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SOCIAL MEDIA

IT'S FOR

B2B

TOO!



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Traditional methods of reaching customers have fallen by the wayside, and many businesses have responded by developing social media strategies. However, very few have harnessed the full power of their social media presence. Online tools aren't just B2C platforms anymore. Innovative companies are leveraging social media channels for B2B communication with astonishing results. These leaders enjoy increased brand reach, improved search engine rankings and stronger reputations industry-wide.



SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: B2C VS. B2B

Because social media is known for its casual approach to communication, many B2B companies discount social media's potential. After all, extraordinary amounts of time and money have been invested in creating an image, and for most B2B organizations, the casual nature of Facebook and Twitter fails to represent that image appropriately. However, businesses that have embraced social media marketing have learned that it is possible to post successfully while still maintaining professionalism.

B2C social media marketers focus on blending in with the culture of their target buyers. This results in posts that push the limit as far as taste goes, taking remarks and humor to the very edge of edginess. B2B marketing doesn't have to fit in with the culture of end-users to be successful. Instead, social media platforms offer opportunities to add value for current and potential clients.



CREATING B2B CONTENT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

As a B2B social media marketer, your goal is to position your business as a thought-leader. You aren't trying to sell through social media per se. Instead, you offer valuable resources that cement your relationship with current customers and drive prospective clients to your website. Skip the silly videos and quick-hit blog posts that make up the vast majority of B2C marketing. Instead, focus on professional content. Create evidence-based articles, exclusive whitepapers, and informative e-books that will catch your target customers' eyes. These kinds of posts are highly effective in drawing clients to your site.

Social media trends are moving away from posts that are entirely text- and photo-based, with a new focus on video and infographics. These tools can be used by B2C and B2B companies with equal success. Consider videos that offer 30-90 seconds of valuable information about your industry, or take the opportunity to showcase relationships with your partners. Consider a webinar to introduce prospective customers to the lesser-known aspects of your industry, which gives you the benefit of additional face time to sell your business.

Video is a perfect chance to tell the story of your business and the people that make it special, promoting stronger relationships with current and potential clients. Case studies are highly effective tools for demonstrating that your products and services are the best fit for clients' needs. Show the value you provide to your current customers through narrative or video. If possible, highlight affiliations with well-known businesses to make a more powerful statement.

Don't underestimate the power of infographics. While these are typically used in B2C social media marketing, there is untapped potential for B2Bs. Your expertise gives you considerable access to the sorts of facts and figures that your clients need to make smart decisions. Breaking down this information in easy-to-use infographics is a service that your busy customers will sincerely appreciate.



MAJOR PLAYERS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

While you are probably familiar with the best-known social media platforms, creating a comprehensive strategy can be daunting. New platforms pop up regularly, and it can be difficult for newcomers to decide where their energy is best spent. Reserve your resources for the big three – LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter – instead of spreading yourself thin across multiple sites. LinkedIn should be first on your list, as this platform sets the gold standard for professional networking and communication. Leverage features like the instant article tool and the group discussions to develop a reputation as a thought-leader. Joining and leading discussions allows you to distribute the content you have created, and it offers opportunities to interact with individuals who have already indicated an interest in your industry by joining the conversation.



GETTING STARTED

Chances are, you already have one or more accounts on a variety of social media platforms, and you may even post regular business-related updates. However, designing and launching a strong, effective social media strategy will take a coordinated effort.

The first step is to create a plan. Understanding your short- and long-term goals for the project will direct the type of content you create. Once you have settled on your desired outcomes, such as increasing your brand's reach, improving your search engine rankings and/or creating stronger relationships within your industry, determine the theme or themes of your content and decide how the information can be presented most effectively.

As you plan, remember that it is easy to become overwhelmed by the constant interactions on social media. Remember that you are likely to receive questions, comments and feedback that require timely responses. If you are new to these tools and you don't have unlimited resources, start small. Choose a single goal or a single theme, and perhaps even a single platform at first. Once you have a solid foundation, it is easier to branch out. Social media is the new face of marketing, and leading businesses are making the most of these platforms to increase their market share. Don't let the myth that social media is just for B2C prevent you from taking advantage of these tools.



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