Social Media Strategies and the Integration of Youth Culture

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When forming a social media strategy, start by understanding the benefits and associated risks. Continue by building a tangible strategy, which you can use to get your company's buy-in. Start implementing your strategy.

If your goals are not met, consider revising your strategy. Take corrective steps along the way and evaluate your benefits against your costs.

Do Some Research

Try to figure out which social media platform is suitable for your company. The answer to that should be linked to where your audience is. On what platforms do you see the most engaging audience in your niche? Whichever platform you choose, you will need to invest your time. There is no other way around it. You cannot be in it this month, skip the next month, and then come back to it again the following month. Social networking is a daily chore.

Understand the benefits

SMO is not just about your website visibility or your company brand. SMO allows for many other benefits. Fostering open dialogs with your clients allows for faster product or service feedback loops. Obtaining instant feedback can be an empowering prospect when developing new products or services.

You can also use these discussions to improve your current offerings. SMO can help you build your perceived trust, influence, and authority. The byproduct of all this is a greater power to influence your clients. When done correctly, SMO can bring huge amounts of traffic and profit. Achieving great social media traction allows for natural link building from an SEO perspective.

Understand the risks

It is important to understand that social media campaigns come with certain risks. All content is scrutinized by your web audience. If you're not careful, you could ruin your entire brand and image.

Another potential risk is in wasting your time and resources. Marketing departments do not have infinite budgets. It is possible that the costs will outweigh the perceived benefits. Nobody can forecast the exact results. Account for known and unknown risks.

Understand the process

All social media platforms have some things in common. All platforms, to be used to their full potential, require their users to register for an account. After this comes creating and optimizing your profile. Be sure to include your business or website links.

The next steps include finding and building your friends network, participating in various outlets such as comment posting, forums, and discussions, sharing your content including links and website feeds, and more. While doing all of this, it is important to continue creating media-rich, engaging experiences as well as focusing your work effort on your specific niche.

Youth Integration

Across the country over 60 per cent of young people have personal profiles on online social networking sites and over 80 per cent of survey respondents believe the young people they are working with use online social network sites. Many young people are often spending upwards of two hours a day using social network sites.

Young people are using online social networking as part of: keeping in touch with peers; developing new contacts; sharing content and media; exploring their self identities; hanging out and consuming content; accessing information and informal learning.

Building young people's media literacy is seen by many as a key strategy in reducing risks and maximizing take up of opportunities online (Withers and Sheldon 2008; Byron 2008). Ofcom define media literacy as 'the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts'. Whilst it is mistaken to see online social networking purely as a 'media' activity, (given it is based around activities of one-to one and group conversation as much as it is based around activities of content creation, publishing and dissemination), work with young people to support them in effectively using online social networking tools, to understand the motivations behind content on social network sites and to develop and reflect upon their own content creation would fit well within a media literacy building paradigm.