

Social media is not just for consumers

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The success of social media marketing for consumer-based companies can be replicated for industrial and service-based organisations, provided some guidelines are established.

Teresa Jenkins, managing director of Litha Communications, explains, “Social media is often seen as the territory of FMCG businesses and one that does not lend itself to the complexities of industrial and service marketing. However, this idea is falling away, as social media becomes more engaging and pervasive across all types of businesses.

“For parastatals, manufacturers and service industries, there are definite opportunities opening up but they do require a new marketing paradigm.

“Internationally, key trends are mobile-friendly sites, enlivening with video and Instagram and compelling content.”

Mobility of everything

In June 2018, US-based Pew Research released a new report on internet, smartphone and social media penetration across the world. Internet use in South Africa is at 59% and stands out for its tremendous growth of 17% since 2015. In September 2017, Arthur Goldstuck managing director of World Wide Worx, said the number of people on Facebook in South Africa had grown to 16 million – with 14 million accessing the service from a mobile device.

“It is therefore critical that companies design all their information to be optimised for both mobile and desktop,” continues Jenkins. “Social channels encourage mobile access, so quality user experience becomes paramount.”

According to a 2017 Facebook Messaging Survey, 53% of people report being more likely to do business with an organisation, they can message. Facebook has made this communication a priority by enabling any user to message a specific business from its Facebook page.

“This trend emphasises the need to monitor all social media communication constantly. Ignoring Facebook Messenger queries or comments will reduce confidence in the organisation.”

‘Show me, don’t tell me’

According to Hubspot.com, video has become a top priority for many industrials with 81% of online marketers using video as a marketing tool in 2018, up from 63% in 2017.

“This is the ideal opportunity to demonstrate a process or a service outcome, making it ‘alive’ for your prospective customers, rather than pages of specs on complex products or services. The social media lead could then transfer the viewer to your website to continue the viewing experience.

“Of course, this means that the website must generate as much interest as the social media page – no more boring, text-heavy websites that are out of date.

“Creating video that engages means interviewing behind-the-scenes staff, satisfied customers, delivery mechanisms or anything that can capture your audiences’ attention. Add topics that are relevant to your industry – such as energy, sustainability – and provide links to other sites.

“Instagram is more than just cats; it too offers a quick view of your business and can be populated by recycling content

from other platforms, blogs or webpages. Again, employees and clients can contribute.”

Captivating content

In early 2012, Marty Weintraub and Lauren Litwinka developed the 50/30/20 rule in their book, *The Complete Social Media Community Manager's Guide*. This has become an established way of devising content for any social media platform.

“In essence, it states that 50% of content should be curated from other relevant and authoritative sources; 30% original content and 20% promotional content. What is critical is that your original content should be in the form of thought leadership, sharing industry insights and trends with your audience. These could include webinars or slideshows. It’s not about ‘selling’, it’s about telling.

“This is also a place where your customers and suppliers could add applicable information that would be of interest to the community you are trying to build. This is a slow process but it builds trust, which is a valuable retention strategy.

“The final 20% is the moment to add in the sales pitch but it must be low-key and not hard-sell. Examples include product updates, new ideas, awards or meaningful highlights in the organisation’s progress and the latest press releases.

“The world continues to embrace social media as a source of information and therefore it is time that organisations review their social media marketing strategies and get ready for the social media decade forecasted for 2020,” concludes Jenkins.

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