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Just last week, I read an article about how one woman, Rhonda Surman, a postmistress in Scotland, was able to locate the owner of a missing camera. Based on some 600 photos, Ms. Surman and her friends located the owner by posting some of the photos on Flickr. As a result, Ms. Surman now holds the newly deemed title, "Digital Samaritan."

How is this an example of social media? By asking the Flickr community to help locate the owner, she brought people together for the greater good.

Most professionals only think of social media in terms of what it can do directly for them, instead of what it can do for others. As a result, I think there are direct correlations to an accounting firm and the way it markets and promotes itself. Oftentimes, the message is too internally focused on what the firm offers instead of speaking to solutions for clients and prospects.

Instead of saying "We offer a variety of tax and accounting solutions for the healthcare industry," you can turn this into something much more informative: "Hospital and physicians groups are often overwhelmed by tax and accounting issues, and have neither the time nor the resources to adequately address these concerns on a continuous basis. Our firm works with healthcare professionals to find the pain points and provide cost-effective accounting solutions that meet short- and long-term needs."

See the difference? OK, so I took a bit of a leap with my social media example of working on behalf of others, but I think you see my point. Try focusing your messaging not on what you can do as a firm, but what you can do for others.

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