Social media success: Engaging your followers

By Genae Girard

Cathy, a small business owner, spent a lot of money on the front end of a social media campaign for her bakery. She set out to incrementally build her following on Facebook, Twitter and her blog. She slowly built a following with her in-store business as well as her distribution nationally. She carefully crafted flyers to put in boxes, an e-mail campaign and newsletters. Her followers steadily grew until she hit a plateau. She wondered why it took so much effort to build her following, just for her drop out rate to steadily increase. What Cathy didn't realize is while it's important to build a following on social media sites, it's just as important to keep that following engaged.

In order to keep your customers engaged, you must create an emotional bond in order to keep their attention. The average customer is exposed to hundreds of messages every day on their computer, on their phones, and on TV. They have become artificially attention deficit disordered, and that doesn't help your advertising brand. In order to be successful in the social media market you must engage the customer. Cathy can do this by turning to the creative spirit of the company and thinking outside the box using the following strategies:

- Create great content. If Cathy posted interesting anecdotes about the history of certain desserts or the story behind a certain dessert, it is sure to create more buzz. If you have a consulting business, talk about some of the best ways to move a customer's business forward in a down economy.
- Consider adding video. The average consumer responds to video better than written content. If Cathy showed a video of the bakery making their new three layered rainbow colored cake, that is more engaging for her followers than the average post. Rick's auto mechanic shop could post video on how to look for seals corroding. The options are endless.
- Add humor to get the customers laughing. If an employee turns the mixer on high accidentally and splatters cake batter all over the place, snap a picture and post it across your social media network. If you are an accountant, you may post the top 10 funniest tax excuses. If you are an author, have some friends act out a funny scene in your book.
- Look at your competition. Look for the top 10 competitors that you have in social media. Keep an eye on what they are posting and how many followers they have. Then develop your content in a more interesting and out of the box way from what they are doing. Do it faster, more cleverly and better.
- Look for other companies that are a good fit to team up with. Make an agreement to swap content on each other's sites so that you can take advantage of co-marketing. This could be another manufacturer or service that complements your business. Take advantage of the communities that have already been built and cross-pollinate them through your posts.
- Look to younger employees in your company that may be on the pulse of social media. Put them in charge of reporting to you once a week about what the buzz is in the social media realm. Have them come up with different ideas, promotions or creative posts of interest and test them out in the market.

All of the content-rich aspects of social media will attract and keep your customers watching your brand grow. Standing out in the marketplace is becoming even more important as competition is always knocking at the social media door. Do it better, be more nimble and you will catch your customers sticking around to see what is next.

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