Bring Out The Human Side Of Your Small Business

In the latest two columns, I highlighted using “content marketing” to increase your sales. Last week’s focus was on the use of “blogging” as a vital part of content marketing strategies. Now, I suggest that you take this one step further by bringing out the “human side of your business”.

Social media gives small businesses an interactive way to connect with prospects and customers, yet many businesses still struggle with building relationships via the platforms they’re using. They fail to make their brands “human” on social media.

I was first introduced to these concepts by a nationally known social media professional, Rachel Strella. She founded her business, Strella Social Media, in 2010 and grew it from a part-time venture into a successful company serving dozens of full-service management clients. Her relationship-based philosophy is a company core value, which is revealed in the collaboration with her team and clientele to implement social media plans that deliver real results.

According to Strella, “People relate more to other people than to a logo or brand image. This can give small businesses and solopreneurs an advantage over bigger businesses.” This really got me thinking and from my experience as a business mentor, I have observed this in action repeatedly.

Taking the human approach is successful for the simple reason that relationships are built on trust.

“For a small business, customer loyalty is often tied to the people who work in the business—the people who give that business’s products and services their staying power,” explains Strella.

As a small business owner, you (and your employees) are your business.
Here’s how your small business can leverage that advantage to facilitate relationships via your social media efforts:

- Personally ask friends, family, and industry connections to follow you on your business’s social media channels. They know you, so they’ll probably be happy to do that for you.

- Post bios of your team members. People love to learn more about the people working in a business. Make the bios fun, not just a reiteration of their job description.

- Share your backstory to create an emotional connection. Has a personal experience or cause prompted you to start your business? Even if you’ve shared it on your “About” page of your website, not everyone might be aware of it.

- Show some personality. Write your posts so they sound conversational rather than stilted and stiff.

- Add some humor—but be careful! What’s funny to one follower might be offensive to another.

- Post images and videos, not just text-only posts. Photos of your team collaborating or doing a good deed will allow people to see what’s going on behind the scenes. And posts with images tend to gain more attention than those without. Look at this blog for example: http://buzzsumo.com/blog/how-to-massively-boost-your-blog-traffic-with-these-5-awesome-image-stats/. According to the Buzzsumo blog, Facebook posts with images get 2.3 times more engagement than posts that don’t have images. This post shares these “take-aways”:

  ✓ You should aim to use a relevant image every 75-100 words in your content for the most shares
  ✓ All of your Facebook posts should contain an image
  ✓ Large Summary Cards are the most effective way to share content on Twitter
  ✓ The more relevant images in your posts, the better your Pinterest traffic
  ✓ If you want to drive traffic and shares, picture list posts should become part of your strategy
• Celebrate customers’ successes. With permission, of course, craft posts that share how your products or services have helped a customer solve a problem or achieve a goal.

• When responding to followers’ comments on your business social media channels, sign them with your first name. It adds a personal touch, and reminds followers that there are real people interacting with them from behind your logo.

For more insight about social media and connecting with customers, reach out to your local SCORE chapter. SCORE mentors have a broad range of expertise and experience and they’re there to guide you in all aspects of starting and growing your business.

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