

We're constantly reviewing our thinking in the light of changing markets and technologies. We're often asking ourselves how our customers can get more from communicating with their audiences. Today, we'd like to offer some of our thoughts on one of the regular questions we get asked:

Can Social Media work for my business?



in form
clear by design

Like a lot of our clients, we're an SME business working in a challenging climate. Time is tight and we'd like to improve not just the *amount* of business that we do, but *how* we do that business. For us this means looking at ways to communicate more effectively with our target audiences; and helping our clients to do the same.

Again, like a lot of our clients, we have been quick to try to benefit from new technologies and have often found that we've been unable to extract value from them, sometimes adopting new technology has been more of a hindrance than a help. It's one of the reasons we now invest more time to review things in much more in depth before we make a change.

So where do we stand on Social Media? Well, let's start with a brief definition...

Put simply, "Social Media" is the term given to a collection of (mainly web-based) tools that aim to ease the forming of relationships with people. Essentially we're talking about Blogs and social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Linked-In.

Researching this topic, we've noticed that many articles move straight to "How to get the Most from Social Media" and deliver some kind of strategy. In doing this they skip straight over a more important question:

Who are your target audiences and what would they like to hear from you?

Without having a clearly defined answer to this, implementing a Social Media strategy is unlikely to prove worthwhile.

If at this stage you're thinking "Just as I thought - our customers don't use Social Media so there's no point" then you may be jumping the gun a little. It may well be true that your current and prospective customers might not think to look for you, expect, or even want to find you on sites like Facebook or Twitter (say, for instance, if you provide funeral services) it does not mean that they won't enter a relevant search query into Google and whether or not you're present on social media sites may well effect whether or not they find you easily using a Search Engine.

When talking with our clients, we always talk in terms of the relevance of the information they use in their communications.

Logging on to Facebook or Twitter twelve times a day and keeping your followers up to date with offers, events or new product lines can work wonders for the right businesses. On the other hand, for some it's simply a waste of time as their audiences don't fit the profile of Social Media users; communicating in that way doesn't suit the personality of their business, or their business doesn't 'do' offers, events or other 'hooks' to tempt customers to engage with them.

Writing or posting Blogs or articles on your website that are genuinely useful for your audiences could be a much better time investment if you are the latter type of business.

It will take you less time than a Facebook/Twitter approach and will still help you to strengthen old and build new relationships. As an extra bonus, they'll also improve your website's Search Engine ranking making it easier for your customers and prospects to find you. If you've read this far, this article is testament to the fact that we're not making this stuff up!

Social Media Communications can be a very powerful part of your business's Marketing Communications Mix but, just like every other media, it's not a starting point, it's a method of delivery.

The key to success is knowing your audiences and providing them with valuable information that makes it easy for them to choose you, or come back for more if they're existing customers.

We've helped our clients to identify their target audiences; clarify their messages; and choose the most effective media and frequency of communication to successfully implement efficient communications strategies. If you'd like to talk to us about how our thinking could help your business to communicate more effectively with your target audiences using Social (or any other) Media, please get in touch.

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