

Remember Your Brand when You Market with Social Media

Use these guidelines to craft a cohesive social-media brand.

By Ben Laube

Depicting your brand is one of your most important tasks when marketing with social media. You need to use brand awareness and cohesiveness to build familiarity and trust.

Be Consistent with Your Graphics

On platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google+, you're able to upload cover photos. It's important to use the same design concept in each cover photo for visual brand cohesiveness. Having the same graphic concept will help people remember your brand. Make sure your logos are consistent across the profiles as well.

Be Sure Your Voice Is Heard

The next step is ensuring your brand's "voice" is heard throughout the text of the page and in the posts. You shouldn't be using slang terms and Internet abbreviations such as "LOL" and "JK." Establish a voice that clearly defines your organization's culture. Remember, your social-media brand is your online persona and face; let it represent who you are.

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Which Social Networks Should You Use?

With the vast array of social networks out there, it can be a bit confusing to decide which ones your brand should be on. You have to think strategically and find the best fit to represent your brand. Many organizations think they have to be on every single platform, but not every platform is right for every nonprofit. Here's a quick rundown of the top platforms, what they do, and how you can use them.

Facebook is the home base of all social media today. No matter your mission, your organization needs a Facebook page to interact with your customers and build a relationship.

Twitter is the popular microblogging (140 characters or less) platform that lets users find people with the same interests easily. It's also a fantastic news outlet to syndicate your brand's press, ideas, and thoughts to the world.

Google+ (the Google version of Facebook) has great collaborative abilities. Google Hangouts (a messaging, video, chat, and file sharing platform) is free, integrates well with other Google apps, and allows you to share information easily. All Google+ posts are indexed by Google and show up in their search results.

LinkedIn is the professional social-media hotspot. This is where you can represent yourself and your organization in a professional manner, building connections and further expanding your outreach.

Social Marketing Do's and Don'ts

Now that you've chosen your networks, your social strategy, and how to represent your brand online, here are few tips to ensure a positive social environment for your audience.

DO'S:

Do engage your followers with contests, questions, comments, and provoking thoughts.

Do post on a regular basis.

Do choose what type of content is most appropriate for your brand. Posting anything and everything will confuse people.

DON'TS:

Don't over promote yourself. If you were talking to someone face to face and all they did was promote themselves, you'd lose interest. The same goes for social media. There's a healthy ratio we like to follow: 60% conversation and engagement, 40% promotion. A healthy balance will keep your followers interested.

Don't over post. It's great to share quality content regularly, but don't post every hour. Remember, these posts show up in people's news feeds and can be seen as "spam."

Don't criticize other brands. Keep your brand's online reputation and image in a positive light.



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Be sure people find your brand on all four of the above social networks. There are other popular platforms that may not suit every brand:

Pinterest is a great way to share and explore creative ideas and visuals. However, if your brand isn’t a visually heavy concept, Pinterest may not work for you.

Instagram and **Vine** are the mobile sensations that rely strictly on pictures and videos. If your brand doesn’t produce images and products, these networks may leave you with lackluster results.

Be Strategic with Your Content

It’s vital to have a cohesive social-content strategy. What are you posting? How often are you posting? Are you posting the same content to specific profiles? Take a step back and decide how and what you want to post. You never want to bombard followers with promotion after promotion. You want to be social! Ask people questions; find out their opinions. Engagement is key: talking at your followers rather than talking to them is the quickest way to lose your following.

Now go be social with social media! 

Ben Laube is president and founder of POLR Marketing (www.polrmarketing.com, 407-712-4836), a growth marketing technology company that helps people grow their organizations through content writing, pay-per-click, ethical SEO practices, Web design, development graphic design, and strategic planning.

More on Brands, Social Media, & Marketing Your Organization

These and many other articles at www.NonprofitWorld.org/members will help you refine your strategy for promoting your brand through social media:

How to Make Social-Media Fundraising Work for You (Vol. 27, No. 2)

Why Invest in Brand? And Where Should You Begin? (Vol. 29, No. 3)

Don’t Take Risks with Social Media (Vol. 29, No. 1)

The Nonprofit Branding Exercise (Vol. 26, No. 1)

Accelerating Fundraising through Social Media (Vol. 28, No. 3)

Benefits & Risks for Nonprofit Leaders Using LinkedIn (Vol. 31, No. 2)

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