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Whitepaper for XYZ Marketing

Social Media Marketing Navigating the Maze

Strategies for Success

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There is no denying that social media is the wave of the future and with more social media outlets available and competing platforms, marketing managers are looking for low cost ways to stay on top of it all. With all the possibilities, how do you know which ones to choose?

Linked In, Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter seem to be taking over our lives and businesses need to get on board, or they will disappear into the abyss. The challenge for marketing managers is if they are over the age of twenty-five, they are finding themselves playing a new game with equipment they have never used and feeling the pressure to learn the new rules. The problem is that the rules keep changing.

Information is everywhere but navigating it is confusing. Picking the wrong platform is like not showing up at all, so what do you trust? Remember My Space? Yes, that was the popular choice before Facebook came along. If you had put all your energy into that platform, you'd have to start again.

The good news is with this new form of marketing, we are seeing some new professionals emerging called social media experts. They can help businesses to navigate the ever-changing landscape of social media so they can stay competitive in this fast-paced business world.

Web marketing companies are educating organizations on the best practices for making an impact and keeping them up to date on new trends as well as offering support for meeting the challenges of staying up to date in this industry. As social media becomes more mainstream, more companies are making it their business to navigate this new territory. We will explore the difficulties that marketing managers face in attempting to stay ahead of the curve and discuss the benefits of continuing your social media education with a professional organization.

Social Media Marketing Today

A 2009 report by Nielson indicates that two-thirds of the world's internet population visits social networks and blogs, and that percentage is rising. People spent 17% of their time online on social networks in 2009, up from just 6% the previous year.

What does this mean? It means, as a business, you know that your customers are using social media and in order to engage, you need to be present there as well.

Social media has changed the game and all the rules of business. It is allowing customers to have the power, which can be scary for a business that has worked so hard to build a reputation in the marketplace. To know that your loyal customer base can be swayed in an instant with a review on Yelp can be devastating.

A New Way to Communicate

In a few short years, the way we market our business has changed so drastically that many marketing managers don't know what way to turn. They feel an urgency to do something but don't know where to start. This, of course, leads to mistakes that can do some major damage.

Marketing managers have to understand that the old ways of marketing don't work on this platform. Social media is just that, social. Nevertheless, letting go of selling isn't easy for some businesses.

Consumers don't want to be sold, they want solutions, and businesses that provide solutions in a way that isn't forceful are moving forward. Those that are still trying to shove their message down consumer's throats are drowning and until they learn the new rules, they will continue to so.

The Power at Your Fingertips

When is the last time you left your cell phone at home? You are not alone if you can't remember. As a cell phone obsessed world, the cell phone has become one of the most powerful tools we have. Besides having the ability to talk and text, we can shoot a video, send photos, and yes, even take part in social media.

Look around any room and you will undoubtedly see more than half the people looking at their phones. Between checking Facebook to updating their profile on LinkedIn, to sending an email, the phone has become a powerful tool in how we communicate.

Making Social Media Work

Social media marketing offers new challenges to business professionals in every industry. It takes time to plan a strategy and even longer to implement it, but how do you know what platforms to focus on, and how will you know if your efforts are working?

Sales are always the goal for marketing, but with all variations in social media marketing there are some challenges that can't be denied.

- Choosing which social media platforms will work best for the business.
- Accurately measuring results
- Measuring the time it takes vs. the cost in resources

- Knowing if you are providing value

Obviously, without a clear method of measuring results, it's tough to know if you are spinning your wheels. That is not a good marketing strategy.

It's true that social media marketing is about providing useful information and connecting in a low pressure way. Counting Likes, re-tweets and visitors to your website are all great but without meeting sales goals, it doesn't mean much for a business.

Choosing the Platform That Works

Trying to decide on how to connect with customers can be dizzying for someone new to social media marketing. After all, how do you know where your customers spend their time? There are so many choices that you could end up spending time and money attempting to learn how to navigate the different sites only to discover that your results were dismal.

Not having a clear understanding of how each platform works and how they can work for a business is one of the problems marketing managers' face, and with all the time it takes to learn about social media, it can be overwhelming.

Understanding Additional Problems

Additional problems faced by businesses implementing social media marketing include:

- Planning a strategy and staying focused
- Plan on how to deal with any negative feedback that may result from your efforts
- Learn new technology and keep up with changes in the industry
- Decide on a schedule and stick with it

Remember, the internet is a moving object and there will consistently be changes in how you will need to approach your marketing. As long as you can be flexible and continue to be open to learning, you will be able to navigate this fast-paced industry.

Finding qualified help is getting easier. Social media professionals now have access to a variety of tools to help them navigate this new marketing environment.

Bringing in a Professional

In order to make the most of social media marketing, it's a good idea to bring in a professional. Whether you choose an agency or an expert, they can help you to navigate the maze of social media marketing.

Some requirements to look for are:

- Training – do they possess any certifications or belong to any professional organizations?
- Strategy – think long term with an integrated approach to marketing.
- Experience – getting references and talking to them about their results will help you to determine what you can expect.

In order to be successful, social media marketing must focus on a four-step approach

- P – People – learn what social media platforms your customers visit.
- O – Objective – Know what your goals are when starting with a strategy.
- S – Strategy – Plan how your relationship with customers will change.
- T – Technology – Learn to enjoy technology and commit to learning how to use it.

To find help with social media marketing contact XYZ Marketing and plan your strategy for success.