

## Effectively Manage your Social Networking Strategy with the Dynamics CRM Social Networking Accelerator

According to a [March 2009 study by Nielson](#), social networks and blogs are now the forth most popular online activity, ahead of personal email. In addition, time spent on social networking sites is growing three times faster than the overall internet rate, now accounting for almost 10 percent of all internet time. While these statistics point out that business can no longer afford to ignore Social Networking, it must be done in a closely planned and monitored manner in order to be effective. Microsoft's recently released Social Networking Accelerator for Dynamics CRM provides an outstanding toolset for effectively managing and tracking organizational social networking activities.

First off, for those readers that are new to web-based social networking, let me provide a very brief explanation. Websites such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn ([Wikipedia lists over 176 social networking sites at the time of this post!](#)) are all categorized as "social networking" sites. Although each of these sites differs from one another in important ways, they all allow users to create personal networks of their social and business contacts. Once a user has a network of contacts, they can communicate to their network in many ways for instance by:

1. Sharing Photos
2. Sharing Audio Recordings
3. Sharing Video Recordings
4. Sharing Personal, Professional, Political, Religious, Charitable, Business etc. Information
5. Posting status messages

Beyond these activities there are countless other ways for people to interact with their network. The especially "social" parts of social networking are that:

- 1) Once a user posts some sort of information, everyone in their network has the ability to comment on the posted information which often starts lively discussions amongst the network
- 2) Every person in your network has their own network which gives you access to your contacts' network and your contacts' contacts' network! (Want to learn more about Social Networking? check out About.com's [Guide to Social Networks](#))

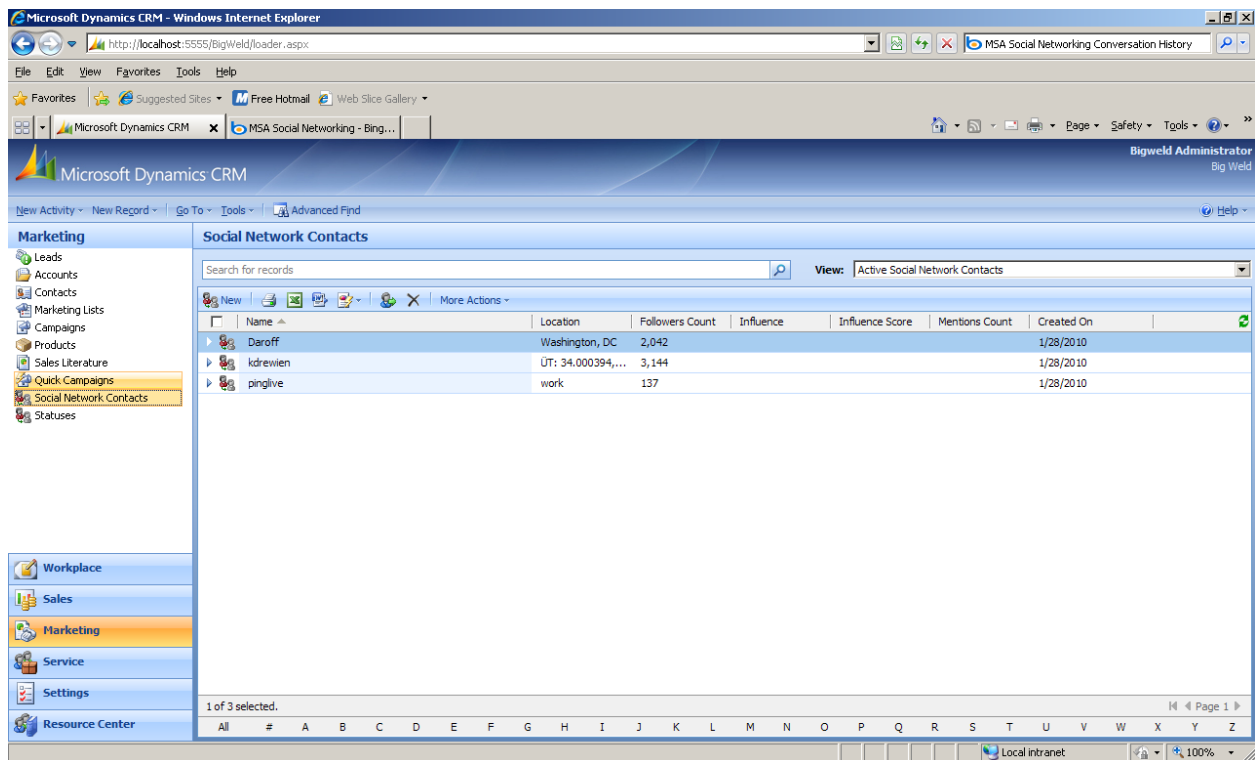
Organizations that participate in Social Networking will want to have a tool that allows them to do the following:

- 1) Setup and track all the Social Networking users or accounts used on behalf of the company on the different Social Networking sites.
- 2) Track all Social Networking posts made by company users or accounts

- 3) Track all responses to Social Networking posts
- 4) Identify potential leads for the company products and services amongst the company network (and follow up on those leads).
- 5) Identify potential customer service or PR "issues" amongst the company network (and respond to those issues).
- 6) Identify network contacts that are Positive or Negative influencers based on their posts in the company contact network (and take appropriate action).
- 7) Identify which messages/posts tend to garner the most response or activity from your network. This could be from an advertising and PR standpoint or even from a sales standpoint. This knowledge helps you to hone your messaging.

Of course, these are the features that the Dynamics CRM Social Networking Accelerator can provide. Let's take a peek at some of the screens:

What you see below in the Marketing area is a list of social networking contacts that have responded to status posts that I have made.

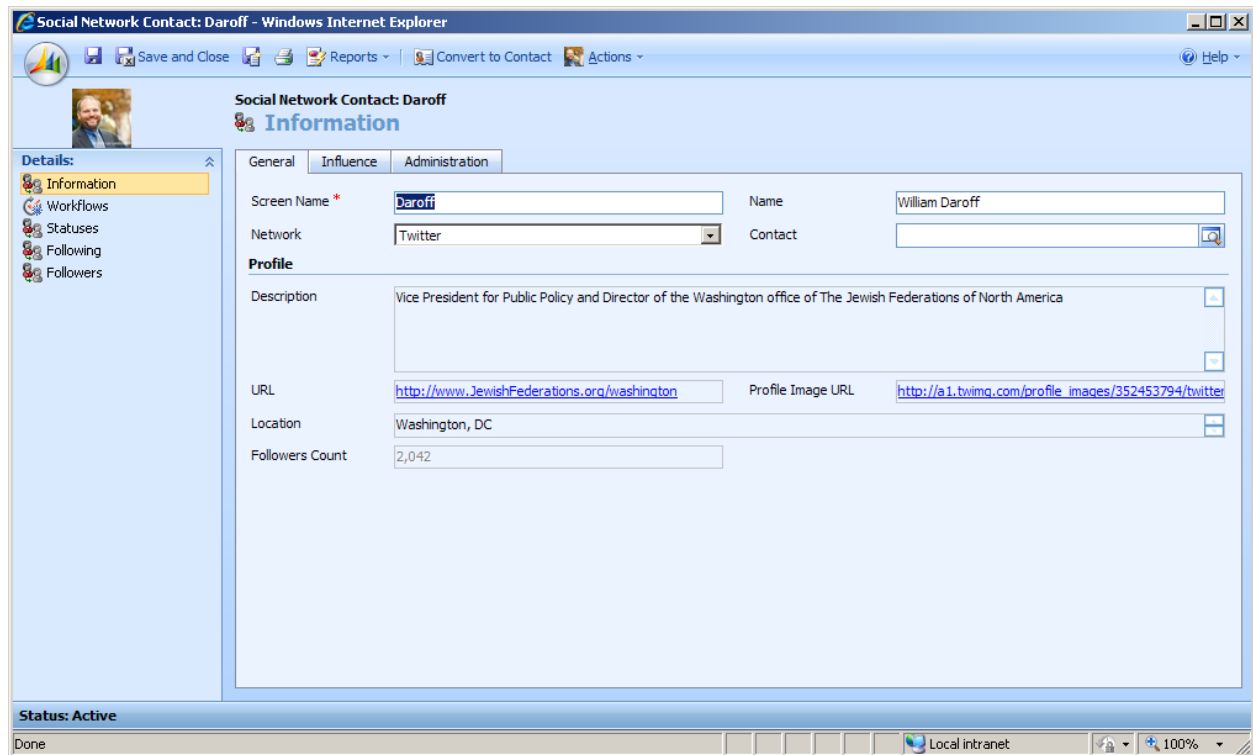


The screenshot shows the Microsoft Dynamics CRM interface in Internet Explorer. The browser address bar shows a local host URL. The CRM interface includes a navigation pane on the left with 'Marketing' selected, and a main content area titled 'Social Network Contacts'. The view is set to 'Active Social Network Contacts' and displays a table with the following data:

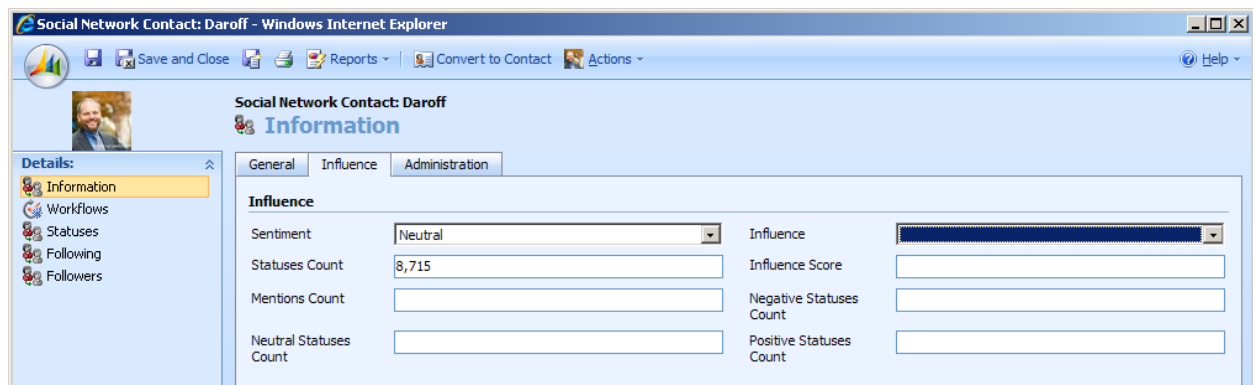
Name	Location	Followers Count	Influence	Influence Score	Mentions Count	Created On
Daroff	Washington, DC	2,042				1/28/2010
ldrewien	UT: 34.000394,...	3,144				1/28/2010
pinglive	work	137				1/28/2010

The interface also shows a search bar, a 'View' dropdown, and a status bar at the bottom indicating '1 of 3 selected' and 'Page 1'.

If I click on one of these contacts I get the following form:

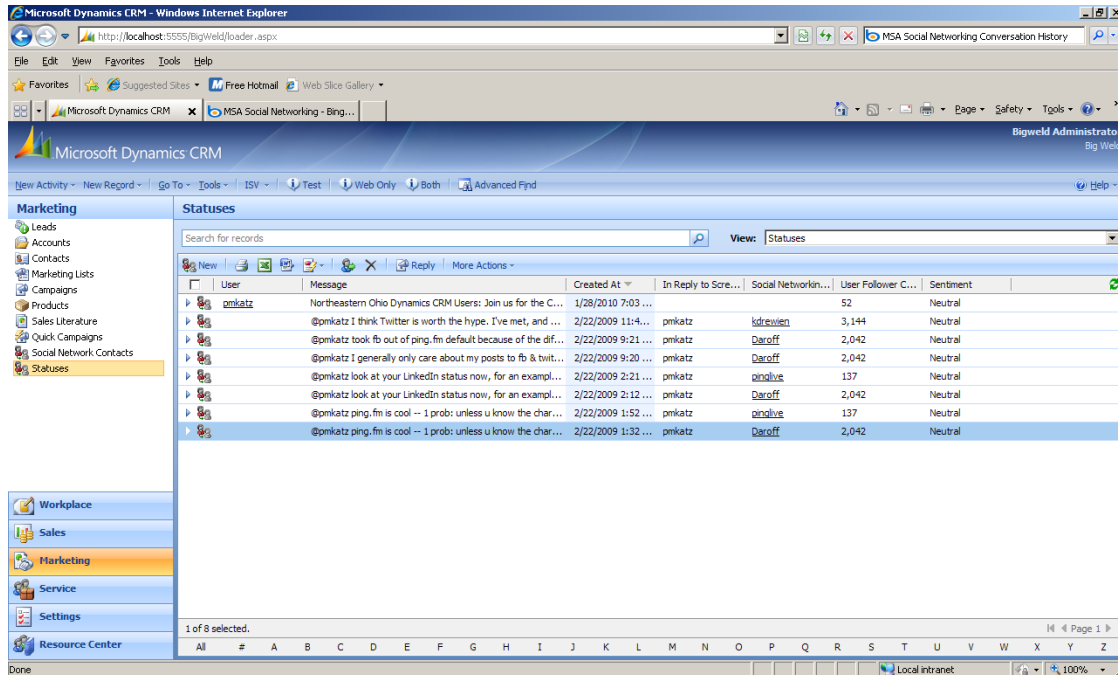


As you can see, CRM has gone out to the Social Networking site and imported the contact's picture, profile and numerous other pieces of information. In addition, the system will allow me to convert this social networking contact into a regular CRM Contact by clicking "Convert to Contact" on the toolbar. You can also see that I have the ability to track all status posts for this user as well as those people following this user and those people this user follows. On the Influence tab, we have the ability to

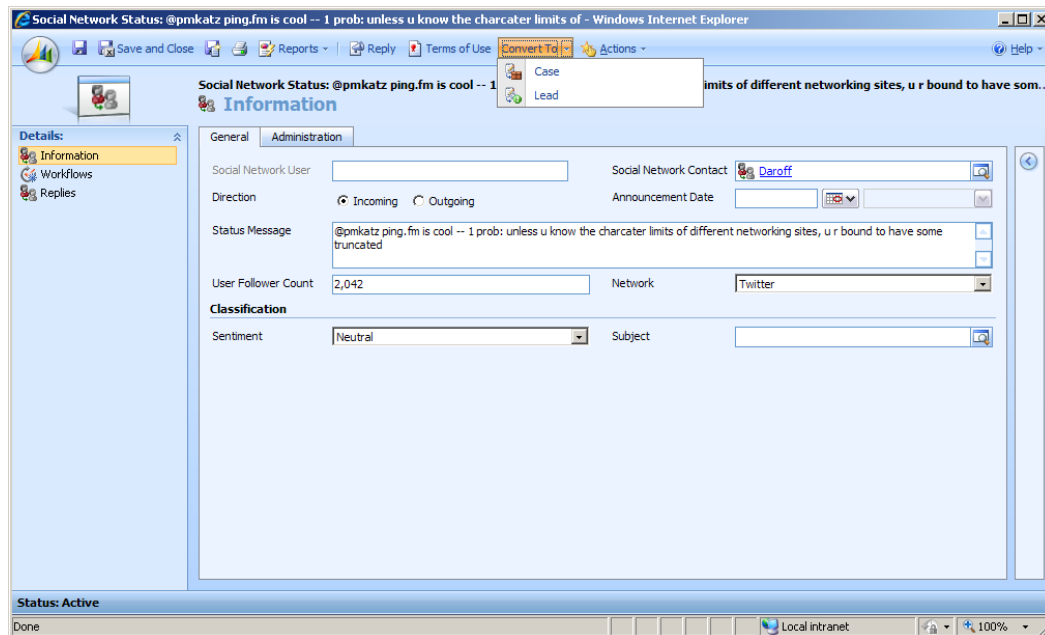


Track additional information about this contact's influence in the network.

Below is the Statuses sub-area which, like the Social Network Contacts list, can also be found in the Marketing area. This lists all statuses that I have published and the responses to those statuses.



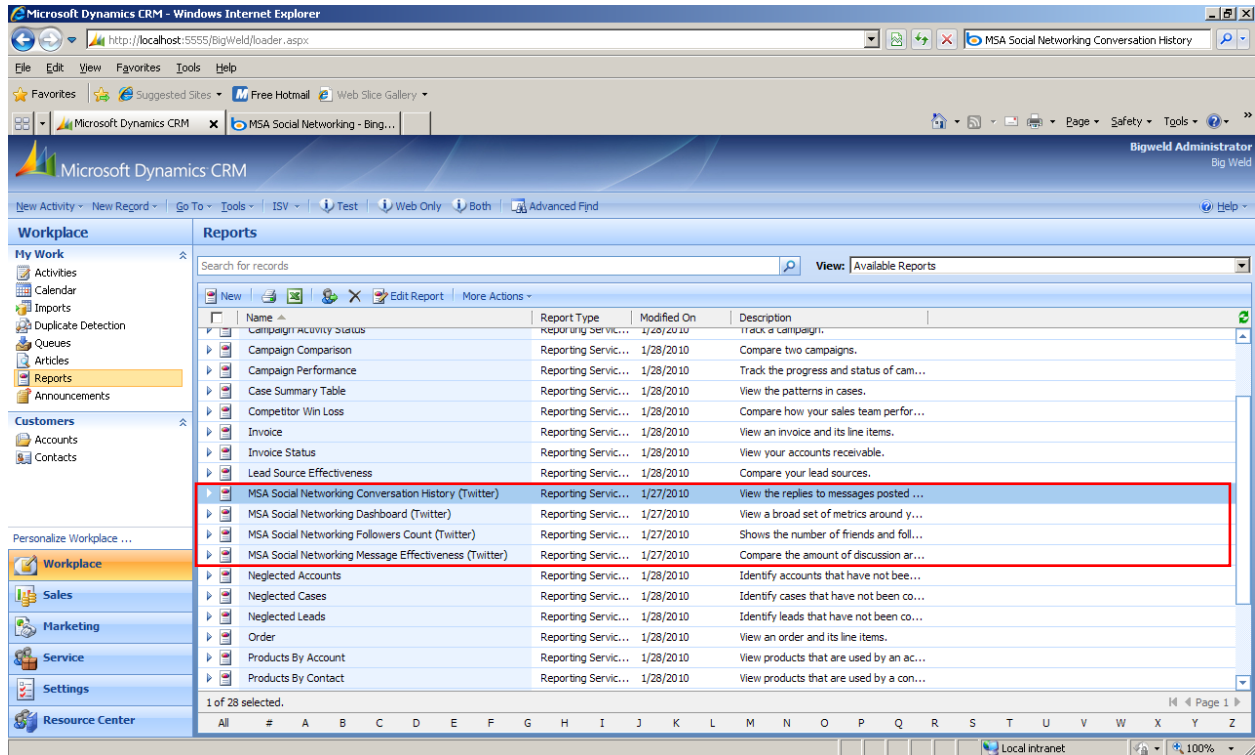
If I click on one of the status records I will see the following form:



Notice that I can convert any status to a Case or a Lead in CRM. This allows me to turn negative status messages into a case that can be resolved with the poster. On the

other hand, if a status message indicates an interest in our product or service, we can turn that status message into a lead and work the lead until it is qualified or disqualified.

The final feature to point out is the 4 excellent reports that come with the Social Networking Accelerator. Because my test system does not have a great deal of information, it would be useless to show you the reports but here is what you will get if you install the accelerator:



- 1.) Social Networking Dashboard – An overview report that provides metrics on your social networking activity.
- 2.) Message Effectiveness – A comparative report of all messages and the replies received.
- 3.) Conversation History – Detailed analysis of any conversation that resulted from a status post including who responded and what the impact of the responses was.
- 4.) Follower Count Over Time – Shows your users and counts of their contacts and followers over time.

As you can see, the Dynamics CRM Social Networking Accelerator has a lot to offer organizations looking to manage their Social Networking. And, as with all 9 of the existing Dynamics CRM Accelerators, you can't beat the price – this accelerator is absolutely free!



Currently, the accelerator only supports Twitter out-of-the-box but a developer would be able to create the necessary components to extend the tool to just about any Social Networking site(s) that you want to use. I would expect that Microsoft is probably working to extend the out-of-the-box functionality beyond Twitter itself but it is hard to know if or when such an enhancement will be available.

If you want to learn more or try the tool out for yourself you can download it and the documentation (and the other Dynamics CRM Accelerators) here:

<http://cram accelerators.codeplex.com/>

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