



4 Reasons to Use Social Media for Your Business

A Guide for Businesses in the Digital Age

a **fanscape** white paper

Overview

If you are just dabbling in Social Media then you may still not be sure what exactly it will do for you or where it fits in to your company structure. You've probably created a Twitter account, built a simple Facebook page and maybe even added a company blog to your website. Good. That's a great start. Now step back for a minute and think about what this is all for.

There are four reasons to use Social Media for your business. Not necessarily in any particular order, they are:

- Marketing
- PR
- Market Research
- Customer Service

All four of these are geared to do the same thing—connect with your customer and engage them. But don't hide behind trendy words like “engagement;” ultimately you want to do one thing, sell more products or services. Let's take a look at how each of these four components of your Social Media strategy can help you sell more.

Marketing

Social Relationship Management

From a marketing perspective, consider Social Media as an enhanced, more touchy-feely version of CRM. Hopefully you are already running an effective email marketing campaign and properly communicating with your database of customers. These days, you need to run several mailing lists. Your Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc. all have fans, followers, and subscribers. Just like with your email list, your Social Media-based customers and potential customers need to be communicated with on a regular basis. They need to be entertained, supported, and rewarded. A good rule of thumb is to make sure there is at least one piece of new content (blog post, special offer, or customer poll) created per day, making sure to cross-promote the content along all social channels. Interact with your customers and ask them what they'd like to see.

Encouraging Engagement

Utilize the methods provided by each Social Media outlet to engage with your customer. One recent example of a company using the functionality of a social network to drive sales is Best Buy's Facebook page. On Best Buy's Facebook page users can browse all the products that Best Buy has to offer and then ask the opinion of their personal network of Facebook friends what they think about the products they want to buy. This enables a customer to simultaneously browse for products while interacting with their friends via the Facebook platform. Best Buy not only benefits from an innovative social sales strategy, but also has valuable research data that may help them determine which products to stock in the future.

*Post one piece of
new content per day*

*Based on what your
customers want*

It's Not a Number Game

Don't get sucked into the numbers game. How many participants you have on your Social Media properties is far less important than how you interact with them. It is better to have 500 fans who are passionate advocates of your brand than 5,000 uninvolved followers. Instead of tracking growth in numbers, gauge success on how responsive and participatory they are.

Become a fan of Best Buy today!
Shop for products and then share them with or get advice from your friends!

Jane Doe is wondering if anybody has any experience on LCD, LED or Plasma

INSIGNIA
3 YEAR LIMITED WARRANTY

Jane wants to get your advice on this product at Best Buy.
Insignia® Advanced Series 46" Class / 1080p / 120Hz / LCD HDTV
Model: NS-L46X-10A | SKU: 9205692

Venture to take the next step in HDTV technology with the Insignia™ Advanced Series 46" LCD HDTV. Behold breathtaking, high-definition visuals coupled with Audysse...

See More

8 seconds ago via Best Buy Share · Comment · Like

John Doe I've had an LCD for a couple of years now and it works perfectly. No problems yet!

Write a comment...

Public Relations

Find the Right Audience

Publicity and Public Relations are no longer just about getting an article in BusinessWeek or the New York Times. Now there are thousands of influential blogs and online outlets that can create a positive effect on your business. With numerous major print publications struggling to survive, most publicists have added digital media and the extended Social Media to their hit list. Going back to the point stressed earlier, quantity should not be the goal. How many people you reach is far less important than the quality of people you reach. With the proliferation of Social Media you can, and should, target your PR campaign to the web publishers that can position you with the people you want to reach. If your product is a piece of technology, then you can find countless websites and blogs that focus on just that. Their readers and followers trust their reviews and advice. While these publications may not reach as many as the Wall Street Journal, oftentimes you will sell much more with an influential blog that has a fraction of the readers.

Self-publish White Papers, POV Docs, Essays, Case Studies, and Research

Do-It-Yourself PR

You can also create your own press exposure by dedicating time and resources to your own blog and social networks. Self-published white papers, Point-of-View (POV) documents, poignant and helpful essays, case studies, and research should be featured on your company's website, blog, and social networks. Documents like these authenticate your brand and position you as a leader in your space. The more original and compelling your work is, the more likely it is to get noticed and be shared. Hot topics and future trends are common avenues to explore, with many companies often incorporating original research findings into their summary conclusions. Digital agency Razorfish does a tremendous job validating their knowledge with their FEED report which generates them substantial press and notoriety.

How many people you reach is far less important than the quality of people you reach.

Market Research

Fans Are More Than Focus Groups

Thanks to Social Media you have incredible access to your customers. You have hundreds or thousands of "fans" coming to your Social Media properties looking for information and a dialogue. They want to know more. They also want to tell you what they think. So encourage them to speak freely. Ask them what they like about your product. Ask them what they don't like. Treat them like family and they will give you the tools to better your business.

If you are like many businesses, you have probably spent thousands of dollars hiring market research companies over the years. Those firms would locate ideal target customers and ask them for input on your product. No need for that now. You don't have to go searching any more, the people whose opinions you want most are opting in to your social networks. Take the money that you had previously spent on market research and give it to your Social Media team to conduct market research directly with your audience. You might offer simple incentives for participation such as extra discounts or small prizes, but most likely your customers will tell you what they want just because someone will listen. Create polls that fans can use to vote on new products, features or services. Publicize, promote and congratulate contributors who submit winning ideas. And don't forget your employees. They have a lot to say too.

The best example of this is being done by Starbucks with their My Starbucks Idea concept that asks their customers and employees to suggest things they'd like to see at Starbucks. The suggestions reside on a dedicated website and then the community votes them up or down based on popularity. It's a simple yet brilliant idea.

Want to sell more? Who better to up-sell to than your current customers? Ask them what they want and then give it to them.

The screenshot shows the 'my STARBUCKS IDEA' website interface. The header includes the logo and the text 'IDEAS IN ACTION BLOG' with a subtext 'See what we're doing with your ideas.' Below the header is a navigation bar with links: 'Share Your Idea', 'View All Ideas', 'Ideas In Action Blog', and 'About'. A Starbucks logo is visible on the right. Below the navigation bar are sorting options: 'Most Recent', 'Most Popular', and 'Most Commented'. The main content area features a large call to action: 'SHARE. VOTE. DISCUSS. SEE.' followed by a paragraph: 'You know better than anyone else what you want from Starbucks. So tell us. What's your Starbucks Idea? Revolutionary or simple – we want to hear it. Share your ideas, tell us what you think of other people's ideas and join the discussion. We're here, and we're ready to make ideas happen. Let's get started.' To the right, there is a 'QUESTION OF THE DAY' section with a poll: 'Which flavor of Bran Muffin sounds most appealing to you?'. The poll results are: Apple Bran (25.6%), Banana Bran (27.3%), Carrot Bran (17.2%), Honey Bran (16.8%), and Raisin Bran (13%).

Customer Service

The Inevitable Incorporation of Social Customer Service

Ok, this is the tough one because it potentially requires serious resources. But you can't avoid it; people are quickly learning that they can get your attention a lot faster by speaking to you via Twitter or Facebook than they can on the phone. So embrace it. Just as companies adapt and adjust their business strategies to match changing consumer preferences, so too should their customer service strategies be updated.

*If you **help someone** publicly via Social Media then **others will see***

The screenshot shows the Twitter profile of Comcast Cares (@comcastcares). The profile header includes a photo of Frank Eliason, the name 'comcastcares', and a 'Follow' button. The main content area displays a tweet from @BobOstwald: '@BobOstwald huh? Forward to me frank_eliason@cable.comcast.com' posted about 1 hour ago. A reply from @andyathalo follows: '@andyathalo My name is Frank and this is my account. @Comcastmelissa and @ComcastBonnie are on today too' posted about 2 hours ago. Below the tweets are promotional banners for Comcast services, including Xfinity TV and Comcast's advanced DNS security trial.

A tremendous advantage here is that if you help someone publicly via Social Media then others will see this. If you solve someone's problem on the phone, no one knows except that person. If you solve it online in public view, then others notice and you may solve several people's problems at the same time. Social Media allows anybody to "listen in" on a customer service call, which increases accountability and gives you greater potential to be regarded as a customer friendly company. Such transparency conveys confidence and sets you apart from your competition.

Companies like Comcast, Dell, and Ford have all excelled in this over the past two years. These are three companies that have all struggled with their customer service reputations but have had significant positive impact with their public perception, as well as sales, as a result of their customer service efforts on Social Media. Other companies such as Bose and JetBlue have been social customer service standouts since near its inception.

Delegation and Implementation

Fitting Social Media into the Corporate Hierarchy

Understanding that Social Media touches these four very distinct areas and that most companies have departments set up for each of them, it can often be confusing as to who handles oversight of Social Media. Here's a radical thought, create a new division for Social Media with a direct connection to each of the corresponding departments. Depending on the size of your company and the resources available, dedicate a member of the Social Media team to each focus that has one foot in Social Media and one foot in the corresponding department.

It is great to be a company that embraces Social Media and 2010 is the year it becomes a bigger focus for the vast majority of businesses. You should be transparent, helpful, honest, and thankful. Put real focus and attention on the four areas described and establish measurable sales-oriented goals and expectations. It will work. Wouldn't you prefer to buy from a company that follows this plan?



Conclusion

Marketing promotion.

PR publicity.

Market Research polling.

Customer Service provision.

Social Media provides.

All of this.

And more.

Right now.

The time for your business to start using Social Media was yesterday. If you have a Facebook fan page, start a Twitter account. If you have an email marketing list, create a blog. If a position in the marketing/PR/research/customer service department becomes available, hire someone with an understanding of Social Media. Find somebody who fits the culture of your company and can serve as its digital face. Personalize your interactions and give rewards. Your followers and fans have pledged their digital loyalty. Give them something to make it worth their click.

About



Fanscape is the leading Social Media Marketing Agency with twelve years of experience helping clients reach and activate consumers to foster targeted and engaging marketing through online and emerging media. Fanscape's online influencer marketing experts have in-depth understanding of niche audiences and consumer behaviors across the Web.

We provide highly measurable, earned media strategies for major corporations and leading entertainment, technology and mobile companies. Our mission is to lead the field of Digital Word of Mouth Marketing, keep developing innovative and creative methods of inspiring WOM conversations, foster positive sentiment for our clients, provide detailed measurement and analysis, generate the highest Return on Investment (ROI) possible and to listen, educate and activate consumers. This results in forging trusted relationships between our clients and their customers.

For additional information, visit www.fanscape.com, our blog www.digitallyapproved.com and follow us on Twitter @Fanscape.