

How to Tackle Social Media: Get Back to the Basics

The excitement of so-called “new media” is keeping marketers and branders up at night. As they explore this new, uncharted territory, marketers all across the globe are asking themselves questions they never would have conceived of just ten years ago. “What’s our Facebook strategy for driving consumer loyalty?” “Who should be managing our brand’s Twitter account?” “How do we leverage YouTube to create the next big ‘talk-of-the-globe’ video?”

Social media has become Goliath to every marketer’s David. In case you’ve been sleeping at the wheel, here are a few facts for perspective:

- The number of people on Facebook is now larger than the population of the United States; indeed, if Facebook were a country, it would be the third largest in the world.
- Twitter doubles its population every 90 days and reportedly has more than 55 million monthly visits.
- 25% of all web searches end up at YouTube making it the second largest search engine in the world.

Rupert Murdoch, the publishing magnate, is quoted as saying that these changes represent the biggest shift in communications since the invention of the printing press 500 years ago. So, clearly, social media is not a fad. It’s here to stay, and it is fundamentally changing not only the way we communicate with consumers, but the way consumers communicate with each other.

The Fundamentals Haven’t Changed

But in the midst of all this flurry of excitement, it’s important for marketers to sit back, take a deep breath, and remember: “How” we communicate with consumers may be changing dramatically, but “what” we communicate should not change.

In truth, the means we use to communicate with our consumers has changed many times over the years (remember how excited advertisers originally were about TV?), but the *essence of brand building* hasn’t changed in decades: Know your target audience intimately, dig deep to understand the target’s functional and emotional needs, and make sure your brand responds to those needs better than the competition. By doing this, you gain loyal brand users. Then, never ever give those loyal consumers a reason to switch to another brand.

It’s really that simple.

Relationships – A Constant

The buzz word I hear more and more these days when it comes to social media is “relationship.” “We must build a *relationship* with our consumers using social media!” cry the marketers. But building a relationship between your brand and your consumers has *always* been at the core of good brand building. That hasn’t changed. *How* you choose to build that relationship is what is evolving. Building relationships is something marketers should be doing day in and day out.

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If anything, the onslaught of new social media outlets has made building a relationship with your target market not only easier but, frankly, less expensive, too. After all, we don’t need to lay down a million dollars to send out regular tweets! But the fundamental nature of your brand’s relationship with the customers *hasn’t* changed at all. It’s still about delighting your consumers every single time they come in touch with your brand.

With so much new media terrain to explore, there’s never been a more exciting time to be a marketer. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media sites are all great tools to further your brand’s positioning in the marketplace. Just don’t let the excitement of that steer you away from the true essence of brand building. Stick with the basics, and you can’t go wrong.

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With an MBA from Harvard Business School, Brenda’s career has spanned more than two decades and has included developing mega brands for Procter & Gamble and Bristol-Myers Squibb across four continents and 50 countries. Now, as President of Brand Development Associates (BDA) International, she travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies to greater success through creative, yet practical, corporate and personal brand development.

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