

Doing Social Right – 3 Social Media Marketing Best Practice Guidelines

Every marketer, whether they have a B2B or B2C company, knows that social media marketing is important in our hyper-connected time. That's why this year, US companies are forecasted to spend \$19.3 billion on social media advertising, a 17% increase from last year.

Social media marketing, although popular, still remains somewhat of a mystery; nearly half of digital marketers say that social media is the most difficult kind of marketing to do well. But at the same time, it's worth finding out how to do it right because when it is done well, it can be highly effective.

The key is adhering to social media best practices so that you have the best chance of using social media for authentic, two-way interaction with your target market, increasing awareness and getting prospects on the path to purchase.

1. Have an overall voice and look for your brand, but tweak it for each different network.

Your brand image should be consistent, meaning that customers should instantly be able to recognize your brand, regardless of which network they are using. That is not to say, however, that each profile and content on the various networks should be identical. They shouldn't (see #2 below)!

When it comes to branding, consistency is key because it builds trust and boosts engagement. People like to know what to expect and that the information you post is authentic and reliable. In fact, two thirds of Internet users have felt like a brand's sponsored content, video or social post was deceptive.

Be careful not to use slang and jargon, though. Nearly one in four Internet users say that slang and jargon on social media is annoying and it makes you look out of touch.

2. Think about how you will use each social network in a unique way.

Different social networks have different vibes and are suitable for different things, so you should tailor the content for each network. For example, many businesses use Twitter to monitor customer satisfaction and to respond to customer service issues.

Companies typically use Instagram more for branding and audience building. LinkedIn is used for lead generation and thought leadership, especially by B2B companies. Depending on your company's branding and your social media goals, you may use one to engage users in creating content or giving you feedback, another

one to post humorous content and yet another to entice potential customers with beautiful photography or videos.

3. Be aware of what the competition is doing.

While you absolutely need to have your own unique voice and content on social media, it also pays to know what your competitors are doing. Since you serve the same or similar audiences, you will be able to get insights from what they are doing right and wrong.

They may have discovered a topic that really resonates with your target market, and this can inform your future posts. Or they may have made a mistake that you capitalize on. For example, when some companies do social media marketing, their posts seem robotic or they do not respond to customer questions and concerns. This is a prime opportunity scoop up those customers that your competitor has alienated.

When you consistently do your social media marketing according to these best practices, you will consistently build a loyal and engaged audience that is likely to buy your products and services for many years to come.