

Social Media: An Effective Tool for Marketing

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1. INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Nowadays, almost every person is using Social Media for communication. Social Media has changed the way people connect, discover, and share information. People are interacting with social media therefore having a strong social media presence can bring remarkable success to business. Use of social media for marketing can increase the possibility of business to reach more customers.

1.1 Social Media:

Social media are computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks.

Social media are Internet sites where people interact freely, sharing and discussing information about each other and their lives, using a multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, videos and audio.

- At these Web sites, individuals and groups create and exchange content and engage in person-to-person conversations.
- They appear in many forms including blogs and microblogs, forums and message boards, social networks, wikis, virtual worlds, social bookmarking, tagging and news, writing communities, digital storytelling and scrapbooking, and data, content, image and video sharing, podcast portals, and collective intelligence.
- There are lots of well-known sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat, MySpace, Flickr, WordPress, Blogger, Typepad, LiveJournal, Wikipedia, Wetpaint, Wikidot, Second Life, Reddit, Lulu and others.

1.2 Use of Social Media in Business:

Use Social media can help in business in the following ways

- **Spread the Word.** Show customers and prospects who you are and what you can do for them. It's great for brand awareness!
- **Drive Sales.** Give customers offers that are so good they'll share them with their friends. Your promotions can go viral!
- **Provide Great Customer Service.** Listen and respond to what your customers are saying *about* you and *to* you. It's a wonderful feedback loop!
- **Keep Your Customers Coming Back.** Build deeper relationships so customers will get to know, like, and trust you more.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Social media marketing is a form of internet marketing that implements various social media networks in order to achieve marketing communication and branding goals. Social media marketing primarily covers activities involving social sharing of content, videos, and images for marketing purposes. Social media marketing is the way to use the technology to build relationships, drive repeat business and attract new customers through friends from social media.

2.1 Steps for Social Media Marketing:

Here are some steps for **social media marketing** to keep business on the right track across all their social media campaigns.

A. Planning:

Building a social media marketing plan is essential. Before beginning social media marketing campaigns, Business should create a social media marketing plan and brainstorm about your goals: what are you hoping to achieve through social media marketing? Who is your target audience? Where would your target audience hang out and how would they use social media? What message do you want to send to your audience with social media marketing?

B. Content is King:

Consistent with other areas of online marketing, **content reigns king** when it comes to social media marketing. Make sure you are offering valuable information that your ideal customers will find interesting. Create a variety of content by implementing social media images, videos, and infographics in addition to classic text-based content.

C. Consistent Brand Image:

Using social media for marketing enables business to project brand image across a variety of different social media platforms. While each platform has its own unique environment and voice, your business' core identity should stay consistent.

D. Blog

Blogging is a great social media marketing tool that lets you share a wide array of information and content with readers. Your company blog can also serve as your social media marketing blog, in which you blog about your recent social media efforts, contests, and events.

E. Links

While using social media for marketing relies primarily on your business sharing its own unique, original content to gain followers, fans, and devotees, it's also great to link to outside articles as well. If other sources provide great, valuable information you think your target audience will enjoy, don't be shy about linking to them. Linking to outside sources improves trust and reliability, and you may even get some links in return.

F. Track Competitors

It's always important to keep an eye on competitors—they can provide valuable data for keyword research, where to get industry-related links, and other social media marketing insight. If your competitors are using a certain social media marketing technique that seems to be working for them, do the same thing, but do it better!

G. Measure Success with Analytics

You can't determine the success of social media marketing strategies without tracking data. Google Analytics can be used as a great social media marketing tool that will help to measure your triumphant social media marketing techniques, as well as determine which strategies are better off abandoned. Attach tracking tags to your social media marketing campaigns so that you can properly monitor them.

3. COMPARISION BETWEEN TRADITIONAL VS. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Basic Elements	Traditional Marketing	Social Media Marketing
Simple Definition	The process of performing market research, promotion and selling products	The process of reaching out customers through socializing, engaging and empowering a community
Platforms	Offline medium such as:-TV, Radio, Newspaper, Banner, Magazine, fliers, Outdoor ads. etc	Blogs, Online communities, Social Networking and sharing sites YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn.. etc
Technique	Mass marketing, creating brand awareness through hard selling	Creating interaction among like-minded people around a brand
Approach	One size fits all	Customized and teller made as per the community interest
Focus	Advertising and branding	People, Community
Customer perception	Intrusive	Inclusive and Participatory
Communication channel	One way interaction	Conversational, Multi directional
Communication style	One-to many, company to consumers	Many-to-many, company with communities, and among community members
Marketing Mix elements	Product, Price, Place and Promotion	People, Platform, Participation and Promotion
Return on investment	Return on Implementation	Return on Influence
Required budget	Huge Budget Needed	Minimum Budget Needed
Feedback handling	Not Feedback friendly due to the communication style used	Provides a real time feedback handling opportunity

4. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR MARKETING

4.1 Facebook:

Facebook can be used for the marketing with creating a Facebook Business Fan Page. Attention should be given to layout, as the visual component is a key aspect of the Facebook experience. Social media marketing for business pages revolves around conversation with audiences by posting industry-related articles, images, videos, etc. As Facebook is a place people go to relax and chat with friends, so needed to keep tone light and friendly.

4.2 Google+

Google+ is the new Facebook competitor and it promotes the same fun, casual atmosphere. On Google+ business can upload and share photos, videos, links. Business can also take advantage of Google+ circles, which allow them to segment their followers into smaller groups, enabling them to share information with some followers while barring others. For example, you might try creating a “super-fan” circle, and share special discounts and exclusive offers only with that

group. You can also try hosting video conferences with Hangouts and experiment using the Hangout feature in some fun, creative ways.

4.3 Pinterest

Pinterest is the latest in **social media marketing trends**. Pinterest's image-centered platform is ideal for retail, but anyone can benefit from using Pinterest for social media purposes. Pinterest allows small businesses to showcase their own product offerings while also developing their own brand's personality with some unique pinboards.

4.4 Twitter

Twitter is the social media marketing tool that lets business to broadcast their updates across the web. Follow tweeters in their industry or related fields, and it should gain a steady stream of followers in return.

Mix up your official-related tweets about specials, discounts, and news updates with some fun and quirky tweets interspersed. Be sure to retweet when a customer has something nice to say about you, and don't forget answer people's questions when possible. Using Twitter as a social media marketing tool revolves around dialog and communication, so be sure to interact as much as possible

4.5 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is one of the more professional social media marketing sites. LinkedIn Groups is a great venue for entering into a professional dialog with people in similar industries and provides a place to share content with like-minded individuals.

Encourage customers or clients to give your business a recommendation on your LinkedIn profile. Recommendations make your business appear more credible and reliable for new customers. Also browse the Questions section of LinkedIn; providing answers helps you get established and earns trust.

4.6 YouTube

YouTube is the number one place for creating video content, with can be an incredibly powerful social media marketing tool. Many businesses try to create video content with the aim of having their video "go viral," but in reality those chances are pretty slim. Instead, focus on creating useful, instructive "how-to" videos. These how-to videos also have the added benefit of ranking on the video search results of Google, so don't under-estimate the power of video content!

4.7 Location-Based Social Media Tools

Social media platforms like Yelp, FourSquare, and Level Up are great for brick and mortar businesses looking to implement marketing social media. Register on these sites to claim your location spot, and then consider extra incentives such as check-in rewards or special discounts. Remember, these visitors will have their phones in hand so they will have access to providing reviews which could hurt or significantly aid your users.

4.8 Reddit

Reddit, or similar social media platforms such as Stumble Upon or Digg, are ideal for sharing compelling content. With over 2 billion page views a month, Reddit has incredible social media marketing potential, but marketers should be warned that only truly unique, interesting content will be welcomed.

5. BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TO BUSINESS:

According to Hubspot, 92% of marketers in 2014 claimed that social media marketing was important for their business, with 80% indicating their efforts increased traffic to their websites. And according to Social Media Examiner, 97% of marketers are currently participating in social media—but 85% of participants aren't sure what social media tools are the best to use.

Following are the benefits of social media marketing which can improve business:

1. Increased Brand Recognition.

Business can syndicate their content and increase their visibility on social media networks which are just new channels for their brand's voice and content. This is important because it simultaneously makes them easier and more accessible for new customers, and makes you more familiar and recognizable for existing customers. For example, a frequent Twitter user could hear about your company for the first time only after stumbling upon it in a newsfeed. Or, an otherwise apathetic customer might become better acquainted with your brand after seeing your presence on multiple networks.

2. Improved brand loyalty.

According to a report published by Texas Tech University, brands who engage on social media channels enjoy higher loyalty from their customers. The report concludes "Companies should take advantage of the tools social media gives them when it comes to connecting with their audience. A strategic and open social media plan could prove influential in morphing consumers into being brand loyal." Another study published by Convince & Convert found that 53% of Americans who follow brands in social are more loyal to those brands.

3. More Opportunities to Convert.

Every post you make on a social media platform is an opportunity for customers to convert. When you build a following, you'll simultaneously have access to new customers, recent customers, and old customers, and you'll be able to interact with all of them. Every blog post, image, video, or comment you share is a chance for someone to react, and every reaction could lead to a site visit, and eventually a conversion. Not every interaction with your brand results in a conversion, but every positive interaction increases the likelihood of an eventual conversion.

4. Higher conversion rates.

Social media marketing results in higher conversion rates in a few distinct ways. Perhaps the most significant is its humanization element; the fact that brands becomes more humanized by interacting in social media channels. Social media is a place where brands can act like people do, and this is important because people like doing business with other people; not with companies. Additionally, studies have shown that social media has a 100% higher lead-to-close rate than outbound marketing, and a higher number of social media followers tends to improve trust and credibility in your brand, representing social proof. As such, simply building your audience in social media can improve conversion rates on your existing traffic.

5. Higher Brand Authority.

Interacting with your customers regularly is a show of good faith for other customers. When people go to compliment or brag about a product or service, they turn to social media. And when they post your brand name, new audience members will want to follow you for updates. The more people that are talking about you on social media, the more valuable and authoritative your

brand will seem to new users. Not to mention, if you can interact with major influencers on Twitter or other social networks, your visible authority and reach will skyrocket.

6. Increased Inbound Traffic.

Without social media, your inbound traffic is limited to people already familiar with your brand and individuals searching for keywords you currently rank for. Every social media profile you add is another path leading back to your site, and every piece of content you syndicate on those profiles is another opportunity for a new visitor. The more quality content you syndicate on social media, the more inbound traffic you'll generate, and more traffic means more leads and more conversions.

7. Decreased Marketing Costs.

According to Hubspot, 84% of marketers found as little as six hours of effort per week was enough to generate increased traffic. Six hours is not a significant investment for a channel as large as social media. If you can lend just one hour a day to developing your content and syndication strategy, you could start seeing the results of your efforts. Even paid advertising through Facebook and Twitter is relatively cheap (depending on your goals, of course). Start small and you'll never have to worry about going over budget—once you get a better feel for what to expect, you can increase your budget and increase your conversions correspondingly.

8. Better Search Engine Rankings.

SEO is the best way to capture relevant traffic from search engines, but the requirements for success are always changing. It's no longer enough to regularly update your blog, ensure optimized title tags and meta descriptions, and distribute links pointing back to your site. Google and other search engines may be calculating their rankings using social media presence as a significant factor, because of the fact that strong brands almost always use social media. As such, being active on social media could act as a "brand signal" to search engines that your brand is legitimate, credible, and trustworthy. That means, if you want to rank for a given set of keywords, having a strong social media presence could be almost mandatory.

9. Richer Customer Experiences.

Social media, at its core, is a communication channel like email or phone calls. Every customer interaction you have on social media is an opportunity to publicly demonstrate your customer service level and enrich your relationship with your customers. For example, if a customer complains about your product on Twitter, you can immediately address the comment, apologize publicly, and take action to make it right. Or, if a customer compliments you, you can thank them and recommend additional products. It's a personal experience that lets customers know you care about them.

10. Improved Customer Insights.

Social media also gives you an opportunity to gain valuable information about what your customers are interested in and how they behave, via social listening. For example, you can monitor user comments to see what people think of your business directly. You can segment your content syndication lists based on topic and see which types of content generate the most interest—and then produce more of that type of content. You can measure conversions based on different promotions posted on various social media channels and eventually find a perfect combination to generate revenue.

These are the benefits of sustaining a long-term social media campaign, but if you're still apprehensive about getting started, consider these points:

6. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion we come to know that Social Media works as an effective business tool. Its use can result in an increase in the number of customers for the business. An effective social media marketing plan can help business in making place in the market. Social Media Marketing overcomes the drawbacks of traditional marketing. Social Media tools like Facebook, Google+, Pinterest, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Reddit, etc. can be used for making awareness and promotion of the business through its existing customers.

Social Media Marketing is beneficial in increasing brand recognition and improvement of brand loyalty. It creates more opportunities to create new customers. It gives customers more search options. Social Media Marketing also provides a platform for sharing experiences about the products as well as various options available in the market.

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