

Give your business some TLC – Tweet Like Connect

Go on, you know you have to! Feel the fear and do it anyway!!

Tweet, Like and Connect seem to be the most commonly used words everywhere now. Are they relevant to your business? The answer is a resounding YES. All businesses should have a Social Media Personality. So what is the recipe for a dynamic digital presence?

1 Facebook Page www.facebook.com

1 Twitter account www.twitter.com

1 Linked In account www.linkedin.com

Username and passwords stored safely

Lots of interesting content

A large splash of imagination

100% commitment

Use Twitter to talk about what is happening now. Use Facebook so people can pledge their 'Like' for you and you can build up your online community. Use LinkedIn to showcase your skills, experience and recommendations.

Businesses have to move with the times and embrace these ever evolving social media sites. Social media is changing the way we do business. We all now have the ability to really connect with our customers and potential customers in a very personal way.

Using social media we have the power to directly inform our customers and compel people to do something or take action when the time is right for them. What matters now is what others say about your business, not what you say yourself. The power has shifted from the company to the customer.

Where are all those great recommendations people have given about your business? Are they visible to potential customers? Now is the time to capture what people think and say about your business and post those great reviews to your social media sites, for all to see. Put all that collateral in the social media bank!

Of course, setting up social media accounts is free but the process of building up an online community and creating interesting content is a labour intensive one. Those who make the time will reap the rewards

To connect to people, you need to understand and be good at building relationships. Everyone has their own circle of people whose opinion they listen to and respect. Consumers now want companies to open up so they can really see them in a transparent light. Some businesses are wary of this open relationship with customers as they feel they are losing control. However businesses should realise positive and negative conversations can happen about them, whether they are involved or not. Why would you not want to know what your customers are saying about you? The company who engages will have the competitive edge. If you want to hear what people are saying about your brand or business set up alerts on google alerts (www.google.com/alerts) and on social mention (www.socialmention.com) and you will see the conversations taking place.

FACEBOOK

Using Facebook you need to think about your audience, encourage people to like your page, use it as an add-on to your website, update it regularly and check regularly for feedback. Have a decent profile photo and make sure your 'About' section, is keyword enabled. Build up your Timeline from the date the organisation was founded to the present day. Put the Facebook 'Like' button onto your website.

The key to effective social media is to keep your target audience engaged through interesting content. Your Facebook page should be interactive and you need to nurture your relationships, generate awareness, build loyalty, magnify word of mouth, gain insights and eventually your audience will do business with you. Facebook is really good for engagement as you can show who you really are especially with the history and personality behind it.

Twitter

A Tweet is 140 characters long. Make sure your company profile is cutting edge and punchy. Twitter is great to listen and hear people's problems. Using Twitter you can steer content. You can pay for a promoted tweet to promote your business. Twitter is fantastic to get a far reach when promoting an event.

Let's say we are hosting a webinar, using Twitter we can promote it and build up a buzz about the event. Having a Twitter element to a real world event means that participation is no longer limited to those within a couple of hours travelling distance. Twitter also encourages discussion during an event and can seriously power up the conversation about an event. Ensure the WIFI and 3G signal are working correctly and WIFI details and passwords displayed prominently.

Also after an event has taken place, using twitter there is no reason to stop attendees continuing the conversation for as long as they want to. Choose a hashtag (#) and start promoting the event early and often, ideally with suggestions of how people can use it on the day. A # is a way of pulling together a topic people are talking about. You don't create a #. You just type it in. Just recently, the ITV show 'Im a Celebrity, get me out of here!', set up a # on twitter called #imacelebrity. Therefore, anyone who wanted to comment on the show could do so in their tweets by including this #. They could also see what others were saying about the show.

Twitter can also be a forum for disgruntled customers. If you mess up, apologise and acknowledge there is failure on your part. Let customers see you are a real person. Do not be afraid to apologise. This will be refreshing to your customers and they will be impressed by how you dealt with the issue so honestly and efficiently

Linked IN

Linked is a fantastic tool to build up a professional network. It can be free or Paid for. If you want to contact someone through linked in and you have a 2nd connection, you can ask that person for an introduction to the person you want to connect to. People can endorse you on LinkedIn and this is a great showcase for your business. If you want to connect to someone you should change the default message to provide context and say something personal. They will be much more likely to connect to you. If someone changes jobs you may get a message to congratulate them on their new role and it may be a company you have been trying to do business with. You can grow your authority and share knowledge via Linked In groups, if you can find a niche that is relevant.

Practical Business Uses for Social Media

1. **Building your online community for your business and lead generation.** With social media you must first entice people to become part of your online community. You need to nurture a relationship with your audience. It is a bit like a friendship. The person must first get to know you; they must have an interest in what you do and eventually must trust in your ability to do business with you.
2. **Product promotion and launch.** Social media is a tie with traditional marketing. There should be a joined up approach with both social and traditional elements. You can use your traditional marketing materials to refer people to your social media sites including business cards, brochures, flyers, events. You can also tie your social media to your website so if people want more in depth information on what you do, they only need to click on your website URL. Any product updates can be announced on your social media sites and a buzz can be built up before the product updates go 'live'. Customers can then give their opinions on these product updates.
3. **Events.** Using social media we can start talking about events long before they happen and build up a buzz. Whether it is a launch of a book, newsletter, webinar, physical event at a location. We can also talk about what is happening behind the scenes to prepare for an event, again being more transparent with our potential customers. After the event has taken place we can talk about it for a long time after and link promotions to it
4. **Testimonials and Brand Reputation.** A company can monitor its brand, product and company name. The company can tune into what is being said on social media sites including Twitter, Hootsuite, Tweetdeck (www.tweetdeck.com) and social mention.
5. **Humanising your brand.** You can uploads photos, videos and blogs to keep your social media up to date and all the time you are building trust in your brand and company

6. **Research.** Using social media sites you can listen to what customers are saying about you, your products, what they would like in your products and services. We must now listen a lot more than talk. Using this research we can make changes to products, services etc to be more in line with customer needs
7. **Customer support and service.** If a customer has a problem, they may tweet or post this on Facebook. The company needs to appoint someone to monitor their social media sites so a timely response can be given to your customer. All going well, they will be so impressed by your efficiency they may post or tweet how great your response has been. On Facebook, your community will see this positive reinforcement of your business. On Twitter you can 'favourite' a tweet so potential customers can see what others are saying about you. You can also 'retweet' something positive that is said about you and all your followers will see it. Therefore something one person says about you can be amplified to reach hundreds or thousands of people depending on the size of your online community
8. **Polling and Product Feedback** – A company can use Twitter poll, Facebook poll and LinkedIn poll for feedback on company products and services from its various communities. For those businesses who get positive feedback, this can be used in securing future business for the company
9. **Competition Watch.** We can follow our competitors on Facebook and Twitter to see what they are doing and how they are engaging with their online communities. We will have a better understanding of our competition
10. **Recruitment.** LinkedIn is a fantastic tool for recruitment of staff. Using LinkedIn you can view potential candidates skills and experience and you can contact them directly, thereby bypassing the need for recruitment agencies and expensive placement fees

Social Marketing V'S Traditional Marketing

Do not forsake traditional marketing for social media marketing. Both work well together to give a cohesive approach. With traditional marketing the businesses must pay, plead and pester for attention. With social media you have to grow the relationship first and attention is earned by creating something interesting online. Your website and social media profiles should have a joined up approach.

It is important not to dive into social media without giving it some comprehensive thought. You should plan what you want to achieve. You should listen to what is being said and by whom. Analyse what you have learned and how to use this knowledge to engage with your audience. Content created must be examined carefully. Businesses should look at what content they have and must decide what they need to do.

If you would like help to go on your social media journey, please contact me Marian Murphy on murchumar@hotmail.com through LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/pub/marian-murphy/4a/a08aa3

Many thanks for reading!