

June 24, 2013

Financial: Social Media Seven Ways to Increase Your Reach

By Betty Uribe, Ed.D

Social media is an essential tool for reaching customers and prospects. In addition to generating awareness for your business, the use of social media can increase brand loyalty and engagement as well as assist in customer service and sales support. But before planting your flag on the planet of social media, consider what target audience you are trying to reach and what you'd like them to do.



Here are seven practices to help ensure a successful social media campaign:

1. Do Your Homework

Research will reveal the platforms your customers are using and how they're using them. Use your company name, competitors' names plus key words and phrases to monitor what is being said about you, your competitors and relevant industry topics. You can do this through free monitoring sites such as SocialMention.com, Tweetbeep.com and Google Alerts.

2. Be Selective

Embarking on a social media strategy can seem daunting. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Google+, Pinterest, the list goes on and on. Determine the social media channels that will help you achieve your goals and ensure that your level of engagement will be maximized.

3. Make Connections

Social media is not about how many friends, fans and followers you have. It's about how you engage with the numbers you have. The meaningful actions of a devoted few can have a much larger impact than the inaction of the masses. So connect through relevant Meetup groups, join online forums or follow professional networks on LinkedIn. You can also place social media icons on your website, sales collateral and email signatures that point people to your social channels.

4. Be Engaged

If you've developed a blog, Facebook page or YouTube channel, be sure you're prepared to interact with your audience. When someone asks a question on your Facebook page or makes a comment on your blog, it's rude to ignore them. If you don't have the resources to engage in conversations with the fans you're cultivating, you're not ready to put a social strategy in place.

5. Create a Content Calendar

It's not always easy to come up with great, engaging content every day. To avoid being content-challenged, create a calendar that represents your company's voice and point of view. This will help you think strategically about what to post and when. If you aren't sharing interesting, non-promotional content, asking questions and making your fans and followers feel valued, they'll soon wonder why they're connected to you in the first place.

6. Work with Measurement Tools

Find the best way to measure ROI, the return on your investment. Focus on measuring things that are based on your goals and objectives. For example, Google Analytics can track visits (referrals) from social media, while in-product tools from Facebook and LinkedIn can show you how engaging your content is. This data will go a long way in helping you develop future content.

7. Spanglish?

If your audience is bilingual and/or bicultural, why not have a bilingual/bicultural flavor to your communication? Connect with your target audience by creating value for them in THEIR language.

Remember, whatever you publish online can be distributed quickly and easily, so be sure to stay consistent, be professional and don't get bogged down in trying to be everywhere all the time. Executing a successful social media strategy means developing a manageable routine of checking the conversations in your networks, publishing useful information, responding to direct messages from others and then stepping away so you can get back to work.

Betty Uribe is an Executive Vice President of California Bank & Trust, which has launched a new financing initiative aimed at minority and women-owned businesses in California called TEAM (Tools, Education, Access and Mentoring). For more information, please visit <http://www.calbanktrust.com/team>. You can also follow CB&T on twitter: @calbanktrust or 'like' them on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/calbanktrust>. (Copyright: California Bank & Trust, 2013)



<http://latinastyle.com/magazine/143/columns-departaments/financial-social-mediaseven-ways-to-increase-your-reach/1/>