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think


meaningfulbrands

Moving towards a more 'standardised' social media

In the media world, we love a formula. We like to know what works based on tried and tested techniques that we've developed and honed over time. If we do X and then add Y, we're likely to get a result of Z – particularly in digital, where we can measure almost anything and everything we choose. For marketers, it removes some of the anticipated risk and uncertainty in an ever-evolving, extremely crowded digital ecosystem.

And this is perhaps why social media has, for many brands, been a bit of a puzzler. It's a discipline that relies for the most part on human behaviour – reaction and response, interaction and participation, and the fact that we don't just *show* people content, we want people to *share* content, on our behalf.

Most of the brands that Socialyse work with started out a few years ago by dipping their toes in the 'social' waters – launching a Facebook page (or MySpace page back in the day!) to establish out how they could best engage with consumers, see what resonated and what exactly their tone of voice should be.

As technology and consumer behaviour has become more sophisticated, investment has increased and social media has risen up the marketing agenda – but to what extent?

What brands are doing in social media in the UK

In the Autumn, Havas Media Social conducted an extensive quantitative and qualitative survey amongst the membership of the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers to find out how much brands were using social media, what they were using it for, and what departments internally were leading the way. We found that 100% of the 50 biggest brands in the UK were 'doing' social media in some form; 78% viewed it as a long-term commitment, with 50% using the discipline for ongoing activity, rather than just tactical campaigns. So the testing phase seems to be over.

In addition, the results pointed overwhelmingly to one major finding: formulas are a good thing. Brands want a guarantee that they'll make money and meet business objectives with significant social media budgets, and ROI is a necessity.

One of our respondents, Jude Brooks, digital activation manager for Coca-Cola, reinforced this by stating: *“Social media is becoming far more formulaic and, in some ways, rightly so. This is for a number of reasons. Most marketers want to do things that work - they’ve seen others do it and that takes the risk out of their own activity. As a discipline, it’s all quite new and there are a lot of people who don’t understand it – or they understand it but aren’t quite in that ‘comfort zone’ to know what they’re doing.*

Currently there is a nervousness about social because it’s changing at such a fast pace, so if you’re presented with the opportunity to narrow it slightly, it allows people to say ‘I get it now, let’s try this route’.

How agencies can help you get the right social media formula

As such, over the past 12 months we’ve seen the rise of more ‘templates’ in social media, which help brands (and our clients) understand what they’re likely to get out based on what they put in. We’ve spent years learning what real people do in social, what they like, what they don’t like, what brands can do to maximise this and what forms of measurement are most meaningful, which means that we’ve been able to standardise our approach. From pages on social networking sites to influencer outreach programmes, promotional activity and competitions to creating viral content, there are now certain rules we can apply.

The industry used to argue that there was no ‘one size fits all’ in social media. And whilst this is true in terms of content and creativity, what we can do is make informed judgments about the best platforms, the best tactics, and the best awareness strategies to get your brand the best response in the social space.

The great strides we (and the industry) have made in measurement have also led to more robust social media campaign analysis. Our advancements in social attribution and understanding the role social plays throughout the customer journey, as well as how to use social data to learn more about an audience, means that analytics are coming to the fore – which, for the geeks among us, is very exciting news.

Socialyse as an extended part of your team

We’ve been saying for a long time now that consumers have changed. Brands are rapidly adapting to the change and it is the agency’s responsibility to adapt even faster and support their clients every step of the way. With 50% of all brands interviewed now having a dedicated resource in-house, and even more conducting some form of social activity within the business, your agency should act as extended members of your internal team. Our clients expect us to be coming up with new ideas, to be at the forefront of innovation and to understand consumer behaviour; they’re looking to us for the very best in best practice and regulatory affairs.

We don’t believe that social media should represent a scary, vast unknown. Rather, we partner with our clients to apply our social templates to their marketing activity and business objectives. This doesn’t mean that social media should be boring, either. Instead, it means that if we have the strategic frameworks in place we can be even more creative and engaging, to tell a story whilst being accountable every step of the way.

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