

How to crack social media and digital marketing in a rigid business context

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Today we are living in a fast-paced working environment where people are constantly connected to the internet and companies use the internet to market their products or services online.



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Online marketing includes digital and social media. These platforms are extremely important since as I said, the majority of young consumers are found online daily.

To give you an idea, the overall figure of internet users is currently standing at 4 billion worldwide, and the majority of these users come from mobile, notwithstanding that people are still using desktop. In terms of social platform stats, Facebook carries the biggest chunk of users that is 2.17 billion in the whole wide world. And Twitter as the second biggest social platforms.

These are exciting statistics projecting vast opportunities for companies to tap into. However, the majority of them does not really understand the nitty-gritty of social media and digital platforms. Understanding social media nuance is pivotal in order to get the return on investment intended.

That's why when big companies find them in the middle of social media controversy, they usually play the blame game instead of taking collective responsibility. This is because many of them do not have a concrete strategy detailing everything properly.

Strategies

Recently I read an article about how to manage social media and digital properly, especially for big companies.

Managing social media for big companies can be a headache when there's no plan/strategy. Note that strategy is not just collections of steps to be followed, but, social media and digital strategies must be organic that allows for tweaking and improving when there's a need.

Similarly, corporate strategy, social media and digital strategies help us take positions in a world that is confusing and uncertain. With this in place, therefore, we will then be able to wave through when the storm hits our shores because we know our position.

Content calendar

Content calendars are some of the exercises that stifle the fluidity of social media platforms. Since this is pre-developed content, in hindsight anything can happen tomorrow that was not pre-packaged or cared for in-out content calendar. How do we then deal with matters which were not included in the calendar, do we escalate the matter to the executives while waiting for the response meanwhile do nothing about the crisis that is brewing online tarnishing the reputation of the company? That's what a content plan does to big companies.

Richard Rumelt, a professor at UCLA's Anderson School of Management, postulate that things that generate and sustain competitive success – things like reputation, a good customer group, network externalities, experienced and competent people performing your processes helps to set companies apart. Therefore, it's critical that social media managers understand the overall corporate strategy and the company's position so that this guard them when dealing with backlashes. Because trusting content calendar does stifle the whole purpose of using social media to feedback instantly.

No objectives

Many companies just want to on social media but they do not have objectives. What is it that we want out of being on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn etc.? Why, because those at the top do not really understand how social media works. It is important to determine your objectives on each and every platform.

For example, Facebook and LinkedIn can't have the same objectives because these are two different platforms with somewhat different user demographics. So it is important to set objectives as per the social platform and make sure that it's attainable. This kind of information will only be understood by hiring people with knowledge and experience on the ins and outs of social media and digital.

Protocol

I am aware of companies that have an escalation protocol for responding purposes on social media. Companies use social media for different reasons/purposes such as customer service, advertising and brand awareness, communication and outreach, community management, reputation management, etc.

But why have protocol responding process when we want to be instant and in the moment. I would expect that companies choose to be online because they want to be rapid in their responding pace to whatever their customer's inquiries. The whole protocol responding process stifles the wholesomeness of social media.

In-the-moment

That brings us to, be an in-the-moment situation, it does matter the type of company you are. To be in the moment is what keeps social media going. People who follow you want to know what is it that you up to. Be always on the impulse of the social streets.

For some conglomerate companies, a crisis would start from their franchisee/branch in Pakistan and end up affecting the whole chain of the company. It's important to know what's happening in order to respond accordingly. Sometimes people would search to understand what they've read from the news and your companies become the first to be asked about the matter, at this moment you do not want to say thing out of context and create more crises.

It is important that 'traditional companies' starts to really understand social media and digital very well, not just what they think it is. It is more than just platforms where you distribute content. Fortunately, most startups understand social media and digital platforms very well.

There are a few start-ups who aren't doing social media and digital effectively and efficiently. But it's important to highlight that we create our competencies by making bets and putting the resources in place to develop those competencies.

We have to understand that competencies are created by activity. If you internalise enough of those activities, you actually get good at them, and they give you a sustainable advantage for a certain period of time, so say Rumelt, who's the most influential voice on many important topics in the field of strategy.

I hope you read this with an open mind.

ABOUT RIRHANDZU SHENGWENYANA

Rirhandzu Shingwenyana is a marketing, advertising and communications professional with experience in account management, social media and digital marketing campaign management.

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