Stop Chasing Trends

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What is trending on social media today is old news tomorrow. I am reminded of this truth at the dinner table with my two teenage daughters. The conversation usually goes something like, "Hey girls, have you seen this funny video that has gone viral?" To which my girls reply, "Dad, that was so two weeks ago."

I don't pretend to be on top of the latest trends, and if you own a small business, you need to stop focusing on social media trends and instead plan out a social media strategy. Too many entrepreneurs try to get cute with their posts and jump in on the fun. Newsflash: it does not help you close more business.

If this describes you, think back to some of the hashtags or TikTok videos you created and ask yourself, "Did my sales increase because of this trending post?" I am willing to bet the answer is no. Not a single person became your customer because your business weighed in on the color of a dress or posted a Bernie Sanders mittens meme.

The only time it makes sense to use a popular trending topic is when that topic fits your brand. If you own a clothing store, then talking about the dress color makes sense.

What is your brand?

What are you trying to communicate online? What does your marketing calendar look like for next year? Those are the questions you need to be asking yourself.

Always start with understanding your brand. Social media should be an extension of who you are as a company. Before you start pushing content out, know the answer to this question. Your brand might be defined as the product you offer or your stellar customer service. It's not enough to say what your brand is; you must eat, sleep and breathe your brand.

I am reminded of the funny scene in the movie *Elf* when Will Ferrell's character gets excited about the sign in the local diner window that reads "World's Best Coffee." Know your brand and push your brand on social media.

However, what you communicate online needs to have a purpose. Let me caution you to not just use your social media for promotion. You need to follow the 90-10 rule when it comes to social media. That means that 90 percent of your content needs to be of value to your current and potential followers and only 10 percent promotional content. This is where a lot of small businesses fail at social media. Too much self-promotion and not enough value.

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What is valuable to your followers?

First, ask yourself who the target demographic is for your business. How can you relate what your target demographic is interested in with the products you are selling without it coming across as a promotion?

Let’s say you own a bait and tackle store. You sell supplies for people who like to go fishing. In that case, most of your content online needs to be centered around articles and videos that give your prospects tips on catching their next big fish. When you start to build followers interested in the content, you then use the 10 percent to promote your products.

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Plan out your marketing calendar

When you look at next year, what do you want to promote throughout the year? Create a strategy that compliments your overall marketing plan. Look at the sales from the previous year. What products were popular in the winter months versus the summer months? Or what products do you want to promote more in certain seasons to drive more sales?

These are all ideas the big companies follow every year. Learn from the large corporations that have huge budgets. That promotional offer you took advantage of in August as a consumer, chances are it was well thought out and planned the previous year. The social media team was a part of that marketing strategy.

New to social media and looking for more inspiration? Try pulling up a national holiday calendar and seeing if you can create content or promote certain products or services around dates on the calendar. Try to ask yourself what your prospects are thinking about throughout the year and how you can connect with them on social media.

Bottom line, it’s time you stop being reactive with your social media and be proactive in the new year.

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