

Six 'Real Tips' your brand's social media manager can start using today

 By [Matt Rose](#)

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This article is about providing a few practical best practice suggestions to brand managers and community managers within a social media context. It's a new frontier and an ever-changing culture and I realise we can't take a "one-size-fits-all" approach, but hopefully these can serve as a starting block or at least some food for thought. Enjoy!

Top 6 best practice suggestions:

1. "Mirroring"

In basic behavioural psychology the best way to establish a 'rapport' quickly with somebody is to employ a technique of 'mirroring' both in terms of body language and in speech. The same goes for online. Try to respond to people in a way to which they can relate. If they are being light-hearted then it's okay to be a bit light-hearted yourself. If a comment is taking a tone of seriousness then it's only appropriate to give them an appropriate response. It seems like common sense but often a fair bit of judgement is required on the part of the community manager to avoid being 'trolled' or coming off as 'patronising'

Take this great example from Samsung in Canada: Dragon & Kangaroo, A great example of "mirroring", which led to a massive viral PR boost for Samsung.

When a Samsung Facebook fan named Shane went for a 'long shot' and requested a free upgrade for being a loyal consumer he included a hand-drawn picture of a dragon. The Canadian community manager respectfully declined his request but went a step further by showing their appreciation of his dragon picture with one of a kangaroo riding a unicycle.

[Take a look at the kangaroo here.](#)

Samsung did not have to give away any product, and they managed to maintain a happy client and get amazing PR mileage out of this interaction. The online community even went so far as to say the whole interaction was engineered by Samsung as a publicity stunt but in reality it was completely authentic. While it may be hard to measure the return on investment of a dragon drawn in MS-Paint, there is no doubt this little exchange on social media was fantastic.

2. Design images to fit for platform and post

The social web is also increasingly the visual web. Consider the runaway success of Pinterest, Facebook's acquisition of Instagram or even FB's move to the more visual heavy timeline format. Images are just easier to digest than text is.

So, following this it just makes sense to have a social media presence that uses imagery that is designed to be there. Think of this like getting clothes that fit the person correctly. Brands that have no guidelines in place to ensure synergy in their visuals often have social pages that seem schizophrenic and even unpolished.

This goes for backgrounds, avatars, profile pix and especially infographics. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube all display slightly differently so it's important to start finding ways to make sure they are all consistent/complementary in their look and feel.

3. Keep it short, keep it sweet

In this world today, we are taking in and scanning large quantities of information, so posts that are longer than about 100 characters are often skipped entirely, purely because of the effort required to read them. We want an easy-to-understand 'headline' so that they can then decide to skip reading through the post, or decide if we want to pursue the link further.

4. Phrase updates that provoke a conversational response

Social media is about conversations, right? So don't speak about yourself only. Get your community involved and give them some creative freedom to have fun with the brand. Phrasing an update in certain ways can spark a great interaction.

There is a right way and a wrong way to do things on this point.

Consider Case 001: "Forced"

For a car brand "what's the best thing about spending Easter in our new 4x4?"

Consider Case 002: "Natural"

For a car brand "where is the most beautiful spot to take our 4X4 off road in South Africa?"

5. @Mention key influencers within the community

A good way to reach out and engage with growing communities is to reach out directly to the key influencers within that community. Facebook and Twitter both have the functionality to directly @mention specific people in conversations.

A good rule of thumb is to target only those individuals who have both of the following traits.

True Brand Advocate: They are organic advocates, They don't mind engaging and being engaged, they feel like they are part of the brand and have a vested interest in positive communications about it. They are a brand's best friend in the social space, and they are out there.

Super User: An individual with a strong personal network (maybe over 1000?) friends or followers.

6. Speak like a human

All too often community managers are bullied into ticking all the boxes with regard to product jargon and product codes/innovations. We need to guard against this in the sense that if you wouldn't talk that way to a friend in real life then you need to think twice about posting about it in that way online.

Forced: "Hey, have you seen the Startech A30 Hyperion 100-E with liquid grip flaps and 2.2GB onboard memory?"

Natural: "Hey, learn more about the Startech A30's technical features here "

Conclusion

Social media takes the 'handcuffs off' to a certain extent. Agencies must explore the brand perceptions on the community's terms. Adapting to the style and needs of their communities.

Whatever the brand rules are in traditional media channels, the social media context demands a level of flexibility that is required when speaking to people in a human way and responding in a timely fashion.

#communitymanagerdiscretionadvised

ABOUT MATT ROSE

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