

Managing the Media Mania: How to Thrive on Social

by Allie Jeka

FOR MANY independent business owners, managing your brand's social media presence can seem like a daunting task for which there just isn't enough time. However, starting small with a concrete plan of action can help get the ball rolling with this very important method of communication. By understanding your current social media presence, blocking out time in your schedule to maintain your accounts, planning content ahead of time, and engaging your followers with stunning visuals, you'll be able to manage a social media presence that fosters a positive relationship with customers, and results in increased sales.

Evaluate Your Existing Presence

Before implementing new strategies to take your social media profiles to the next level, get familiar with your starting point. Evaluate your existing digital profiles from a "fresh" perspective by looking at them from your customers' point of view. Think about

what kind of information your customers might be looking for, and then make sure it is clearly provided. Do you link to your website and other social media platforms? Do your profile and cover photos convey your brand consistently across platforms? Are your store hours listed?

Stick to a Schedule

Like any other relationship, maintaining a relationship with your customers on social media takes time. However, time spent fostering pertinent digital connections is well spent, because social media has become the preferred communication method for many consumers. According to a study by Global Web Index, on average, people spend over two hours per day on social media. This number rises even further for millennials. Make it a habit to commit just 20 minutes per day, perhaps split into a session in the

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morning and a session in the afternoon. This includes posting and sharing content, following and interacting with your customers and other relevant industry accounts, and engaging with anyone who has reached out to you with a comment or message. Taking time to grow your brand's presence in the digital space is crucial, because this is where your customers are making key brand and purchasing decisions.

Plan Content in Advance

Reduce the daily amount of time you have to spend on social media by creating a content calendar prior to the start of each month. Planning and scheduling your content ahead of time will help you develop a better understanding of your brand's social media presence, and will save you from forgetting to post or on busy days that result in your accounts getting neglected. Begin by deciding how many times per week you want to post. Keep in mind that this number may vary by platform. Next, mark a calendar with any important dates that are relevant to your

brand such as holidays, sales, and special events. Plan content that will alert customers to these opportunities. Continue by deciding if there is any recurring weekly content that you could post. Do you have any cool historical photos of your business that would work well on #ThrowbackThursday? Could you post a customer testimonial every Tuesday? Fill in this regular weekly content, and then take a look at your calendar. Hopefully, you'll be pleasantly surprised with the amount of space you've already filled. Now, you just have to develop your own engaging content for the remaining days. Are you launching a new product line? Is there something exciting going on in your local community? Find a creative way to tell your followers about it.

Make Your Profile Worth Viewing

Gain more followers and entice viewers to spend more time on your social media pages by producing content that your target market will want to see. In digital communication today, visuals are key. When possible, use high-quality, creative, or even funny pho-

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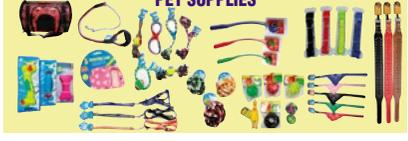


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