



Integration is critical

Leverage the power of social media to build your business

I must confess that I was a skeptic of social media when it emerged in the early 2000s, but I've done a total turnaround on the topic, realizing the power of social media for communication, networking and knowledge sharing.

When used productively and with intention, social media can provide a wealth of benefits to business leaders and their organizations. Social media cannot be managed in a vacuum, it has to be integrated in the organizations overall marketing strategy. Plus, it has to be fun, creative, ambitious and impactful, while serving a purpose for your business and bringing value to your customers.

I propose the following five objectives to integrate into your social media strategy to make it a productive tool:

Follow, track and monitor your "ecosystem"

LinkedIn and Twitter allow you to easily follow critical players in your ecosystem. You can follow companies, connect with people and read the latest news they publish for free. You don't have to check multiple websites; the information comes to you regularly and freely.

You can track your competitor's and customer's pages to find out what they are working on. In addition, you should connect with industry association experts who regularly share their knowledge through social media.

Find great knowledge at no cost

Most service companies, particularly consulting firms, publish white papers and research reports that are priceless. Lately, I have accessed some amazing reports from McKinsey & Co., BCG and Deloitte Research.

Business schools have great blogs that offer links to papers and other relevant essays. There is a wealth of knowledge available out there — get connected to what thought leaders are working on and discover potential trends and signals from other industries.

Develop your own network

The power of networking for business has been demonstrated over and over. LinkedIn and other similar sites are the best way to establish strong and long-lasting connections. I have used LinkedIn to target potential hires, to launch discussions on particular topics of interest, to run polls in specialized groups and to establish a network of more than 4,000 professionals.

Create a corporate brand, image and content

Social media managed with intention can help develop your corporate brand. Use social media to publish your content, create your image and complement your traditional marketing strategy. Create a small team within your organization that will manage digital marketing. Use



it as a team-building activity and as an opportunity to bridge generations at work.

Use it as a productivity tool

This is probably the most attractive reason to use social media. I used to have a long list of websites to check every day. I have now streamlined this list and am using LinkedIn and Twitter to read news, find content and communicate with my ecosystem, saving me considerable time. Encourage your marketing team to be active in industry-relevant social media groups.

There's no doubt times have changed. Technological development is going to accelerate and the next generation of workers will probably be the most connected and technology-savvy. So it is not a question of whether or not your organization should embrace social media, but when and how it should do so. ●

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