Small Business Customers Will Drive Marketing Strategies

I am not going to be able to compete with the Post Bulletin Answer Man, but I will try to answer some comments on my last columns. Joe who is a local CEO summarized most of the comments, “Dean, you have been focusing on some pretty high tech marketing strategies, but we are just beginning to use social media, so how will that fit in for the future?

That is a great comment and it is a key factor in future marketing strategies. What I am seeing is that customers will remain in control of their purchase journeys in the future, and social media will continue to be intertwined in these customers’ personal and professional lives. The way marketers interact with contacts on social will need to evolve, though, to deliver the types of engaging experiences today’s social users want.

To better meet customers’ needs, marketers will need to incorporate more sophisticated tools into their overall social media efforts, creating more personalized experiences for each individual, on a mass scale. What I read and observe is that there are some key areas of social that leading marketers are and will be focusing on.

Social Media Advertising. Social media ads provide one of the best opportunities to personalize customer engagement. The big networks, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram, offer a variety of advertising options. Effectively using these channels provides an additional touch point for both prospective and current customers to engage with your company.

Advancements in digital marketing technology continue to break down the silos between marketing channels, and social media is no exception. Marketers can increasingly incorporate data collected from other channels into their social marketing efforts.

For example, if a prospective customer explores your website and visits the demo form or a product page, but doesn’t complete the action, a pixel on the page allows you to retarget that individual in a tweet or Facebook post with helpful content related to exactly where that person is in the buyer journey.

Alternately, for customers who have been loyal to your brand over time, you can offer special deals and promotions as a “thank you.” For example, a sporting goods retailer could deliver a targeted tweet or Facebook ad to a repeat customer who is due for a new
pair of running shoes. Integrating paid social campaigns with your digital marketing platform allows the two systems to pass information back and forth, giving customers those personalized interactions they crave, while simultaneously increasing engagement, loyalty and marketing ROI (return on investment).

**Organic Social Media.** The advancements in paid social media do not bring an end to organic social efforts, however. In the future, leading companies will double down on creating branded social channels that serve as an online home (an inviting place for customers and prospects to learn more about your brand and what you offer).

Your social “home” should have interesting books on the coffee table (enticing content or offers), a host that’s always ready to make the guest feel comfortable (active moderators and page managers) and, in the best situation, other guests that make the home even more valuable (an engaged community of fans).

Brands that succeed in doing this will not only provide relevant, worthwhile content on social media, but also engage with their followers in a personal way. Through both organic and paid efforts, marketers will share valuable, personalized information at exactly the right moment.

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