



SOCIAL NETWORKING

You Get Out What You Put In

One of the hot buzz words in this “Web 2.0” world is social networking. Marketing gurus, both self-proclaimed as well as those anointed by others, have been busy trumpeting the necessity for a business to be active on a number of social networks in the ever elusive search to find new customers, connect with existing ones, and prove that your firm is not only hip but still relevant in this wired and wooly world. Business owners are faced with a bewildering number of choices, and navigating this unfamiliar territory often becomes a comedy of errors and thwarted ambitions.

Of course, adding to the din and confusion is the sheer proliferation of networks: MySpace was one of the early stars, along with Friendster, but the former was largely co-opted by kids and young adults and the latter seems to have lost luster and momentum. These days, the networks which generally seem to get the most attention and press are [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

“Carpe Diem”

I recently assisted a client, an interactive marketing agency based in Santa Monica, California, in developing a social

media strategy which is eminently “brandable” and memorable due to its use of an acronym constructed from the first letter of the nine key principles outlined below that spells “Carpe Diem,” which all good students of Latin know translates as, “*Seize the day.*” When it comes to the employment of social media to promote a business agenda, I believe this to be highly apropos.

In order to develop a coherent social media approach for your business, you must bear in mind the following:

- Consistency
- Authenticity
- Relevance
- Performance
- Excellence
- Dedication
- Innovation
- Evolution
- Momentum

Each of the principles enumerated above is critical for brand development over time, but in the digital world, where information travels (literally in some cases) at light speed and word-of-mouth can quickly overcome marketing

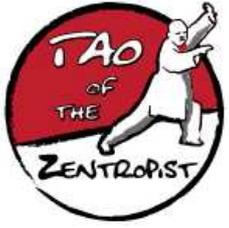
If you want to build a coherent and actionable social media strategy for your business, make sure to employ the principles of Consistency, Authenticity, Relevance, Performance, Excellence, Dedication, Innovation, Evolution, and Momentum, which can be remembered as CARPE DIEM.

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channels directly under a company’s control, it’s simply non-negotiable.

Consistency means that you must commit to maintaining your presence on your chosen networks and you must allow this channel to operate bi-directionally as it is intended.

Authenticity requires that you remain true to your brand and the realization that customers/clients expect the relationship to be one of peers, if not equals, so talking down to them or behaving insincerely will potentially cause irrevocable harm.

Relevance is a nod to the fact that every brand must tell a story, no matter what product or service you are selling. Customers expect their problems to be solved, or want to fulfill a need (often-times a “want” in masquerade), or feel they will gain social currency in being associated with your brand.

Performance is a reminder that “the past is prologue” and third-party testimonials from satisfied clients speak volumes about your work. Don’t be shy about using these.

Excellence is a conscious choice that we all make. Always strive to be the best at what you do and never forget that there’s always room for improvement.

Dedication implies that you are there for your customers and willing to listen to their suggestions and ideas.

Innovation is a process through which calculated risks and “out of the box” thinking allow a business to find oppor-

tunities where the competition is failing and then aggressively exploit the gap and go for broke. Fortune favors the bold.

Evolution acknowledges the need for a business to adapt and overcome as new challenges arise or new opportunities present themselves. Social media provides a great tool to keep one’s finger on the collective zeitgeist and to look for trends which may impact your bottom line.

Momentum can take time to build, and often requires considerable energy and effort to achieve, so don’t squander it once you get it. Once you implement a social media campaign, you must at all costs continue to prosecute your efforts by providing fresh content, listening *and responding* to your customers, and staying current on trends within your field.

Summary

At the end of the day, online social networking is a phenomenon blending traditional good business practices with the ubiquitousness nature of the Internet. People can spot phoniness a mile away, so what you put out there better be real.

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