

How to Use Social Media for Business



1 Social media for businesses

Social media has changed the way the world communicates, creating real time interconnectivity between people, businesses, and geographies.

As social media continues to grow in popularity, brands are looking for ways to increase their fan base and leverage their social presence to increase sales and brand affinity.

Here are 5 ways to leverage social media for business so that you can maximize your social marketing efforts.

“By engaging in conversation, you’ll **gain exposure** on social channels and **increase credibility**”

1 DRIVE CONVERSATIONS

Social media is a powerful tool for engaging your customers and fans in a conversation. Open up two-way communication between your business and your consumers to provide a way to stay connected with your fans and to introduce your brand to those who are less familiar. Interact with your fans and reply to what they have to say. By engaging in conversation, you’ll gain exposure on social channels and increase credibility by getting your customers to refer your brand or talk about their experience with your company.

Everyone has experienced the amazing ability that word-of-mouth has to spread a message instantly and to a large amount of people. Social media does exactly that. It acts as a catalyst of word-of-mouth, making it easy for your fans to recommend your brand to their peers. Social media is a vehicle that allows and encourages your customers to connect and interact with each other, sharing details about your company and products. Statistics show that 53% of active social networkers follow a brand on social media, and 60% of those who use digital methods to research about the products they intend to buy, learned about it on social media sites.¹ Get your fans talking about your brand and you’ll be rewarded with better brand awareness and sales.

¹ Dwivedi, C. (2012, January 20). The sharing avalanche. Retrieved August 21, 2012, from Mind Jumpers website: <http://www.mindjumpers.com/blog/2012/01/the-sharing-avalanche-infographic/>



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GET TO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE BETTER

Not only is social media a great tool for allowing your audience to get to know you, it is also a way for you to get to know them. Social media can be used as a way to gather consumer research. Many of your fans are using social media as a way to show the world who they are. Observe what information your fans put out there and use that information to get to know them and their expectations in regards to your brand or products. Consumer research can be used in every aspect of your marketing efforts; it is imperative to know who you are marketing to and what they anticipate. By listening to your fans, you'll have a better understanding of how to be successful marketing to them.

“**Immediate response** through effective use of social media is the kind of service **customers** are beginning to **expect and demand.**”

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PROVIDE CUSTOMER SERVICE

Before the boom of social media, customers would have to write a letter or call the company's customer service line if they were unhappy with a product or service. Today, with the growth and pervasiveness of social media, these customer service complaints can be resolved online almost instantly. Customers can access the Internet everywhere and at anytime, therefore making it easier to communicate and receive responses to their questions in a more efficient manner.

Immediate response through social media is the kind of service customers are beginning to expect and demand. This is an example of how social media marketing can help increase brand loyalty and customer retention. If you provide excellent customer service, your customers will be more likely to buy from you in the future.

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EDUCATE & INSPIRE

To help build a relationship with your fans, you need to offer them something compelling – an incentive to engage with you. Creating and sharing great content that is relevant to your brand can help build a sense of trust with your audience and keep people interested in following your brand. People are often looking towards brands for information. Determine what type of content your audience responds to by trying out different types of content and experimenting. Think about how your brand fits into your audiences' lifestyle and try to create and share content that your fans will be excited about. If you are able to educate or inspire your fans, you'll build affinity, trust, and most importantly keep them interested and engaged with your brand on social media.

When in the process of creating interesting content the most important thing to be thinking about is your target audience. When creating content it is not only about writing, it is important to read what is out there already and what has been getting your audience's attention. Find out what your audience finds interesting and adapt this so that it works in conjunction with your brand or business.

Another way to create content that is interesting to your audience is to create content that answers their questions. This can help your customer service as well, because you'll be providing answers to commonly asked questions without having to address each customer individually.

An added benefit of creating great content is that it can help your SEO efforts and drive traffic to your website. By conducting keyword research and determining what your customers are searching for, you can better understand what they are looking for and tailor your content to their needs.

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RUN A PROMOTION

Promotions such as contests and sweepstakes are a fun and simple way to engage your fans and customers, allowing them to interact with your company. Promotions help create buzz and excitement around your brand, generating awareness and exposure.

When choosing what type of promotion to run, such as a photo or video contest versus a sweepstakes, you should analyze which type of promotion better suits your goals. For example, a photo or video contest is a fun way to get your fans involved and engaged, however this type of promotion requires more time and effort from your customers and fans. This means that while you are engaging fans with your brand or business, you may also receive fewer entries. It is a good idea to invite users to stay involved by allowing them to vote on the best entry. Sweepstakes, on the other hand, have a lower barrier to entry with the only requirement being to enter your email. This allows for more fans to be inclined to enter, but also means there is less engagement.

Both forms of promotions are beneficial in different ways; it depends on what end goal is more important to your marketing efforts. It is possible to run a sweepstakes and a photo contest simultaneously, but you must make sure to do so in a beneficial and smart way. You want to make sure that the two promotions vary enough so that they are not repetitive. An example of this would be to run a weekly trivia sweepstakes with a question and winner of the week, alongside a shorter photo contest.

For your promotion to be a successful marketing tool, it is important to offer prizes that relate to your brand, business, or products. It is often a good idea to offer your own products as the prize; this is a cost effective way to ensure that your customers will try your products and build excitement around your brand. If you are a travel company for example, you could run an effective promotion that offers a free vacation or a free stay at a resort.

For more information on creating a contest or sweepstakes check out votigo.com/resource-center

“create buzz and excitement around your brand, generating awareness and **exposure“**



A FINAL COMMENT

Social media continues to grow and evolve. With this in mind, the role social media plays in marketing will continue to transform the relationship between brands or businesses and their audiences. The great thing about social media marketing is that as a marketer you have the ability to transform how social media is utilized. The ideas outlined in this guide can act as a starting point for you to develop a social marketing strategy and plan.

“as a marketer **you** have the ability to **transform** how **social media** is utilized”

Additional Resources

After reading this guide, you should have a solid foundation to start using social media for business. If you're ready to grow and engage your audience, Votigo's software gives you the tools you need to create a promotion in a matter of minutes. You can design and preview your promotion for free and without obligation.

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