

Marketing 101: Social Media is Rooted in the Basics



The January issue always gathers a panel of experts to take a look at the year ahead. The hot topic everywhere is Social Media and clients are jumping up and down to get onboard. This year the panel includes three social media experts that take a look at the best uses of this medium with multiple platforms available and what they would advise clients on how best to use this media, especially the client that wants to use them all.

The panel includes SALLIE BURNETT, President, Customer Insight Group; TERA KEATTS, Innovator, Philosophy Communications; and KEN SABEY, President, WebOh! com. Lading the discussion was TERRI MAIZE, Resonant Research. The number one piece of advice from all of them was – it is still marketing 101. Again a big thank you to CHRISTINE COOK and staff at Ingather Research for allowing us to use their great facilities for the discussion.

Enjoy and learn about using Social Media from the pros.

Terri: What social media do you use and when? And how do you deal with a client that wants to use them all?

Ken - Because it is a new medium doesn't mean you forget your marketing 101. My company builds websites and manages social media marketing but that doesn't mean we do all of it for every client. Most of the time we sit down with the client and ask just what is your mission here. What are you trying to do here and what are you trying to say. Once we get those answers then we can put the mix together. Maybe we should have a main website, do some of the campaign on these two social media sites because that is where your audience is. We also consider mobile because maybe your customer will search for your product on their smart phone so we need an app for that. Sometimes when we get down the road we find there was a misstep there and we need to spend some more resources on the site, or on the app. So now it isn't just figuring out where you want to go but tracking it.

Tera - The first question to be asked about which social media to use and when to use it is first taking a look at what your business is, whether you are a B2B or B2C, who your target audience is, what the demographics are that will help drive what platform to recommend. Obviously not every social media platform is right for all types of businesses. Equally important is determining how much time and money you are willing to invest in social media. It's better to be active on one or two platforms and be doing it well rather than being active on five or six platforms and not following through and managing your pages, not posting content regularly and letting your pages go stagnant. Platforms like Facebook are great for B2C, retail consumer focused businesses where you can get out there and interact with your customers. Twitter and LinkedIn especially are more geared towards B2B and business professionals and those that are in professional networking.

Determine what you want to get out of social media. Is your goal to increase overall awareness and grow a fan base, is your goal to solve something specific, or connect and hire employees, connect with associations? Really hone in on what those goals are and then we can recommend the platforms that are going to be successful in reaching those goals.

Sallie – We have to step back and see what the customer wants to do. Let's step back and see why you want to use that, what your business objectives are because what we do know is that a lot of companies take the plunge into social media and don't understand what it is going to do for their business. They know their competitors are doing it but they don't know if their competitors are successful at it. We always say you can walk and then run so, what channel can we start with then add additional channels. Most companies have a marketing plan and a campaign plan. We say look at social media as integrating with that campaign plan you already have. So if you've always done a campaign this time of year how does social media add to that, enhance the value of it and understand what it can do for the business. So when a company comes to us and wants to do everything we stop and listen and understand what their goals are and recommend the best approach to achieve those goals and try to get them to slow down and not take a plunge and get a concise well thought approach to it.

Terri: How do you know this works and you are getting results?

Sallie - People say social media isn't measurable. In reality you design your strategies where you use a custom link to your URL. You start with your objective. If you are looking for brand awareness you can look at the number of impressions and how many people are seeing that message. It's kind of like TV; it's the number of branded impressions. If you are looking at customer engagement look at how many people are actually engaging with that content. But you have to have realistic expectations. In social media and customer interaction there is a rule called the 90/9/1 rule. What we know is that 90% of the people gather information, look at product reviews but they are not commenting on it or giving feedback, they are just absorbing it. 9% of people will comment, will interact with content, they might give a product review, feedback on something, fill out a customer survey. But only 1% of the customers are actively participating and engaged enough to frequently comment. What we have to understand how social media works and how consumers view the Internet and the information they are gathering. If your goal is to educate and provide additional information you have to understand that the consumer offline has one level of expectations. When they go online that value and expectation goes up so you have to give them more. If our goal is to educate the customer give them more information in a more relevant and timely manner then you can evaluate that because you can see they are going deep into your website they are going deep into the content, they are engaged and coming back more often so you can see how much content they read how often they come to it and how many people have seen the message. It's all about the bottom line, we are all held accountable for sales. With social media it's harder to get that direct. If you are a company with a special offer you can embed a code in your URL and then Google analytics can pick up that code and see how many people clicked over and how many purchased. The key is to build that code in order to measure the results. It is important to set up how you are going to redeem and measure that response. Those metrics can be on brand awareness, redemption or customer engagement.

Ken - We try to put in some tracking tools. There are tools out there unlike the old days of TV and print where you just relied on interviews. We will put analytics not only on the website but you can actually

track mobile devices, track apps, downloads, who and where they downloaded it. Social media can also be integrated into analytics such as Google products but they usually have their own tracking. Once we figure out what we want to do then every month we go back and look, whether it's an overall campaign or specific campaign, what are the results. If people out there are not using analytics I absolutely recommend you do because there are so many insights and aha moments that you get when you realize we should be over here because the user is going this way. So use those tools that are available and most of them are free. With Google you do have to spend some time learning it.

Tera - Results can be little nebulas sometimes to be able to track it back to your Google analytics or to use all of the analytics that the social media sites can provide. It goes back to when you are setting your goals and what the results are you want to see. If you are looking to see an increase in the number of followers, that's a pretty simple results to measure and to track. If you are looking to sell a product or direct people back to a website or a place to show them a video or something specific. Google analytics is a great place to track all that information. You can see everything from the number of clicks on the link to the number of people who came to your website from all of these social media platforms and tell which one is driving the most traffic to your website.

Terri: How do you approach each of the social media?

Ken - On Facebook we just came off a campaign I ran for a client that creates traditional Navajo jewelry. They are Navajo and silversmiths and it is beautiful hand made jewelry. They were coming out with the new fall line and in the beginning we were just going to announce it as a new line but then decided to do a contest to get more engagement and get people on Facebook to talk about us and interact with us. So we created the jewelry tournament. We started with eight of her new products, we pitted two on two going against each other in the first round, used a split image with necklace on the left earrings on the right and posted them on Facebook and people voted on them. Everyone who engaged with us and voted went into a drawing. We picked one of those eight pieces of jewelry to go to the winner. Especially when we got toward the end in the semifinals and finals the analytics showed spike in the engagement shot up. They might usually average 200 or 300 engagements we were up to 700-800. Both the jewelry winner and drawing winner got something. The jewelry winner came back on Facebook and wrote a glowing review. This was a case where we concentrating on one social media platform for one month and got the engagement.

Sallie - Mobile is rocking the world. If your site is not optimized for mobile it's a problem. We look at engaging and interacting with brands. If you walk into Best Buy looking for a product, you could use your mobile app that lets you scan the product and it tells you prices everywhere. You can check other retailers or online, check how much it is and availability. Companies have to adapt. Stores like Best Buy, when you scan an item will have a popup that directs you to their site for more information like in store product reviews. So when you scan a product you get that relevant information you need to make a purchase. For B2B mobile is still a challenge. If you rely on email you might find that your click through rates shows that you are not getting people reading your emails from the open rates but in reality they may be opening your emails, not reading but deleting them. For companies that have heavy images in emails, when they come up on a phone they are a big empty box and you can't see them. B2B the mobile people have smart phones and those images are not viewable.

You have to think are you using text version, HTML or mobile versions. Mobile is a lot like SEO, there is a wave coming and it's going to change how we communicate and how we interact with people. Mobile is one aspect of it but the big screen is the Ipad. I use one while we are talking and if I need anything I have the information at my disposal. We as a society are driven by the screen. What used to be the television is now a 2X 2 square or an Ipad and it is with us everywhere we go. People expect access to information everywhere you go. Information is now one of the biggest assets a company has to influence purchase decisions.

Direct mail is to get a sale. Social media is to influence the idea of buying from a particular company. And how we are influencing that purchase is by getting peers to influence you. The reason a brand intersects with that is there is a conversation going on and if you are not a part of that conversation someone else is determining what your brand stands for.

Tera - Mobile is on the rise and I think, as like with social media, stopping to ask yourself if this is right for me. Mobile website when done right, when done for the right reasons can be very easy to navigate and can be very beneficial for your customers. When done incorrectly they are a pain in the butt. Consumers can easily get frustrated with mobile websites. If you don't need a mobile website if you are not a B2C business or not a service type industry that requires a customer to call to place an order or make an appointment on a regular basis I don't know if it is worth the investment. Again it just depends on the business. Pinterest is great being very visual and if your business or product you are selling needs to have a visual. So retail, restaurants, associations that have great photography, anything that is going to spark creative minds. Pinterest is also very big on the do-it-yourself or party inspiration. As with Pinterest, YouTube visual video is a huge sales and marketing tool. What you are putting on YouTube needs to be resourceful and engaging and needs to be well thought out in terms of the images and video being shown. The average YouTube viewer usually last only about a minute, no more than two minutes. So don't be putting six or ten minute videos on YouTube.

Ken - Mobile is interesting in how quickly it has taken off. More than half the people that engaged in the jewelers Facebook campaign came from mobile, 67% when they shared their like. But the other interesting thing is never think you know which company needs to be mobile and which company doesn't. I have a client that is a distributor for large excavation equipment. We found they not only needed a mobile site but they needed an app because they rent a lot of this equipment, more than the sell. We created an app that was simple. The manager had to check equipment in and out and was using paper to write everything down then shot pictures of the paper and tried to store those pictures. We built an app where everything is on the app. Someone checking in equipment would use the phone and take a picture and it would get stored in the interactive system of the company. Then sales guys are out talking to their clients and when they want to rent a specific piece of equipment with certain attachments he can then put that request through the app back to the shop manager to find if it is available and if so for the needed days. Everything is done through the app on the phone and it eliminates all the paper work. There are apps that we haven't even touched to be used for mobile in the future

Terri: How does Search Engine Optimization play into Social Media

Tera - The one thing that a business should be doing that has a website and wants to be active in the World Wide Web is to SEO absolutely. It is essential to having an online presence. I believe Google has 80-85% of search traffic so they are obviously the leading force to follow. With all the changes they are making to the way they view websites the way they rank websites the way they determine if you are doing it right, I think it is invaluable to find the time and the money to really work on your SEO. It goes hand in hand with the social media but if it was the single thing that you do, absolutely.

Ken - It's a little bit of everything, organic from search engine where someone types in a set of keyword and you show up without having to pay for it. That's because of content and the technology but even more important it is how other websites link to you called inbound link building. Google will put way more emphasis on what other people think about you than what you think about yourself. You can write all you want on your website and create all this great content and metatags but until you see other people linking to your site who say you know what you are talking about they will hold off judgment until they start seeing it. Once you see people linking to you or your app so they can download it, that's when things really take off. Other than that, to get people to find you, you will have to pay for it. Go to Google, Bing and identify a set of keywords for this demographic and pay so that you show up at the top of the page. That's hard to manage too. Most people are wasting money when they try to do online marketing and don't stay on top of it. Viral involvement is the hardest part of social media.

With Google and Bing it varies on whether you are trying to market locally, nationally or world wide, what industry you are in. In other words you are paying for those keywords and if everybody is trying to pay for those same keywords you will have to pay a lot more. What I try to do is have my clients figure out the niches for long keywords, maybe 4 or 5 words, and then you can bring that cost down. But it can be anything from hundreds of dollars to thousands of dollars. I have clients like a little local garage that we spend a few hundred dollars a month and he is getting phone calls all day long so it is the most effective thing I've ever seen.

Viral involvement is the hardest part of social media. Everyone wants it to go viral but true viral is almost like trying to win the lottery. You have to go back to true marketing and think about ways to go outside the box.

Sallie - Social media and everything has changed. We all know there is a relationship that Facebook has with Bing and Yahoo. If you were to look at the newsfeed and do a Bing search for say music, and you were logged in to Facebook you would be able to see what your friends impressions are and what they would recommend. You would also see what other people recommend. What we know is that consumers are turning less to company websites and more to peers, They have more trust in peers, even a stranger then they do a brand. The thought process is that that stranger does not have an interest in deceiving you. They don't feel that way about brands. What we see in SEO is that in social peer to peer is becoming more dominant. There is going to be a continued change where search is going to change and what shows up in your search is going to change and your friends and peers recommendations will have higher priority. There is a battle with Facebook and Yahoo on one side and Google and Google+ on the other and they are going to play in their own sandbox. Though there is no data to prove this, the feeling is Google will give preference to a company or business that has a Google+ page. You have to recognize the role that social media plays - one from the consumer perspective and how they find information - and two how the search engines have changed. If you are not in social media for your business objective, brand awareness, or customer engagement and awareness, how is that impacting your SEO? Right now it is not a big impact but I look at it as a tidal wave coming in. Do you want to wait and be underneath the wave or ride the wave. You have to think long term, not short term.

Terri: Give an example of an aha moment when using Social Media

Tera - One of our aha moments came in just being prepared for how a social media campaign is going to play out and viewers are going to react to the campaign, then have a backup plan in place An example is, we just launched a new menu for a Denver chain of restaurants and sent out an email to all of their loyalty rewards customers to come and try the new menu at a tasting party for free. We sent out the email blast to 4000-6000 people and had space for 600. Within an hour all the spots were filled. In addition to the email blast we promoted it on the restaurants Facebook, Twitter and social media pages and started to get negative feedback from these loyal customers saying, "I just opened the email and in 20 minutes the entire party was filled, why can't I come to it and what are you going to do?" So we had to come up with a plan B very quickly as we weren't expecting that quick a positive feedback from the customer and we had to manage those loyal members expectations.

Also. We did a give away on Facebook asking followers to upload photos of their gardens and they would win landscape design services. After a day we had one or two photos uploaded so we had to change again. If the effort was keeping them from uploading photos of their garden, how do we make it easier for them to participate so we can get some traffic? So our aha moment is to have a plan B or at least know how you are going to react and shift a campaign quickly to compensate for how its running.

Ken - The Navajo jewelry, when we started the first round I had a great idea that we would use a polling app so we would have the official results. What happened is that when someone went to click on the post they would have to go and download the app and this scared a lot of people away. For that one moment I put a barrier in front of people that was not a good idea. What I learned is keep it simple. People know how to share and like and comment but don't go outside that box. When we got into the semifinals and finals I

completely changed to where I just asked the people, here are the two pieces of jewelry just comment on it and tell us which one you like. Then post and share it. Engagement shot up as soon as we made it easy for what people are doing on Facebook. That's one of those things where you start a campaign on Facebook and realize you have to keep track of the data and what's going on. I wasn't seeing the result I wanted, we made a quick change and boom we got the results we expected in the first place.

Sallie - We manage a lot of social media for companies and a lot of content development. One of our biggest ahas is one of the things we never realized is how important it was for a customer coming to a branded page, they want to feel like they are connecting with you individually. It is about a social engagement, it is about a conversation. So the conversation isn't always about product, it's about the peoples' lives. If you are a clothing retailer its not about selling clothes its about what is going on in her life. If it's New Years do you stay up to see the ball drop or if it's Christmas when was the last time you were kissed under the mistletoe. It's envisioning the things that people remember and the things that matter to them. Our aha is just how important that is to a consumer. We are including that and what we are seeing is interaction and how important it is to the consumer to have that connection where you are part of their life and its not just about the product.

Terri: Any thing to add?

Ken - It is Marketing 101 and the main thing is do not be afraid of the technology because either you can learn it or hire someone who uses it every day. You as the marketing person for the company have to remember it is marketing 101. It changes a little bit on how you do it but you still have to know who is the audience, how do I reach them what do I want them to do. Once you figure out that top level then you might realize there is a place for LinkedIn here because we need to hire some new people and need a campaign to bring in candidates. If you have a new product launch and you are a computer geek and computer geeks are on Google+ and we should have a campaign just for this. Don't let it keep your whole day being about social media. There are places where you can concentrate on a particular social media realm or on this devise with an app, but it is still part of the big marketing picture.

Sallie - What I tell people before you go into 2013, step back, when you are thinking about social media look at your business, look at what your goals are, and look at your challenges and your opportunities and then say, how do I use social media, how does in align with achieving those business objectives in general then which channel of social media supports that integration with our business goal and communications. Some people are using social media on Twitter, Facebook etc. but they don't have a goal. I'm doing social but I'm not being social. If you are dong it, step back and audit it, are we dong it right, are we getting impact. If we step back and say what our business objective is then we can start the year off with realistic expectations, is it measurable and how are we gong to make improvements.

Tera – I agree, those things are all very important.