

Networking *for* Naturists



Emma James is really into her social media – Facebook, Twitter and blogging – and she uses it in her professional life as well as for promoting naturism. First published in [Naturist Life](#) in June 2014 under the title Naturist Networking, this article appears here edited and with permission from author and publisher.

I BEGAN NETWORKING ACTIVELY IN 2004, AFTER ATTENDING A BREAKFAST MEETING FOR A LOCAL business networking group. After the initial welcome, everyone around the table introduced themselves, and one member was given the opportunity to give a short presentation about their business. Business cards were passed around the table, along with neat little vinyl covered folios diligently updated with their latest offerings.

After a hearty breakfast we were able to network more informally. As a soon-to-be-divorced single parent with two rumbustious children, it was liberating to get away from the confines of my solitary life so took the opportunity to stay.

Typically at these meetings, a wide range of different professions are represented. Some groups lock out competitors so that only one representative from each industry is present, while others are less rigid. I've been a complimentary therapist since 1996 and built up a wide bank of clients over the years. At my first networking meeting, I was immediately able to link three people at the group with other business owners where I felt there was synergy. What a revelation! Not only was I able to promote my own business, I could help others at the same time.

An invitation for Ecademy¹, an international online networking group, had already been sent to me by one of my clients, I signed up to in December 2004 and hesitantly started to blog, encouraged by Thomas Power, who co-founded Ecademy along with wife, Penny.

I network universally, from a business, social and naturist perspective and over the years I've built up a large network of colleagues and friends. We all network every day, with our colleagues, friends or family and when we engage with other people who have similar interests, our networking creates stronger bonds.

For many naturists, the goal is for naturism to be more widely accepted and understood. We can help to spread the word about naturism far more effectively if we employ online and offline networking.

The Naturist Action Group (NAG), which is closely linked to Naturist Life, and has formed a consultative alliance with British Naturism. NAG understand only too well in order to succeed, team effort is required and in [Engagement](#), an excellent article posted on the their website, Reg Barlow says networking is necessary to increase further understanding of our lifestyle.

¹ Now known as [SunZu](#)

Surprising Facebook

There are a surprising number of naturist groups already on Facebook. If you take a look, you'll be surprised at how many naturists are out there wanting to communicate with other people. Some are doing so very powerfully through the medium of blogging, which is one of the most effective means of raising awareness, within the naturist community and to the wider public.



A Facebook friendly picture of Emma and friend.

Facebook's policy on nudity is well known to many naturists who use the social network and frustrates them inordinately. Provocative, sexualised images barely raise a glance while graphic images glorifying violence don't raise the censor's hackles and in direct contrast, non sexualised, relaxed nudity is akin to committing a cardinal sin to the Facebook Moderators. I've been suspended from Facebook three times so far and the last time it wasn't even a misdemeanour, they booted me off for some inoffensive naturist links I had posted.

However, you can share uncensored naturist content on the [Naktiv Network](#) (subtitled NOOK standing for Naked Online [is] OK), a free website founded by Richard Foley, an English ex-pat living near Munich in 2013. *Naturist Life* and *British Naturism* are run on a subscription basis and offer online interaction. *Naturist Life* through a dedicated Facebook group and *British Naturism* via a community website, in addition to events which both organisations set up and oversee.

Engaging with local businesses

If we're to gain wider public acceptance, I believe we need to gain the trust and acceptance of the business community. It doesn't benefit anyone if we are secretive and closed about our naturism. We are a part of our local communities and we need to interact with them, not hide away if we are to move forward with confidence. At Diogenes Sun Club, I help the PR Manager, Andy Cremer with Social Media and Ladies Recruitment. We actively engage with our local community by taking the Diogenes Roadshow to community fetes and complementary health fairs. We help to support local businesses by flagging them up on Twitter and ascribe to relevant Twitter campaigns which highlight the values of our family-friendly club. The more we speak out, the more we will be heard.

With greater engagement there will be less lampooning and more genuine understanding for naturism. The principles of naturism can help to highlight important and topical issues. (e.g. Body acceptance, the sexualisation of the human body in the media and the archaic response to the female breast and breastfeeding.)

More Women in Naturism

I'm passionate about getting the word out about naturism, particularly in relation to women. In order to do that naturism needs more women who are prepared to speak publicly about naturism and work with the media, taking part in radio and TV interviews.

I network on *Britmums* and to a lesser extent *Mumsnet*. These niche female networking groups help me to get the message about the benefits of naturism out directly to other women. It also enables me to highlight the wonderful facilities we have at Diogenes Sun Club, where we have a growing

membership and a number of young families and younger people; contrary to the ageing, mainly male demographic, typically seen in naturist clubs elsewhere and abroad.

This year (2014), British Naturism is celebrating its 50th anniversary and as a consequence naturism and naturists are more newsworthy than ever. A very positive article, "[The Naked Truth, 50 years later and British Naturism is still going strong](#)", was already been published in the *Daily Express* (by Sadie Nicolas: 26 April 2014) and there have been more since. It's encouraging to see positive message about naturism being conveyed by the mass media, as opposed to the usual salacious portrayal of sexualised flesh, which our society finds so acceptable.



Emma with Andy Cremer, PRO for Diogenes Sun Club with the Diogenes Roadshow.

Emma's Top Tips for Social Networking

So the basic tenet is, network to your heart's content and it will provide the seedbed for change. Support your vocal fellow naturists, we are after all a community and by working together we will gain more recognition.

Encourage those naturists who are prepared to be interviewed about naturism and those who utilise social media. The more people who are willing to do so, the greater our reach and influence will be.

New content is more effective than recycling old material. In social media terms, news becomes old very quickly. Nowadays social media metrics are assessed on the basis of engagement rather than activity, which was the case when online networking and blogging was in its infancy.

Social media is very reactive, as evidenced by natural disasters and for example, during times of political unrest. Respond quickly to breaking news and campaigning issues for maximum impact. If a BBC Radio Producer covers naturism, the broadcast is only available a short time (7 days) and the quicker you respond, the more likely it is to be featured.

Most presenters run a Twitter account. Reading their Tweets and interacting with them will help you to understand their attitudes towards naturism, which is always helpful if you to face them in a live radio or TV interview.

Nowadays, individuals can have as much reach and influence as a well known brand if they choose to harness social media effectively. Although social media has now been around for a number of years, the business community at large has only just begun to wake up to how powerful and effective Social Media is as a communication tool. People who are prepared to engage openly and honestly with interesting content, and who are prepared to show a little of themselves and their humanity, flaws and all, will have the louder voice in what has become a sea of noise.