LEAD GENERATION

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

A Simple introduction to Social Media Marketing

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01 WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Of all the various features and derivatives the advent of the Internet Age has brought, none has had such far-reaching and monumental potentials and ability to shape the minds of people as social media. Gone are the days when intercontinental calls and mailboxes were the primary means of communication between two far points on the globe. The internet shortened the distance between the countries and social media came in to replace letters and telephone calls. Thanks to social media, the world is now truly a global village and information can get spread easily and that is exactly what social media marketing hopes to tap into.

Information is the currency of social media. Every post, every picture and video shared is a direct or indirect exchange of information with the social media community and throws up the potentials for using social media to inform more people about the range of services you offer. Research has shown that close to 80% of the world that is connected to the Internet have

active social media profiles. In fact, from a layman's view, it may sound incredulous to think that as much as one fifths of the world's Internet-savvy population does not operate social media accounts. Why do people use social media? Evolving from its primary goal of serving to connect friends and family, social media platforms now rank highly as a source of genuine information.

As such, Social Media Marketing (SMM) is the process of tapping into the wide consumer base offered by social media platforms to promote, advertise and popularize the features of a product or service on offer and attempt to analyze, inform or influence the opinions of both prospective and existing consumers. Virtually all big businesses have a social media presence now and a vast majority of small and medium entities also take to social media to improve the range of their popularity. With Social Media Marketing, it has become much easier to affect and bring the consumer's attention to products and services on offer.

The very first social media platforms sprung up towards the ends of the 90's but it was the next decade that really witnessed a boom in the social media stratosphere with amazing numbers of people taking to social media to remain informed and trendy. Some of the larger and most common platforms include Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Tumblr, Linkedin, Tumblr, Twitter and Google+. Each platform has specific and unique features that stand out. By and large, Facebook remains the largest and most widely used social media platform with its unique layout of interacting with friends and family, making it rank highly among the platforms where information can be easily and readily shared at next to no cost. Twitter is another large platform but it requires certain skills and knowhow to enable you increase your visibility to potential consumers. Other platforms also have their own unique structures and features that make them suited for specific types of content and brand promotion. Instant messaging applications and sites like Whatsapp represent another branch of social media that while admittedly less suited for marketing, still offers potentials for touching and capturing the minds of more consumers.

What makes social media marketing work is that it specifically targets the appetite of social media users. Second only to search engines in terms of

usage, social media is one of the first place people turn to find answers, check queries and make decisions and advertisement has always thrived on catering to specific needs. It is one of the reasons the Internet in general has been able to make such huge strides against more traditional agents like print media, the radio and television simply because of the ease with which more people can access answers faster. For businesses, the primary aim of advertisement has always been to be able to provide answers to as many questions as possible by providing solutions to consumers' problem. Social media marketing perfectly keys into this concept.

First of all, social media platforms all have the same basic layout where each consumer represents a single entity denoted by his own account or profile. Some of these platforms are interlinked such as Twitter and Facebook. Within his account or profile, a user has a list or choice of friends or followers he has added and interacts with. Each follower of friend represents a link in his own chain of information. Everything (post,

picture or video) he shares is seen by the people in his own list or network. Other people outside his network may also see them but the people in his network are guaranteed to see his ideas. When we take into account that each of these people then has a list or network of other, most of who may not be in the first user's network. Then, the true potentials of social media can be honestly gleamed.

It takes only one user to turn another post into a viral trend heard all over the world. In the lead-up to Barack Obama's election as the first black American president, his team did a fine job of helping him set up a social media presence that boosted his image and made him quite popular. By connecting with many people (in the hundreds at first), he captured their attention and made them listen to what he had to say. Each of this hundred then directly or indirectly pointed the attention of the people in their list towards the Obama movement, and in no time at all, the hundreds swelled into thousands and eventually millions of social media users attuned to hear what Obama had to offer. This is the essence of social media marketing. To allow other people use their credibility and social connections promote or at the very least inform their friends and followers of your services. From time of immemorial, news has been spread by word of mouth and social media marketing allows you to spread your 'news' by word of mouth but at an unbelievably fast rate that can have your business jumping oceans and continents in seconds.

02 HOW SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IS USED

Social media marketing is not just about just lumping together every single social media user and hope that your target audience will fall somewhere among those that view your adverts. With over three billion users, social media can prove to be something of a complex haze for the uninformed and inexperienced marketer to tap into. Understanding how all these billions of people behave is essential to enable you design a social media marketing plan that converts and informs the multitude of the consumers you specifically want to target. How does social media marketing work? First of all, let's understand certain basic social media concepts and their relation and importance to social media marketing.

Profile or page

As a marketer, company or influencer, you need to create a page, group or profile for your products and services. You can choose to create anyone of them based on your preference and unique needs. These will represent your own network. They are the people with direct access to you and your content. You have to expand your network and this represents the hardest part of social media marketing. The larger your network, the more people you are reaching and the higher you ROI and conversion rate.

Post/content

Every new post you make then aims to add to your network of interested subscribers. It doesn't matter if it is not the most salient point you have to make. The aim of your content is to draw loyalty to your profile. People will notice your content and metaphorically speaking, become willing to lend an ear to your next offering. This is really important in any form of advertisement.

Reactions

Each unique platform has its own way of allowing users express their reactions to content or your profile. Your followers can help promote your content by showing favorable reaction. Everybody in their own network can see their reaction and favorable reactions will pique their interest and improve your own exposure. It will probably encourage them to also join your network and further widen your reach.

Hashtags

Universally represented by the '#' sign, hashtags have an important role in Social Media. They denote particular concepts, ideas or movements happening within social media. Hashtags help promote and identify your content as belonging to a particular niche. They also make it easy for people to codify and identify your content. Hashtags are very important in social media marketing to gain popularity. They make you instantly recognizable and easy to search for. If your content or product must go viral, hashtags call attention to you.

Sharing option

On most platforms, your readers have the option of sharing your content directly to their own contacts with reference pointing back at you. On Facebook, it is simply a share button; on Twitter, retweets are the soul of the platform and make it easy to increase your popularity. With sharing, your followers can help you achieve greater reach. It also serves as a sort of endorsement or approval of your products to their own followersrecognizable and easy to search for. If your content or product must go viral, hashtags call attention to you.

Streamlining audience

Social media platforms have options that allow you to tailor your adverts towards a particular group of people. From opening a page to geotagging, customers can be easily classified based on a number of factors including, demographics. One of the main grouse customers had with mass media like the radio and television was the way they intruded and disturbed people but social media allows you pick out specific people.

Social Media Marketing works as a sort of referral system. By reaching Mr A who then helps you reach Mr B who you did not know, SMM thrives on the concept of a single global online community which you can then streamline depending on your needs. By also building up a followership that constantly increases, SMM means you can also deliver consistent information to match the needs of your consumers. However, similar to Search Engine Optimization, SMM also requires optimization to enable feeds and posts reach the desired audience. In very much the same way, keywords are important features that must be taken into consideration to ensure that your campaign consistently turns up at the top of users' search. The spirit of SMM is visibility and optimization allows you to chart higher and drive more traffic and consumer interest to your business and campaigns.

There are two ways to go about social media marketing; you can either attempt to build up your own retinue of loyal subscribers or subscribe to a paid Ads plan. In the former, you may need to either take up the role of social media campaign director or assign somebody else within your organization to set up and monitor your social media campaigns. In the latter though, the platforms themselves offer a paid advertisement plan for you to subscribe to. While handling your own campaign yourself can save you some cost and provide you with real-time updates and paid adverts do a better than average job at promoting your brand, they both share a need for social media optimization that must be properly done to allow them provide desire impact.

In using social media marketing, there are two broad strategies and structure your campaign can take; active or passive.

Passive form

In passive social media marketing, your goal is not to actively engage your consumers by offering up new services but rather analyze and measure trends and impressions. Generally, passive campaigns offer up a platform for both new and existing consumers to get back to you through reviews, ratings, advice and comments on the products you sell. Creating and linking blogs to your social media profiles also falls under this same category. The aim is to know what consumers think about your existing services.

Active form

Generally considered the true form of SMM, it focuses on creating awareness, attracting and engaging the attention of both new, existing and prospective consumers as a means to increase income and ultimately profit. The active form includes creating new ads, uploading content, attempting to make campaigns go viral and subscribing to paid adverts from the social media platforms themselves. It also includes paying for endorsements or employing social media influencers to create more awareness among the social media populace.

Whatever form or structure your SMM takes though, remember, the key focus is always on popularity and optimization.

03 WHY SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IS IMPORTANT

The internet and social media are wonderful tools that have revolutionized the entire world. Basically, people use them for everything ranging from questions, queries, searches, questions and projects to shopping. They remain the largest single marketplace in the world and that makes it compulsory for businesses to flock there to make a killing. A very healthy percentage of businesses now have online presence but expanding into social media marketing enables you to steal a march on your rivals. If you can further optimize your SMM, you give yourself a huge boost and it is no surprise really to find businesses allocating a tidy amount to promoting and enhancing their presence on social media. Why is social media marketing important and a must-have for your business and profile?

Popularity

More than half of the entire world is on social media. Pause to allow that sink in for a minute. What that means is that you are literally a few clicks away from allowing potentially 60% of the world from seeing you. Even people without PCs or smartphones have social media profiles. You could try advertising in newspapers or TVs but you would be reaching only those with access to them. Even among those with access, you would be reaching only those who view or notice your ads. It is a no-brainer to have a social media marketing plan given the sheer numbers of people you could potentially be bringing awareness to. If you are a big brand, it makes sense for you to want to engage your consumers and consolidate on your achievements so far. If your business is still small and you are looking for rapid growth and more investment, social media marketing offers unlimited opportunities to help you gain a foothold and a larger market share.

Measurable progress and market intelligence

One of the less desirable features of traditional adverts including newspaper, magazines and television is a lack of hardcore data to establish proficiency, or a lack of, of advertising runs. With print media, you could only try to attempt to use medium that cater for your end users. For instance, a sports hardware agency could run adverts on their products in the sports section of a daily newspaper or a monthly sports magazine in the hope that a greater percentage of customers who might be interested in sports hardware would be more inclined to read sports news. While a smart and genuine concept, there is no feedback data that can be generated from such adverts to support policy making. You could get the total number of readers but that would not specifically tell you how many of them read or took even slight interest in your adverts. Social media marketing on the other hand comes with a broadly impressive number of features that can help you gauge the effectiveness of your campaigns. Not limited to just trends and numbers of likes or followers who choose to share, features such as Google Analytics help you reach exact figures to help you determine how far and how well your message has been received. On a plain and basic level, even the number of likes and shares can give you an idea of how well your information spread.

This all make it easier for you to ascertain current market trends and plan ahead. Even comments and reviews can help you maintain contact with current market conditions and get ahead of your rivals in the market. It is no longer uncommon for large companies to test run services and get further suggestions from social media to improve the eventual product.

Cost effective

Especially when you or an employee handle social media marketing, it offers an handily cost-effective alternative to most other forms of advertisement. If you are not going to be subscribing to paid ads, then, the cost of social media marketing could be down to the barest bones. It doesn't mean it has to affect the quality or reach of the service you are delivering to your followers and subscribers. The cost per receiver ratio is the very lowest in advertisement today. With virtually no expense or a few dollars, you can effectively broadcast your message to millions of faithful across several continents and regions at once.

Longer campaigns

It is pure logic that the longer you can keep an advertisement going, the more reach and prospective customers it is going to reach. With social media, unlike other traditional media where you pay to allow your advert go on, it is often your discretion that decides to stop or resume a campaign. Nobody is going to ask you to pay for more space or duration in the local weekly. Indeed, the internet doesn't forget and your advert can remain indelible and permanently inscribed in the minds of your audience.

Optimized for your consumers

On a personal note, this is one of the biggest reasons why social media marketing is a must. It simply means that social media can allow you choose and configure the type of people you want to address your campaigns to. You could carve out a prospective audience list by applying demographics like location, race, gender, leanings, profession and hobbies. For instance if you sell size 8 cleats for soccer, you might have needed to take out an advert in the general sports magazine closest to you. Your ad is going to get read by a lot of people, a large percentage of whom have no interest in soccer, cleats or do not simply wish to get a size 8 cleat. However, imagine that you could tailor your adverts to only those soccer-interested fellows with short feet-span. While even social media may not give you these same exact details, it does come close. It is like having a filter to weed out unlikely consumers. Yes, ads could pique the interest of an uninterested fellow but targeted ads do a better job of improving Return on Investment ratios (ROI) by ensuring your ads are right with the people who need them.

Fast news

Fast fulfilling the roles of primary news outlet, social media has evolved to become the fastest means of informing more people about happenings. Not everybody fancies sitting down to catch upon BBC hourly or visit a news website but people have customized alerts telling them of new developments on the social media planet. By marketing your services on social media, you make your products more visible at a very fast rate.

Increase customer loyalty

A recent research has shown that having a social media presence could help you retain the loyalty of more consumers over time. What this means is that your presence on social media may entice your customers to stick longer with you than test other rival brands which might be staring them in the face if you weren't on social media. Everyone loves to jump on a trending bandwagon. If you are absent on social media, competitors might just be tempting away customers with great content and feedback support. Your presence means a lot to consumers. It reassures them and gives them a reason to stick to your brand for longer.

Improve consumer relations

The soul of business is consumer satisfaction. Tied to loyalty, the kind of service you offer consumers will dictate whether they stick around or get away. Social media creates a platform for them to feel involved, receive support and feel genuinely cared to. With social media marketing, you can show them that you care about their needs, expectations and suggestions.

04 THINGS TO AVOID WITH SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Basically, almost everything goes on social media. In public relations cliché, almost all popularity is good popularity. However, there are still areas where you need to pay extra caution.

Negative posts and comments

Try to avoid arguments or pick fights online if your aim is to promote your brand. As the brand, you will always have the odds stacked against you until you can explain. No matter what happens, retain your cool, keep your page and profile sane and smooth. Also, nothing kills faster than goofing. Racism or political incorrectness has killed off brands in the past. On social media where everything spreads at blinding pace, you need to be extra careful and consider all possible ramifications before you post

Misinformation

Whatever you do, do not misinform people intentionally or even unintentionally. The internet never forgets, social media always comes back to ask. You do not want to gain notoriety as an unsecure source of information. Impressions last forever on social media. Do not soil yours.

Wrong timing

A study by Buddy Media discovered that posts towards the end of the week generate more attention. There is such a thing as right and wrong timing in SMM. You need to target when most people are available and aim to pull them in. It could also depend on certain events or even product releases. Evenings on weekdays and mornings on weekends have more people paying attention to their social media feed. Aim to pop up in their searches from and bring awareness about your campaign and brand. .

05 HOW TO BUILD A SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Creating a social media marketing campaign requires some forethought and planning to make it a great success and reduce cost and expenses incurred. Here are the things you should put in place and how to set up a new social media marketing campaign.

Identify your consumer base

You need to understand the targets of your campaign. Who are your products and services aimed at? This will help you narrow down your work and prevent you from creating bourgeois campaigns that yield large followership but relatively smaller conversions. The social media is a wide world that incorporates people from all walks of life, nationalities and preferences. The first step is identifying what services you are marketing and the target population

Select your platforms

There are numerous social media platforms available but despite the fact that they share the same basic structures and ideas, there are unique features that make each highly suited for specific ads. Youtube is the king of video marketing. If you are offering business-to-business services such as consultancy and freelancing, Linkedin presents you with a chance to connect with many prospective customers. The list is inexhaustive. Simply pick a platform that complements your ideas, allows you to dissipate them and contains the kind of consumers and audience you are looking for.

Create an account

This explains itself. You need an account to connect with the people you want. Choose from a wide variety of options. Choose to create a personal, group or page account depending on your ideas and the structure of your campaign.

Choose keywords and prepare content

Content remains king and keywords remain its crown. Enthralling content will keep your consumers hooked, help improve your brand visibility, and make your campaign hugely popular. Build content around the keywords users are likely to employ when searching for new products and recommendations. Keep your followers waiting for your next post eagerly and your numbers of conversions and followers will soon swell up.

Employ visuals

Pictures and videos have always served to pique the interest of customers since time immemorial and social media marketing is no exception. Use graphics, symbols and videos to create a followership and drive home points. Memes are very popular features; you can employ them too to spike interest. People are more likely to retain an image than words. A catchy and instantly recognizable picture can help your interests greatly.

Utilize endorsements and support

This is one of the more noticeable ways you can get more traffic. Support from social media influencers or a well known celebrity can spike a great followership. When Cristiano Ronaldo holds up a bottle of perfume or the latest Nike boots, he doesn't need to say anything. His loyal army of followers simply clue onto his clue and send the post viral. Some will buy simply because a Ronaldo endorsed it. Paying a token for these endorsements can help you grow faster.