

10 Proven Applications For Social Media

by Adam Singer on Oct 20th, 2009

Tenured digital marketing professionals have been applying social media for end business and marketing objectives for years. But what is clearly valuable to some is still a mystery to many.

Whether you're a marketer trying to get buy-in for social media from the top or a small business owner wondering why you should bother, knowing high impact applications of social media are helpful. If you're looking to build relationships with connected, influential individuals (and what business isn't?) then it's no longer a question of if you should engage in social media, rather it's the how and the why.

If you're wondering how, a great starting point is viewing TopRank's social media roadmap presentation. But let's take a step even further back and consider the why: directed application of social media can accomplish some seriously valuable objectives.

Following are 10 tried and proven applications of social media:

1. Change the conversation in your industry, even if you're not at the top

The social web is the great equalizer, in that good ideas permeate a niche in as close to a democratic fashion as you can get. Certainly those with a following and a strong reputation can spark whatever conversations they want. But in reality anyone with ideas worth sharing can impact the global conversation. Influence is multi-directional and frequently occurs horizontally or from the bottom up.

2. Reputation management

As noted in our post on B2C Marketing and social media, social media allows you to go direct to consumer with your news. If you've got a megaphone to your fans – such as a popular blog read by your entire industry – you can counter pesky rumors floating around about your brand with a simple post backed up with the real facts.

3. Build your tribe

Seth Godin has popularized the notion of having a tribe – aka a following or community – interested in seeing you succeed. Social media does not make this easy, rather it makes it possible at scale if you're actually worth following.

4. Organic PR generation

As Lee noted in answers to social media questions, TopRank's blog generates anywhere from 10-20 quality organic PR placements monthly. Some months this can be much higher. By participating as a contributor to the social web and consistently adding value, organic PR is a byproduct. This is possible for your brand too and shifts your PR from the infinite treadmill of push to the natural growth of pull. This strategy is scalable, authentic and let's you be yourself – what's not to like?

5. Use social as part of your SEO strategy

At TopRank, we're big on the SEO and social media intersection. We frequently help clients uncover opportunities embracing the fact that both SEO and social are intrinsically linked. Being white hat SEOs, it's a crossroads we're especially fond of. Social content plays such as linkbait are tactics the engines publicly endorse, the engines thrive on the addition of fresh content and social media participation forges relationships with others likely to link to you as those relationships strengthen.

6. Listen to key stakeholders

The wide array of social media monitoring tools available make listening to the topics you're interested in a snap. Get the right setup in place and you can have your finger on the pulse of your niche, learn frequently articulated pain points and deliver solutions that truly resonate.

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7. Become a David to your industry's Goliath

Social media lets you tell the stories you want to tell in an unrestricted fashion. If you're a brand willing to step outside the box, it is possible to position yourself as the David to your industry's Goliath. And if there is one thing social web users across niches love, it's an up-and-comer that's organized around openness and being social. That was a huge part of Zappos' strategy and reason for their success.

8. Social proofing

We've previously discussed the importance of social proofing and its application as part of your online marketing growth strategy. Social media allows you to attain directed social proofing for use to accomplish specific business objectives. Whether you want to inspire comments/ratings about a new product and leverage that for marketing materials or share compelling metrics such as the popularity of your community publicly to inspire even more growth, social media application can play a large role in establishing your brand's social proofing.

9. Attract talented, passionate employees

Participation in social media shows the human side of your company and in time it shows your brand's true colors. Bearing your company is truly remarkable and communicating that to the world, this will attract attention from quality employees. And with hiring paradoxically harder in a downturn, yet no slowdown in demand for A-list employees, social media can position your brand as a better choice for top talent.

10. Become a media company

In a previous post on influencing the social web we mentioned the fact that every company is now a media company. It's something many others have noted, a great example being Techdirt. They've fully embraced this – their popular blog with more than 600,000 subscribers is easily their launching point for complementary services. Mike Masnick, Techdirt's CEO recognized this so much he even state it directly: advertising is content, content is advertising.

Conclusion

The 10 potential applications of social media listed above are merely a primer to get you thinking. There are far more than these 10 – the use of social communications tools are limited only by your creative and technical know-how.

As a marketing professional or business owner, realize that at its core social media is not Twitter, Facebook or any single tool despite what your peers are buzzing about. It's merely the opening of communications and connections through technology. And the buzzwords, tools or tactics are meaningless without end applications/strategies in mind.

What applications of social media are you applying for your business or marketing objectives?

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