



How to Use Social Media Successfully in Business

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Social Media is changing the way people communicate today. As a result, businesses are trying to figure out how to use these valuable platforms to communicate their pitch, message, brand and unique value to their existing and potential customers. Generation Y are entering their 30's and 96 percent of them are utilizing some sort of social media platform. In the near future we will no longer search for products and services — they will find us via social media.

Successful companies in social media act more like party planners and content providers than traditional advertisers, and sometimes blur the line between personal branding and company branding because social media is personal by its very nature.

You should think of social media as a virtual community. Its members appreciate when other members add value to that community. Community detractors are scorned and marginalized, or even worse, labeled and run off as spam. So how do you successfully use social media as a marketing tool? Give your campaign at least one half hour per day, commit to the campaign for at least six months, learn the rules of the virtual community you're entering and always remember the acronym E.L.E.E.

Engage

Engagement is a two-way street. When you engage people in an online community, they will engage you too. Engagement will allow you to build the image and brand perception you want while handling customer service issues at the same time. Direct communication will allow you to build real relationships with your

customers and/or potential customers. Have you ever heard the saying, "People buy from people they know?"

Tip: Creating an online poll or contest is a great way to engage your customers.

Listen

No matter what industry you're in, someone, somewhere is talking about your company, industry, brand, product or service. Usually these discussions are on one or more social media platforms. Most organizations don't even know these conversations are taking place because they're not listening. Your campaign will allow for the active listening of your marketplace while providing invaluable insight into the mind of your customers.

Tip: Set up a Google Alert (www.google.com/alerts) for your company, industry, brand, etc. Google will alert you via email every time a website or Social Media platform discusses the keywords in your alert.

Tip: Follow your competitors and listen to what they're doing. You may garner some valuable competitive intelligence.

Educate

People only go to the web for two reasons: to be entertained and/or to solve a problem. By presenting yourself or your company as the subject matter expert in your field, someone will find your content compelling enough to listen to your campaign more often because you can help solve their problems.



Tip: Connect your Blog RSS feed to your Twitter, Facebook or other Social Media accounts. Blogs are a great flexible platform for organizations to educate their followers.

Entertain

As mentioned in the educate portion, entertainment is one of two reasons people go online. It doesn't necessarily mean

you have to be funny to be entertaining, either. Iconic88 entertains thousands of people a day on Twitter by simply posting famous and not-so-famous quotes. A company called Blendtec created a "Will it Blend" video series on YouTube where they put items like an iPhone, Silly Putty, golf balls, etc. in their blenders to see if they would blend. Their campaign resulted in over 50 million video views and a 700 percent increase in sales.

Tip: Go viral. If your social media campaign is highly successful at entertaining visitors it may become viral and spread to millions of people on its own.

For more than 12 years, Digital Hill Multimedia, Inc. has specialized in Web design, E-commerce, SEO, Web hosting, flash, 3-D animation, database development, and Web marketing and promotion strategies in Northern Indiana and throughout the country. They can be contacted at 1-888-537-0703 or www.digitalhill.com.

Find Out More

Learn more from Chad and Digital Hill Multimedia this month. Digital Hill will be presenting the Chamber's Business Brown Bag workshop: "Marketing Your Business with LinkedIn and Online Personal Branding." The workshop will take place Wednesday, November 18 from Noon to 1 p.m. at the Chamber. Cost is \$5 for Chamber members, \$10 for Non-members. Register online at fwchamber.org.

