

10 tips for Integrating Social Media into your Marketing Plan

by David Saxby

1. Think Strategy first, not Tactics. Your strategy is the reason, rationale, goals and objectives for why you choose a marketing approach. Tactics are the tools you use (Radio, TV, print, Facebook, Twitter, etc.). Social media's greatest strength is the opportunity to build public relations.
2. Start where you customers are – pick one or two social media tools and use them regularly. Invite customers to visit your social media sites and share ideas, opinions (good and bad), and conversations.
3. There are 6 basic Social media functions or uses of social media:
 - Social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.),
 - Blogging (a live newsletter people can share their opinions) and Microblogging (Twitter) short forms of blogs,
 - Social bookmarking (sharing articles, websites and links with others that you know),
 - Media Sharing (YouTube, Flickr, Podcasting) sharing photos, videos and audio with others that you know),
 - Reviews and opinions – commenting through live forms of media – chat rooms, blogs, crowdsourcing, opinion polls etc.
 - Wikis – (eg. Wikipedia) encyclopedic collections of information which can be in an open or closed format
4. Be innovative, creative and unique. If you are saying what everyone else is saying you will get lost in the noise of over-communication. Find a way to deliver your messages in traditional media and in social media in a clever, interesting and exciting way.

Speak with one voice, one overall message so as to not confuse your customer with too many messages.
5. Go viral with your social network. Use the power of the internet to get your message out. But don't broadcast, narrowcast. It's about having a conversation.
6. Starting with a limited number of social media tools so you can commit some time to making it work, and do it regularly.
7. Write conversational messages for social media and think like you are talking one-to-one. In advertising media use sales copy. Make sure both social media and traditional media are speaking with a unified message.

8. Create a call to action, get them to interact with you (have contests, quizzes, opinion polls, surveys, etc.) engage them in conversation and also reward them for their time but be careful with social media to not sell or advertise, unless you are using social media advertising tools.
9. Use whichever channels you choose for the purpose they were intended and for the strengths they can offer in reinforcing your communication and relationship with your target market.
10. Cross promote your social media links in traditional marketing: your press releases, business card, stationery, fax cover sheet, website, email signature, print ads, trade show displays, TV radio, in your voicemail, and in QR codes (we'll talk more about this in a later article), etc.

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