

Using Social Media to Effectively Market Your Brand

Developing A Common Sense Plan

In consulting and coaching with hundreds of business owners it has become apparent that social media is on everyone's mind, but has yet to make it into the marketing strategy of most business owners. The field is fiercely overwhelming in terms, intricate technologies, not to mention the sheer speed that social media is moving within our world and in our personal lives.

The motto here is: "Start somewhere, do what you are capable of and stay persistent." Most people start with Facebook as it is free and relatively simple. This is where I find most of my clients that run your typical "brick and mortar" type business. The burning question that follows is, "Now what?"

While this article is not a complete picture, it is nonetheless intended for beginners and relatively experienced social media participants, to give some clarity and direction so that you can begin to be relevant and effective. As social media itself evolves, so will your knowledge, your strategies and thus your success.

Hockey legend Wayne Gretzky once said, "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." The same holds true with everything else in life. Look, you're going to make some mistakes, get frustrated quite often and feel that all of it has no use to your profitability. "Back to the ol' drawing board", learn some more and keep at it. Like anything else in business, you build it over time and you will grow. And over time, persistence and experience eventually pay off in big dividends.

Here are some tips to follow and practice:

THE LOST ART OF LISTENING.

Many companies chase social media tactics with no idea of protocol. It's essential that companies first develop a strategy to listen to what is being said on blogs, by your employees and most importantly your customers. Listening through social media monitoring is critical to understanding brand, competitors and key terms relevant to your audience on the social web. If you lack a smart listening effort, your company will miss key opportunities in marketing, better service, higher sales, joint ventures and public relations.

ORGANIZATIONALLY, WHO IS IN CHARGE OF YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA?

As companies develop their social media strategy, responsibilities and resources need to be correctly allocated. As anything else in business, there has to be accountability and responsibility. For successful social media generation within organizations, it's important to establish social media goals and responsibilities in different parts of the organization. As resources and accountability are identified, the various personnel and/or sections of your business can now coordinate and work as a team. Doing so helps to get in sync their combined efforts and from an implementation standpoint, avoids conflicting representations of the brand.

We like Wordpress.



YOU NEED A BLOG INSTALLED WITHIN YOUR WEB SITE.

Yes, you need a blog. Why? Original content and a profusion of blog postings not only builds your web site, but your blog will be how Google, and thus many future potential clients, will find you in many cases. One of the most basic mistakes, when one does have a blog, is to have that as a separate web site. For example, some

web sites have a blog through Blogger that the web site is linked to. Unfortunately, now you are trying to build traffic for two URLs. This is why at McIntosh Marketing we insist that your web site be installed on a WordPress format, with a blog built right into the web site. Now blog postings link directly to your main web site URL. Industry news, articles on relevant topics, your spin on hot trends, your views on the world, new products and services offered, etc. are so easy to disseminate broadly to a audience searching for information regarding those issues and your ideas.

PERSIST, PARTICIPATE AND THUS PROLIFERATE.

To be successful, companies must be consistent with their participation in blogging and social media. Those with the most successful blogs are those that blog consistently. The solution to more consistent participation is to lead from the top, get executive buy-in. As they grow, the community will provide feedback. Set aside resources, plan who will create content, monitor and engage. Tap passionate community members and activate them to be brand ambassadors. Create efficiencies through the re-purposing of content. Moreover, you must tie in your blogging to your social media with automated feeds. In other words, your blog post also post into your Facebook page and through Twitter without further editing or pasting. This is something that McIntosh Marketing utilizes extensively.

DON'T STOP WHAT HAS WORKED.

Integrate past success with social media. There are a few who dive into social media with no idea what they are doing. It's the newest thing, the new direction and what gets killed under the tires of this new machine is what worked in the past. Social media is just that, SOCIAL. Engaging online is crucial, and in fact the heart and soul of success. But one still has to do the things that won people over

in the past. With an intelligent plan, one will see that both worlds, offline and online, can easily play off each other and build a powerful dynamic. Maintain your off-line promotional actions that pay.

CONFIDENCE SELLS!

The biggest barrier to making a purchase is FEAR. Believing that people will listen to and find value in what you really want to say requires confidence. So much so, that it inspires others to buy. Being passionate and completely committed to your brand will show when it is there. Now, more than ever, is the time to show leadership and conviction when it comes to social participation and engagement. Videos make it easy to demonstrate this through social media.

YOU CANNOT BE “DIGITALLY DYSFUNCTIONAL.”

Today’s marketers need to fully comprehend social media. And to that successfully, you have to become social as a core value. Moreover, it has to be a vital aspect of the character of the brand, as well as the people who represent it. That means being educated executives and staff. There’s good reason for that. According to “Social Technographics of Business Buyers” from Forrester Research:

91%
55%
43%

- **91%** of business buyers read blogs, watching user generated video, participate in other social media
- **55%** of decision-makers were in social networks
- **43%** are creating media [blogs, uploading videos or articles, etc.]

And here are some other facts:

- 38% of bloggers post brand or product reviews.
- Facebook has announced, 400 million members. (Feb 2010)
- As Yelp has grown from fledgling start-up to critical mass website, serving over 30 million visitors a month. (Brainstorm Tech, April 2010)
 - Find out who is creating the top YouTube videos and who is embedding them. “The study also looked at the demographics of bloggers who embed these videos. In general, 20-to-35-year-old bloggers embed most of the videos (57%), followed by teenagers (20%) and bloggers over 35 (20%).” Including stats on average number of comments, duration and other tidbits. (Read Write Web, Feb 15)
 - LinkedIn now has 60 million users. (Feb 2010)
 - 95% of business decision makers use one form or another of social networks.

INFORMATION IMMOBILIZATION

Information should assist to form and articulate decisions. But do not allow it to generate paralysis to your strategy and tactics. A vital part of social media market research and an analysis of the comments, pro and con, of those who work for you and those you service. Many companies do not want to look at the facts. They so want to believe their own ideas, despite facts staring in them face to the contrary. Embrace information based on research and feedback from your own clients. Many times, criticism can lead to positive dialogue. What better PR could there be than the idea that you listen and adapt to the needs of others.

“KNOWLEDGE IS POWER”

The other side to this is to surround yourself with those who know social media and continue to demonstrate a passion to learn and engage in it.

Sergio Zyman, the former CMO of Coca-Cola and author of the book, “The End of Marketing As We Know It”, commented on why he had so much success in building massive sales for this world-wide brand. He simply hired the best for whatever he needed in order to build a marketing team. Result: Coca-Cola almost doubled their sales, within 11 years under Mr. Zyman’s direction.

Depending on your industry, up to ninety percent of your competition is still resisting social media or is doing it so ineptly, that they could not be considered a worthy opponent.

Where others struggle or are slow to adapt effectively, this is where you gain ground. Either recruiting social media mavens as part of your own marketing team or out sourcing the work to a proven professional who has a history of building brands and increasing sales as a result, you need to have a “Dream Team” to handle your social media. It is a full time job for most companies.

Those business professionals who continue to indulge in self-induced ignorance on the subject will see their sales diminish over time, as web savvy competitors take ground on a month to month basis.

Regardless of who you hire or subcontract, you also should stay knowledgeable yourself. While it may not be necessary to understand all the intricacies of social media, you should stay current on the basics. There are many good books out there, and I would start with David Meerman Scott’s book, “The New Rules of Marketing & PR.” According to a blog post I read from sales expert, trainer and

author, Grant Cardone, a typical CEO of a Fortune 500 company reads an average of 60 books per year. They stay at the top because they stay informed. And it's probably how they arrived there.

THE 80/20 RULE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

To attract you must engage, educate, entertain if possible and become a compelling voice for the audience you want to influence. So much focus can be on "Who can we close right now?" that you do not place attention on distributing a continuous stream of high-quality content from your blogs, articles and press releases. Eighty percent of your attention has to be drumming up new business and twenty percent managing the leads and conversion process. It takes a heavy and consistent commitment to win in blogging and social media. Those who do this, creatively and can do so in an articulate manner will eventually be found and drive profits to higher levels.

SUMMARY

Social media is here to stay. It is a 900 mile per hour train that has no brakes. Get on board, enjoy the ride and you will see that it take your business and profits to better destinations.

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About the Author



Edwin Dearborn is a 24-year veteran of marketing and business development, Edwin's passion and expertise has given him access to coach hundreds of CEOs, doctors, CPAs, entrepreneurs and a wide variety of business owners. Whether as a seminar leader or coaching people on a one-on-one level, Edwin has now recorded over 40 million dollars in revenue generated from his programs and personal management.

Edwin began his marketing career at the age 20 at a family owned business in Irvine, California. Within the first year, they exceeded one million dollars in sales. Shortly after that Edwin went to work as an executive at an advertising firm in Orange County, California working with dozens of companies and corporations, locally and abroad, furthering his on-hands knowledge in advertising, branding and sales.

For the last 20 years, Edwin has worked in the non-profit sector helping numerous humanitarian organizations to generate millions of dollars for projects that directly contributed to relief efforts such as 9/11, Katrina, tsunami victims and other disasters.

Today, Edwin is the Chief Branding Officer of McintoshMarketing.com.