B2B Social Media Marketing
Introduction

Social media marketing is quickly becoming one of the most popular marketing techniques for B2B enterprises. Social media spending as a percentage of the marketing budget is on the rise. According to Duke University Fuqua School of Business CMO Survey, marketers spent 6.6% of their marketing budget on social in August 2013. Social is predicted to corner 15.8% of the marketing budget in the next five years. With the rise of popular new social media channels such as Pinterest, B2B marketers have to keep themselves informed and use innovative tactics to leverage social media. If done right, social media marketing has the potential of bearing rich rewards.

Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn continue to rule the roost when it comes to top social platforms B2B brands use for social media marketing. The newest kid on the social media block, Pinterest has quickly gained traction with B2C while B2B marketers continue to experiment with it. The time is not far off, when Pinterest will figure prominently in every B2B company’s social marketing strategy. Google + and Foursquare are two other social media sites that are worth investing in for B2B marketers.

When it comes to social media, the best strategy B2B marketers need to adopt is to go back to the basics. With new social media channels rolling in each day, it is easy to be overwhelmed by the continuous pressure to be active and engaging on each of them. Additionally, one solution does not apply to all channels, for example, your Facebook strategy must be different from your strategy for LinkedIn or Pinterest.

Having said that, some basic best practices have to be kept in mind when it comes to using social media for B2B marketing. Remember that the ultimate aim of your social media plan is to create a community of prospects, partners, and customers, who believe in your company and can evangelize for your cause!
Social Media Best Practices

1. DETERMINE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

The first step for social media success is to identify your target audience. For those who want to join social networks, having their peers already on board is a good motivation. So, a combination of smart branding with the added knowledge of prospect interests is the first best practice to adopt for social media campaigns to be effective.

Here are a few things you can do:

1. Find out the top social applications used by your target segment.
2. Analyze forums for offers and promotions that have worked very well with your target audience.
3. Scrutinize how interactive they have been on social sites.
4. Check for companies whose marketing campaigns have been a hit with prospects.
2. DETERMINE YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY

As indicated earlier, every social networking site is different and your marketing strategy must be planned accordingly. However, make sure you cover these key points:

1. Determine who the key social media influencers are using free search tools such as Technorati, Twitter Search, or Google Blog search. Build campaigns to reach out to these influencers.

2. Determine the key business objectives that are to be met with social media marketing.

3. Allocate manpower dedicated to creating, tracking, and monitoring social media campaigns.

4. Create a social media marketing strategy based on your revenue targets, product releases, upcoming events, etc.

5. Prioritize your marketing activities based on how fast your brand image gets established on the social site. Example: If your Twitter stream is going great whereas your Facebook presence is still lacklustre, it makes sense to spend more time and campaign money on Twitter than Facebook.
3. CREATE MARKETING CONTENT

As is the case with any marketing campaign, content is the lifeblood for social marketing as well. Without quality content, you cannot have a successful social media strategy. But keep these points in mind when it comes to content sharing:

1. Provide content on tracked links (links to blogs, articles, survey results, etc.) to encourage repeat visits. This offers credibility to your service/product.
2. Make sure whatever you share is of value.
3. Top shareable content include articles, blogs, whitepapers, videos, webinar invites, slide shares, infographics, eBooks, newsletters, magazines, product tutorial documents, etc.
4. Repurpose and recreate content based on the social media platform used.
5. Content shared must be relevant, timely, and fresh to enable further sharing.

4. ENGAGE PROSPECTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media marketing is not a one-way street. Any social media campaign becomes successful only when it evokes response (even negative response is better than no response, as it proves that your audience is listening, and cares for you). Here are a few tips on how you can increase engagement.

1. Formulate the schedule of activities for social media interactions. Example: post a blog weekly, Tweet everyday, subscribe to professional networks, respond to forum discussions proactively, etc. Stick to the planned schedule as much as possible, so it increases predictability for your audience as well.
2. Highlight social media survey results on your product/service and encourage people to discuss it.
3. Try different social media engagement tactics like contests, quizzes, giveaways, infographics, podcasts, etc. to constantly provoke people to discuss and share your content/ideas/offers/etc.

4. Leverage marketing automation tools to track prospects that have Liked, Tweeted, or shared your content.

5. Use buzz link generation tools that help shorten URLs and publish content in various social media sites simultaneously.

5. OPTIMIZE CAMPAIGNS BY MONITORING RESPONSES

Monitoring success of your social media campaigns or your overall social media strategy on a regular basis is very important. This evaluation will help determine if you are on track to achieving your social media marketing objectives, or if you need to change your strategy midway. Here are a few things you can do in this regard:

1. Generate weekly and monthly reports for responses generated in social media and the action taken on them.

2. Integrate CRM and marketing automation solutions to effectively track links and generate analytics on a scheduled basis. This includes, monitoring Facebook likes, Twitter followers, LinkedIn group member additions, etc.

3. Most social media sites provide smart solutions to monitor day to day activities and updates. Use these tools effectively.

4. Find out which channel is working well and which is not, and dig deeper to know why.

5. Keep monitoring how your competitors are using their social media channels as well.

6. If your prospect or a customer posts a query, respond immediately. This is a very important part of monitoring.
6. GENERATE METRICS

Generating metrics is part of monitoring your social campaigns, but given the importance metrics play in social media planning, we included this as a separate best practice. Metrics, of course, vary depending on the site chosen and the content shared in it. Some of the important metrics that you need to have in place:

1. **For Blog Sites** – Number of posts, Number of responses, Number of inbound links, Conversion rates.

2. **For LinkedIn** – Number of followers, Number of follower’s followers, Number of groups affiliated to, Number of times the company page appears in search results, Conversion rates.

3. **For Facebook** – Number of Likes, Number of Fans, Profile of members, Number of links shared/clicked, Conversion rates.

4. **For Twitter** - Number of Tweets, Number of followers, Number of inbound links, Conversion rates.

5. **For Video sites like YouTube** – Number of videos viewed, Number of times viewed, Number of subscribers, Number of inbound links, Rank in search pages.

However, the common metrics applicable for any social network would be based on connections gained, interactions made, referrals acquired, and profiles of group members/connections. Another important metric to monitor is how active and passionate your social community is to spread your word further.

7. BE PROACTIVE & MAKE IT PERSONAL

Don't forget that social media is all about just that- being social and personal. So every status update, every content piece shared must be customized and
personalized. Think of your brand as a person—now decide what kind of attitude you want this person to have—do you want to come across as a friendly brand, an edgy one, a thought leader, a content expert, a marketing guru brand, a next gen product company? Decide on the tone and content once you zero in on the attitude. It is extremely important for your brand to show some social personality and maintain that consistency across channels. Here are some more tips (some repeated) to make your brand truly memorable on social media:

1. Share valuable and genuine content so that prospects are convinced of the value behind the link.

2. Designate teams that exclusively monitor and respond to social media responses.

3. Personalize responses, offers, propositions based on industry, professional level of prospects, geographical locations, website activities, time taken to respond, number of responses, etc.

4. Provide valuable and genuine responses/solutions since they will be viewed, clicked, read, and analyzed by a larger audience who will judge the company’s brand image based on it.

5. Get senior management or technology specialists to pitch in occasionally to show how much of an effort and interest goes into your campaign.

6. Tweak social media strategy based on the performances of marketing campaigns since there is no way one can judge performance completely at the beginning. This helps to monitor and measure accurately as well.

7. Don’t be afraid to experiment, apologize, and lavish praise. But respond quickly, especially to negative criticism to show you are listening.
Conclusion

Although social media is relatively a new B2B marketing tactic compared to traditional tactics like email or cold calling, it has far greater visibility than one can imagine. So, do it right, and you will see favorable results.

Simple Pointers to Remember

- Enter the social foray only when you are ready with content to share/post.
- Do not indulge in promotion ONLY. Learn the art of attracting followers through relationship building on a personal level.
- Do not expect any ROI generation as soon as you kick start. It takes time to build trust on social networks.
Corporate Headquarters
6200 Stoneridge Mall Road
Suite 500
Pleasanton, CA 94588
Phone: +1 (925) 251-2283

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Diamond District, Tower AB
Lower Level -1
Old Airport Road, Kodihalli,
Bangalore-560008
Phone: +91-080-41636861

UK & European Headquarters
1st floor, Holborn Gate
330 High Holborn
London WC1V 7QT
United Kingdom
Phone: + 44 (0)208 899 6444

Email Contacts:
Sales Queries: info@calliduscloud.com

www.calliduscloud.com