

Social Media is only part of the Answer

- Before you start your social media campaign, be sure you know what role it plays in your marketing strategy
- Creating buzz is more than engaging a celebrity
- First tackle the basics: Know what business you're in and your business model for generating revenue

A potential client called me about adding social media to his service launch. He talked enthusiastically about employing social media to create buzz. He was sure that if he got a celebrity endorsement and had a Facebook page he would be launched. Sales would pour in.

I asked him about his existing Facebook page and what he was doing with Twitter. We have Facebook. We have Twitter, he assured me.

I looked them up. Yes, he had both. Twitter was streaming live on his website with tweets that didn't support his brand. The Facebook presence was more confusing. It was impossible to make a connection, real or implied, to his website and brand concept.


Okay, I thought, taking inventory, he had a presence based on his company and website name. He also had many competitors with a similar idea. He was convinced his idea would prevail over the others.

He was sure "social media" would broadcast his concept to the right audience (which he could not define).

I took a deep breath. What's wrong with this picture, I asked myself?

- There's no business or marketing strategy
- No integrated marketing solution in which social media is a component
- On the plus side, there's an unwavering belief that buzz will work

I cautioned him on moving too quickly and suggested that he step back and rethink the timing of his launch plan. In essence, I advised him to take a look at the basics of his business. Look at the destination for any social media tactics, I said. It all comes back to the website. Right now, the website is the sole distribution channel. It is the only venue for prospects to experience the product and make a decision to buy.



His website was like a retail store for his consumer product. To encourage future sales, he needed to create an inviting shopping experience in his “virtual” store where it would be easy to find his products “on the shelf”. He needed a customer-focused, friendly, easy to navigate website, that clearly described his products.

He was depending on social media (creating buzz) to compensate for the lack of a business model, a well-articulated brand and a distribution strategy.

It was time to return to the basics. I advised that he answer the following questions before launching into social media.

What business are you in?

Before embarking on any marketing strategy, you need to know what business you’re in. Are you in the “feel good” business, delivering a catchy phrase to make the buyer happy? Are you in the business of selling products that carry your company name? Are you selling a service or a physical product? Are you selling events to sponsor your products?

Until you can answer what business you’re in, the vision remains a dream of what might be.

What’s your business model?

After determining what business you’re in, the next step is to determine how to create and deliver your product or service. First, what are the products and services? Even if they’re intangibles, they need to be translated into tangible terms. Is it BtoB? BtoC?

Will you sell products or services solely from a website? Will you partner with other distributors to sell product? How will the business make money? Is it based on generating demand and drawing clients to the website or is there another plan for generating revenue.


How are you going to build your business from that model?

In this case, the business concept relied on a logo that invokes a “feel good” response. The logo would be on various products – T-shirts, mugs, baby items, stationary, etc., available for sale through the website.

Partnering with affiliated businesses would increase distribution and provide a revenue stream parallel to web purchases. However, building partner relationships depends on a well-articulated business model and marketing strategy.

Based on your service concept, who is your target market?

With a business model in mind and a decision about products and services the company will offer, the question arises: who is the target market?



A product/service surely is developed with a buyer in mind. Categorizing this buyer as a demographic segment with specific buying habits, time of life needs, etc. begins to define the target market.

Knowing the **who** is quickly followed by **where** (to find them) and **how** (to reach them).

What is your strategy to generate demand for the service?

Directing customers to a website requires that they know to come to the website to buy. It also means that customers understand what the product is and why they want it.

This is where social media comes in. Social media as a marketing tool uses many tactics to generate demand. A primary tactic is email – BtoB or BtoC depending where to reach the target market. It includes describing the value of the service through tweets, strategically placed ads or descriptions of the product, Facebook links, and testimonials by happy customers and product partners.

The client wanted to place product with a celebrity or in the media (TV programs, film placement) to create buzz. Although a great tactic if you can get celebrity sponsorship, be aware of the complexities of collaborating with celebrities; make sure that your monetary return (and percentages) are well defined.

Fulfillment - getting the product to the customer

Plan for success. Be prepared for double or triple digit orders. When the orders come in, you will need to deliver on your promise to fill them.

If a customer has difficulty placing an order through the website, he'll give up and go elsewhere. If a customer has to wait two weeks to receive an order, he'll place an order once, but probably won't be back.

The back office operation must be in place before the launch. Make sure it is capable of handling high volumes after you set off a social media blitz to generate demand.

As I told my potential client who wanted to introduce social media into his marketing mix, first tackle the basics:

- Know what business you're in and your business model for generating revenue
- Define your product or service model
- Be able to describe your target market and how you will reach them
- Have a demand generation strategy and know how social media fits
- Have a fulfillment strategy to fill customer orders when the orders pour in