



SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS

"Social media is an ingredient, not an entree." -- Jay Baer

Today's consumer is savvier than ever -- thanks to online research, we all have access to a plethora of information for free, helping us make more informed decisions about what to buy and where to spend our hard-earned money. And since we all spend more time online than ever before, wouldn't it be natural for businesses to shift all their marketing/advertising dollars online? Isn't that the perfect formula for businesses to capitalize on this trend, you might ask? Well, not necessarily. If you are a business selling to consumers, there's a good chance that social media can be your sweet spot and a solid way to increase sales. But what if you are a business selling to other businesses? Is online and social media a waste of time in that case? No, absolutely not. Social media is a powerful communication channel that spans beyond selling and can help promote your business, highlight your brand, connect with others and expand your reach.

If you operate in a B2B setting, social media is still a resource you should be investing in if you haven't already done so, and the following tips help you do it the right way:

1. Pick the right people.

Just like with delegating any other task in your business, think about selecting the right people to run your social media. Social media doesn't always have to land in the hands of the new generation like an intern or a university graduate. Understanding your business model, your brand personality, and your strategy takes careful deliberation and a certain level of maturity -- make sure that your social media team is consisted of people who have all those qualities. In the end, social media has a very sensitive nature, and if you are not careful about who you place behind this tool, it might not take much for someone, somewhere, to find parts of your content offensive and potentially use that to inflict damage to your reputation in no time.

2. Select the right social media channels.

There is always new social media platforms joining the scene. Have you heard of Ello? Snap Chat? Pinterest? There sure is more of them than we can count. Pick the social media sites that are most suited to your product/service and run with it. But ensure that you have the right tools. If you choose a picture-based platform like Instagram, make sure to post something each day and that you can produce your own high-quality images.

3. Have a content marketing strategy.

A content marketing strategy sets boundaries and parameters around what you would like your social media team to talk about and defines the way they would present your company brand. Do you want to be perceived as fun and lighthearted? Or perhaps you want to be perceived as deep and philosophical? Or you just want to make sure your brand is seen as practical and helpful? And what are the building blocks of content marketing, you may ask? It is anything from tweets, to blogs, to videos, wiki's, and any other content that seeks to educate your audience on what it is that you do.

4. Partner with influencers online to amplify your reach.

This is the key ingredient to a successful social media presence -- amplifying reach through others. No one can exist in a silo and still be successful -- your company's Facebook/Twitter/Instagram accounts, etc. are no different. But how should a B2B organization go about it? Think about trade associations, organizations doing any form of advocacy within your niche (take trucking, for example), companies selling complementary products, and even your competitors. Twitter chats are an example where some companies are using the platform to host a live conversation moderated in real time around a certain topic (represented by a hashtag). For example, one organization invites another to join the chat because of a certain expertise or thought leadership they bring and at the end, they get to share their audiences and help new people discover their respective brands. Isn't that amazing?



EFFECTIVE E-MAIL COMMUNICATION

As one of the most revolutionary communication tools in recent history, e-mail offers several major benefits over other communication tools: convenience, cost-effectiveness, speed, and reach. But e-mail is also a quite vulnerable tool due to its impersonal, asynchronous nature which often makes it susceptible to misinterpretation. Therefore, the way we use e-mail can make all the difference. The following 10 tips are a compilation of some of the most basic, but highly important rules of good e-mail use:

1. Get straight to the point.

E-mail is designed and best suited for brief, time-sensitive, and concise information. By following this, you show respect for not only people's time but also attention.

2. Craft a meaningful subject line.

A subject line that provides a good reference and "title" to the e-mail you are sending will make the communication process efficient for both the sender and the receiver, but especially for the receiver.

3. Follow proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Modern spell check tools can help you with most of grammar, spelling and punctuation rules. However, never fail to proofread your e-mails before hitting the "send" button because many common errors require human attention.

4. Employ proper structure and layout.

Since reading from a screen is often more difficult than reading from paper, use short paragraphs or lines between each paragraph to break up the content visually. When making points, number them or mark each point as separate for added emphasis.

5. Avoid using lower or upper-case letters only.

A message that is composed of all lower-case letters can be considered as too casual, and a message that has all upper-case letters is the written equivalent of yelling. Vary the use of lower and upper-case letters to showcase proper capitalization rules.

6. Be aware of the tone of voice you are conveying.

As a basic example, an extremely short e-mail can be misinterpreted as anger or frustration. If the tone of voice you are conveying as you are preparing your e-mail starts to sound questionable, it might be better to stop writing that e-mail and talk to the person directly.

7. Avoid using abbreviations and short forms.

Avoiding abbreviations and short forms will minimize any missed or misinterpreted references at the receiver's end.

8. Use the "high priority" flag with caution.

Only flag very important e-mails because overusing this feature will make it lose its impact and could reflect negatively on your professionalism.

9. Acknowledge receipt of time-sensitive emails.

If you sense urgency in the sender's e-mail, respond with a quick note letting them know when they can expect a complete response.

10. Be aware of privacy issues involved in forwarding other people's e-mails.

Ask for approval from the sender before forwarding. Remember to remove any lists of previous recipients out of respect for privacy, and to show common courtesy.

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