

TO FACEBOOK OR NOT TO FACEBOOK?

When considering your business marketing plan – these days an area that inevitably warrants discussion and often inclusion, is marketing via Facebook.

With over 1 billion users, and many of those users 'checking in' multiple times a day, Facebook is the number one social media platform.

BUT WHY USE FACEBOOK?

The number one reason to utilise Facebook as part of your marketing tool-box is that your customers are there!

Secondly and also importantly, your competitors may already be there!

In addition to this:

- Facebook provides an opportunity to show a more human side to your business.
- It's a great way to interact on a more one on one basis with your customers - to keep them informed and build your brand identity. They will therefore tend to be more engaged with your brand.
- It broadens your reach versus what you could achieve if you were solely using more traditional channels.
- It's insightful – the more one on one nature of Facebook gives you a deeper understanding of your customers.
- It's timely – you are able to reach large groups of people more frequently, and are able to tailor those interactions to suit the needs of your particular audience.
- It's another way to engage with your customers – an additional touch point.
- It helps you increase your website traffic. By posting 'link Facebook posts' that drive traffic to your site. This interaction between Facebook and your website will further boost your website SEO and help you to obtain better search engine results, as your site is well optimised.
- Facebook builds brand loyalty. If you consistently provide valuable and entertaining content your followers will tend to stay loyal even when you make a mistake. When people look online for businesses to buy from, these days they will often search via social media, particularly if they are already active Facebook users. If your followers see you being active and responsive in this environment, they are more likely to do business with you than a company with no Facebook presence or a poorly run Facebook page.

- Many people have a Facebook presence, so they are already Facebook savvy and comfortable using it as a reference point.
- Effective lead generation tool – Facebook can be used as a lead generation tool by way of competitions, giveaways, newsletters etc. These allow you to legitimately collect users email addresses so that you can connect with them outside of Facebook.
- It's an inexpensive marketing tool. A Facebook business page costs nothing to setup - other than the content managers time! It is advisable to use professional graphics and photos where possible though, to ensure a professional and reputable looking site. But getting started generally costs little or nothing until you start paying for ads, running sponsored stories etc.

In short, Facebook is an easy and inexpensive way to target specific prospects, as well as existing customers.

IT LOOKS LIKE I SHOULD GET ON BOARD...BUT WHERE DO I START?

Start by setting up your business page. Facebook is very user friendly, but if you are not comfortable with technology yourself, enlist the help of someone you know who is.

Ensure you request an profile address that is clear, logical – and will allow your business to be easily found. There are many helpful set-up tips to be found online, particularly on the Facebook site itself.

What content should I include?

- Focus on a customer perspective – what would they find interesting?
- Remember the 80/20 rule. 80% of your posts should be social – and only 20% should pertain to products or services that you offer. Overt selling is a sure-fire way to drive off potential Facebook followers.
- Keep it brief – Facebook is all about limited characters. A short, relevant message is more engaging than a lengthy piece.
- Bring your brand to life – perhaps even add in some humour! Facebook allows you to drop the corporate mask so to speak, and add some personality into your communications. This in turn will build trust, and therefore stronger relationships with your customers.

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If you have any questions, please call 0800 CHAMBER (0800 242 623).

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- Include images and videos as part of your content. Doing this increases customer engagement and drives traffic.
- Giveaways or competitions – Everybody loves a freebie! Undertake promotions eg. "Like us on Facebook and receive this gift".
- Links – you can also build your Facebook fan base by posting good links, photos and content. These will be more likely to be shared and thus organically grow your fan base further.
- Post questions on your page. People are more likely to interact, comment and respond to a question that is posed. It shows that you are interested in their opinions or experiences. Encourage people to interact with you – don't make your page look like a billboard.
- Integrate social media sharing. Utilise social media plug-ins or integrate social media sharing buttons on your website to make it easy for your visitors and customers to share your website pages. Once a person has shared your content through Facebook and other social media sites, their friends can easily see those linked on their Facebook profile and newsfeed.
- Post regularly. This increases your opportunity to connect with people and build trust.
- Experiment. Try different kinds of posts and read the resulting response from your audience. Find out and note what they enjoy and replicate it. Learn from what they don't respond well to.
- Events – depending on the nature of your business, you may even like to promote upcoming sales or events you are planning. There is also the ability for users to advise if they will or will not be attending the event – helpful in determining not only catering requirements, but also the events popularity.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER GENERAL RULES?

- Don't over-feed. You don't want to clutter people's newsfeed and annoy them. Most social media users who unlike a brand do so because they posted too frequently.
- Be responsive – any response that takes longer than 24 hours is taking too long. Don't ignore comments from your audience. Obviously favourable comments are quicker and easier to respond to. But don't procrastinate on potential negative comments – a long turnaround time to respond will only irritate more! The general rule of thumb is to acknowledge any negative comments publically but to resolve them offline wherever possible. Ironically if they are handled well offline, often the person will respond favourably on your Facebook page with a thank you for resolving their issue so well.
- Keep the content fresh

GROW YOUR REACH

- Invite your friends – Like your own page, and encourage your friends to do the same. This will create an initial audience... and should get them spreading the word for you as well.
- Undertake an 'email blast' to your existing databases by promoting that you are now on Facebook. It's an excellent way to obtain instant followers from an audience who is already engaged with you and your brand.
- Encourage organic growth in your Facebook followers by adding links to it via your website, email signoffs, blogs etc.
- Promote it via other collateral – eg store signage, packaging, business cards, invoices etc.
- Once you understand your target audience, you can reach more of them via Facebook adverts. These adverts are inexpensive and can be targeted to reach the right people. They are particularly useful to use when you start out. You can even get really smart about it and target different adverts to different target audiences. People are more responsive if they receive a message that is more relevant to their own personal needs, as opposed to a more generic approach.
- Re-marketing. Facebook adverts also have an option of re-marketing. They can recognise that a particular person has visited your Facebook page and can then target your Facebook adverts to appear on other sites they visit.

ANALYSE HOW YOU ARE GOING

Facebook itself has many tools that you can utilise, that are important indicators of how well your Facebook page is doing.

After your page has received 30 'likes' you are able to access data on audience demographics, referral traffic, likes, sharing, un-likes as well as how people are discovering and responding to your posts.

These metrics are invaluable in assisting you with determining what is working and what isn't.

Bring your company to life – give it a personal face by creating an easy, inexpensive Facebook presence. It will assist you in understanding your customers better, and help to build a stronger and more trusted relationship with them. What are you waiting for?

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