

Businesses: The Thing You Avoid Could Be Your Secret to Success

How the social media field you do not want to deal with could be holding you back.

Big business, big Church, big ministry, big candidates, big causes. What do they need?

Their message told.

Who tells their message?

Their paid advertisements, their robocalls, their endless snail mailers, and periodic email lists. But their best source? People.

Where do people hang out? Online.

Should they? It's not a matter of should they. They do. It's the current reality.

WHY THIS SPACE MATTERS

You as an entity who needs to mobilize the masses - be it 10 or 100,000 buyers, consumers, supporters etc need to understand facts: your audience is online, waiting to be engaged with by you, or someone who will quickly take your place.

If you win them over, people are your best source of advertisement. They will perpetuate your story, invite more people into your community, and will become your biggest fans when they feel you have connected with them. But have you connected with them?

Do they feel you are more - spammy and cold online? Or do they feel like they could invite you over for a cup of coffee because you, yes you as a brand, a candidate, a ministry, a business, an entity - are human?

This, my friend, is why you need to do social media, email and good websites and do it well.

WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?

So, let's talk about it: What do people that hangout online engage with? What causes them to feel "connected"?

Brands, businesses, campaigns, and causes that are relatable, authentic and *feel human are what appeal to the masses.*

The entities that your target audiences engage with may not be the businesses next door, or the Church they attend on Sunday. But it will be the substance with which they can feel connected. They are definitely not engaging with social or online platforms that only sell, preach, do ads, and post content with no inspirational feeling to them.

If your online content isn't relatable, conversational, catchy, engaging, authentic and emotional, they have stopped following you, never thought to find you or forgotten about you - or worse. Blocked you.

WHO DO YOU ENGAGE WITH?

People online will engage with the content that is most riveting and personal (or relatable) to them, and with entities that are *showing up in their feed*.

Don't believe me? Well, who do you engage with, eagerly follow, and jump to open their email?

Just like you don't want to be sold to by someone who jumps in front of you on your run to your car from the office at the end of a long day. You don't want to be preached to when you just need space to breathe. You don't want to be given a big book of information while you rush to your meeting. And you do not want to hear one more commercial when you are rocking a fussy baby at night, need a break from studying for midterms, just had a difficult discussion with a friend, or have an exhausted brain. You would rather have something that distracts you, engages you, inspires you. Right?

Salespeople, commercials, ads, white papers, and product promotions do not usually inspire us to connect on a human level. (No offense to the brilliant people behind these substances.)

WHAT DO USERS WANT ONLINE?

Consumers want an experience. They want to feel something. They want to connect. They want to be part of something bigger than themselves. You have to find a way to relate your product into a story and find a way to make it relatable to your target market - *without making it feel like sales*.

People will engage online with what they engage with offline: relationships, emotions, memories, something that casts a vision, invites them into an experience, speaks to something deeper in them.

If your online communication does not do what I just mentioned - there should be blaring sirens going off in your head right now. Houston, you have a problem.

Social media and anything online is **a mission field (read my white paper here)**, a ready-made market, a cafeteria of people looking for purpose and ready to be engaged - if you will reach out to them in an engaging way.

But too often it feels like people assume that if they stand on a proverbial soapbox and shout a little louder they figure others will come. But it's as though they are blindfolded and cannot see that people not only are not listening but they are avoiding them at all costs.

GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT

What's the solution? To do online right, and well, and - in the way that the target audience wants.

Here are three reasons why you need to make a good, strong online presence a priority (not tomorrow, but now):

1. **Real-time Market Feedback:** Good social and online platforms will give you easy access to consumers to find what they want in real time. You can be of service to them with their immediate questions, solicit their raw advice, and get a very quick pulse on what their needs are (that your product might be equipped to fill).
2. **Builds community:** Good online presence is active and engaging. Our culture is starving for connection and currently experiencing a breakdown of community. People need one another. Use a good online facilitator to craft conversations, to engage with customers, to encourage visitors, to be an extension of your church/ministry, or business - online. Help them connect with one another. Make your page (or resources) a destination, something they have in common with someone else, a place where they know that they are heard and valued.
3. **Emotional Connection:** Consumers buy based on emotions, and when they see you show up in an authentic way on their newsfeed in a way that engages them, honors them, relates to them, inspires them - you are making an emotional connection that will cause them to *want* to learn more about you. By doing your online presence well - you give an opportunity for the consumer to make emotional connections with you. This is invaluable.

So how do you change things?

IS IT REALLY HURTING YOU?

Without doing social media, email, and website platforms effectively and aggressively and doing it well, you will most definitely (you are probably experiencing this already):

- Pay more for not knowing what your market really wants
- Go the hard route of learning what they want in ways that deeply annoy them i.e. robocalls, public surveys etc.
- You have no community
- Be shunned by the market (**as I state in my piece here:** our perception of you is largely impacted by how you are perceived online).

In yesteryear, you could expect consumers to buy based on a winsome ad. But now they want to be part of an experience. They want to be drawn in, engaged and to have memorable experiences. They want to like you, connect with the face (s) of the brand, and feel like they can connect on a

personal level.

There are so many messages being thrown at them constantly that the way you are going to stand out is by doing what few do well: being social, and *human* online. Give them a reason to *want to know you more*.

If in your head right now, you are saying, "*We can't afford to do social media well. We can't afford good email newsletters. We can't afford good copy on our website that will attract the search engines. We can't manage doing good social media that is relatable.*"

Friend, in this 21st century America, you can't afford not to.

- *Amy Hawkins (Jackson Michigan) has been serving in the social media space in professional and philanthropic ways for over 15 years. She is still learning.*