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Set clear objectives for social success

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Social media marketing can produce significant return on investment when it is done well, but many companies jump into it without setting clear objectives. Social media remains a relatively new concept for marketers, but just because Ashton Kutcher is on Twitter doesn't mean it's right for your brand.

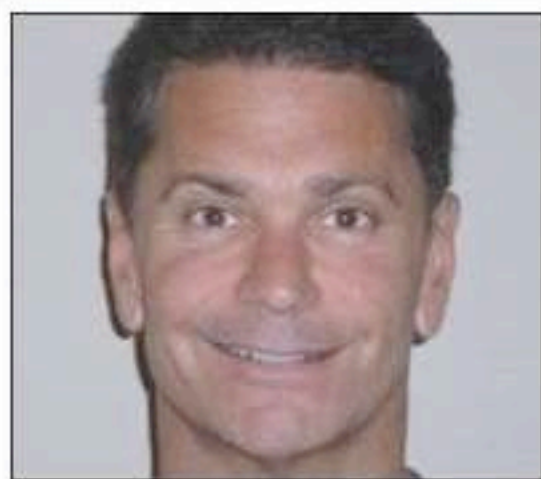
A disciplined development approach to social marketing strategy is vital. Social marketing is promising, because it engages and involves your brand's key constituencies at critical touchpoints in ways that build sales. Those constituencies can be a sales force, franchisees, retail sales associates, customers or other stakeholders. There are four essential steps to getting social media right.

1. Determine your key constituencies and audience. Don't be too broad in making that determination. Women ages 25 to 54, for example, are made up of a number of sub-groups. Marketers should identify the best targets based on interest so that an effort can be developed that is engaging and relevant.

2. What behavior of this audience will lead to a sale? It could be to interact with a specific unique aspect of a product or service: all-natural, green, best tasting, or some other brand attribute. Or it could be to get friends to redeem a coupon whose value gets bigger as friends pass it along. The right efforts include emotion, relevance and originality.

3. Determine the critical touchpoint that is most likely to elicit the desired behavior of the key constituency. That touchpoint includes both the medium in which you speak to them — e.g., mobile, in-store, social network, at work, e-mail, an event — and the time or daypart that you reach out to them.

4. Measure and monitor the results. Measure the social media effort in terms of participation and sales follow through. Some efforts require post-quantitative research against the database. Other efforts can be tracked by measuring traffic to a website or a retail outlet, coupon redemption, sweeps entries, or other promotion overlays.



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