

Getting Strategic

B2B marketers become more sophisticated in their social planning

The days of B2B marketers thinking social is something best left to their B2C brethren are long gone. Today, B2B marketers are approaching social more strategically than in the past, creating concise and compelling content that is mobile friendly.

"More of the buyers in B2B are younger than people thought and marketers are catching up to that," says Lisa Abbatiello, CEO of Leo Burnett Business. "Millennials are online and they're doing their research in social media on their phone, so you need to be mobile."

As in B2C, B2B users and influencers can be the

best champions of a brand in social media, Abbatiello says. B2B brands are developing stories in formats like video that can be edited and distributed in a variety of social channels to reach the widest audience possible.

"If you really want engagement, B2B social creative needs to be more visual," she notes, noting that being concise and creating an emotional connection is essential. "Video allows you to tell a story not just in words, but in sight, sound and motion."

"Social is incredibly important across all B2B verticals," agrees Ted Kohnen, CMO, Americas, Stein IAS.

"We're even starting to see more brands come to us asking how we do social in a highly regulated space."

GOING BOTH WAYS

Social is all about creating two-way communications, says Kohnen, and that means targeting audiences when they are in a receptive mindset. Where that is exactly depends on your target market. For some, that could be Facebook, while others might be more inclined to start a conversation on Twitter. Periscope, which enables real-time video on Twitter, could be a huge game changer for brands wanting to create an experience and amplify their reach beyond the confines of an event.



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Brands can also create their own social media ecosystems and build their own community. A great example of this is Adobe and CMO.com, notes Kohnen.

"I think we're going to see more purpose built social platforms develop," says Kohnen, noting there could be localized elements, such as networks for New York-based CMOs. "Micro communities will be the next frontier in B2B social networking."

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But no matter where you choose to engage, it is key to make that engagement a personal thing. "In social, it's about the connection—if a brand is communicating and you don't know who the individual [that is speaking is], all people are doing is engaging with a logo—and that's not the ethos of social media," he says. "People want to know who the thought leader is behind what a brand is saying—not having that level of personalization is a missed opportunity."

For brands that don't necessarily have a "rock star" level figure associated with their company as a spokesperson, sharing content on venues like LinkedIn Pulse can be extremely helpful. And of course, content that speaks to your audience's needs and pain points can be particularly good for generating a dialogue, says Kohnen. Inspired by a client's recruitment talent index, Stein IAS launched a B2B digital marketing maturity index to help companies benchmark where they stand.

To get a conversation going, continually ask questions, Kohnen urges. "Poll your community and engage them in a dialogue. Tap into user-generated content."

Paid social is becoming a bigger and bigger factor for B2B brands looking to cut through the clutter. "There's so much noise out there, and you need to break through and get the audience's attention," he says. "They're being deluged and paid social can help you get the visibility you need."

B2B brands are judging the success of their social expenditures in a variety of ways. Some see social

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TAKE A VERTICAL TURN THE BENEFITS OF TARGETED PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL NETWORKS

Vertical social networks that target a specific professional niche can be a great way for buyers and sellers to connect and start a conversation.

Jay Hallberg, founder/CEO, Spiceworks, estimates there are now over 50 vertical networks for a variety of industries, such as SERMO for doctors, or Edmodo for educators. "They're disrupting the traditional methods of reaching these audiences."

Spiceworks is a vertical social network for IT pros founded in 2006. The community, which features a wide range of content including how-tos and product reviews, gives IT pros a place to interact and fosters connections that often extend offline.



"IT can be a lonely profession," says Hallberg. "If you're the IT guy for 100 lawyers, chances are you're not hanging out with your co-workers, because you might not have much in common."

Marketers wanting to connect with their target audiences via these networks need to remember that you can't go in with a traditional lead-gen mentality. "You can't just use the campaigns you use in other channels," he says, because that won't resonate in social. "You'll get thrashed if you make a sales pitch."

On Spiceworks, Hallberg says vendors that bring real technical know-how and value to the conversation succeed. "People will take good mental notes [of what you say] and remember that for later. The right technical experts can really build trust and brand affinity." —BNV

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as merely a way to engage the audience and share content, while others view it as an integral lead-gen channel, notes Kohnen.

“B2B marketers need to optimize their social spending, so paid social is here to stay,” agrees Brian Quijano, director of product management and marketing, Adobe Social. “Of course, there isn’t a clear playbook right now—the biggest mistake a marketer

B2B DIGITAL AND SOCIAL SPENDING RISES

B2B digital marketing spending will increase 7.6% to almost \$77 billion in 2015, according to Outsell’s 2015 Advertising and Marketing Study.

In some categories, growth rates will be twice that according to the survey, fielded in January.

Website spending remains the largest category with \$29.1 billion in spending, according to Outsell’s report. Ad spending on social networking sites will grow more than 15% year over year, but spending on companies’ own social engagement exceeds social ad spend by \$1.1 billion. Email continues to maintain an impressive 11% share of B2B marketers’ budgets, but its growth has dropped 1.8%.



Year over year, the categories with the highest spending increases for B2B digital will be webinars (up 10.4%), sponsored content (+7.4%), ads on social networks (+7.2%) and mobile (+6.2%).

Breaking down spending by vertical markets shows that manufacturing, technology vendors, biotech/chemicals/pharma and professional services cite their own websites as the top ROI method of marketing, while financial services cite conferences.

Data for the study was collected via survey in January, and combined with 10 years of trending data. Of the total 1,487 US respondents, 719 were B2B-focused marketers, while 768 were consumer-focused. —BNV

DON'T TAKE THE WEEKEND OFF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT DOESN'T STOP ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

B2B brands receive twice as many retweets and engagements on social media channels on Saturday and Sunday, according to Brandwatch’s B2B Social Media Report.

However, they’re typically posting less than half of their normal output on the weekend. That’s a mistake, says Phillip Agnew, community manager for Brandwatch. “They’re not optimizing their content strategy.”

On average, the 200 brands studied in the report posted the most tweets on Tuesdays, averaging 5.3 tweets and 4.5 retweets. But on Saturdays and Sundays, they were only posting 2.1 and 1.5 tweets. The average for retweets on those days, however, were 8.9 and 8.3. This may be because of a lower volume of tweets in readers’ Twitter feeds overall, but it definitely signals an opportunity for B2B marketers savvy enough to keep their social presence active outside the average workweek. —BNV

can make is not testing.”

In the past, marketing organizations were more siloed organizations. These silos are starting to come together, says Quijano, and organizations are looking for more cohesive metrics to gauge the success of their social spending, including engagement and natural conversion.

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BY THE NUMBERS

The recent Brandwatch B2B Social Media Report showed that 76% of B2B brands have at least one Twitter or Facebook account, with 47,023 Twitter followers and 211,872 Facebook likes on average. Over 5 million social mentions were recorded in a two-month period for these brands.

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ON THE ROAD

SOCIAL HELPS DAIMLER TRUCKS GET BETTER MILEAGE FOR ITS BIG BRAND STORY

The story of a truck's journey is much more than simply driving from Point A to Point B. There's a number of starts and stops along the way that factor heavily into the ride.

Similarly, the journey of a truck owner from contemplation to purchase isn't a simple trip either. In today's challenging economic climate, truck owners are interested in the total cost of truck ownership, not just singular elements like mileage. The solution for Daimler was to create a campaign incorporating social media, advertising and PR highlighting the "Real Cost of Ownership" for one of Daimler's Freightliner trucks.

In the past, trucking company owners often looked at fuel efficiency above all else, says Matt Ferguson, senior partner, Eric Mower & Assoc., which created the campaign with Daimler. But there are other issues as well, such as safety and "uptime," the amount of time needed for service and repairs.

"If your truck is in the shop, you're losing money by the hour," Ferguson notes.

"We're the market share leader for Class 8 trucks, and we wanted to deliver a message to the market that resonated with the customer," says Mary Aufdemberg, director, product marketing, Daimler Trucks North America. "Our message needed to be aligned to their real needs."

Connectivity is also a key element for freight truck owners today, Ferguson says. Owners need to be able to monitor where their trucks are on the road, as well as what is happening with the vehicle, to determine if a truck needs to be taken off the road for servicing.

A big part of Aufdemberg's job is working with the dealerships to help them reach out to customers and sell the product. Ultimately, Daimler has multiple audiences to communicate with—the trucking industry, owners, drivers, the media and employees.

"We needed a marketing strategy that could live across all of our platforms and audiences," she says.

A microsite was created, RCO.freightlinertrucks.com, to give fleet owners deeper content, including testimonial videos and access to webinars.

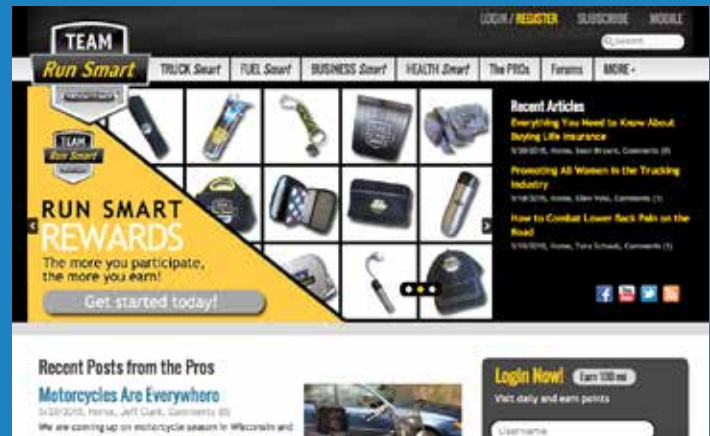
All of these messages needed to be inserted into advertising and promotions in a holistic way, because they all figure into purchasing decisions. The "Real Cost of Ownership" message carries across not only paid marketing efforts but also public relations, media interviews, trade show promotions and social media. Drivers on the road are heavily engaged in social, Ferguson notes, talking to one another and posting pictures of their vehicles. "There's a camaraderie between truck drivers."

"Social has grown dramatically for us," adds Aufdemberg. "Everyone in the trucking industry is mobile, and tablets and smartphones are the way to connect with family and friends on the road." Daimler maintains active presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as well as a community site, TeamRunSmart.com, where five drivers blog about their experiences on the road and—keeping on message—the real cost of driving and maintaining a truck.

In mobile, Daimler's most important tool is an app to assist the sales force. It provides a variety of specs, as well as critical information for sales people to share with prospects about truck ownership.

The purchase cycle can vary dramatically when it comes to buying trucks, she notes. Some people come to the vendor already knowing exactly what they want to buy. Big fleets often rotate in new vehicles frequently, say, every three years. Independent owner operators might hold on to their trucks for a decade or more.

What's the overall ROI of Daimler's marketing efforts? "Honestly, for us we look at market share and sales," says Aufdemberg. "Because we're B2B and much of what we do is reaching out to customers, a lot of our measurement [is based on] driving customers to dealer websites and ultimately driving sales and ownership." —BNV



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But one of the biggest surprises in the report was that 42% of the leading B2B brands were currently inactive in social media, says Phillip Agnew, community manager, Brandwatch.

"That's a huge problem," says Agnew. "B2B customers expect a holistic, engaged experience and you have to have a place to respond to them."

Not surprisingly, the number of B2B brands posting from multiple accounts was 16% higher on Twitter than on Facebook. U.S. software brands had the highest average amount of Twitter accounts, 9.1, while industrial tech brands in the U.K. had the lowest average, at 0.4.

In the report, Brandwatch recorded over 75,000 mentions that signaled an intent to purchase over the course of a year. Of the more than 5,000 customer complaints mentioned on social about these brands during that same period, only one percent received a response.

Which B2B verticals are doing the best in social? Business and software brands are in the lead, comprising half of all B2B social conversations. Aerospace comprised about 14% of all mentions, while medical and energy each own 8%.

"They're getting a great audience for their brands, says Agnew, noting big name B2B software brands average over a quarter million followers for their main social accounts.

These companies are also posting more frequently—software brands are posting to social on average 38 times per day, more than four times the general B2B average of 7.7 posts.

IBM was the most mentioned B2B brand in social media in over 100 countries. In oil rich countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, energy brands like Exxon-Mobil, BP and Chevron dominated conversations.

Where are B2B social conversations happening? Primarily on Twitter, according to Brandwatch's report. Eighty-nine percent of B2B owned and earned social interaction is on Twitter, with 10% on Facebook. B2B brands are also engaged in conversations on blogs and forums.

Instagram and Flickr aren't on most B2B organizations' radar, but they should be, notes Agnew. B2B conversations are happening there, but because the brands don't have a presence they're not engaged in this dialogue. "They're missing a huge chunk of the conversation—they don't find these customer service mentions and they can't jump on these intents to purchase."

B2B marketers with less mature social media plans need to catch up, and fast, he says. "There are two levels of B2B marketers—those who are adapting and those who are still stuck in the past. When marketers fully invest themselves, they'll be able to take advantage of all the opportunities and make their mark." !



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