



Business Strategies

Making Social Media Pay Off

The social media trend is here to stay, but how do you take advantage of this trend to grow your business?

By Michael Hammond

The return on investment of social media has been called into question. Some say that it doesn't work in a B2B fashion. To them I say: You're not using it right. I know personally of technology vendors that have gotten calls from lenders because of their strategic tweets. Yes, it's possible.

So, how do you get results from using social media? In the article entitled, "Social Media Branding: 16 Tips to Create a Consistent, Relevant & Trusted Social Brand" clear strategies are defined. In brief, the article suggests:

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE.

Who is your audience? What are their demographics? What problems do they have that you can help solve? How can you bring value to their life and/or business? The better you know your audience, the better you can create content and a social platform that provides relevancy and value for them.

KNOW YOURSELF (COMPANY).

Who are you? What do you have to offer that is unique? How can you provide unique value to your target audiences, stakeholders and larger community?

KNOW YOUR GOALS.

It does not matter how small or large your business is, how many customers you have or how much cash you have in the bank. You must set goals and objectives. Who are you now and who do you want to be when you grow up?

BRANDING STARTS FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

Your brand is who you are when people are watching and when they are not watching. Your brand is what your employees say and do when they are working and even when they are not working. The key here is to focus on inspiring and empowering your internal employees and advocates as a top priority.

CREATE A BRAND MESSAGE ARCHITECTURE.

Your brand is not simply your logo, colors and

tagline. Your brand is everything you tweet, pin, post, do, say, and do. How you represent yourself to the outside world is going to determine your success. Don't just think logo or colors. Think brand and message architecture.

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LEVERAGE WHAT YOU GOT.

It is important that you leverage what you already have. If you have already invested in content marketing assets such as videos, podcasts, white papers etc., be sure to leverage them. Nothing should go to waste.

CREATE AN EDITORIAL CALENDAR.

Once you have an idea of where you are going it is important to create an editorial calendar so you develop a healthy rhythm for your communication with your priority audiences. Use this editorial calendar template to get started.

REFRESH DOES A BRAND GOOD.

DIGITAL BRAND EXECUTION DOES NOT ALWAYS = SAME AS OFFLINE.

Don't simply take your 1999 corporate collateral and split it into 2000 tweets to be auto scheduled for publication over the next year. Instead, leverage what you have but start fresh. Keep the focus on your audience, their needs and how you can provide the highest value possible to them.

STAKE YOUR TERRITORY.

As you make progress in determining how your social digital brand is going to be executed, start staking your territory. Grab your brand name and relevant product names as appropriate on the social networks. If you find that someone or another brand has grabbed it before you and now has your brand name Twitter handle or YouTube account,

you will need to negotiate each social network account individually.

CHOOSE A CONSISTENT SOCIAL NETWORK BRAND NAME IF POSSIBLE.

If possible, choose a consistent social network brand name. Even if your favorite one is taken on some networks it may be good to select a different one that you can have across more of the platforms. When you see a new social network launch that looks like it might gain quick traction, be sure to grab your account and name so you won't have to worry about it later should someone else or another brand grab it.

USE THE SAME PHOTO OR LOGO.

For personal branding, it is important to get professional photographs taken. Remember your smiling face is likely the first impression you are going to make when people see you on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and the numerous other social networks. Select 2-3 top photographs to use consistently across the social networks. This will help you build your brand and consistency. You want people to be able to recognize you regardless what platform they see you on. If they trust you on one platform this will help build trust further by connecting with you on additional networks.

LESS IS MORE. FOCUS ON DEPTH AND CONNECTION, NOT JUST PRETTY PICTURES.

Less is truly more when it comes to social branding. You don't have to spend tens of thousands to create a social brand. If you are new to this, it is more important you focus on your audience first and your brand and message architecture second.

Creating a fancy Twitter background and Facebook cover image is going to do very little for you if you don't know your audience and how you are going to provide value to them, inspire them and connect with them in a genuine way. Focus more on content and connection than you do on pretty pictures. The pretty images will come in time and they will mean so much more to the audience once the words behind them have meaning.

BE HUMAN.

Remember you are communicating with human beings. Just as you want to connect with the human beings within your social communities, they also

want to connect with you as a human being. People buy from people. They also communicate better with people than they do with only logos. Share the inside of your organization with your network. Share the human aspect, the events, parties, conversations.

DON'T FAKE IT UNTIL YOU MAKE IT.

Yes, you should be confident and be who you want



Becoming a social brand is a journey, not a destination. You are going to learn, grow, and evolve.

to be tomorrow, today. However, this does not mean that you should focus on fake social proof, over spin on social vanity metrics to fake people out. I have written much about this topic.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP.

If you don't know how to work in Photoshop, don't waste the next year learning Photoshop so you can simply create a new or refreshed logo. Delegate the tasks and work that does not align with your core competencies or where you want to grow your business. When working with outside partners, agencies and consultants, take your time. Don't settle on the first one you find. Look behind the social glass curtain. There are many who are "faking and trying to make it" and if you only look at their pretty Facebook cover image you are likely to waste a lot of money.

TAKE THEM ON YOUR JOURNEY.

Becoming a social brand is a journey, not a destination. You are going to learn, grow, and evolve. You are going to fall down and hit your head, hard. How you stand up, wipe off your knees and keep moving will determine your success. Use video, photos and podcasts to tell your story. Take your clients, partners, and social community members on your journey as you grow. If you share your ups and downs, the members of your community will also celebrate with you when you win. Why you ask? Because they will know they were part of what built you. Be humble.

So start using these tips to grow your business through social media. ❖