Why Your Company Should Be Branding on the Internet

How Strategic Branding Can Help your Business

One way to stand out from the competition and make a mark on the internet for your business is through strategic branding. You've likely noticed branding via offline platforms, which is when companies use a tagline or some other identifying tactic to keep the brand in the mind of consumers. Think about some of the billboards you pass on a typical day, for example. However, branding on the internet is an entirely different game.

With so many different choices on methods for branding online, it can be difficult to know where to start. Fortunately, there are some tried-and-true ways to brand online that will benefit your business and not cost you much out of your overall marketing budget.

- **Develop a Street Team**

Street teams originally started out as a way for the music industry to promote artists, but has developed into a method that all types of businesses use. About 33 percent of consumers say they trust a message from a company, which isn't great, but 90 percent of consumers trust a recommendation from someone they know, even if they just know the person in passing.

This is where your street team comes into play. You should have a database of fans who will go out and tell others about your company and products. This can include social media influencers, people who have been customers for many years and brand ambassadors who you send free products in exchange for their word-of-mouth advertising.

Red Bull utilizes a street team/brand ambassadors to get the word out about its product. The way it has implemented its strategy is to have tiers within the team all the way down to student ambassadors who will recommend the product to their friends.

- **Content Marketing**

91 percent of B2B marketers use content marketing to promote to potential clients, making it one of the most popular B2B online marketing methods. You've probably heard that content is king, and in some ways, this still holds true.

However, you have to ensure the content speaks to your target audience and provides some value to them. Gone are days where businesses could keyword-stuff a page, drive traffic and find success. Today's savvy business owners expect and demand value for their time.

- **Make Connections**

Small businesses need a convenient way to get active online and begin building that brand image. One key thing is figuring out how to connect with other small businesses, but statistics show that businesses with better listings receive as much as 347 percent more searches than those with subpar listings. A company called Manta helps with Google AdWords placement, figuring out SEO for local listings, social media timing, online reviews and preparing for mobile search traffic.

One example of a company using this platform is Mericle Commercial Real Estate Services. The company specializes as a developer of industrial sites and office buildings, so the ability to connect with other businesses is a real help.

- **Social Media**

Get everyone in the company versed in how to use social media to promote the business and then allow those who seem to be savvy to promote on your behalf.

Studies show that leads that are generated by employees via social media are about seven times more likely to have high conversion rates. The key is training employees on what to say and what not to say or to simply ask them to retweet and share.

- **Customer Service on Social Media**

Every day, there are 2.1 million negative social media posts about U.S. brands, which means people are very likely to go online and voice their complaints. Since your goal is to please your customer and show others you care about your customers, it is a smart move to hire customer service specialists to handle social media complaints. The reps simply reach out to those complaining and offer to fix the issue.

JetBlue airlines is an excellent case study of how to use social media to respond to your customers in a pleasing way. When customers complain, it immediately responds, asks for flight info and provides an update.

- **Persistence Pays**

A person has to see your branding approximately five to seven times before they remember it, as a rule of thumb. Of course there are exceptions to that rule, but it goes to show that you need to put your eggs in more than one basket when it comes to online marketing. Think about where your target demographic hangs out online. If most of them are on Pinterest and a specific crafting site, then that is where you'll advertise, as well as by using AdWords with a similar keyword range.

- **Mobile-Friendly Emails**

The number of people using mobile devices to access emails has risen by 180 percent over a three-year period. With more and more people using their mobile devices to get online, it is a smart practice to take those emails you've collected and send

out a message here and there. You can offer stories about your company, discounts, free shipping, customer testimonials, etc.

Groupon sends out emails several times a week that are segmented to offer specials that particular group of subscribers would be interested in. This highly targeted form of advertising has been quite effective for the site. Those emails are also mobile friendly and can be easily read on a personal computer or a smartphone.

If your company isn’t focusing on branding online yet, then you can see why it is vital that you do. You can easily expand your customer reach by doing online marketing. The key is to be smart about where you spend your marketing dollars. Even though online marketing is a fraction of the cost of traditional print advertising, you can still waste a lot of money if you don’t go into it with a very specific strategy and marketing plan.

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