

17.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter we covered some of the major social media channels and platforms, and the three phases involved in using them to reach your customers. These included strategy, implementation, and analytics. Strategy is by far the most important, as it informs what and how often you post, and how you choose to engage and relate to your audience. Strategy also informs how and what you will analyse. It is important that all these parameters are clearly established in your strategy, and that your strategy is in turn informed by the analytics you receive on your content and style of engagement.

Social media can be used to solve business, marketing and communication challenges, and is an important part of digital marketing. With so many platforms and choices available in social media, this chapter will show you how to use these spaces strategically to address these challenges. The last few years have seen a shift in social media strategy. The space is becoming a more traditional medium for advertising, but with a far better ability to target consumers. While it is still recommended to build a community on Facebook, there are brands using the platform for effective advertising, without actually having any followers.

Despite these changes, effective community and reputation management should remain key considerations in your social media strategy. Planning and thinking strategically, while leaving room to be flexible and respond to analytics and tactical opportunities is your key to making the most of social media marketing.

Consumers spend more and more time online, and that time is increasingly being spent on social media sites. In 2016 over 67% of Internet users were active social media users, equating to 2.3 billion people, 10% more than in January 2015 (Chaffey, 2016). Users spend an average of 30% of their time online, on social media (Mander, 2016).

The largest demographic of social media users is still young adults, aged 18 to 29, but the largest growing demographic is the over 65 year olds, who have tripled in number since 2010. Mobile is the device of choice when accessing social media, eclipsing desktop. In fact, 80% of Facebook's audience access the platform via mobile (PewResearchCenter, 2015).

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