

News From Terre Haute, Indiana

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BUSINESS CENTS: Pendulum swings to social media

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--- — I had the opportunity to attend a social media seminar hosted by the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce and Tech Haute, and it simply amazed me on a couple of different aspects.

First, there are so many companies out there that are not seizing the opportunity to target their customers efficiently and for a minimal amount of investment.

Second, new technologies and social platforms constantly merge, and it is imperative that we understand who our primary and secondary customers are in order to determine whether or not we should be embracing that platform to market.

According to Harvard Business Review, only 58 percent of companies use social media; for our purposes today I am defining social media as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

The statistics get even more alarming: Only 12 percent use social media effectively, 45 percent are “getting there” and 43 percent might as well revamp their strategy because it is completely ineffective.

Social media marketing is more than just having an account and posting something every now and then. It is obviously not a fad, so don't think of it as that. It is about engagement and content.

At the seminar, Tech Haute did a very nice job of sharing with companies how to effectively engage with their client bases through social media.

For example, Tech Haute shared an example it had with a client. If you are on Facebook, then no doubt you have heard of the fundraiser the “Cold Water Challenge.”

As a company, how can you get involved in something that benefits a charity and seems to only engage individuals? As Tech Haute stated, it is actually pretty easy. According to its rules someone can identify a charity to help, and then for each time someone shares the video of the Cold Water Challenge, then your company is mentioned and you donate \$1 to the charity. You have actually just completed two things; you helped your charity/community, and you created a positive marketing campaign that had a very minimal investment, while simultaneously spreading the word of who you are and what your business does.

The second aspect is one that I am actually a bit guilty of, and thanks to my babysitter, I have a new understanding of emerging social media. If you were like, me you might be thinking there are more than Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn? The simple answer is yes. Have you heard of Snapchat? Instagram? Vine? These are social media outlets that engage the demographic between about 13- and 25/30-year-olds.

Of course, we know why they like these outlets: because we are not utilizing these ... yet.

So what is Snapchat? Snapchat allows users to send messages, primarily photos and videos that are destroyed seconds after they have been received. This service is marketed to teens with “capture the moment” messaging, and plays on its contrast to Facebook, which archives every post and pic for years.

On Vine, users create and post 6-second videos, which are often also shared on Twitter and Facebook. And Instagram is a photo-editing and -sharing app that is crazy popular with teenage girls who love their selfies. Instagram allows users to edit and post photos taken with a phone, and the images are publicly visible by default.

Why is this important? If you have a company that targets any of the younger demographics, regardless of gender, then you need to revamp your marketing campaign to begin using and leveraging the new social media tools to invite these consumers into your company.

As you reflect back on where your business currently is and where you want to go, consider your mission, goals and objectives. Do you need to revise your marketing plan to incorporate social media? What messages do you want people to know about your business? What can you do to become more engaging with your social media platforms? If you are concerned with the time it takes, there are some efficient practices and tools to help you manage social media outlets very well without spending significant time. Remember that in attracting and retaining customers, it is about awareness, service and experience — all of which social media can help you with.

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