



Social media: useful or not?

According to people who claim to be knowledgeable in this matter, the modern entrepreneur must be active on all social media. Because that is the way to really make your company successful. But is it?



If you want to actively participate in the social media circus, it will take up a great deal of your precious time. Time you undoubtedly have better use for. So try to avoid the time claims of the social media, and limit your posts and presence to the channels that actually reach your target group.

Participating in the social media can be a lot like actual life: very pleasant, demanding, confusing, weird...and it can bring you a lot. Usually, however, by the time we have left school, this social life no longer dominates our daily existence. Then, people find out that there may actually be something to these social media, but now they have to manage the time they spend on it. With the rise of more and more different social media channels, and the intensity with which some people actively use these, it might be an option to give up and to forget the whole shebang. But as your mother told you years ago: collecting your toys and going home sulking is not the ideal way to handle the frustrations that usually come with social situations.

CONTACTS

Your mother probably had another good advice: choose your friends wisely. This also applies to the social media, when you select your contacts. It is

essential that you choose the best social media for your content marketing activities (and expenditures) to get the best return on your investments in time spent on them. Instead of blindly following the crowd to the currently 'hot' social media site, you had better start an approach that (in hindsight) you should have adopted at school: where is the hangout where I can find people who have the same interests as I have? As our social life becomes more mature, we realize that the definition of the desired social group is different for everyone. You must have a good insight into who your potential or existing clients are, and the sort of content they are interested in. Then, limit the social media playing field by determining where they (your target group) most likely hang out. Here, we provide a short overview of considerations in selecting the best social network(s) for your enterprise.

FACEBOOK is good for you... if you wish to build up a presence in the community or reach an optimally broad network. Amongst the younger users, this medium has been losing some popularity, but with over 70% of the online adults actively participating in Facebook, this remains the most popular media site by far. The medium not only has the most users, it is also the most often used, which shows that it

has a high level of commitment. It may of course be that pure popularity is not your primary criterion. Since the primary reason why people use Facebook is to maintain contact with family and friends, it might not be the ideal medium for your corporate messages.

LINKEDIN is good for you... if you are active in B2B or some other industry or role in which you can offer useful insights to people who think about their work, want to set up business relations, or are looking for another job. Although LinkedIn is trying to broaden its information supply, most people use it for their work, so it is an optimal medium for so-called 'peer networking' and industry-specific information. In view of the high level of income and education of the average LinkedIn user, it offers a specific audience that is worthwhile to approach – with the appropriate message.

PINTEREST is good for you... if you are active in a very visual industry with clients who wish to naturally present themselves by means of images. It may, however, also work in areas you would initially consider visual. Think about your audience and their interests. Is it likely that they collect images on which they base their decision to purchase a product or service? Are they extremely interested in a subject that can be presented visually? Considering the popularity of Pinterest amongst the

female users, it is also the place to be if that is your target group. Inspire and inform them on Pinterest and you can create real commitment.

TWITTER is good for you... if you want to reach men as well as women, especially the younger ones. It is also a popular medium amongst the so-called 'information junkies', so if your company offers breaking news or new insights, Twitter is an excellent choice. Just like Facebook, Twitter is more effective if it acts like a two-way platform on which you answer to and show commitment with followers.

INSTAGRAM is good for you... if, just like with Pinterest, your activities have a visual aspect your clients are interested in. It is interesting to see that the users of this medium are often also active on Twitter, so they can function well in combination. Considering the popularity of Instagram amongst specific ethnic groups and urban residents, it may be a good choice for a specific target group.

Another, slightly less popular, visually centered website is Tumblr. According to Business Insider, an American website for corporate and technological news, Tumblr in general draws a younger and less wealthy audience. BI also considered Google, and came to the conclusion that this is mainly dominated by male users. Google has some interesting





social community tools like 'hangouts' that are worth checking out if you want to create extremely interactive opportunities.

Hopefully, the information provided above has helped you overcome your stress in relation to corporate participation in social media, and you can now choose the platform that is best able to support the communication of your enterprise. This means: finding your clients wherever they are, and approach them with the right content, be it original or collected, on news, entertainment, sports or other reliable sources. But it also means: being realistic about what they are prepared to do and what they are capable of, when it comes to interaction. At the end of the day, social media are two-way channels, so you must participate in conversations that have some use for your clients and your enterprise.

RISKS

Social media can also pose some risks: if someone is not satisfied about a product or service, and he or she posts his/her displeasure on one of the social media, you can have a big problem. In many shops, you can still find notices with the text: "If you are content, please tell others; if you have complaints, please tell us." Unfortunately, the modern consumer does not feel compelled to follow this advice:

disgruntlements are 'told' immediately on the social media. With the consequence that this complaint – justified or not – will start leading a life of its own. This may have grave consequences for your enterprise, because the internet has no compassion, in fact, it is ruthless. Once a message is posted, it is very hard, if not impossible, to erase. A negative remark or review is extremely hard to refute. The excuse that it is just one subjective opinion of one over-demanding person, seldom helps in mending the damage.

RESULT

No one medium can guarantee that an advertisement or other presentation with which you try to reach your target group, will yield any positive result. What is certain, is that if you do not present yourself, people will not know you and you will not sell. So you have to do something about publicity, and the social media may be one channel that works for you. But for these, the same goes: no guarantee for turnover, no matter how many followers or 'Likes' you have. The only thing you can do, is asking the buying customer how he found you. Try to keep tabs on that, and make a survey of the various sources. This way, you can determine what works for you, and what does not.