

10 Quick Fixes To Instantly Improve Your Social Media Marketing

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I know the term “quick fix” goes against everything we, in the Digital Communications world, tell you about promoting your company online. And it’s true that really good Social Media Marketing requires a sustained, strategic, regularly-evaluated effort to yield you business results.

However...

There are a few simple things I end up telling almost every brand I go in to work with which can seriously improve your online communication channels in the space of an hour and they don’t require in-depth strategic knowledge or tech-savvy.

Anyway, in keeping with my “it’s not rocket science, it shouldn’t cost the Earth, I want to train you to do it yourself so I can eventually leave” ethos, below I’ve listed the Top 10 Tips that I think most organisations can benefit from and implement with little investment of time or money:

1. Spring Clean Cover Photos

This always elicits a shocked face from clients. “But the branding?” they cry, “It must be consistent, no?!”

Well yes, and it still should be, when the images are repeated across your channels and your logo is always present and prominent. However, your cover photo on Facebook for example doesn’t adhere to the same text-to-image ration required in adverts, and you can guarantee every new visitor to your page will see it, and they’ll see it before anything else. So don’t waste the opportunity to communicate a message.

Business people are quite good at ensuring a call to action in this space and charities often feature events or families/animals they have helped, explaining the back story so that their fans come to the page specifically to see the updates, garnering them repeat visitors.

2. Delete Unused Channels

Yes, you heard me. I said delete.

The problem with spreading yourself too thin is that you are actually damaging your brand. I’ve seen it all, from half-set-up Vine accounts to multiple Twitter accounts, two of which are ‘dead’ because Sally didn’t know what she was doing when she set it up, then Sally left and no-one had her password, so we made a new one...

Right, well, forget about Sally. But don’t forget about those accounts.

People will be stumbling across them even if your website doesn’t link to them. They’re half-branded, haven’t been updated since 2012 and it looks shoddy. So make the effort to contact the channel support emails, have the old accounts removed.

If you’re leaving them as holding accounts because they were populated at one time (which may work with YouTube or Pinterest) then ensure all your contact details are up-to-date, and likewise that your branding is consistent with the channels you do update daily.

3. Take It Off The Intern's Desk

If I've heard it once I've heard it a thousand times.
"We're getting a student in to do that."

You're going to let a teenager who is paid minimum wage (if even that), who knows nothing of your values, business strategy or corporate voice, to be the public-face of your business?

Good luck with that.

I'm not being unfair here, to students or businesses. I realise that Social Media Marketing is resource-intensive (it's why I end up being hired to do it). And I'm not trying to say that you have to have superhuman mental powers to do it (quite the opposite, I know some very good students). But as the boss, you need to be clever about how you spread your resources and still ensure accuracy of message while protecting your reputation. Who would you trust to attend a high-value business meeting in your place? Only those people should be communicating publicly for you.

My advice is to take said student, or volunteer or receptionist and make it their job to plan and schedule, i.e. they go around teams physically or virtually (by email), find out what everyone is doing, plan some post ideas, research the linked accounts you could include in your posts and possibly even schedule the week's posts in advance.

But always go in and check before it goes live.

Or you can explain to your solicitor why you didn't have the time when you enter your first Crisis Communications storm.

4. Learn From Your Numbers

Think you don't have any research? Think again.

So many organisations are blindly using social media and assuming they need to pay a Digital Marketing agency to come in and analyse the statistics in order to better target their communications. Well that can be a good idea, too, especially if you plan on paying money to target people. In fact, I'd recommend it.

But in all other circumstances, most social channels will offer you all the information you need. Between Facebook and Twitter analytics alone you can find out who your audience is, their age, gender, location, when they're online (i.e. when best to talk to them) and what stuff of yours they like so you can do more of that and less of the other.

Don't be afraid of analytics, you can't break anything by going in and having a look.

5. Repeat Yourself

That sounds strange, but hear me out.

So often I go into an office and explain (in the least offensive way possible) that, like many people nowadays, I didn't bother going to the company website (that you spent thousands on) but instead I looked at your Facebook and Twitter. I scrolled back weeks and although I know about all your nice events, your funny memes about the weather and your latest promotions, I have very little idea what you actually do.

The defence is normally something like “we posted about our services when we set the page up.” Great, but not very helpful to all the people who have visited you since then, isn’t it?

The reason I show companies how to plan basic editorial calendars on a weekly basis isn’t to over-complicate the process, it’s to ensure that you know your main messages and you don’t miss them, which is easy to do when you’re posting off-the-cuff on a daily basis.

Linked to this, is the problem of scrambling for content to populate the channels. Again, the trick here is repetition.

Obviously don’t repeat last week’s posts, but you could look back to last year. What were you doing then? Can you follow up a client story? Can you showcase a photo album for an annual event that’s coming up again? Can you link to an old media article for a topical story?

Get as much mileage as you can from your own content, especially the good stuff.

6. Use Visuals Wherever Possible

This is so easy to do but will make an immediate difference to the engagement levels of your posts (people who like, share, click or comment).

Photos and, to a greater extent, videos, will garner much larger impressions and actions from today’s Social Media users.

It’s not as difficult to do as people imagine, because too often you grasp for your own imagery which, although you should invest in more, isn’t always necessary.

As I said, re-use older content if it’s relevant, share other people’s content (while tagging them for acknowledgement of course) or Google Image Search for fun memes or historical posters, celebrity shots, anything that is relevant to your content and not necessarily copyrighted.

You will notice a difference pretty quickly from then on.

7. Make Friends With Your Enemies

OK, enemies is a bit strong, I’ve suffered too much Marvel games over the school holidays.

However there is a strange truth to the concept that many organisations and businesses don’t follow what their competitors are doing, as though they are some sort of enemy territory.

“We can’t like them, they steal our customers.”

“We don’t follow them, they’re an English charity.”

Well, not only should you be following them, you should try engaging with them. Like their posts, comment under their articles and even highlight their work by sharing it where necessary.

Why? Well, for a start, that’s where a large chunk of interested audience lie in wait to know about you. It’s not about stealing followers. There’s room enough for everyone. I can like a couple of shopping centres. I live near one, my son goes to school near another and I work with one. I’m allowed to do that. As a consumer, it varies my choice.

If they all decide to engage in some friendly banter between each other, it’ll only engender me more to all three of them. Win-win.

8. Show Some Personality

This can be tricky for so many brands, whether it's because of the corporate nature of the business (like banks, or pension folk) or perhaps because they deal with a serious subject (like many charities).

But this is why it's important to have people who know your company ethos and the people you serve inside out, having at least an arm in with Social Media Marketing, if not their whole upper body.

A great way around this is to diversify accounts.

This is a controversial advice tip, but I sit firmly on this side of the fence.

If you want to be very serious because you engage with political representatives, government departments, European funders or regulators, then your CEO or other senior representative should be online and should be interacting with those targets.

That frees up your main channels to give the public a more feel-good idea of what you do.

In fact this is vital if you're a charity! People want to know what goes on behind the scenes, especially if their donations are paying salaries.

So show your staff working hard or celebrating a birthday with some cake at tea break.

Show your volunteers laughing at an event. Show your suppliers giving the thumbs up as they deliver stock or show your customers out and about with your product. It takes only a smartphone camera and the mindset of always looking for good content.

And as I said above, as long as you have some sort of plan in place, you needn't fear overrunning your channels with humour and losing your core messages.

9. Chat, Don't Lecture

People want to be engaged with, not talked at.

Today's Social Media users are savvy and they know when they're being constantly sold something, as opposed to being encouraged to build a relationship with you.

Historically, we have viewed posting online as a self-centred activity. This harks back to the day's when each Facebook post started with "So-and-so is doing/thinking/watching..."

But nowadays it's even more important to ask questions, run polls, engage in issues that people are talking about (if relevant to your business) and reply to every single comment, share, message.

I cringe when I see public complaints and reviews go unanswered. Many companies will tell me they took it offline and answered the person privately. That is good. But the hundreds or thousands of other people who visit your page don't know that.

They see you ignoring someone. And that is bad.

So always look at your feed from a stranger's point of view and be sure to engage everyone, nice or otherwise as they may be, and ensure you're seen to do it publicly as well as privately.

10. Hire Me

Well, I'm obviously going to say that, aren't I?

But seriously. My last tip:

At least once in your time operating in the online world, hire someone to give you a bit more training than my Quick Fixes. Let them show you how to get the most from your analytics. Let them see your business and advise which channels are best to focus on and how to build your audience. Let them teach your staff how to plan and schedule the best types of posts to grow your audience and convert people to your calls to action. It's a very small investment for a much larger, longer-term return.