



Passnotes

Best Practice in PR and Marketing



THE HENLEY GROUP INTERNATIONAL

Social Media for B2B Business:
There is no better time to 'get' social.

It has long been a misconception that social media is a platform mainly used for personal usage. Currently in the UK 57% of small business are embracing social media to support their marketing efforts.

Given that social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Instagram are here to stay, is now the time you embrace social media?

HERE'S TEN STEPS TO GET STARTED:

- **Design** a Digital Communications strategy that meets your objectives and integrate it with PR and marketing activity.
- **Develop** a social media policy to govern internal use and provide guidance on how to use the channels.
- **Identify** advocates within the organisation to engage with and let them take a stake in digital communications.
- **Research** and identify customers, prospects and other stakeholders that will be invited to join the community.
- **Produce** a message platform to confirm key messages and strategic positions on issues and topics that might arise.
- **Establish** an editorial panel to guide the production of content and ensure the consistency of campaign messages.
- **Agree** on campaign metrics and develop dashboards that mesh with overall business goals.
- **Setup** the social media channels best suited to the needs of the specific business.
- **Help** to get audiences online, through white-labelled guides to social media, invites and incentives.
- **Promote** social media channels to internal and external audiences to build a following.

WHEN WILL YOU SEE THE RESULTS?

Once you're set up, the real work begins: it's not simply a case of clicking the 'start' button and watching success unfold.

A digital communications campaign succeeds or fails on the basis of the content produced - and this takes time, effort and skill.

Even those organisations lucky enough to have a dedicated digital media person find generating content a challenge; while monitoring social media channels for opportunities can dominate the working day.

DAY TO DAY ACTIVITY WILL REQUIRE YOU TO:

- **Monitor** the conversations your online audiences are having in order to identify opportunities to get involved.
- **Engage** with audiences by holding Q&As, conducting surveys and promoting incentives.
- **Target** media that use social media to promote stories, provide comment and unearth opportunities.
- **Build** your online community and expand its reach - in terms of quantity and quality.
- **Setup** and monitor keywords to allow rapid reaction to issues and handle crises as they develop.
- **Disseminate** news and announcements to augment traditional PR and communications activity.
- **Measure** your online influence through services such as Klout, Crowdboster, and Twitalyzer.
- **Track** your campaign process with HGI's own proprietary dashboard.



WHAT DOES 'SOCIAL MEDIA' MEAN TO YOU?

According to a study by the Nielsen Company, 53% of adults who use social networks follow particular brands and four in five active Internet users visit blogs and other social platforms. It also reveals that social media for business is predicted to take up a significant amount of digital media budgets for SMEs by the end of 2014.

The most common purpose businesses gave for engaging with social media was to help increase brand awareness (27%) and a further 15% used it to boost sales.

Many of the early adopters of social media were well-known consumer brands (Coca-Cola, McDonalds and Apple). They found that their customers were already talking about their brands on Facebook and Twitter. By using the same tools they started to engage with the consumers in conversation and learning about them and what they wanted. Think of social media as the virtual eyes and ears of the brand.

Most business-to-business organisation today are in a different position. They already know who their customers are. But these businesses are either not using social media – or they are not putting it to the best effect.

Conversations about your own brand are being started online. There is a brief window of opportunity for businesses to set up their own social media networks, engage with the customer and reap the benefits – before the competitors do.

The Henley Group call this Digital Communications. It's about putting social media to work for business.

It does this by adopting the social media tools embraced by individuals and the consumer brands that target them - and puts them to use in a business-to-business context. Taking what is often dismissed as 'frivolous' communication and turning it into a serious business tool.

Adding new social media channels into the marketing mix extends the reach of existing communications, but also helps businesses to engage deeply and profitably with entirely new audiences. This helps raise brand awareness, establish credibility and demonstrate leadership.

Used properly, Digital Communications can also help generate sales leads, retain customers and handle customer queries. And as more media embrace social media, businesses can better target journalists with news and announcements and identify opportunities for media coverage.

Despite the immediacy of the social channels now available, a digital communications campaign requires considerable time and effort to get right.

If it's to be done properly, tweeting can't be squeezed into an hour last thing on a Monday, nor passed down to juniors, assistants, it is all about finding your voice and ensuring that the messages are timed consistently and professionally.

Just like all PR and marketing activity a Digital Communications campaign needs to be planned, managed and closely monitored if it is to work.

HOW DO YOU GET STARTED?

Getting up and running requires more than simply opening a Twitter account. The right framework for activity must be established, audiences must be developed and responsibilities have to be confirmed.

Above all, the strategic purpose of the campaign must be clearly defined. What must it achieve and how can results be measured?

THE TOP 10 BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Learn more about your audience
2. Target the audiences more effectively
3. Find and support new customers and affiliates
4. Increase web traffic and search ranking
5. Get content shared quicker than before
6. Utilise advertising and generate new leads
7. Provide customer service through social media
8. Reposition existing content (press releases/ case studies) to a new audience
9. Gain and influence other thought leaders in the sector
10. Spot trend and new products through competitor handles

PUT SIMPLY, DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS HELPS BUSINESSES COMMUNICATE BETTER WITH THEIR TARGET AUDIENCES.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Algorithm: The technology that a search engine uses to deliver results to a query. Search engines utilise several algorithms to deliver search results.

Bit.ly: A URL shortening service predominately favoured by users of Twitter. Bitly shortens 600 million links per month, for use in social networking, SMS, and email.

Hashtag: Although predominately used in Twitter, the humble hashtag (#) is now used throughout social media. Used to identify messages on a particular topic and to allow users to search quickly and view trends.

Linkbuilding: The process of getting quality websites to link to your websites, in order to improve search engines rankings. Linking building techniques can include buying links, reciprocal linking, or entering barter arrangements.

Social Media: Web-based technology that allows individuals, organisations and communities to generate, distribute and exchange messages and interactive content on shared networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Messages are accessed over the internet and, increasingly, on smartphones and tablets.

Blog: A personal or themed journal published on the world wide web consisting of entries (“posts”) displayed in chronological order, typically expressing the interests or expertise of the writer.

Keywords: Words, phrases, tags and terms that are easily recognised by search engines, allowing for the easy retrieval of messages and helping content reach a relevant and large audience.

LinkedIn: A business-specific networking website that allows individuals and organisations to develop business connections and engage with internal audiences, customers and sales channels.

Twitter: A ‘microblogging’ social media platform launched in 2006 that allows users to send 140-character messages, or “tweets”. Each tweet is posted to a website where it can be read by anyone and sent directly to those Twitter users who have chosen to “follow” you and can “retweet” (forward) your message, or reply to it directly.

Facebook: A social networking service launched in 2004 which provides a web-based platform for users to identify friends, exchange messages, make comments, demonstrate their “likes”, and join organisational or common-interest groups.

Google+: Described as Google’s rival to Facebook, Google+ is a social networking platform launched in 2011, which allows users to share updates, messages and internet content amongst “circles” of individuals defined by their relationship to the user.

YouTube: Launched in 2005 and now owned by Google, YouTube is a video-sharing website which allows users to upload, view, share and comment on videos.

Klout/Crowdbooster/Twitalyzer: Some of a wide range of measurement tools that track the online influence of a particular individual or brand. Other tools, such as Twitter Counter, provide statistics on the reach and extent of specific social media activity.

Copies of other Passnotes, the Henley Group’s guides to best practice in PR and marketing, can be downloaded at www.henley.co.uk



The Henley Group is a specialist PR agency with over thirty years’ experience helping mainly B2B organisations realise their PR and marketing goals. Client experience includes work for some of the best known technology and industrial brands, as well as high-tech start-ups, not-for-profits and businesses seeking to secure a foothold in the UK.

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