

The Importance of Social Media



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What is Social Media?

As well as there being other forms of social media these are the most popular and most common. All have different functions but have the ability to achieve the same things. Recent results have shown that 71% of people in the UK believe that social media provides a platform and voice to people, this could be a voice about anything, from politics to windows and doors.



Facebook



Twitter



Youtube



LinkedIn



Blogs



Pinterest



Google+



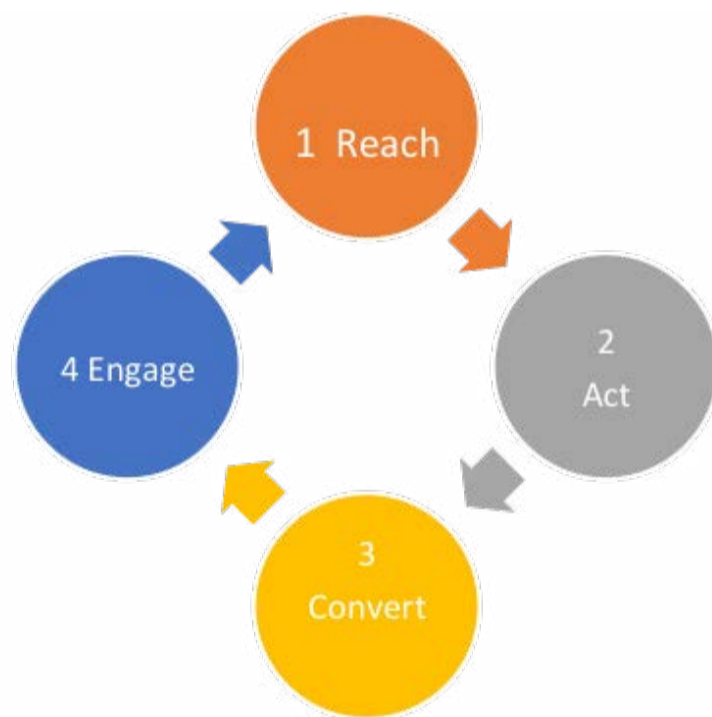
Instagram

Social Media can help a company or an organisation, no matter the size, achieve SMART goals alongside other marketing strategies; Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound or Targeted.

For example, if a company wanted to increase sales on stable doors between the months of March and September, (Specific and Time Bound) a blog could be posted about recent celebrities who have stable doors in their home, or it could be linked in with the Cheltenham races, having a blog about horses and stables could get people opening and reading the blog and have people thinking about purchasing stable doors before they even realised they wanted them! All of these could be tweeted, to get people's attention quicker, tweeted from your company's twitter page so the customer is aware you stock them. The blogs will be able to help forward traffic to your site along with tweeting, adding photos to Instagram and writing a status on Facebook. The amount of stable doors can be measured through the time given and it is a realistic and achievable goal.

So more products could be sold, more traffic and conversions can be made on the website and brand image and reputation can be strengthened..... all from the use of social media!

Social Media is a tactical tool, in brief here is how it works:



Social Media, whether it's the use of twitter, a 3rd party blog, or a board on Pinterest, the aim is to reach the customers, for the customers to then act on what they have seen, which should hopefully lead them to your website, convert their visit into a sale and then continue to engage with them after the sale or after the visit, to then entice them back to the site.

The web is now a **social** place, and we should make the most of it.

Why is Social Media important?

There are many reasons why Social Media is important, if it wasn't why are so many companies using it?

Social Networking can fit in with customer lifestyles, with the constant use of smartphones, tablets, laptops and the busy world that we live in, it's easier to target customers who are constantly on the move by sending a tweet, publishing a blog or posting something on Facebook or YouTube. It is more likely to reach them quicker and plant a seed. The seed could be a reminder that their single glazed windows are not the warmest in the winter and they should start to look at investing in new windows. If it was your companies tweet or blog, they are more likely to visit your website. If the content of what they read was funny or moving, or contained a photo, they are even more likely to remember it.

Social media is the ideal way of reaching out to the customers you haven't been able to already. It's also an ideal way to acquire new customers while retaining existing customers, 2 birds with one stone; 2 new customers with one tweet.

Cognitive	Know (Knowledge) Awareness Attention Comprehension
Affective	Feel (Predisposition) Interest Liking Desire
Conative	Act (Behaviour) Purchase Trial Adopt

Above is a basic over view of the importance of social media. Get your customers attention, this could be with an online competition, get them interested in your company and the products you sell, finally persuade them to act, by purchasing or even trialling your website and gaining more traffic which will hopefully turn into more conversions and leads.

Windows and Doors are essential, not necessary products customers have a direct interest in. However it does mean that that the mass market all have the same common characteristic; they NEED these products, and not all for the same reason. The use of social media can open up the eyes of new home owners, old homeowners, pensioners, tradesmen and many more. It can help to promote security, energy efficiency, home improvement, new designs, and "the idealistic" home that doesn't cost as much as the customer first thought... Social media can make essential and necessary products fun and exciting and can help to push sales and direct customers to your website, not your competitors.

The Salvation Army have recently been in the lime light for their use of social media. Remember the black and blue dress? Or was it White and Gold? If you don't you clearly haven't been using social media enough!



#TheDress was trending globally and the Salvation Army took a risk and used social media to their full advantage and created a genius campaign within days. I'm not suggesting that we come up with a global campaign, but I'm highlighting what can be done with a little imagination and creativity. These are the things that get you remembered!

“Anchor to which other associations can be attached.” Being associated with trusted and well known bloggers or tweeters is on par with being friends with a celebrity, although it's a lot easier! If you can get a retweet from a popular tweeter, or have a blog published by someone who has a wide audience, your company is being exposed positively to customers you were never able to reach. It also makes you associated with another trusted source, making your brand image improve. Your brand will also then be associated with something else other than “windows and doors,” it may then be seen to be more exciting and more social, something customers may warm too and what may make them pick you over your competitor. Your company will be known for all the right reasons.

Social media also allows companies to be in constant contact with their customers, if there's a problem the company can almost instantly fix it. It's a way to build a relationship with new and existing customers and to see what your customers want and expect from you. You can share your news with them as quick as they can share their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with you! Exciting right?!

How will it benefit your company?

So how will social media benefit your company?

“A successful brand is an identifiable product, service person or place augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added values which match their needs most closely. Furthermore its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition.”

Social media can add value to your brand and company. Social media can make you stand out from your competitors and can help you gain the extra leads from your website you were after. It can change the customer's perception of you. The 7P's and 6I's in the marketing mix, which are the most basic tools within the marketing world, can help with customer relationship management. And so can Social Media.

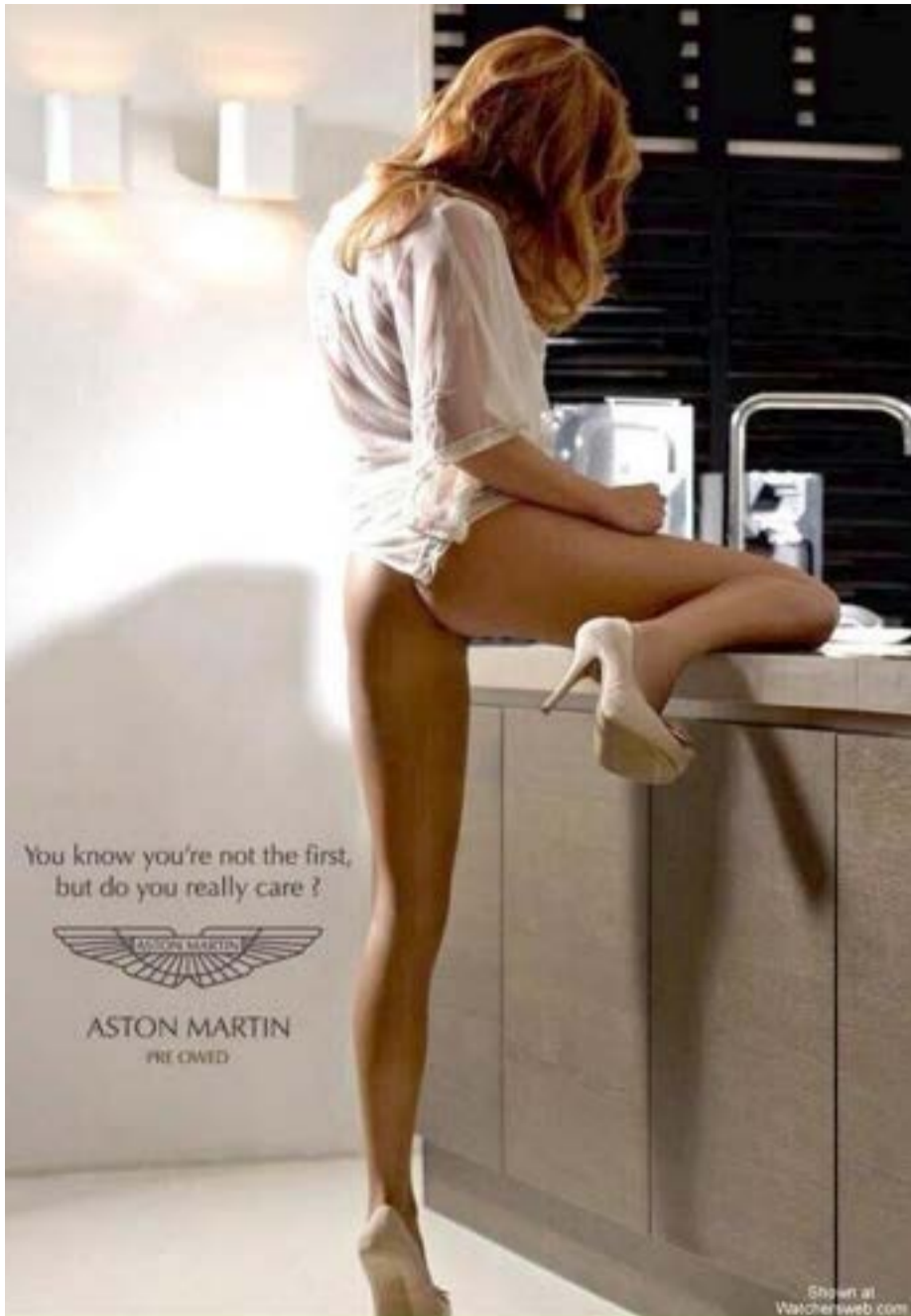
- Product
- Use (by product class and competitor)
- Features
- Benefits
- Price / Quality
- Promotion – branding / symbolism
- Physical Evidence
- Process
- Place
- People
- Interactivity
- Intelligence
- Individualisation
- Integration
- Industry restructuring
- Independence of place

The likes of Twitter and Facebook or even a photo uploaded to Instagram, can achieve the marketing mix every day. You have a new promotion, tweet about it, you are opening a new store, write a status, your local area is looking exceptional on a certain day, upload an Instagram photo and show interactivity within your local community. Everything on that list can be ticked off with the use of social media, which shows just how easy customer relationship management is even though it is so important!

Link building, key words and PPC (pay-per-click) online marketing jargon that is extremely important to getting customers to your website. Having a 3rd party write a blog for you or publish a blog you have already written can help to build links and direct customers back to your website. The technical stuff is a little more complex but social media DOES help direct customers to your website, which leads to conversions etc!

“Viral marketing is based on creating and sending messages—concerning a product, brand, or organization—aimed at ensuring that users receive such messages and forward them to other users, who in turn forward them to others, and so on.”

The use of an interesting tweet or an eye catching blog headline can turn the most boring of things into something worth reading, sharing and remembering. Once again the use of social media can benefit your company by doing all of these. Yes the content needs to be there first, but once you have that why wouldn't you want to share something amazing with everyone?



An example of an interesting piece of social media is the most recent Aston Martin advert. I have no interest in cars. They bore me. Much like windows and doors, the mass market needs them, although not everyone can afford a composite door or an Aston Martin... I saw this advert on Instagram, someone had taken a liking to it and reposted it. I thought it was brilliant so re-posted it on my site and then tweeted about it and posted it on Facebook. How many other people did the same? Now when I see a car advert all I think about is how much better the Aston Martin advert was... this could happen to you. It may be on a smaller scale, but the effects would still be the same. Social media is a brilliant way to market your company and to attract people to your website. It makes you stand out from the rest.

I can still remember where I first saw this advert, so if you posted something interesting or worth a read how many people are going to remember you?



G+ can literally put your business on the map

Twitter and blogs

Twitter is an easy way for customers to follow your every move. They can talk to you, complain to you, compare you and read almost everything they need to know in the space of 140 characters. And you can do the same. You can follow existing customers, customers you would like to follow, competitors (so you can see what they are up to) and other companies you are interested in, all of which could give you an idea of what you may want to tweet about next or a style you wish to adapt.

Twitter can tell you a lot about the market you are currently in, what your target market likes and believe in and what your competitors are up to. You can upload photos of a new product, share a link or article that interested you, the best bit is it doesn't have to do with anything you are trying to sell or promote. You are purely trying to get the attention of your customers or the attention of new customers. Twitter allows you to keep things light, inform customers on updates to the company, tweet about the company's success and attract customers to your website. Twitter can enhance website visitors, users and can even help to improve conversion rates. So what you waiting for, get tweeting!

Blogs can add content to the website or can be sent to 3rd party bloggers who are able to promote your website and attract new customers you were unable to target. Blogs can be about anything. New products, the benefits of a certain product you are trying to boost sales on or even a blog about interesting facts of the company's local area.

A 3rd party blogger, such as "Slummy Single Mummy" or "Glazing Blogger" are trusted bloggers with wide networks. To have a blog published by people like these opens up new doors to new customers and improves brand reputation, as well as making a company more memorable. It also directs customers to the website. A 3rd party blogger is most certainly something to consider when looking into social media.

Summary

Social Media Landscape 2012

Have a quick read over these diagrams. The use of Social Media is more important than anyone first thought.

