

Facebook and Blogs as Active PR and Marketing Tools in Managing Your Own Business

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Abstract

The aim of writing this research was mainly to prove which social network is better in marketing your own business. The two networks that we have chosen are the two most used social media platforms: Facebook and blogs. We wanted to prove which of these two is better in marketing your own business. Due to the fact that we live in the so called "internet age" businesses are better advertised online. Through the use of social media and these two platforms entrepreneurs can make their businesses more visible and easy to advertise. Using either the Facebook platform, blogs or in some cases both, the business can be advertised to target a certain niche, the niche that the product sells best.

Regarding the purpose of this paper, we wanted to conduct this research to show which one is better, easier to use, and has fast results in marketing and advertising a personal business.

Keywords: social networks, blogs, Facebook, marketing, entrepreneur

Introduction

Nowadays all the information is online. Together with the internet, social media networks have emerged. Two marketing tools in one, they are interdependent. These two have made great changes in marketing and advertising. This fact can be seen in the budgets that enterprises allocate to online marketing campaigns. Research has shown that marketing departments are allocating almost 60% of the marketing budget to online advertising campaigns. Using an online campaign to market a business is easier, faster and less money consuming. Setting a certain niche helps entrepreneurs to have access to certain clients that they know for sure to have an interest in the product or service that they offer.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate which social media platform is more suitable for advertising a personal business. We refer to Facebook and blogs. Which is more effective in reaching the niche that an entrepreneur targets for his business? Which is a better marketing tool?

Facebook or a blog? Or maybe both? This is the main purpose of what we want to demonstrate further in the research that we have conducted.

For a better understanding of both Facebook and blogs we have structured the study to describe each of them and to demonstrate which of them is better in managing your own business. The literature that we have used to conduct this research is mainly from the field of marketing, social media and advertising. The information that we have gathered helped us through all the study with genuine information.

Entrepreneurs are versatile and they adapt themselves easily to certain changes. They are permanently seeking new ideas to improve their businesses. Social media is that type of change, offering new and improved ideas of advertising the business in a lot of different ways as to set a certain niche or reach certain customers. By setting this niche the strategy that will be implemented further as to advertise that business will be a lot simpler and clearer. The message that will be sent to the customer will be perceived more easily by using a certain channel looking through the prism of age, gender, etc. By using social media nowadays an entrepreneur has access easily to a large group of people that could be interested in the product that he/she is promoting on a Facebook page or a blog.

Internet marketing is evolving rapidly. New ways of advertising online are emerging. As an entrepreneur you should stay permanently updated with the latest methods and trends in marketing and advertising.

Theoretical Perspectives

The concept of the online social media network

We find ourselves today in the "Internet Age". There are so many possibilities of communication, socialization and business platforms that make our life easier. A lot of new platforms and applications have emerged on the market and they make our daily lives easier. Here we can mention Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and so on. By using these platforms we make ourselves visible to other users. Creating an account helps people keep in touch with business partners, browse the market, create marketing campaigns, socialize with friends and family, market their own business and create PR campaigns.

However, we should keep in mind that none of the above mentioned platforms would be available to us without the internet. Advertising would not be what we know today without the internet.

Businesses are easier to be advertised by using the internet and different platforms.

According to Treadway and Smith, social media is a collection of data and technologies that make the connection between individuals by sharing content through internet platforms.¹ Meerman offers a different approach of the concept: "Social media provide the way people share ideas, content, thoughts, and relationship online. Social media differ from so-called mainstream media as that anyone can create, comment on, and add to social media content. Social media can take the form of text, audio, video, images, and communication"².

The first definition offered by Treadway and Smith is a general one, explaining briefly what social media is, whereas Meerman offers a broader definition, explaining exactly what the social media concept implies, what it offers to each individual.

By using the means that social media offer, people can market their businesses easier. They can get in touch with customers rapidly. From our point of view what is the most important part of social media is the fact that you can create promotional campaigns and advertise your business easier and faster. Using the tools that social media can offer, the entrepreneurs have much more opportunities on the business market.

A lot of business people nowadays prefer advertising their business through social media. The ads are easier to be seen and they appear almost everywhere. Now, even YouTube has included ads at the beginning of the video clips. Although, this can be sometimes annoying, entrepreneurs have the certainty that their commercial or advertisement has been seen by the targeted market.

There are two terms that may get confused, "social media" and "social networking". Meerman further explains that social media refers to the large number of platforms that people use for online communication. Examples: blogs, video, photos and so on. Social networking is broadly a term defining people that interact on sites like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. Moreover, Meerman states that "Social networking occurs when people

¹ Treadway C., Smith M., May 2010, "Facebook Marketing: An Hour a Day", Sybex

² Meerman D.S., January 2010, "The New Rules of Marketing and PR: How to Use Social Media, Online Video, Mobile Applications, Blogs, News Releases, and Viral Marketing to Reach Buyers Directly", John Wiley, 3rd edition (p. 38)

create a personal profile and interact with to become part of a community of friends and like-minded people and to share information."³

According to M. Pisău "companies are gradually moving parts of their business online and the recognition of the digital reality is reflected in the marketing budgets for online communication where investment is significantly rising."⁴ Online marketing nowadays is rapidly changing and developing. New online marketing strategies are appearing, almost every day. Investors are constantly seeking new ways of promoting their business and gaining a consistent profit out of it.

The social impact that social media had over the internet was huge. At the same time, this phenomenon was perceived differently by every culture. Taking a glimpse at the marketing scene, the different socio-cultural behaviour of the consumer set some barriers to the advertising and marketing domain, leading to custom advertising campaign for cultures that were and still are more conservative, that have a strict religion or particular customs.

Last but not least, another important aspect of social media is the consumer behaviour. According to Rich, "Consumer behavior is very different today than it was when CRM was born in the early 1990s. Every company must adjust accordingly, positioning itself as a resource not only to service a customer—through whatever channel or channels the customer chooses—but also to attract, upsell, and cross-sell for repeat business."⁵

The online social media emergence in PR and marketing through Facebook and blogs

Advertising online was not so easy at the beginning of the internet. The means were not available for everyone and the chances for people to see your advertising texts were small. After almost 4 years the World Wide Web made a grandiose entrance. The first available browser was Mosaic in '94, opening the channel for marketing and advertising opportunities online. People responded in a large number to this new opportunity of promoting their businesses online.

³ Idem, p. 38

⁴ Pisău M., "Social Media and the Communication Shift", in *Communication Matters*, p. 167

⁵ Rich D., 2010, "The New Behavior of the Social Customer", *CRM Magazine*, vol. 14

Moving further we are going to talk about the of social networks and the emergence of Facebook.

No one would have thought that a platform created mainly for Harvard students to get to know each other would create a revolution in social media. At the beginning, the emergence of Facebook as a new platform that was attracting more and more users every day, created a war with MySpace, a social platform created in 2013. This war was to be won by Facebook.

Facebook has improved and has had a lot of new great features that were more attractive and easy to use. One of them is the News Feed that created a bond between users. They can see status updates, photos, and links; all was well organised and put in place. At first people did not respond so well to the changes that Facebook suffered but after a period of accommodation they embraced the change. Taking into account the limited companies and their former strategies to advertise online, now a pallet of new and improved opportunities for marketers appears.

Facebook is one of the above mentioned opportunities. We might say that it was created as a marketing tool. All the information and data can be found in one place. Using Facebook, individuals can manifest their likes by using the famous "Like" button and dislikes in comments. These tools are great for entrepreneurs. They can analyse consumer behaviour just through these tools.

Going back to what interested us in the first place Facebook is a platform that can make new businesses easily to be seen by users. Entrepreneurs can gather the necessary information faster by setting a certain niche that would manifest a greater interest in its product that he offers to the market.

Moreover, we are going to deal with blogs, taking into account that we describe how blogs have emerged and how they can help users to manage their own businesses.

Nowadays, a large number of entrepreneurs advertise and market the business that they have by using a blog. They can engage easier with customers, promote different services or products and, last but not least, they can gain extra money from adding visual ads. Blogs are mainly divided into two big categories: personal blogs and business blogs. As White describes, "A *Personal Blog* is generally set up to allow the author to discuss their views on anything and everything, so the topics change with each post according to mood or inclinations" compared with "*Business*

Blogs developed as a natural progression. They use the same technology but tend to be much targeted in terms of their subject matter and focus on a specific market area or niche. In fact, something to bear in mind: the most successful are set up with both an audience and a business focus in mind which they then stick to".⁶

Blogs are an easy to use marketing tool that can help marketers to advertise their businesses in a pleasant and easy way. All that is required would be just some imagination, creativity, time and dedication.

Research Methodology

In order to gather all the data that we needed to reach a certain conclusion, we have collected and analyzed some data. The report that we have chosen is published every year in May and its research is based on quantitative methods, Stelzner M. A. May 2015. The process of data collection was based on emails and social media as to find participants that were relevant to this annual report. Emails were sent to a total of 330,000 persons out of whom 3,720 responded. The respondents were mainly entrepreneurs.

From this report we have chosen only the questions that interested us the most and that we found interesting and useful to reach a pertinent conclusion that can be feasible later on. We wanted the research to help and inspire others that are in the same search for answers that we are. We wanted to conduct this case study mostly because we live in the internet age and we should use all the means that social media offer us.

Following this annual report we discovered a lot of new and fresh information regarding Facebook campaigns, blog campaigns and what is the entrepreneur's opinion on these platforms.

In the last part of our paper there are the conclusions and the recommendations correlated with my findings. Here will be found the results explained and recommendations that we consider to be relevant after analysing the results that were obtained. These conclusions will be detailed and specific, related to our findings. The advice that we are going to present is related strictly to our findings. We hope that this paper will help people to finally decide to start their own business and market it on one of these platforms.

⁶ M. White, 2008, "Better Business Blogging – An Introduction to Business Blogs, their benefits & how to promote them", p. 4

The Case Study

This section is divided into two parts. In the first part we are going to analyse how to conduct an advertising campaign/strategy on a Facebook page and a blog. Mostly, how to market and advertise a personal business using these two platforms. The second part is the core case study, where we are going to analyse the data based on the report that we considered to be relevant for this research.

Promoting campaigns/strategies on Facebook

Facebook is used, today, mostly for socialising. People all over the world use it to communicate with one another, share photos, videos, statuses, stories, and also files. But Facebook is more than that it offers entrepreneurs the means through which they can advertise their businesses on it. Now, almost everyone has a Facebook page, people browse daily through Facebook in search for new information. Facebook is more than that, it is a marketing tool. People can express their opinions, likes, dislikes, comment, on a certain page or topic. Almost everything is online. That is why nowadays entrepreneurs market their businesses on Facebook. They can easily set a certain niche that they want to address to, they can select the type of advertising that they want to conduct, different campaigns that can reach to the heart and attention of the targeted customers.

Entrepreneurs have a lot of different opportunities through which they can advertise their business on Facebook. That is why we are going to present how a Facebook campaign is conducted, step by step. The first step and the most important of them all is to create a Facebook page for that certain business and to set a niche for the clients that will be interested in that product/service. The second step is optimizing the page, setting a clear timeline history about that business, how it all started, the process, what clients do to address it. After that a brief description of the services/products that it offers. A slogan is another plus for Facebook advertising. The slogan should be catchy to draw the clients' attention and to remain in their minds. Another important part is the page name. If the business has a name of its own, that will be the name of the page. If not, the name of the entrepreneur is the next best alternative.

The third step is creating a great consumers' experience. Satisfied consumers are the best advertisers. That will lead to free advertising because word-of-mouth comes in. Another plus is to send thank-you emails after the purchasing of that product/service. Customers are not used to this

type of attention. Making the customer feel special is another plus in gaining new customers.

The fourth step is to make the customers share their experience with that product/service. A follow up with a phone call asking the client if he is happy with the product/service that he has bought will make the seller-client bond stronger. The client will feel that he is important. After that call the entrepreneur will ask him if he wants to leave a comment on his satisfaction with that product/service. This will lead again to word-of-mouth and will gather more customers. People can easily relate to other people's experience. If they see the opinion of another person that is "exactly like them" they will feel encouraged to buy that product faster and with less doubts.

The fifth step refers to giveaways. Clients are attracted by free products. This is a great idea for the promotion strategies. By organising giveaways, entrepreneurs advertise their business, mostly, for free. The mechanism of a giveaway is very simple. The entrepreneur organises a campaign where he is giving away for example, an iPad. In order to win this the customers need to follow some easy steps. The first step is to enter their email in the comment section below the giveaway post and to say they are participating in that giveaway. Second step is to share the business page on their personal Facebook pages and to say why they like the products that can be found there. After that, they will wait to see if they are the lucky winners. The winner is mainly decided by the page Random.org which is simple and fast to use. The entrepreneur will post the winner in a new post and will deliver that iPad to the winner in person. After that a photo will be posted on the page as to show that it was not a charade. The customers respond well to this type of giveaways. A big part of the advertising campaigns is based on this type of giveaways because it generates new customers with minimum effort.

These are the five easy steps in promoting your own business through Facebook. These steps are a guarantee of success. A lot of entrepreneurs nowadays use these steps when they start a business and want to advertise it through Facebook. Having access to a big platform where people are always searching for information and products is a great opportunity for entrepreneurs nowadays. It is a simple and easy way of marketing your own business.

Promoting campaigns/strategies on blogs

Nowadays blogging is done mainly by anyone that has access to the internet and a computer. By blogging, people share photos, experiences, thoughts, expectations and market their own business. Further on we are going to focus on how to market your own business on a blog.

When an entrepreneur starts a business he takes a lot of technicalities into consideration, mainly the marketing strategy. Entrepreneurs are permanently seeking new ways to advertise their businesses. Having a blog for that business is a step forward for the entrepreneur to be seen on the market. The blog must be eye-catching because clients respond to the visual part more easily.

First and foremost, an entrepreneur needs to start a blog for his business and to set a niche to know what customers to target when he advertises his product/services. After that, the first step is to generate content. The titles must be catchy for the clients to access them. Usually clients respond well to titles like: "How to", "How not to", and when urgency is created as for that client to click the title. Ex: "Find out the latest trends in sports gear. Only here!" Using breaking news is another strategy. People access rapidly the latest news that appear about a certain product or a service. Another plus for a blog post is creating a sensational title and content. Readers like to be surprised, they are always searching for something new, something that they do not see anywhere else. Due to the fact that there are a lot of bloggers on the market the content must have a "dose" of sensational in it. As a new entrepreneur on the market, gaining customers' attention is essential.

The second step, when the entrepreneur has constructed an online journal readership, he can begin showcasing to change those guests into leads. An all-round developed blog entry ought to dependably incorporate into content connections to different assets that the entrepreneur sells. There are different links included in the article that the clients can access and get familiarized with.

The third step contains the calls to action. The calls to action aim to bring the customers into the purchasing process. The "purchasing process" can be understood by the client purchasing the product that the entrepreneur offers or by simply accessing the information that he is writing on the blog. Well positioned calls to action on blogs are through banners strategically placed on different parts of the blog where the customer can permanently see them. A good call to action is advertising

more than on one blog post that is ultimately leading to the process of selling a product or a service.

The fourth step underlines that the blog should be entertaining, and its content should be well balanced. A research showed that more than 70% of the customers are attracted by the visual elements that have powerful colours. Adding videos and photos that are related with the article is also a great marketing strategy.

The fifth step is, in our opinion, the most important one. How an entrepreneur can promote his/her blog. There are plenty of opportunities out of which an entrepreneur can choose. First of all, there are professional bloggers. Attracting professional bloggers from the niche that was set at the beginning of the business is a huge step. Bloggers can promote a business if they find the product/information useful. In this way the entrepreneur gains more leads on his blog. In the second place there are the social networks that offer a wide range of opportunities for the entrepreneur to advertise his blog/blog post. Social networks such as: Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ and Twitter are very useful. On these social networks, the entrepreneur can share his publish post, share images, product information, all that could be found in different blog posts.

Another way of advertising the blog is through events. If the entrepreneur is invited to different events he can relate this on his blog. In this way a lot of people discover the blog and can become potential customers. Last but not least, there are business emails. In a business email or any type of email when the entrepreneur signs he can also mention his blog. In that way people can find information about the blog more easily.

From our own experience, people empathize whenever writing an article we use our own life experience. They tend to be more connected with the person that writes the article. Entrepreneurs can gain more clients by empathizing with them and asking them about their needs and wants. Last but not least, they should also position themselves as experts. Clients respond much more rapidly if the person that writes and manages the blog is an expert on the topic. The degree of trust tends to be higher.

Facebook vs. Blogs. Which suits your business better?

In this section of our study we are going to analyse the data that we have collected from Stelzner M. A. May 2015, "2015 Social Media Marketing Industry Report - How Marketers Are Using Social Media to

Grow Their Businesses”⁷, a report that is published in May every year. The data that we have found in this report are very relevant to the research that we wanted to conduct by gathering data from people all over the world. In this way we can reach a certain conclusion based on experienced people who have based their business on the concept of social media.

The first question that was relevant to our case study was: “If entrepreneurs use social media in their businesses”. 96% of them said that they use social media in their businesses.

The second question relevant to the case study is: “Which social media is mostly used?” At the top is Facebook with 93% and then the blogs (forums) with 14%. The discrepancy is considerably high between the two of them.

The third question: “Which is the platform that they find the most important to market their business?” Half of the entrepreneurs went for Facebook and only 1% for blogs (forums), another big discrepancy in their preferences.

The fourth question was: “Which type of paid online networking do they frequently use?” 84% of the entrepreneurs said that they use Facebook advertisements and only 7% promoted blog posts.

The fifth question was: “The type of content they use in their online networking”. 70% of the entrepreneurs chose blogs. Blogs present an advantage in content writing and the visual section. Taking into consideration that on Facebook the amount of text that can be written is limited a blog wins by not having a limited number of words or pictures.

The sixth question was: “What is the absolute most vital type of content for their businesses?” 45% of the entrepreneurs chose blogging.

The seventh question pertinent for this case study was “In what capacity entrepreneurs will change their future content movement?” 69% of the entrepreneur plan to increase blog usage. This is a plus for blog usage. Entrepreneurs also intend to move their attention more to blogging.

The eighth and last question was: in what capacity will entrepreneurs change their paid online networking? 53% of entrepreneurs plan to increase their Facebook use and just 24% of entrepreneurs have in mind to increase their promoted blog posts. Nevertheless, the 24% for blogs

⁷ M. A. Stelzner, May 2015, “2015 Social Media Marketing Industry Report – How Marketers Are Using Social Media to Grow Their Businesses”, pp. 7, 23, 28, 40, 43, 44, 46

is a step forward for blogging. Entrepreneurs tend to move their focus on promoted blog posts.

As we have expected Facebook is in the top preferences of entrepreneurs. Blogging is still at the beginning although when we refer to content blogging is number one in the preferences of entrepreneurs. Although the discrepancy between the two is big, each one plays an important role in the advertising and marketing campaign of a business. Even though Facebook is the top choice of entrepreneurs as the best platform and paid ads, blogging is considered the most important platform for content and visuals (images and videos).

Although Facebook is by far winning this “battle” we would choose both of them for advertising and promoting our own business. Each of them has something to offer in a big or small way. Each has its advantages and disadvantages and in our opinion they both work well together in advertising and marketing a new business. By completing each other, this “mix”, could be the recipe for success as a PR and marketing tool in managing your own business.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The online social media has a lot to offer nowadays. People use social media every day, every hour, enjoying a big range of opportunities that are just a click away. Looking back at the evolution of social media is huge and the possibilities that it offers to us today are infinite. Who thought that it would be so simple to advertise a business using social media in the past? Now the possibilities are everywhere you look on the internet.

Even a child could do this if he would like to.

The internet age has brought us a lot of facilities that in the past people never dreamt of. Social media is making the lives of entrepreneurs easier each and every day. The opportunities do not cease to appear. Facebook and blogs are two of the platforms that we wanted to spotlight. From our point of view these two make a business easily seen by the public. As in the case study that we have conducted, Facebook is in the top of the entrepreneurs’ preferences as the best and most frequently used platform and paid ads. Although blogs are far behind Facebook they are still considered the best in terms of content and visual.

Furthermore, entrepreneurs take into consideration to increase their use of blog content and promoted blog posts as well as Facebook ads usage.

Although the purpose has been to choose one of these two, it can be clearly seen that Facebook has won supremacy on the social media and it is the “lucky winner”. Looking forward, we think that for a successful business the perfect recipe would be to use both of them. Although Facebook is the best, blogs work better at content and visual. For a start-up business to use both Facebook and blogs is a very good idea.

An entrepreneur who uses both Facebook and blogs can easily reach a larger number of consumers on whom he has set a certain niche in the past. Blogs offer more details about that certain product by offering more information with each blog post. Customers can reach certain blog posts and obtain the information that they need regarding that certain product.

Facebook and blogs can be seen as two very helpful platforms marketing and advertising a business because they complete each other. As an entrepreneur that permanently seeks new opportunities to market and advertise his business Facebook and blogs constantly develop and come up with new and improved solutions for marketing your own business.

As an entrepreneur, you should take all the risks into consideration. You never know what may appear. Using both Facebook and blogs make an entrepreneur feel secure in the case in which one of them is hacked he will still have the other one. Using these two platforms gives entrepreneurs a certain security knowing that their business is safe if something happens to one of these two platforms.

Both Facebook and blogs are safe platforms to conduct your business on. They offer a backup if something happens to the page that you are marketing your business on. This strategy has attracted a lot of young entrepreneurs that want to start their businesses online. Social media has a lot to offer nowadays. Looking from the perspective of age segmentation people that are in their 20s – 30s are more opened to the idea of marketing their business online. They are permanently online seeking new methods of advertising their businesses through different strategies to whom customers respond better.

In conclusion, the internet age is developing fast, coming with new and improved social media methods. Two of these methods are Facebook and blogs. Although the result of our case study shows that Facebook is in the top of the preferences of entrepreneurs all over the world, we think that using both Facebook and blogs could lead entrepreneurs easier and faster to the success that they hope to achieve. We trust that this speaks in favour

of the future age that will reform the advertising channels as we know them at present.

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