

Social Media Isn't About Winning ... It's More Important Than That



Business has been built on the foundation of selling stuff. Hopefully, lots of stuff – products, ideas, services – to lots of folks.

The latest tool new-marketing experts are promoting to management is social media. You know, putting your products, your ideas in front of the masses to buy.

Most social media efforts today – Facebook page, Twitter account, YouTube video program – are implemented, tested and measured to push what your stuff to retail (brick and mortar or ecommerce) to keep the cash register ringing.

If the bottomline is black, the people who recommended and ran the program say, “*See, it works!*”

If the bottomline bleeds red, another social media team is brought in.

Social media, the internet, smartphones, ecommerce, mobile to in-store signage and friends digital coupons put you in front of the customer.

If it's a bad product, bad process or the business-as-usual model hasn't changed to align with today's new environment; social media people and tools won't produce the results you want and need...a sustainable business.

Digital marketing and social media programs that are implemented on top of the same old business model to move the products/ideas are too obvious, too easy to see through.

They're about as transparent as Morgan Spurlock's recent documentary, *The Greatest Movie Ever Sold*.

The business of yesterday was tough. The business of tomorrow is even tougher; and only a few will be willing to be sit there and be told what they want and must buy through psychological manipulation and repetition.

The business of today isn't the same as it always was. It's different. It's better. It's tougher. And it isn't going back.

Intelligently implemented social media can be an important tool to use in getting back in the center of the marketplace and can help your team rethink and rework your business to become a part of the customers' universe.

Get over the idea you control your brand.

Hasbro doesn't own their brand...Apple doesn't own their brand...Ford doesn't own their brand.

You can't control it, you can't protect it, and you can't reshape it.

Lead by Following

The customer community owns the brand.

Social media give you the tools you need to listen and learn what the brand is...not to hype/promote it.

Social media strategists who spend all their time crafting their posts and sending out their tweets are so into themselves they don't have time to...shut up and listen.

The power of the individual, the power of the crowd shapes your brand. They make your success.

Asking questions, responding to the community and being a good steward of the brand are all important parts of your social media success.

The marketplace – partners, retailers, influentials, customers – have already taken over the control of your brand; now it's your job to help them help you.

Race to the Top

Apple's iPad isn't the cheapest tablet available. LeapFrog's LeapPad won't be the cheapest children's tablet.

Neither firm is in a rush to be the lowest-priced product in their category. But they are in a rush to define to help their customers understand why their products are unique and special in their product category.

The LeapPad is designed for tykes to use but the selling proposition is clearly focused on parents who want to give their children an edge.

Both tablet producers focus on the value, the benefits they are offering, not the lowest price in town.

Both organizations are using social media to help their loyalists, their customers, their users show and tell others why their solution isn't just cooler but better; and, in fact, a greater value than anything else out there!

That's your job too...make your product/idea better, more interesting, more innovative, more useful for the consumer/user, not cheaper than something else.

You're not trying to make them buy the product; you want them to bond, identify with it.

Social media is an ideal way to help people take and make your brand theirs.



Market to One, Market to Many

The digital world is a microcosm of the real world. It is individuals having a conversation with a few people with millions listening in, coming in/leaving the conversation, moving to new conversations and sharing/modifying that information with others.

It's a web of information, ideas and entertainment that people can search for and share.

As Mitch Joel, president of Twist Image, has written, we are now no longer separated by six people to everyone else in the universe; we are separated by six pixels.

Whether you're writing a blog post, responding in a forum thread, leaving a blog comment, communicating on Facebook, Google+, Twitter or whatever, you're focusing on one person with a mob looking on, listening in.

As long as you're participating in the conversation and bring value to the conversation – listening and responding – people will stay as part of the audience.

Listening, being honest, candid, helpful and entertaining usually works in the real world and attracts an open, friendly, interested crowd.

Confrontational or hostile conversations attract a virtual audience just as they do in the real world; but the tone, temper never produces positive results/relationships. If the discussion becomes confrontational or unique to the individual, take it offline to resolve the issue/problem as best you can.

No one wins arguments...everyone wins conversations.

The company's goal is – or should be – to have people appropriately building an audience online for the company, the brand, the product.

The more honest, more candid, more open, the better the audience and the more they contribute and share with their audiences.

Authenticity, interest always works best.

- Help your online employees be people – transparent
- Ensure they sound like people – tone

- Remind them to act like people – adding value
- Communicate like people talking with one and millions listening
- Listen like people interested in the other(s) inputs, ideas

Social media isn't a new, exciting, cheap marketing project/plan. Social media is strongly people-centric, integrating into every fiber and phase of the company if it is done right.

It's a mindset transition.

Done right, customers and employees are important contributors to the organization's direction, products, success...not an intrusion.

When customer ideas and recommendations are incorporated and/or taken seriously, that customer has an investment in the success of the brand that will take you into tomorrow.

Don't expect your business, your brand, your product, your market, your corporate culture to change overnight.

You can't fake social media activities; you can't simply give it lip service.

Show your team you can listen and they'll listen.

When they listen, they are able to connect your company, your brand, your success with an audience.

An audience builds your market...that's what they want, that's what you want.

And that's more important than a winning campaign, beating the competition.

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