

4 Ways to Plan the Growth of Your Company in the Instant Information Era

Today's senior business managers face not only traditional business planning tasks when driving growth within their organization, but also the need to understand new marketing challenges and opportunities presented by technologies that were not taught in business schools even five or ten years ago.

Key among those business planning elements are marketing and public relations planning that leverages the latest technologies to communicate your company's mission, focus and differentiated, competitive advantages. Leaders also need to plan digital defenses against issues that can arise virtually overnight even as they deploy new marketing tools and techniques.

Here are four ways you can promote your business more effectively using the latest marketing and public relations techniques:

1. Stick to the 1 in 7 posting principle

A spin on the "Rule of Seven," which stipulates that a buyer should hear a marketing message at least seven times before buying, the 1 in 7 rule relates to social media. As noted by American Express, whenever you post something on Facebook, Twitter or other social media website, one out of every seven of the posts should promote your business. The other posts should be some piece of content that your customers will consider interesting or valuable. This balance helps your customers view your business as an industry thought leader.

2. Target your audience with search engine optimization

What are your customers searching for when they log on? What websites are they going to for information? Search engine optimization can help you decipher the type of questions your customers want answered and what key search terms they're using to find them.

"Find out who's talking about what, where they're talking about it, and then start listening there," Amy Vernon, marketing consultant at Predictable.ly, told Fast Company.

3. Form a crisis management team

How would your company respond if an employee mistake or a cyber security attack tarnished the organization's image? Time is of the essence in today's digital world where word travels fast, and the immediate strategy you employ determines how you'll bounce back. You may want to appoint some of your existing employees to serve as crisis managers. The team should consist of individuals who have a knack for staying cool under pressure and thrive at problem-solving in a digital environment. Once the team is assembled, map out a process that can be followed, should a crisis arise.

4. Connect with influencers

Influencers are the people who move the needle and whose endorsement of your product - or contribution to your blog - elicits more clicks. That's the social

media component of leveraging influencers. However, your association with influencers goes far beyond the online world. Connecting with industry influencers can lead to additional marketing opportunities, such as guest speaking at your corporate conferences or appearances in promotional content.

"From guest blog posts to interviews to podcasts, influencers can legitimize your organization and significantly raise the company's profile," explained Vince Webb, vice president of marketing for MRINetwork. "Influencers allow you to reach target audiences, as well as those that you might never have expected, through a vast assortment of interactive mediums."

Establishing a solid brand and spreading the word about your company has never been easier, thanks to cost-effective measures like social media, digital marketing and public relations. The key is striking the right balance between traditional and new marketing and public relations techniques that can propel your business to new heights.

