

Council Post: When Social Media Is Done Right, It Really Works

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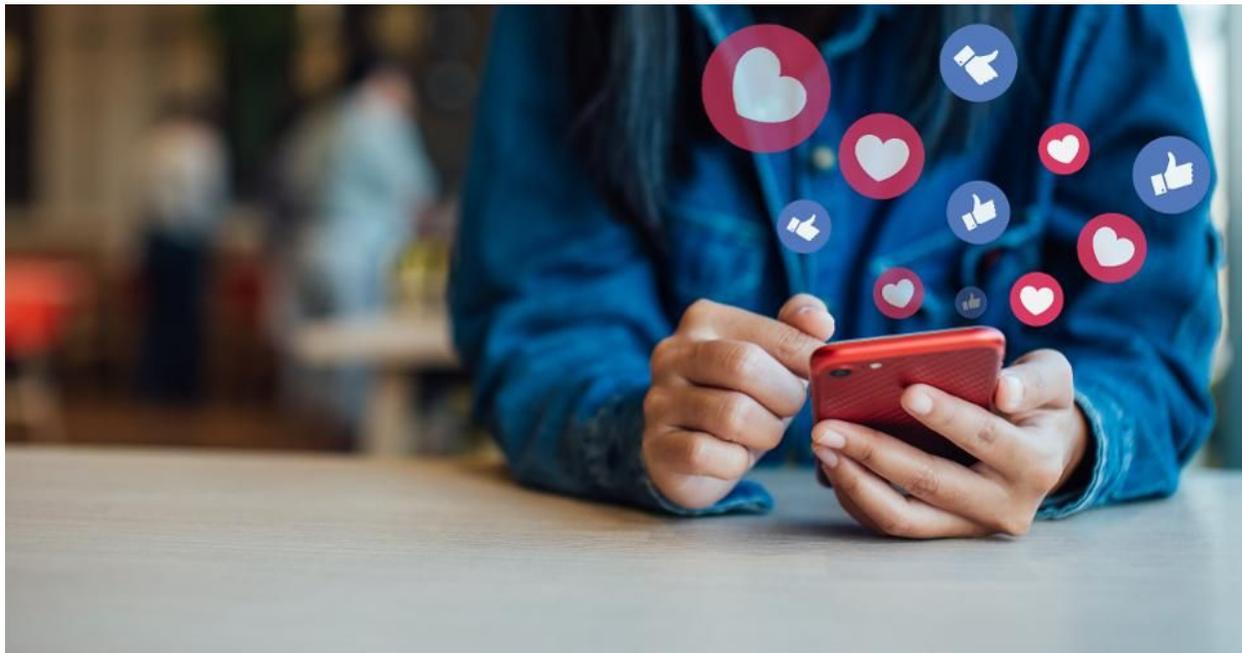


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In my early days in public relations and marketing, a potential client

would come to me and say, “If you’d just get me on Facebook, I know my business will grow.” Then we’d do the dance of understanding.

Me: “Well, I can get you on Facebook, no problem. But I can’t guarantee that your business will grow just from having a presence on social media.”

Client: “Oh. Well, how much will that cost? I need more inquiries, more customers.”

We’d talk in circles, and if I was successful, I’d educate them on how social media is a tool in the PR and marketing toolbox — an important tool, but just one of many tools. And when used correctly over time, consistently, it could lead to increased inquiries and better brand awareness.

I’d explain that PR and marketing is a gradual and consistent build involving a comprehensive mix of activities that, working together, driven by strategy and clear messaging, can lead to growth.

Sometimes I’d succeed in explaining all this and they’d come on board, and we would build a collaborative and fruitful relationship that, in time, grew their business and brand awareness. Sometimes, they stopped listening after that first conversation.

Recently, I had lunch with a client in a small town on the border between Michigan and Ohio. We were meeting in Monroe, a half-hour from my client and an hour from me. I got there first and drove around looking for

cute restaurants.

I decided on one of them, but I had no idea what I was in for. The restaurant's menu was full of locally sourced dishes and drinks that had us pondering what to choose for quite a while. Everything we ordered was delicious; we finished every morsel. The service was friendly and attentive. Even the host, when she sat us at the table, asked in a very upbeat tone, "Have you been here before?" And upon learning that we had not, she smiled broadly and told us a little about the restaurant's background and focus.

I was already pleased with this surprising find that I happened upon, but I was in for an even bigger surprise. When I left the restaurant, I remembered to "check in" on Facebook, where I tagged the restaurant and my client and whipped off a quick note that said, "What a fun client meeting at a really delicious place!"

Truth be told, I was using social media to showcase the work that I do and the clients I work with. After all, most of us use social media to curate a public persona that is captivating and alluring, with the hope that potential clients will stumble upon our posts and be inspired enough to consider working with us, right?

Within three hours, the restaurant's Facebook page shared my post and said, "Thank you for choosing us!"

I was so pleased with their quick rate of engagement that I immediately

posted a reply comment: “The service was fantastic and the food wonderful and creative. We had a hard time deciding what to choose.”

Minutes later, they responded: “We are so happy you loved your experience.” And back on my original post, our server commented, “It was a pleasure waiting on you.”

This is how to do social media well. It’s frequent engagement, friendly staff who are all involved in the social media process, and upbeat posts that connect people and businesses that truly move the needle on whether social media can grow your business or not.

Every interaction has the potential to become an opportunity to build a meaningful, mutually beneficial relationship. And through those relationships, loyalty and respect are built.

I’ve always said that *people do business with people*. We must remember that. Social media is a place to be social, to be human, to connect on a level deeper than the surface. The brands that do this well and consistently emanate a consciousness that speaks volumes for their core values and their overarching purpose.

A business that prides itself on having a people presence must have an easy time on social media since that’s what social media is all about after all. It’s in the title: media outlets that are social at their core.

A brand must truly care about its audience. When that is sincere and already a part of how you do business, it’s easy to humanize your brand —

especially on social channels. If you can't, you won't inspire humans to connect with it. And that human connection is the root of all business success.

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