

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing refers to the process of gaining website traffic or attention through social media sites.[1]

Social media marketing programs usually center on efforts to create content that attracts attention and encourages readers to share it with their social networks. The resulting electronic word of mouth (eWoM) refers to any statement consumers share via the Internet (e.g., web sites, social networks, instant messages, news feeds) about an event, product, service, brand or company.[2] When the underlying message spreads from user to user and presumably resonates because it appears to come from a trusted, third-party source, as opposed to the brand or company itself,[3] this form of marketing results in earned media rather than paid media.[4]

Social media platforms

Social networking websites

Social networking websites allow individuals to interact with one another and build relationships. When companies join the social channels, consumers can interact with them and they can communicate with consumers directly. That interaction feels more personal to users than traditional methods of strictly outbound marketing & advertising.[5]

Social networking sites and blogs allow individual followers to “retweet” or “repost” comments made by the product being promoted. By repeating the message, all of the users connections are able to see the message, therefore reaching more people. Social networking sites act as word of mouth. Because the information about the product is being put out there and is getting repeated, more traffic is brought to the product/company.[5]

Through social networking sites, companies can interact with individual followers. This personal interaction can instill a feeling of loyalty into followers and potential customers. Also, by choosing whom to follow on these sites, products can reach a very narrow target audience.[5]

Social networking sites also include a vast amount of information about what products and services prospective clients might be interested in. Through the use of new Semantic Analysis technologies, marketers can detect buying signals, such as content shared by people and questions posted online. Understanding of buying signals can help sales people target relevant prospects and marketers run micro-targeted campaigns.

Mobile phones

Mobile phone usage has also become beneficial for social media marketing. Today, many cell phones have social networking capabilities: individuals are notified of any happenings on social networking sites through their cell phones, in real-time. This constant connection to social networking sites means products and companies can constantly remind and update followers about their capabilities, uses, importance, etc. Because cell phones are connected to social networking sites, advertisements are always in sight. Also many companies are now putting QR codes along with products for individuals to access the company website or online services with their smart-phones.

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Engagement

In the context of the social web, **engagement** means that customers and stakeholders are participants rather than viewers. Social media in business allows anyone and everyone to express and share an opinion or an idea somewhere along the business's path to market. Each participating customer becomes part of the marketing department, as other customers read their comments or reviews. The engagement process is then fundamental to successful social media marketing.[6]

Campaigns

Betty White

Social networking sites can have a large impact on the outcome of events. In 2010, a Facebook campaign surfaced in the form of a petition. Users virtually signed a petition asking NBC Universal to have actress Betty White host Saturday Night Live.[7][8] Once signed, users forwarded the petition to all of their followers. The petition went viral and on May 8, 2010, Betty White hosted SNL.[9]

2008 US presidential election

The 2008 US presidential campaign had a huge presence on social networking sites. Barack Obama, a Democratic candidate for US President, used Twitter and Facebook to differentiate his campaign. His social networking profile pages were constantly being updated and interacting with followers. The use of social networking sites gave Barack Obama's campaign access to e-mail addresses, as posted on social network profile pages. This allowed the Democratic Party to launch e-mail campaigns asking for votes and campaign donations.

Local businesses

Small businesses also use social networking sites as a promotional technique. Businesses can follow individuals social networking site uses in the local area and advertise specials and deals. These can be exclusive and in the form of "get a free drink with a copy of this tweet". This type of message encourages other locals to follow the business on the sites in order to obtain the promotional deal. In the process, the business is getting seen and promoting itself (brand visibility).

Kony 2012

A short film released on March 5, 2012, by humanitarian group Invisible Children, Inc. This 29 minute video aimed at making Joseph Kony, an International Criminal Court fugitive, famous worldwide in order to have support for his arrest by December 2012; the time when the campaign ends.[10] The video went viral within the first six days after its launch, reaching 100 million views on both Youtube and Vimeo.[11] According to research done by Visible Measures, the Kony 2012 short film became the fastest growing video campaign, and most viral video, to reach 100 million views in 6 days followed by Susan Boyle performance on Britain's Got Talent that reached 70 million views in 6 days.[12][13]

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Nike #MakeItCount

In early 2012, Nike introduced its Make It Count social media campaign. The campaign kickoff began Youtubers Casey Neistat and Max Joseph launching a Youtube video, where they traveled 34,000 miles to visit 16 cities in 13 countries. They promoted the #makeitcount hashtag, which millions of consumers shared via Twitter and Instagram by uploading photos and sending tweets.[14][15] The #MakeItCount Youtube video went viral and Nike saw an 18% increase in profit in 2012, the year this product was released.

San Francisco Bat Kid

In November 2013, a campaign planned and directed by the Make-A-Wish Foundation was released on behalf of a young boy fighting acute lymphoblastic leukemia. The campaign sought to help the boy realize his dream of becoming a superhero. During the campaign, the hashtag#SFBatKid was used to spread information about the situation, and people from not only the San Francisco area, but around the world, chimed in on the campaign from their social media accounts. Thousands of people in San Francisco participated in the actual event, cheering on the young hero as he completed his mock campaign. This campaign showed how social media can be used to efficiently rally thousands of people around a cause.[16]

Tactics

Twitter

Twitter allows companies to promote their products in short messages which appear on followers' home pages. Messages can link to the product's website, Facebook profile, photos, videos, etc.

Facebook

Facebook pages are far more detailed than Twitter accounts. They allow a product to provide videos, photos, and longer descriptions, and testimonials as other followers can comment on the product pages for others to see. Facebook can link back to the product's Twitter page as well as send out event reminders.

A study from 2011 attributed 84% of "engagement" or clicks to Likes that link back to Facebook advertising.[17]

Google+

Google+, in addition to providing pages and some features of Facebook, is also able to integrate with the Google search engine. Other Google products are also integrated, such as Google Adwords and Google Maps. With the development of Google Personalized Search and other location-based search services, Google+ allows for targeted advertising methods, navigation services, and other forms of location-based marketing and promotion.

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LinkedIn

LinkedIn, a professional business-related networking site, allows companies to create professional profiles for themselves as well as their business to network and meet others.[18] Through the use of widgets, members can promote their various social networking activities, such as Twitter stream or blog entries of their product pages, onto their LinkedIn profile page.[19] LinkedIn provides its members the opportunity to generate sales leads and business partners.[20] Members can use “Company Pages” similar to Facebook pages to create an area that will allow business owners to promote their products or services and be able to interact with their customers.[21][22] Due to spread of spam mail sent to job seeker, leading companies prefer to use LinkedIn for employee's recruitment instead using different job portals. Additionally, companies have voiced a preference for the amount of information that can be gleaned from LinkedIn profile, versus a limited email.[23]

Yelp

Yelp consists of a comprehensive online index of business profiles. Businesses are searchable by location, similar to Yellow Pages. The website is operational in seven different countries, including the United States and Canada. Business account holders are allowed to create, share, and edit business profiles. They may post information such as the business location, contact information, pictures, and service information. The website further allows individuals to write, post reviews about businesses and rate them on a five-point scale. Messaging and talk features are further made available for general members of the website, serving to guide thoughts and opinions.[24]

Foursquare

Foursquare is a location based social networking website, where users can check into locations via their smartphones. Foursquare allows businesses to create a page or create a new/claim an existing venue.[25] A good marketing strategy for businesses to increase footfall or retain loyal customers includes offering incentives such as discounts or free food/beverages for people checking into their location or special privileges for the mayor of that location.[26]

Instagram

Instagram is a free photo and video-sharing program and social network that was launched in October 2010. The service enables users to take a photo or video, apply a digital filter to it, and then share it with other Instagram users they are connected to on the social network as well as on a variety of social networking services.[27] Instagram debuted as a photo sharing network but implemented support for video on June 2013.[28] As of September 2013, Instagram had 150 million monthly active users.[29]

YouTube

YouTube is another popular avenue; advertisements are done in a way to suit the target audience. The type of language used in the commercials and the ideas used to promote the product reflect the audience's style and taste.

Also, the ads on this platform are usually in sync with the content of the video requested, this is

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another advantage YouTube brings for advertisers. Certain ads are presented with certain videos since the content is relevant. Promotional opportunities such as sponsoring a video is also possible on YouTube, “for example, a user who searches for a YouTube video on dog training may be presented with a sponsored video from a dog toy company in results along with other videos.[30]” Youtube also enable publishers to earn money through Youtube Partner Program.

Delicious, Digg and Reddit

Delicious, Digg and Reddit are popular social bookmarking sites used in social media promotion. They are heavily used by the social media marketers to promote their websites due to their ability to share links.

Blogs

Platforms like LinkedIn create an environment for companies and clients to connect online.[31] Companies that recognize the need for information, originality, and accessibility employ blogs to make their products popular and unique, and ultimately reach out to consumers who are privy to social media.[32]

Blogs allow a product or company to provide longer descriptions of products or services, can include testimonials and can link to and from other social network and blog pages. Blogs can be updated frequently and are promotional techniques for keeping customers, and also for acquiring followers and subscribers who can then be directed to social network pages.

Online communities can enable a business to reach the clients of other businesses using the platform. To allow firms to measure their standing in the corporate world, sites like Glassdoor enable employees to place evaluations of their companies.[31]

Some businesses opt out of integrating social media platforms into their traditional marketing regimen. There are also specific corporate standards that apply when interacting online.[31] To maintain an advantage in a business-consumer relationship, businesses have to be aware of four key assets that consumers maintain: information, involvement, community, and control.[33]

Marketing techniques

Targeting, COBRAs, and eWOM

Social media marketing involves the use of social networks, COBRAs and eWOM to successfully advertise online. Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter provide advertisers with information about the likes and dislikes of their consumers.[30] This technique is crucial, as it provides the businesses with a “target audience”. [30] With social networks, information relevant to the user’s likes is available to businesses; who then advertise accordingly.

Consumer’s online brand related activities (COBRAs) is another method used by advertisers to promote their products. Activities such as uploading a picture of your “new Converse sneakers to Facebook[34]” is an example of a COBRA.[34] Another technique for social media marketing is electronic word of mouth (eWOM).[34] Electronic recommendations and appraisals are a convenient manner to have a product promoted via “consumer-to-consumer interactions[34]”.

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[34] An example of eWOM would be an online hotel review;[35] the hotel company can have two possible outcomes based on their service. A good service would result in a positive review which gets the hotel free advertising via social media, however a poor service will result in a negative consumer review which can potentially ruin the company's reputation.

Social media marketing tools

Besides research tools, various companies provide specialized platforms and tools for social media marketing:[36]

- Social media measurement
- Social network aggregation
- Social bookmarking
- Social analytics
- Automation
- Social media
- Blog marketing
- Validation
- Brand ambassador

Implications on traditional advertising

Minimizing use

Traditional advertising techniques include print and television advertising. The Internet has already overtaken television as the largest advertising market. Websites often include banner or pop-up ads. Social networking sites don't always have ads. In exchange, products have entire pages and are able to interact with users. Television commercials often end with a spokesperson asking viewers to check out the product website for more information. Print ads are also starting to include QR codes on them. These QR codes can be scanned by cell phones and computers, sending viewers to the product website. Advertising is beginning to move viewers from the traditional outlets to the electronic ones.

Leaks

Internet and social networking leaks are one of the issues facing traditional advertising. Video and print ads are often leaked to the world via the Internet earlier than they are scheduled to premiere. Social networking sites allow those leaks to go viral, and be seen by many users more quickly. Time difference is also a problem facing traditional advertisers. When social events occur and are broadcast on television, there is often a time delay between airings on the east coast and west coast of the United States. Social networking sites have become a hub of comment and interaction concerning the event. This allows individuals watching the event on the west coast (time-delayed) to know the outcome before it airs. The 2011 Grammy Awards highlighted this problem. Viewers on the west coast learned who won different awards based on comments made on social networking sites by individuals watching live on the east coast.[37] Since viewers knew who won already, many tuned out and ratings were lower. All the

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advertisement and promotion put into the event was lost because viewers didn't have a reason to watch.

Social media marketing mishaps

Social media marketing provides organizations with a way to connect with their customers. However, organizations must protect their information as well as closely watch comments and concerns on the social media they use. A flash poll done on 1225 IT executives from 33 countries revealed that social media mishaps caused organizations a combined \$4.3 million in damages in 2010.[38] The top three social media incidents an organization faced during the previous year included employees sharing too much information in public forums, loss or exposure of confidential information, and increased exposure to litigation.[38] Due to the viral nature of the internet, a mistake by a single employee has in some cases shown to result in devastating consequences for organizations.

An example of a social media mishap includes designer Kenneth Cole's Twitter mishap in 2011. When Kenneth Cole tweeted, "Millions are in uproar in #Cairo. Rumor is they heard our new spring collection is now available online at [Kenneth Cole's website]".[39] This reference to the 2011 Egyptian Revolution drew objection from the public; it was widely objected to on the Internet.[39] Kenneth Cole realized his mistake shortly after and responded with a statement apologizing for the tweet.[40]

Numerous additional online marketing mishap examples exist. Examples include a YouTube video of a Domino's Pizza employee doing unspeakable things to pizza ingredients, which went viral on the internet.[38] A Twitter hashtag posted by McDonald's in 2012 attracting attention due to numerous complaints and negative events customers experienced at the chain store; and a 2011 tweet posted by a Chrysler Group employee that no one in Detroit knows how to drive.[41] When the Link REIT opened a Facebook page to recommend old-style restaurants, the page was flooded by furious comments criticising the REIT for having forced a lot of restaurants and stores to shut down; it had to terminate its campaign early amid further deterioration of its corporate image.[42]

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