

A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN

Part III – Synthesis & Sample Social Media Plan

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Part I of this guide noted how a wise brand will construct its communication strategy around the value propositions that social media affords its customers, recognizing that it too will reap benefits. Part II of this guide provided relevant research statistics with a customer focus, as well as research that supports how social media is beneficial from an institutional perspective. Part III is the final installment of this guide and will demonstrate how having a social media plan can provide benefits in six priority objectives. A sample social media plan will be shared.

Research Synthesis

Increased Operational Efficiency

A social media plan will improve a brand's operational efficiency. Through the use of a forum and blog a brand will be able to disseminate solutions to product errors or issues simply by drafting and publishing a posting. Part II of this guide referenced an article titled *Digital Government* which reported how a similar strategy proved successful for the city of Elgin, Illinois.

Additionally, a forum will provide a place where customers can directly voice their opinions about the company and its products or services. The brand will have access to every comment and thought shared. Starbucks was able to parlay its forum into a continuously-generating idea bank sourced from its most relevant focus group. Other brands can achieve the same.

Cost Savings

A social media plan will save a brand money by drastically reducing its marketing expenses. A brand that still majorly relies on traditional direct marketing methods – printing and mailing – has yet to leverage the power of electronic marketing, and will have a comparatively higher marketing expense. Traditional printed materials can be replaced by posted images and links within social media postings. Commercials can continue to be produced and be broadcasted on a designated YouTube channel instead of television, using social media posts and email messages to direct customers to the commercials' hyperlinks.

Increased Revenue

A social media plan will increase a brand's revenues. Richard Miller provided several survey results that indicate that social media activity brings users to a brand's website, and increases social commerce. Research was even found that quantifies the increase in revenue that a brand can expect to realize. Using a conservative estimation, revenues could increase by \$681,900 with 5,000 Facebook fans.

Increased Guest Satisfaction

A social media plan will increase a brand's customer satisfaction. Today's social customer expects a brand to have a presence on social media sites. Fulfilling this expectation will please customers, providing them the opportunity to engage directly with the brand. Moreover, the use of forums affords a brand the opportunity to improve its products and customer service. Improvements in products and customer service also lead to increased customer satisfaction.

Increased Social Responsibility

A social media plan will increase a brand's social responsibility. The abundant examples given in the market research section of Part II demonstrate how important social responsibility is to today's consumer. Given the nature of social networking, social causes generally gain momentum when featured on a social networking site. Therefore a brand can gain an even larger audience to promote its cause.

Increasing Brand Image

A social media plan will enhance a brand's image. Market research shows that a social media user's potential range of influence is global. Research also shows the disparate distribution of negative publicity to positive publicity online. These factors are threats to a healthy brand image. A social media plan will enable a company to better manage its brand and respond to crises in an official capacity.

Social Media Plan

After an in-depth synthesis of the preceding research in Parts I & II of this guide, consider this sample social media plan:

- Develop a forum and blog on a corporate website
 - Post two new blogs weekly
 - Analyze feedback to improve products and customer service
- Create official profiles on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube
 - Use a service such as Hootsuite to simplify management of multiple platforms
 - Post one new comment with a picture and relevant hyperlink every day
 - Two of the postings each week should advertise a new promotion
 - The postings should be published on weekday evenings and weekend mornings
 - If needed, schedule the postings since the posting schedule involves days and times outside of typical business hours

- The writing style and tone should mirror the prevailing social media style, which currently is informal as opposed to formal business tone and style
- Respond promptly, courteously, and strategically to customer inquiries or negative commentary that is publicly posted on social media platforms
- Eliminate printed promotions and television commercials; instead distributing advertisements and video commercials through social media

Thank you for your attention during this three part series. I hope that you found it useful. If you missed Parts I & II you can view them on the website in the A Conversation with TJ section.

References

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