



Three Keys for Getting the Most Out of Your Social Marketing and Media

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Not a day goes by when I don't read – or in some cases hear first-hand – some variation of this question: “Is social media really worth my time and effort, especially when I have a thousand other things on my plate?”

Yet, there's little doubt that the results of a well-executed social media strategy can be substantial if not profound. [SaleSpider](#) recently ran a survey of small business owners in which 63% stated that social networking is driving sales and increasing revenue. Think about that for a moment: two thirds of small businesses stated that social media is not only increasing awareness of their products, but is actually contributing to the bottom line. With that in mind, below are three often overlooked “best practices” that can help you get the most out of your social media efforts.

1: Tie it into the Bigger Plan

Make sure your media activities map directly back to your larger business plan. Ask yourself: Is the main objective of your social media efforts to brand the company's identity? Or is it to drive sales of your product? Perhaps the primary driver is simply to network with other small businesses. In any event, it is an absolute must is that you lay out clearly defined goals before diving into social media marketing.

2: It's a Marathon, Not a Sprint

As with many things in life, to get the most out of social media, consistency is critical. One small business executive told me the other day that it took him a few months before he started moving material amounts of product as a result of social networking. However, he noted that over the past year and a half the returns he's seen have been steady, with a slight bit of month-over-month growth. Why? Because, as he pointed out, after a few months of not getting the results he wanted, he became more consistent in devoting a certain amount of time (about a half hour to forty five minutes a day) engaging with potential customers on social networks.

3: Walk the Talk

In large part, the “rules of engagement” in the world of social media are fundamentally the same as those in the real world. A couple things to remember: first, when connecting with a potential prospect online, don't begin by asking what that person can do for you; instead think about your assets and what you have to offer in exchange. Just as in the offline world, relationships are a give-and-take affair.

And while social networks provide very powerful and efficient ways to initiate and grow a relationship, closing the deal sometimes requires an in-person meeting. Although it may be impossible to meet every social media prospect in person, create opportunities to meet with your most enthusiastic prospects via meet-ups or one-to-one meetings.

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