

The Balance Between Personal Touch and Digital Engagement

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How do you maintain a balance between providing a personal touch with prospective clients while engaging in the social digital media? Have we started to hide behind the electronic communications, and are we losing our ability to engage a person one-on-one?

For many companies the Internet provides one of the most powerful marketing tools that allows prospective customers to learn about their company 24 hours a day via their website; there is no need to wait until "work hours" for customers to contact a business. With the pent-up business peer pressure to engage in the "hot" new Social Networking tools and thus create new avenues to connect, there seems to be less focus on the personal touch either in person or over the phone to engage, connect, and close deals.

Digital Engagement - The Good and The Bad

The general understanding in generating consumer recognition for a product or service is that the product or service needs to come in contact with a consumer 20+ times; the obvious goal is that the consumer will buy the product or engage the company via a phone conversation or in person.

In the past, the foundation for generating product or service recognition was via print, television, and radio media, but with the fall of the print media, and both television and radio being diluted by the amount of options and channels, these channels are not yielding the value added proposition as in the past. With the progressive expansion of the Internet via relationship websites and Social Networking the opportunity to generate numerous points of recognition for a product or service in a cost effective manner is now available, which is a good point.

On the bad side, there are many different agendas for relationship websites that a Company has to investigate to ensure that they are working to a common goal. While within Social Networking, this format was born out of a person's choice to socially interact electronically and sometime behind a pseudo image to protect or create an alternate identity, but the key element is that the interaction was done by electronic channels and not in person. In a company's attempt to move swiftly into these new media elements they need to ensure that they are hiring Web 2.0 personnel who are adept at social media from a personal and electronic perspective, but even more important is that they also possess an understanding and trust of people. From a business perspective they are using the Social Networks to connect with an existing or prospective customer, they are not just connecting with a random individual. The old adage that you only have one chance to make a good first impression is equally true on the Internet. Though you may be using a Social Network to communicate, there needs to be a level of professionalism and business acumen that is projected. Customers who engage a business via a social network understand that the company is trying to communicate with them about a product or service, but if the company puts the person first, then the customer is likely to connect with them again and again.

The Personal Touch

Some people have noted that the art of selling has become too impersonal and technical due in large part to the Internet. Has the Internet changed the way we sell or have we become too comfortable

hiding behind our keyboards and cell phones?

For many companies nothing replaces the face-to-face interaction. How can you read the eyes and body language of a text message, voicemail, or email? In today's competitive arena, a Company needs to be progressive with an engaging website, as well as a presence within the different media tools to connect with their customer. Creating an Internet presence should be to expand a customer's awareness of your product or service, as well as increase your presence as it applies to their needs (be a part of tangent websites that a customer may look at for answers to their questions). Too many companies have fallen into "If I build it and if I am a part of it [Social Media], they will come," they are not prepared for a one-on-one personal interaction. If you are looking for ways to differentiate yourself from your competition it may be in how you treat the live person at the other end of the electronic communications.

Yes, all these new layers of opportunity for a company to communicate their products and services does create additional points of management, but the underlying point is that there is a live person at the other end of all this electronic communication. They may not have a name and you may not know about their family, golf game, or vacation preference, but that is the level of communications that you are trying to achieve. It may take time for a customer to finally move to the next level and call or email for an appointment or buy the product, but you need to be ready to move from the digital engagement to the personal touch.

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