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# Sharpen Your Social Media Strategies

WANDA KENTON SMITH • FEB 21, 2018

*Your goal should be to produce and share content that your audience will value, enjoy and share.*

Unlike traditional media that remained virtually unchanged for decades, today's digital and social media evolve at the speed of light. To stay on the cutting edge, marketers absolutely must stay laser-focused on the latest technological developments to tap the real-

time power of today's technology. Companies that hope to remain relevant must support their marketing organizations by insisting upon — and investing in — ongoing professional development.

I've spoken to dozens of marine marketers during the past few months and many readily admit that today's complex digital landscape has them feeling overwhelmed or totally befuddled. There are countless new choices of where to invest marketing funds, and many people feel unprepared to make well-grounded decisions. Some have shared with me that even the basic modern marketing lingo can be tough to comprehend, not to mention grasping how it all works, how to develop strategies, how to figure spend or how to analyze ROI.

If you find yourself or your company sinking quickly in this modern-day marketing quicksand, I recommend taking pro-active steps to develop a rock-solid foundation for your future. The longer you delay making progress to secure your marketing foothold, the faster and the farther behind you will fall. Perhaps it is time to consult with or employ an outside expert to aid in navigation, or to educate and empower your crew. Honestly, even the most well-intentioned do-it-yourselfer is likely to experience difficulty when trying to achieve any degree of mastery. There is just so much to learn. By the time you ramp up in one platform or another, the marketing quicksand shifts again.

In an effort to keep my finger on the pulse of these seismic marketing activities, my team and I research and collaborate to produce monthly webinars for a North American audience of franchise business owners who, like many of you, have responsibilities beyond marketing. Our goal is to keep business owners apprised of important marketing changes and opportunities that can drastically affect or impact their businesses. This month, I'm pleased to share some well researched, key findings from our past two months of webinars focused on social media developments. One of our go-to resources was SocialMediaExaminer.com, which offers a wealth

of free resources plus a comprehensive report involving a survey of 5,700 marketers from multiple business sectors.

### **Here are a few of the marketing insights we discovered:**

Today more than ever, visuals are essential. About 85 percent of marketers use photos and videos, and 73 percent plan to increase their use. Some 61 percent of marketers plan to use live video services such as Facebook Live and Periscope. I would ask: How's your visual arsenal? And what are you doing to enhance it? Maximize your social media impact by capturing and sharing the boating lifestyle through awesome visuals.

About 62 percent of marketers consider Facebook their most important social network. LinkedIn followed at a distant 16 percent, followed by Twitter and Instagram.

On the advertising front, a powerful 93 percent of social marketers deploy Facebook ads, and 64 percent of that group expect to increase their advertising spend in the platform.

Instagram, which Facebook owns, is enjoying an upward trajectory and is a social-media platform to test. Here are some fast facts and tips about this fast-growing social media platform.:

About 38 percent of all female internet users and 26 percent of all male internet users are active on Instagram. Some 59 percent of 18 to 29-year-olds use Instagram, followed by 33 percent of 30 to 49-year-olds and 18 percent of 50 to 64-year-olds.

According to blogger, author, SEO expert and tech geek Anson Alexander, Instagram claims 700 million active monthly and 400 million daily users.

Talk about visual impact: 95 million photos are uploaded on this platform daily.

Some 54 percent of the marketing survey respondents cited Instagram in their social media mix, and 63 percent of users planned to up the ante.

About 80 percent of Instagram users follow at least one business. Make sure your Instagram space is a business profile and is connected to a Facebook page. You can run a joint advertising campaign for both platforms, and the system will track best performance and favor that platform. However, use caution to ensure you develop custom ads designed and best suited for each platform. One size does not fit all.

Because Instagram is all about visual content, be sure to shower it with inspiring images that reflect the exciting nature of the boating lifestyle. Kids, pets and families along with great boating escapes always spell f-u-n.

Invite and encourage customers to take pictures while boating. It's a great strategy for Facebook too, but it is especially smart for Instagram, which is rich in imagery. Idea: Enter customers into a monthly photo competition. Find ways to reward them for following your feed, taking and posting pix and tagging your business.

Hashtags are highly relevant and effective on Instagram and Twitter. Develop hashtags for your business and promote them regularly. Share them with your customers and encourage replication. You can also use popular, top-performing hashtags to accompany visuals that accurately reflect the mood of the image. Search top hashtags by platform to generate ideas. Avoid using hashtags that likely won't show on a search because they don't have enough traction.

We also researched and shared some social media best practices based on today's audience preferences and attitudes.

Follow the 70/20/10 rule of social media: 70 percent of your posts should be original, relevant and fun content, while 20 percent should include shared content and a minimum of 10 percent should include promotional (self-promotion) content. This mix works best on social media channels.

Don't surpass the 10 percent of the 70/20/10 rule. The social media audience least favors promotional content and tends to ignore it. Again, no more than 10 percent of your posts should include overt self-promotion. It is the least likely of all content to be shared and generally does not produce comments or likes. Use extreme caution in your social sales messaging to avoid turning off or losing friends, fans and followers.

Social marketing experts all agree that interaction is key. The more your audience engages and interacts with you, the higher the degree of content retention. Facebook also values interactive content, which ultimately leads to greater exposure.

Your goal should be to produce and share content that your audience will value, enjoy and share. What does your audience respond to the most? What engages your followers and gets them in the game? Are you monitoring your activity to know what is working and what is not? Review analytics regularly. Do you research other pages similar to your own to see what works elsewhere?

Share popular content. This is a smart strategy that requires little work but delivers positive response. Follow boating experts and find cool resources that your audience will value.

If your goal on Facebook is to develop leads, then invest in a paid lead-generation advertising campaign. Boost well-performing posts.

A highly successful photographer, Jenna Kutcher, shared how she used Instagram to build her six-figure business. She recommends a major strategy for success by using your page like you would a journal, magazine or scrapbook. Instead of shouting to the masses, speak instead to your tribe. Create a personal connection by sharing stories about yourself and your customers. Sharing personal stories will help to establish trust. Another tip she offers is to like and comment on posts other than your own, a strategy that positively builds awareness of, and reflects positively on, you and your business within your community or niche.

Do you plan and produce a monthly social media calendar for your content across all social media platforms of choice, supplementing with additional content as it may organically develop? This is a major strategy for success, and inexpensive planning or scheduling platforms can assist. See Buffer, CoSchedule or Hootsuite.

And, did you know that there are recommended days, times and frequencies to post on different social media platforms? Test different strategies and make a plan based on the analytics that result. Posting on the right days, at the right time and with the right amount of frequency on each unique social media platform will positively enhance your social presence. Get strategic. Research your social media platforms of choice to learn primetime recommendations. Then, devise a plan accordingly and test the waters to see how it works.

Besides a stream of standard posts and visuals, are you regularly producing and publishing original blog content? If not, you should be, or you should hire a content producer familiar with your space to produce it for you. This is an integral component of social-media strategy. If content marketing represents more “mumbo jumbo” and you’re stumped, then check out my favorite marketing read of 2017, Marcus Sheridan’s They Ask You Answer.

I hope these social media updates and recommendations are helpful and that you can find at least a few to apply to your business. And remember: there’s a world of self-help tutorials, webinars, white papers, blogs, YouTube videos, books and more out there. Invest time every week to seek, study and sharpen those marketing skills so that you can leverage the best options to build and grow your business.

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