



MARKETING / OFFICE / STAFF

The Good, the Bad and the Successful in Social Marketing

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You might be thinking, "social marketing, don't you mean social media?" No, I mean social marketing. Every day, I keep reading, hearing and learning more and more about the changes happening in social media. More specifically, how the organic value of social media is dead or dying. Instead of focusing on the pessimistic side of the issue which leads to stagnation and most certain death, why not adapt your strategies to this ever-changing world?

Life is going to change, technology is going to keep changing and if life has demonstrated anything, it is that continuing to hold fast to old ways of thinking will most likely result in a devastating mistake. Need further proof; just ask any poor soul who invested heavily in 8 tracks, cassettes, beta tapes or VCRs. It's not that investing in those items was a terrible thing, but if you refused to move forward, then you stand a chance of dying.



Things change and we need to stay flexible and open minded to new possibilities. I never want to stop learning or adapting to change. Things are going to happen, life is going to progress, the next best mousetrap or widget will be created and we have the option to figure out how to adapt or spend a quantitative less desirable amount of time fighting an outcome. It isn't always easy to recognize an opportunity when it comes along, but it is better if we are prepared looking and listening for the knock.

Blockbuster vs. Netflix

Consider this example from 2000. The CEO of a small and (dare I say, struggling) DVD-by-mail service approached the CEO of Blockbuster Video about partnering. The DVD-by-mail owner wanted to manage Blockbuster's online rental business. John Antioco, Blockbuster's CEO at the time, dismissed the whole idea. The CEO of the small DVD-by-mail company was Reed Hastings and the company you may recognize now was called Netflix. Fast forward 16 years later, Blockbuster Video is void and Netflix is worth \$32.5 billion.



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Why did I bother sharing that story with you? Well, for three very good reasons. One, we still have those who refuse to accept online and social media as the new word of mouth marketing. Blockbuster failed to recognize how the world was changing around them and look where it landed them. Practitioners are daily still struggling to find new leads and new customers and yet, there is an unbelievable amount of low-hanging fruit ready to connect socially.

Second, those who recognize the value get stuck in the rut of "traditional" online marketing ideas. Similar to Blockbuster, they think they can do all the things they usually do, instead of being open to new ways, new opportunities for growth and being able to clearly see the future.

Third, just because it has worked that way in the past, doesn't always mean it will work for the future. Take Blockbuster and Netflix. The biggest pain about Blockbuster were the late fees and it seemed like I always had to watch my account like a hawk because I would return the product on time, but it would inevitably be charged a late fee that would take a battle to reverse. So, Netflix made the late fee irrelevant. They completely removed this pain point from the equation. It was a brilliant marketing move. They played on the one major pain point everybody had with renting movies and literally made millions from it.

Of course, it is easy to analyze Blockbuster's demise, but it isn't always easy to see a bigger picture or recognize a major shift in your market, not to mention creating a strategy to cope. In fact, sometimes it can be expensive perhaps risky, as not all possible changes really stick (just ask anyone with a MySpace account). Your only other option is to continue to do what you've always done, even when it

isn't working anymore, or has continued to decline month after month or year after year.

The Instagram Example

In February, Instagram announced they would be implementing an algorithmic feed and in my online marketing world, you would have thought they said they were killing the Internet. This is a great example of how industries panic whenever change comes knocking. If you subscribe to any online blog or social group, you most likely saw countless people losing their minds over this development. But this isn't anything we haven't seen before. Twitter announced their implementation earlier this year, Facebook, of course, made the switch in early 2015 and we know what will happen: businesses have to step up their game and pay-to-play if they want broad reach, exposure and traffic. Is this such a terrible thing?

I have to admit, when social media was 100% organic without any ads, it was 100% completely filled with tons of spam. Horrible click-bait content as far as I had time to scroll and fake followers. For every legit online coach like me teaching how to get organic traffic using real strategies, there were too many slimy brands always ready to try to "game" the system. Today is a much better arena for all types of businesses who want a fair playing field. Paid traffic is an essential part of most social strategies today and it's a good thing. The branded content offered up today is a 180 degree difference from the earlier days and I have to admit I have a much more enjoyable experience on the social platforms as a consumer. As a marketer, the results are so much better as well. Being able to be very specific with your targeting certainly means a lot less on the wallet.

These intense changes have meant that marketers and business owners had to get serious with their social marketing, both organic and paid. Social media has become the connective tissue for most successful practices. Social is the greatest source of insight into new growth and new clients. Social, in most cases, is the first point of contact for new customers.

Future of Social Media

That means social can't be the off in a corner or ignored part of your marketing, it's a critical component and needs to be leveraged to insure your practice is not a void left in tomorrow's wake. Organic social will always have a place. Standard people aren't going to pay-to-play and they will continue to utilize Facebook, Instagram, Snap Chat, or Twitter, and because of that, practitioners will have the ability to interact with them, organically, on all of those social platforms.

My advice for those who want to continue to grow their practice is twofold. One, stop ignoring the countless amount of free information about your customers that social offers. Our customers' interests in specific topics are rising. By evaluating social media data with data from other digital marketing channels, we're able to understand the path to purchase in a way we have never had before. So, start carving out 10 minutes a week to evaluate the stats and start working smarter.

Second, social media is going to continue to be an awesome source to interact with your customers in an organic way. Pay to play strategies won't effect that, however, paid options give us more ways strategic ways to interact with them and it is vital in my opinion that you need to understand that you need both!

The good side is Social media isn't dying, but it is changing. The bad is that for those refusing to accept this mind-shift will struggle to keep up and most likely fade into the past. The most successful

will adapt their organic to incorporate paid and start leveraging the opportunity to understand your customers' needs and make adjustments. If you feel like ignoring this advice, remind me again when was the last time you rented a movie from Blockbuster?

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