Social Media Marketing: Management by Storytelling

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Storytelling is the conveying of events in words, images, sounds and gestures. Stories or narratives have been shared in every culture as means of entertainment, education, cultural preservation and in order to instill moral values. Important elements of stories and storytelling include the story, people and characters, a narrative point of view and - in the understanding of today’s successful marketing - a postmodern morality. Interesting stories tend to be committed to memory and passed from generation to generation respectively in the context of Social Media Marketing from community member to community member and beyond. Word-of-Mouth-Marketing (WOMM) has become a powerful tool in marketing in general and especially in the understanding of the web 2.0-based tools, platforms, forums and blogs (Turel, O., Serenko, A., Buntis, N. 2009).

Because of the personal nature of the communications between individuals, it is believed that product information communicated in this way has an added layer of credibility. Research points to individuals being more inclined to believe WOMM than more formal forms of promotion methods; the receiver of word-of-mouth referrals tends to believe that the communicator is speaking honestly and is unlikely to have an ulterior motive (i.e. they are not receiving an incentive for their referrals). Word-of-mouth depends on the extent of customer satisfaction with the product or service, and on the degree of its perceived value (Grewal, Cline, Davis 2003).

Marketers place significant value on positive word-of-mouth, which is traditionally achieved by creating products, services and customer experiences that generate conversation-worthy "buzz" naturally.-The relatively new practice of word of mouth marketing attempts to inject positive "buzz" into conversations directly (Salzman, Matathia, O'Reilly 2003).
Companies can focus on brand advocates, the people who proactively recommend their favorite brands and products online and offline without being paid to do so. Influencer marketing is also increasingly used to seed WOMM by targeting key individuals that have authority and a high number of personal connections (Keller Fay 2011).

This is the most interesting part of the Web 2.0 including WOMM. The consumer becomes storyteller, the brand advocate becomes the prime, respected and most credible storyteller. The more positive stories about a brand, the more interest the brand generates and the more successful the brand can become (e.g. Apple community - talking in forums and blogs about upcoming new products).

The reason why Storytelling is a new critical success factor based on Web 2.0 is almost banal: The human need to be entertained. Stories are illustrative, easily memorable and allow any company to create stronger bonds with the customers (Lury 2004).

McLuhan’s fascinating statement that “the medium is the message” reaches with the web 2.0 a new quality. In an historical context, every medium is not only having its own authorization and importance but increases the spectrum of media in an additive and not alternative manner. Television has not displaced radio at all, today we have more radio broadcasting stations than ever before. In the case of the Internet and most of all the web 2.0 we see today a multimedia integration: Printing becomes blogging, anyone can present the self as an author and can produce and multiply content. Newspapers are losing “share of mind” and even “share of heart” against the World Wide Web (WWW). Advantages are - next time relevance – the possibilities of talkbacks, comments and dialogs by the consumers.

Brands can create marketing buzz in the Web 2.0 and therefore become the “must have” in the exposure culture (Tim Wu 2005). The form, therefore the participation often becomes more important than the content.

In postmodern marketing the buzz becomes in fact the “truth”. The Internet and its (mobile) applications are omnipresent and define the new reality of marketing.

Keller Fay Group NYC, Q3 2011 Conversation Index. New York 2011


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Salzman, M.; Matathia, I.; O’Reillly, A.: Buzz: Harness the Power of Influence and create Demand, New Jersey 2003
