

M LOCAL BUSINESS MARKETING

The Marketing Guide for Local Businesses

March 2015

5 Top Tips for Social Media Marketing

*6 Types of Posts
that Will Drive
More Traffic to
Your Business Blog*

The Top Three Social Media Fails

Customer
Service Never
Goes Out Of
Style



**Networking
Tips**

Infographic:
Top Social Media
Sites

FREE!

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Welcome!

Thank you for taking the time to read this month's magazine. We hope you find it full of interesting articles, and more importantly, that you'll be able to learn at least one thing that you can immediately apply to your business.

This month, as usual, we address several ways to help you grow your business. You'll find tips that will help you get the most from your networking efforts, your social media marketing, and your business blog.

You'll also find new versions of our popular Marketing Calendar and Infographic.

If you're not already receiving this magazine regularly, we suggest you add your email to our subscriber list. We have some exciting articles already in the works for the upcoming issues. Don't miss out!

If you like the magazine, and know other local business owners that could benefit from receiving our magazine each month, please do us (and them) a favor by forwarding a copy to them.

If you have any comments about this issue or would like us to help you with your marketing please do not hesitate to contact us.

Regards,
David Akers
President / CEO
LMS Solutions, Inc.

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LMS Solutions was developed to give businesses of all sizes the ability to leverage the same cutting-edge marketing platforms that the Fortune 500 organizations use, at extremely affordable rates.

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Marketing Calendar

Plan your marketing messages around these upcoming holidays and proclamations.

March

Irish American Heritage Month (US, Ireland)
Women's History Month (US, UK)
Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) Awareness Month
Employee Spirit Month
National Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month
National Endometriosis Awareness Month
Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month
Red Cross Month

March 1 - St. David's Day (UK)

March 17 - St. Patrick's Day

March 29 - Palm Sunday

1st - National Peanut Butter Lover's Day

2nd - Dr. Seuss Day

3rd - National Anthem Day

4th - National Pancake Day – IHOP

4th - National Hug a G.I. Day

6th - National Dentist's Day



6th - National Oreo Cookie Day

6th - National Employee Appreciation Day

8th - Return of Daylight Savings (US)

9th - National Napping Day

10th - National Pack Your Lunch Day

11th - National Johnny Appleseed Day

12th - National Girl Scout Day

13th - National Good Samaritan Day

14th - National Potato Chip Day

17th - Corned Beef and Cabbage Day

19th - National Certified Nurses Day

21st - National Common Courtesy Day

22nd - National Goof Off Day

23rd - National Puppy Day

24th - Chocolate Covered Raisin Day

26th - National Spinach Day

29th - Mom and Pop Business Owners Day

30th - National Take a Walk in the Park Day

30th - National Doctors Day

31st - National Tater Day

April

National Autism Awareness Month

National Humor Month

International Guitar Month

Keep America Beautiful Month

Lawn and Garden Month

National Poetry Month

Stress Awareness Month

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

April 1st - April Fool's Day

April 4th - Passover Begins

April 5th - Easter Sunday

April 23rd - St. George's Day (UK)

2nd - Reconciliation Day

2nd - Children's Book Day

4th - School Librarian Day

6th - Sorry Charlie Day

7th - World Health Day

7th - National Beer Day

9th - Winston Churchill Day

10th - National Siblings Day

11th - Barber Shop Quartet Day

11th - National Pet Day

12th - Big Wind Day

12th - Grilled Cheese Sandwich Day

13th - National Scrabble Day

15th - Tax Day

15th - Titanic Remembrance Day

16th - Wear Your Pajamas to Work Day

17th - World Hemophilia Day

19th - Primrose Day (UK)

20th - Look Alike Day

22nd - Earth Day

22nd - Girl Scout Leaders Day

22nd - Administrative Professionals Day (US)

23rd - Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day

24th - Arbor Day

25th - DNA Day

26th - Pretzel Day

30th - Adopt a Shelter Pet Day

30th - Hairstylist Appreciation Day



Customer Service Never Goes Out of Style

No matter what business you are in, you are in the customer service business. Without customers, your business wouldn't exist. If you're thinking that just because you don't work in retail or ever have any contact with a customer you shouldn't have to worry about customer service, you're making a big mistake.

Whether you're the traffic engineer who synchronizes the traffic signals, an inventor creating the next video gizmo, or the clerk who rings up the sales at the hardware store, you all have customer service concerns.

For the traffic engineer, his goal may be to keep traffic flowing but without an emphasis on the customer, in this case the individual drivers, he will fail miserably. The initial intersection may get cleared however, if next intersection stops the drivers, the traffic will back up again, moving the gridlock elsewhere. Instead, if he puts himself in the position of the customer, he'd see that by synchronizing the lights, not only would it make it easier to get through town, the traffic would

flow better. By synchronizing the lights with the customer's needs in mind, he can accomplish his goal of smooth traffic flow as well as get the driver through a series of intersections efficiently.

An inventor who understands the end-user's needs will create a better product. For example, let's say this gizmo is designed to make it easier for senior citizens to download movies onto their TVs. If the buttons are small with tiny text, his customers, the senior citizens will reject it because of their failing eyesight.

The clerk at the hardware store is the typical example of what many people think customer service is. This clerk is the main point of contact for many customers. So what about the guy who hired the clerk? Is he involved in customer service? You bet. Human resources managers have customers too, internal customers. They must meet the needs of the various department heads that need to fill positions. If they don't listen to their requirements and place an employee that's inappropriate for the position, their customer,

the department head, won't be pleased.

This could also trickle down to the customer purchasing his hardware. For example, let's say the clerk hired by human resources lacks basic math skills. When the customer buys his new hammer, he pays in cash and gets short-changed. Not only did the clerk fail, the human resources manager did too for hiring an unqualified candidate.

In addition, the human resources manager's customer is the job applicant. Perhaps this particular clerk would be better suited in the garden department where he can answer questions about what plants are best for the climate. Did the human resources manager overlook the applicant's past nursery experience in order to fill an immediate opening?

Why should you care about customer service? Companies that have an emphasis on customer service enjoy repeat business. Considering what it costs to attract new customers, a little effort pays off big dividends in keeping the existing ones.

Customer service doesn't have to be complicated either. Smile, listen, care. Give your employees the go-ahead and tools to help solve customer problems. Get rid of obstacles that make it hard for employees to help.

One of the best ways to spot potential customer problems is to pretend you are a customer at your own establishment. For example, if you own a boutique that caters to new moms, enter the store with a stroller or a big diaper bag on your shoulder. Can you navigate the aisles or are your displays jam-packed to the point where your target customer can't get around?

If you manage a fast-food restaurant, place an order at your own drive-through. Is the speaker box blocking the menu board so you can't see all the items available?

If you work in the human resources department, fill out your own paperwork. Are your applications easy to read? Is there plenty of room to fill in the required information? Are you asking for redundant or irrelevant information?

Customer service matters. It's the best approach to just about any job and it never goes out of style.



5 Top Tips for Social Media Marketing - A Guide for Small Businesses



In a time where brand awareness is everything, social media is giving small businesses a big voice. By engaging with the community in a friendly, informative or fun way, you can connect directly with the people who really matter. For a little time, and a very small amount of money, you can achieve the sort of targeted success unrivaled by any fancy advert.

1. Be Selective

As it's so easy to set up an account on social media, it can be tempting to go crazy and create a profile on every website you come across. It's important not to try and reach out to everyone, but rather select the best platform for your audience - this way you won't

be spreading your attention too thinly once you start using them.

LinkedIn is a professional arena, making it ideal for B2B firms who want to network with CEOs. Facebook can be perfect for shops and cafes targeting a local community, while Twitter's microblogging system is great for giving a more personal voice to a brand. Pinterest is a very visual platform, perfect for photographers, restaurants or fashion retailers looking to create an aspirational image. Google Plus and Google Places work together to give customers the precise location of your business, as well as important information like your opening times and phone number. Google Plus allows you to build a following and interact with

those in your Circles; customers can leave reviews, and you can respond to them here.

Facebook is the most popular option for SMEs and, with 1/7th of the world's population logging in monthly and a 65% referral rate for website links, it's easy to see why. A dedicated business page gives you the option to pay for advertising through Facebook, which displays your ad to an extremely specific audience, or sponsor a post to give it that extra boost.

2. Consider Tone

Establish clearly who you are targeting through your social interaction. Picture a typical customer - this is who you are writing for. It's worth bearing in mind 72% of Pinterest users are

female, while LinkedIn is only really used by professionals. Twitter and Facebook allow you to be broader with who you target.

Develop a social media marketing strategy, no matter how simple, and stick to it. Marketing agencies can help you create a clear voice for your brand if you need assistance.

Websites like Twitter and Facebook are the perfect arena for toning down the formality if appropriate for your business. Think about the brands you follow with your personal account - it's likely they take a fun, warm and chatty tone. Of course, this doesn't work for all small businesses. A professional, inspiring or authoritative tone is usually better for a B2B looking to network with professionals.

Whatever voice you choose to take, ensure you sound human. This is how your

social campaign differentiates itself from your website and marketing materials.

3. This Isn't The Place For 'Hard Sell'

While you should consider the purpose before posting anything, nobody likes a news feed spammer. Rather than selling your product or service directly, social media marketing is all about increasing brand awareness. Everything you post should be of interest to your target customer. Small businesses can prompt likes and shares with a pretty landscape photograph or by joining in with the discussion of an upcoming festival or fete. Aspirational pictures, how-to guides and funny photographs are often popular posts.

Basically, everything you post should be useful, interesting, or inspiring. A cookware store, for example, could post a recipe or a handy cook's

measurement conversion guide, or encourage followers to send in photographs of baking projects. Ask questions, encourage debates and think outside the box. Of course, it's fine to post the occasional relevant website or blog post link, just not too often. And make sure it's interesting when you do.

Generally, take a safe approach and don't post anything which could be remotely controversial or offensive. Think twice before retweeting that witty comment on politics, or even that scandalous piece of celebrity gossip. It's important to maintain a happy, open community where each user feels welcome.

4. Stay Active

This is partly why point 1 is so important. Neglected social accounts are just asking to be unliked or unfollowed. If you can only afford to invest an hour



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or two a week in your social marketing strategy, explore tools like Buffer and HootSuite. These enable you to write lots of posts whenever you get spare time, and schedule them to go out at allocated date and time intervals.

Whether you use these tools or not, it's still important to log in directly. It only takes a few minutes to read and answer queries, and gives an impression of great customer service. Don't panic if you receive a complaint through social media, but make sure to respond. Take a polite, helpful and friendly tone and solve the issue as quickly and calmly as possible.

General connecting with others is important. Search for industry-related phrases on Twitter and retweet posts which may be interesting to your audience. Use your expertise to help fellow users out and discuss relevant topics.

5. Track Your Success

The great thing about social media marketing is you'll see how well you're doing instantaneously. Check notifications religiously, and take note of which posts have prompted the most interaction. There's plenty of advice online about the best times to post statuses and tweets, which hashtags to

use and how to increase your follower to following ratio.

Getting to know your audience will be a learning curve, but you'll soon be able to assess your own successes and failures. Social media tools like Buffer and HootSuite also detail the volume of responses and shares, and Google Analytics and Bit.ly can be used to assess website referral and conversion data.

Social media offers the perfect opportunity for small businesses to increase brand awareness, website traffic and even conversion ratios. By taking note of these key points, anyone can create a simple yet effective social media strategy.

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The Online Marketing Perks of Pinterest

It used to be that you get what you pay for and free anything signified a whole lot of nothing. The salary package of your online marketer aside, online businesses can, today, get quite a bit of marketing accomplished for free via social networking sites like Pinterest. This relatively new image sharing platform is growing at a phenomenal rate and marketers who are looking for free exposure that is just as effective as exposure one could pay for will discover that Pinterest is an exciting option to steer traffic to your website and generate serious (and free) exposure for your products or brand.

Pins

Big and small businesses alike are using Pinterest and its virtual pin boards to gain exposure for their products, brands, and services. The central concept of Pinterest is the image—any image—that may be shared from one pinner to the next. When users see something they like such as a recipe, hairstyle, gadget, or new blouse they can pin it to one of their boards. If that shirt happens to be a shirt designed by your company, you have proof of interest from that one pin. How much interest does that one shirt garner your company on Pinterest? Well, if pinners are clicking on

that shirt to link back to your catalog where it is available for \$34.99, you may very well witness the easy jump from passive to active interest without doing a thing except allowing that single shirt image to network for you on the Pinterest website.

Pinners

Pinner, naturally, are people. Marketers that sign on to Pinterest and launch their products on the site in the form of pins are likely to see a positive boost of activity on their home website. Certainly, developers should be tracking all this traffic with some analytics, but many companies are finding Pinterest exposure to be profitable. Yet, pins aside, the people who pin a business' products can tell marketers a lot about demographic interest and item profitability. Perhaps your company had no idea its Mexican-style blankets would become all the rage in Denmark, but the fact that more development can be done in that direction is valuable information for a company to know. In real time, marketers can witness what pinner like and what they tend to ignore.

Public Boards

Having a business profile on Pinterest can be as minimal as one board or as broad as hundreds of boards. A women's magazine might have boards relative to cooking, family, seasonal style, crafts, and even design. A beverage company might have boards that showcase products as well as product ingredients or special events. Since the nature of each board is entirely up to the owner of the account, the whole process and look of the pin boards are utterly customizable and even

changeable. Consider boards for new product launches or marketing events. Followers of your company will see the pins over their pin-followers feed, but their followers will see anything they decide to repin. The repin process allows your company the potential for far-reaching exposure.

Private Boards

Pinterest also allows accounts to have private boards—boards that either no one can see or the parties that you designate may see. These boards can allow companies to prepare marketing campaigns before launching any one pin over this platform. On the other hand, they can also be used to track the pins or marketing strategies of other companies so that your own company can keep tabs on its industry. For some marketing teams, these boards can be powerful tools that allow them to interact with each other while tracking other activity on Pinterest.

Maintaining a Pinterest Presence

Most companies today are trying to maintain an active presence on social media sites. Pinterest is simply another avenue to get the message out about products or the brand itself. However, its considerable popularity is causing it to be named frequently in statements along with Twitter and Facebook. In fact, using an analytics program can clearly demonstrate which social networking website works best for your company and is driving the most traffic to your business. Yet, now that Pinterest is becoming one of social's heavy-hitters, it is far more beneficial to embrace it rather than ignore it. Chances are your competition is pinning away even now.



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CONTEST

Promote your Brand with a Pinterest Contest

Pinterest.com offers its members the capability to find and share images they like by creating 'pins' (a shared photo from the web) and placing them on customized and themed pin boards.

Others can then 'like', comment on, or 'repin' the image to their own boards, sharing them further. Each pinned image contains a link back to the source website, so as a backlinking strategy, Pinterest can provide meaningful social proof and create interest, awareness and peer-recommended plugs for your products and services.

While other brands are still trying to work out how to leverage the seemingly sudden popularity of the site, business owners and internet marketers have the opportunity to gain a quick and powerful advantage using Pinterest's growing popularity.

Wise webmasters are already falling over themselves to get the most attractive and appealing images on their blog posts, in an attempt to increase their likelihood of being pinned.

However, most website owners are still floundering and ignoring the phenomenon, giving early adopters the chance to fully establish themselves and gain authority and brand recognition.

Many businesses already using the site are working hard on getting the best out of it. But what if you could get your customers, and potential customers, to do the work for you?

Persuading others to create multiple pins, all linking back to your site, is easier than it sounds. Running a contest on Pinterest will cost you only the value of the prize, and a few hours of work. This will be more than repaid by the priceless social promotion you will receive, along with a massive increase in popularity for your website or products.

A Numbers Game

Challenge customers to create a board on Pinterest containing their favorite products from your website, with a prize for the person who gets the most repins within a set amount of time.

Imaginative Thinking

Alternatively, offer a prize to the customer who creates the most imaginative, creative, or visually appealing board made up of images from your website.

Descriptive Advantage

To really make customers think deeply about your products, you could also offer a prize to the person whose pin has the best, most apt, or most original description.

Storyboard

If you want to get even more innovative, ask your readers to create a pin board which tells a story. Made up entirely of photos from your website, every pin would create a backlink to a product, service, or page of your site, offering ample opportunity for friends of your customers to see, and follow the link to, your website.

Products in Action

If you have a physical product, ask consumers to create a pin including a photo of them using your

product. Videos can also be posted on the site, so a video review pin board could also be extremely effective. The prize could be randomly selected from all the entrants, or be awarded for originality.

These Pinterest contest ideas can be promoted on your website, email lists, and Twitter and Facebook accounts. They can be collated by asking entrants to tag the entries with a searchable key word, or to email you with a link to their board. This kind of engagement with your brand is invaluable and will create a sense of investment in your products' success.

If a customer is cheering on their pin of your best seller, she will feel strongly that it is great value and should win. If another is desperate for his demonstration video to scoop the prize, he will share it with all his friends and request that they repin it to their own boards.

This kind of viral success is much sought-after, and Pinterest offers an environment where it has a chance to succeed. By creating a competitive environment along with an appealing prize for the winner, any business with products they are proud of and a strong brand can sit back and relax as their marketing is done for them, and the resulting orders flood into their inbox.



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6 Types of Posts that Will Drive More Traffic to Your Business Blog

Succeeding with business blogging isn't easy: it requires time and effort and the ability to be creative and inspirational. With quality, original content being more important than ever before, online marketers face significant challenges to keep their audiences interested.

Another challenge facing marketers is the necessity to diversify their approaches to appeal to wider audiences, and this means not only choosing different topics, but also different content formats.

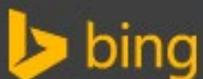
You'll also need to write in a web-friendly way that takes into account the relatively short attention span of Internet users. Consider the following types of traffic-building posts:

1 - Tutorials

While your precise goals will vary, your business blog probably exists to solidify your brand's image online, and for this reason, content should be helpful to its intended audience if nothing else. Tutorials are among the oldest and most tried-and-tested forms of content marketing. How-to guides present a great deal of potential, since they help your existing customers to get more out of your products and services while at the same time helping to inspire potential customers. However, not all tutorial-driven content should concern your own products and services, but also related topics as well, such as more general how-to advice.

2 - Lists

Almost everyone loves lists, and you don't even have to look very far to find entire websites dedicated exclusively to publishing lists. Since bite-sized chunks of information tend to be consumed much more often when published online, lists provide an excellent way to streamline useful snippets of information in an easily readable format that readers can skim through at will. Lists don't tend to provide any in-depth content, but they can be useful for piquing the reader's interest in a particular subject matter. Similar to list-type articles are lists of resources and links that your readers are most likely to be interested in.



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3 - Checklists

Similarly to the way that online audiences tend to seek out help to get more out of the things they use on a daily basis, they also seek direction.

Checklists and to-do lists are excellent formats for guiding your readers, with the former being especially effective for helping people to make sure that they don't forget about anything important when working on a particular project. Checklists are typically written in much the same way as any other lists, although they tend to be more focussed on being educational rather than entertaining. Another popular and closely related format is the cheat sheet, the ultimate in quick-reference notes.

4 - Infographics

Infographics are a great way to share information in an engaging visual manner that also combines some useful pieces of relevant information in the form of text. Since people tend to be much more receptive towards visual representations of subject matter in the form of graphs, charts and other illustrations, infographics are a

great way to attract attention. Such content also tends to be highly sharable, provided that you can create your own or hire someone to do it for you.

Alternatively, you can find numerous infographics online, many of which you can embed on your own website. Start by looking at visual.ly, Pinterest and Instagram for some ideas.

5 - Guest Posts

Although guest posting as a way to build up links was condemned by Google in January, 2014, it remains a great way to get some new talent and a fresh perspective for your blog.

Consider approaching other bloggers in your niche or even the most active members of your audience and asking them if they would like to write a guest post for you. Guest posting generally doesn't cost anything, since the poster typically gets some exposure for their own website by accompanying their posts with a short bio and a link. If you need more valuable content for your blog, there are plenty of talented writers out there who can help.

6 - Series

Blog posts are typically fairly short at around 500 to 700 words, but you'll likely come up with many ideas that are simply too big for a single post. While whitepapers or even eBooks are the ultimate formats for providing an in-depth study into a particular subject, a series of blog posts tends to be much more accessible. If you find that a blog post you're writing is approaching much more than around 1,500 words, consider breaking it up into numbered parts. For continued audience engagement, you can also publish each part a few days or more apart rather than publishing everything at once.

The above are just some of the more popular ideas for blog content formats, but this list by no means covers everything. The most successful blogs tend to have multiple writers with each one having their own column or series, while the occasional piece of more in-depth content is published to provide its most valuable and information-hungry readers with the level of content that they crave.

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Why Business Networking Works



In this day of the internet, iPods, and smart phones, you'd think business owners would spend all their time on the internet to drum up new business. Not so. The smart business owners do a considerable amount of business networking and that means networking two, three, and even four times a week.

What is networking? Meeting other business people, generally at a meeting or event, and discussing the possibility of doing business with one another at some time in the future providing one of you needs the other's service or product.

Why does networking work? It's simple. People will do business with people they know, like and trust. People are creatures of habit. They shop at the same stores over and over or they go to the same stores out of convenience. So how does that relate to networking?

If you see a person at a networking meeting over and over and talk to them once in awhile, you are developing a relationship with them. You are getting to know them. You might be learning about the

schools their children attend. Perhaps you learn you both like the same baseball team. You'll also be learning about each other's business.

By attending the same networking meetings over and over, people will get to know you and, hopefully, like you. So where does the trust come in? Over time, trust is built up. You are likely to get a good product or service from a business person you know you are going to see week after week at a meeting. They would be very uncomfortable if they sold you a bad bill of goods then had to see you week after week at a meeting.

Another way to earn trust from your fellow business owners is to ask them to give you a testimonial at a meeting after they have done business with you. Ask if you can also put that testimonial on your website. Put a photo of them on your site as well for added emphasis.

Getting someone to know, like, and trust you takes time. Attend the same networking events each week or month. Give referrals once you build trusting relationships. Your business will grow as a result.

A vertical advertisement banner for RingCentral. The background is a dark wood-grain texture. At the top, there's a white laptop keyboard and a speech bubble icon. The RingCentral logo is in the upper left. The main text is centered: "Your complete all-inclusive phone system." Below that, it says "Easy to manage and set up. Now with online meetings". At the bottom, there's a white smartphone, a grey office phone, and a speech bubble icon. A large orange button with the text "FREE TRIAL" is at the very bottom.

RingCentral

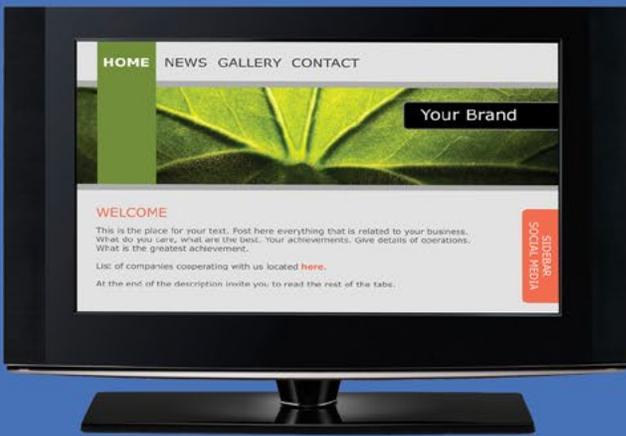
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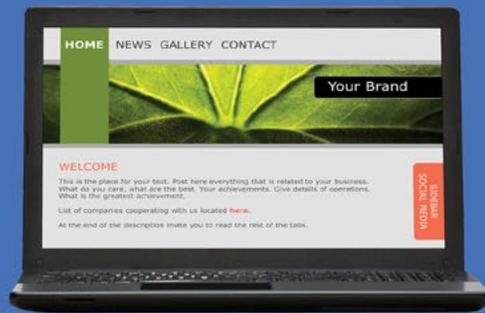
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The Top Three Social Media Fails: How to Avoid Them for the Sake of Your Business's Reputation



#Uh-Oh

Social media marketing is one of the most effective ways to market your business online. Compared to SEO and standard marketing efforts, social media provides a stable, direct avenue of interacting with your fans. It's practically a fact that businesses with strong social media presences experience steadier growth than businesses that lack it.

But social media is something of a double-edged sword. If you mess up on social media, everybody finds out about it. Whether it's a mistimed tweet or an insensitive attempt to market your product, a social media blunder is sure to be a good source of bad publicity. Featured below are some of the biggest social media blunders that happen occasionally, and how you, as an entrepreneur, should be avoiding these same mistakes.

Insensitivity

Every marketer in the world knows about the importance of a trend. In social media

marketing, the value of a trend is unparalleled. Paying attention to what everyone is talking about is an important part of succeeding in the world of social media. When a new trend pops up, it's pretty much guaranteed that every business in the world is going to find a way to promote their product in the context of whatever that trend is.

But if you're going to promote your content in the context of a trend, remember to practice a bit of tact and sensitivity. Don't copy the example of Epicurious, a cooking site that somehow found it appropriate to promote recipes for whole-grain cranberry scones in the wake of the Boston Marathon bombings. Another example is Kenneth Cole, a designer who similarly thought it was appropriate to promote his brand in light of the protests in Cairo.

Never, under any circumstance, try to make light of serious

situations. You're not being clever or witty if you're trying to promote your product like this. If anything, you're only going to succeed in giving you and your brand a bad name.

Employee Scandals

Big companies and small business alike often employ the use of experts to run their social media accounts. After all, succeeding in the social media landscape requires consistency. If you want your social media account to be noticed, it has to be active around the clock. Big names like Target, Starbucks, and Apple have hundreds of employees keeping their Twitter or Facebook profiles alive.

But what happens when these companies fire one of these employees without properly revoking access to the company's social media accounts? An example of this happened in 2013, when HMV employees were being laid off by the dozen. Without warning, the company found its Twitter

profile getting hijacked by dozens of angry, disappointed employees. This effectively exposed HMV to a ton of negative publicity.

At the same time, key employees are often directly associated with the companies they work for. If you're the vice president of a brand or a regular writer for a publication, your Twitter or Facebook profile is usually going to mention your relationship with a particular organization. On the plus side, every time this employee tweets or interacts with his fans, he is indirectly promoting his employer. But, on the other hand, if this employee were to suddenly decide to turn against his parent company, his words would carry a bit more weight than usual. Once a disgruntled employee opens his mouth, news outlets and loyal followers alike are going to spread the word like wildfire. Repairing your brand's name is going to be a nightmare.

Avoiding these scenarios is actually pretty easy. To avoid the former, remember to always practice care and consideration when parting with an employee. If you're going to lay them off, whether it's because you're cutting costs or because of their performance, remember to allow them a bit of dignity. Let them leave with their pride intact. Don't burn bridges with your employees. Do everything in your power to keep them, at the very least, still respectful

of the brand they once represented.

Sometimes, these scandals are caused by companies releasing obviously loyal employees without warning. Employees are people too. Suddenly having your loyalty thrown aside is a perfectly valid reason to get mad at a company you once loved. If you're going to part ways with your employees, take care of them and let them off gently.

Now, avoiding the equally disastrous second scenario is a bit simpler. If a rogue employee starts acting like a jerk online, all you have to do is sever ties with him or her. Don't hesitate. Release the employee before any more damage can be done. After releasing the employee, make a quick announcement to your fans about the situation.

This very solution was practiced by Sun News Network when one of their reporters, Vandon Gene, started acting unprofessionally on Twitter after a rejected selfie request with Anderson Cooper. Within just a few days, the reporter was fired and the channel announced his departure, quickly diffusing the situation.

Brand Owners Themselves Acting Unprofessionally

The most extreme case of a social media failure is when

the founders of a company themselves start acting unprofessionally. Brand owners themselves misbehaving on social media can deal a much heavier blow to the company name compared to the actions of a random employee.

One of the most memorable examples of this situation occurred in 2013, when the owners of Amy's Baking Company went online to voice long tirades against their followers. The owners' breakdown was caused by a sudden surge of negative feedback, following the airing of a Kitchen Nightmares' episode where they were featured.

The Amy's Baking Company situation is a perfect example of how not to react to negative feedback. When the tirade happened, the company lost face from its fans and people who had never even heard about them in the first place.

Avoiding such a horrific meltdown is simple. All it takes is a bit of common sense. If you're the president, CEO, or founder of a company, remember to act like it. Everything you do is going to be an extension of your brand. Don't act like the owners of Amy's Baking Company. If you receive criticism, treat the criticism with care. Don't just react angrily through Facebook or Twitter. Tread carefully and respond professionally.



Networking Tips - How to get the most from your networking efforts

Business networking can be a very effective, low-cost marketing method for creating sales opportunities through personal introductions and the development of new contacts, resulting in referrals and introductions.

As a side benefit, you may also create a good number of new friendships.

Simply attending events is not networking. Like any other worthwhile marketing program, you have to put some effort into it.

Here are ten tips that can make your business networking more effective.

Try many different groups

Different groups have different focuses, as well as overall atmospheres. If you've had a chance to attend different meetings, you'll soon find out that they come in many shapes and sizes. You need to find a group that matches not only your targeted group, but also your personality.

Some groups have strict rules regarding attendance, number of referrals, and industry

restrictions. Others focus more on fellowship and community service, while others, such as Chamber of Commerce organizations, focus on business to business networking.

All can provide a benefit to your company, but if your focus is on immediate growth, visit groups that provide the best opportunity to meet business owners that can either use your services directly, or provide you with referrals.

Most groups will allow you to visit one or two times before having to make a decision about joining.

Notice the tone and attitude of the group. Do the people sound supportive of one another? Does the leadership appear competent? Are the members inviting and friendly?

Ask colleagues/other business owners

Leverage your existing business relationships to develop a list of groups that you want to test. Find out which ones they are involved in, and get their feedback. Why do they enjoy being a member of that group? If they belong to an organization that you would like to check out, ask to join them at

an event.

Create a target list

Do some homework to determine which of the group members would be a great natural fit for your business, not just to provide leads to you, but also those where you can reciprocate with potential business. Make a concerted effort to be introduced to those on your target list, or take the initiative to introduce yourself.

Set a minimum goal

Before each event you attend, make a goal of the number of new contacts you want to make. This number will change based on the type of event being held. For a small, intimate event you might make a goal to meet four good contacts. For a larger event, your goal could be increased to ten.

These should be good contacts, with substantial discussion. Simply getting a business card doesn't count.

Team Up

Whenever possible, go to events with a colleague or other business owner that you know. Leverage each other to introduce your networking partner to other business owners at the event. Speak highly about the service/product that your networking partner provides, and let them do the same about you. Hearing the praises coming from a third party have a bigger impact than when they come from you.

Practice your pitch

In order to get the most out of your new contacts, you must first have a clear understanding of what you do that you can easily articulate to others. In most cases, a networking group member will ask you point blank, "So, what do you do?" Be prepared with a clear description of what you

do, practicing it enough times so that it comes out naturally. Don't be afraid to add at the end, "And a great referral for me would be XXX."

Ask how you can help them

While the main purpose of networking is to grow your business, making a concerted effort to find out how you can help others can make a big impact on how quickly you'll receive referrals from other members. After all, the other members are there to grow their business, and if you show that you're genuinely interested in helping them, they will be more willing to help you.

Follow up in a timely manner

Within 24 hours, send your new contacts an email, reinforcing how much you enjoyed meeting them and learning more about their business. When people give you referrals, your actions are a reflection on them. Respect and honor that and your referrals will grow.

Connect online

Follow up with each new contact by inviting them to join your growing network on LinkedIn. Don't use the default message. Remind the person that you met them at a recent event. Like their page on Facebook, and any other social media network that you are a member of.

Get involved

When you find a group that you really like, get involved as quickly as you can. Volunteer to help at events, become an ambassador, or if so inclined, show your desire to become a member of the board of directors. This is a great way to stay visible and give back to groups that have helped you.

Not only can networking be a very effective way to grow your business, it can also be fun. Practice these tips, and you'll see greater results from your networking efforts.



News You Should Know

Consumers Don't Want To Share Location/History

While marketers are driving to utilize the location and purchase history to increase ad effectiveness, consumers aren't too keen on the idea.

In a recent study performed by Accenture, only 20% of shoppers want retailers to know their current location.

The Accenture Personalization Survey found that only 14% want to share their browsing history, contrasted with the nearly 60 percent who want real-time promotions and offers.

While many consumers are willing to share some personal details with retailers, 90% of respondents said if the option were available they would limit access to certain types of personal data and would stop retailers from selling their information to third parties.

Instagram Unveils Carousel Ads

Instagram recently unveiled a new "Carousel Ad" feature, which is designed to provide advertisers the ability to run ads that offer deeper content and a story feel.

With more than 300 million users, Instagram is an easy choice for advertisers. However, in the past the app has lacked the ability to click on brand ads.

The carousel feature allows advertisers to add multiple pictures to a single post. Similar to a slideshow, consumers are able to scroll through if they wish to see more, but move on if they are not interested.

In addition, a clickable See More feature will be added to the right-hand corner of the ad, taking consumers to the advertiser's Web site. Such functionality lets advertisers create a unit that tells a story instead of just a single picture and caption.

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310,000,000 Unique
Visitors per month



#4 - Pinterest

250,000,000 Unique
Visitors per month



#6 - Tumblr

110,000,000 Unique
Visitors per month



#5 - Google+

120,000,000 Unique
Visitors per month



#7 - Instagram

100,000,000 Unique
Visitors per month



#8 - VK

80,000,000 Unique
Visitors per month

#9 - flickr

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