that continue to struggle as the economy falters.

*Passing the payroll tax extension will put extra savings in the pockets of not only consumers, but also in the pockets of the self-employed and micro-business owners.*

So often, the self-employed and micro-businesses are singled out in business legislation. Even though most of the businesses in this country are made up of 10 or fewer employees, and micro-businesses contribute nearly a trillion dollars to the economy, legislation is often less than fair for us.

### Other Actions Congress Can Take To Help America's Smallest Businesses

In addition to the payroll tax break, Congress can invest in small fixes that will go a long way for the small-business community:

- Fix the tax disparities that make small businesses pay more than their corporate counterparts for health insurance
- Increase small-business lending that will help startups create new jobs and help existing businesses expand
- Help individual states launch self-employment training programs for residents

America's small-business owners expect our nation's policymakers to find solutions and take actions that will help put people back to work. When small businesses begin to thrive again, so will the U.S. economy. ■

Kristie L. Arslan is president and CEO of the NASE and provides critical insight to policymakers on issues affecting our nation's self-employed. You can contact her at [advocacy@NASE.org](mailto:advocacy@NASE.org).





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