

Optimize the Sales Potential of Your Social Media

By John McGee

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The days of the door-to-door computer salesman are gone. Instead, computers are now the ultimate sales tools for companies if they're using their technology resources properly. More than 15 million businesses and organizations are now on Facebook. Many corporations also have Twitter pages. In the corporate world, these pages are typically followed or liked by customers and employees. Companies with large customer bases and thousands of employees might have impressive numbers of likes and follows, but all too often posts or tweets are stagnant, void of real interaction and results.

One of the primary goals many companies share in regards to social media is monetizing the channel. Currently, most corporate social media accounts function more as a customer service tool than a sales tool. The explanation for this is simple: Social media at its core is about relationships on an interpersonal level. A person can't have a relationship with a corporate social media account. At the corporate level, posts and tweets are too broad and out of touch with individuals' needs and interests to function as effective sales drivers.

While corporate social media accounts shouldn't be done away with, it is time for companies to change expectations and develop a new, more effective approach to the channel. The role of the corporate account should remain what it's always been — a public face of the company, not a sales driver.

Instead, this function of social media should be pushed down to the employee level — i.e., people customers can have one-to-one relationships with and feel like they can get to know. These faces of the company will become people who customers trust. This trust provides employees with an opportunity to make connections with their customers on social media and deliver tailored, educational messaging that also sells.

In an employee-centric social media strategy, companies are able to reach customers through channels that are more effective while simultaneously exposing more prospects to products and services. Employees should be empowered with brand- and legal-compliant messaging they can post to their individual Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts. The messaging should be relevant, not pushy, relatable, and solve a problem for current and potential customers. If done properly, businesses will be able to touch more people via social media and realize greater success at creating opportunities for sales.

In addition to an employee-based social media selling strategy, companies need to reach their current and potential customers through text messaging. There are more than 320 million wireless subscribers in the United States, and it's likely that most of them are tethered to their phones every waking hour of the day. Unlike email or direct mail that might only be read a few times a week, text messages are nearly always read instantaneously upon receipt. Consumers are already on their phones, so making a call to act on the message received is a simple follow through in that moment.

Overall, companies need to adjust their social selling and marketing techniques to align with the modern consumer. By making a few adjustments to current campaigns and capitalizing on the capabilities of social media and text messaging, companies will be able to significantly increase their bottom lines.

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