



Ask Affy

Need advice? Ask Affy!

Q

We are thinking about getting our feet wet in social media in our contact centre. Is now a good time to get started and if so, what are some best practices?

Signed, Twitter tweet!

A

Social media is not only here to stay but emerging as influential communication medium impacting brands and even personal reputations. Everyone is getting on this bandwagon – just last week, Google introduced ‘Google +’ (Plus) which includes a feature that gives you real-time access to a closed circle of friends and family – you literally get to virtually ‘hang out’.

Adoption rate is growing and be aware that it is not just the twenty somethings who are actively using social media. So, the short answer to your first question is ‘yes but’... be clear on your strategy and if you decide to get actively get involved you must commit to stay involved.

Many who are in the same position as you are start with a passive approach. Listening to what customers and others say about their products and service and watching what other companies are doing or not doing. We subscribe to the R and D method – Rob and Duplicate. Look at what others are doing, find what you like and what seems to work for another company and replicate it!

On the other hand, if you choose to actively engage, stay true to these key principles - be responsible, genuine, and transparent. Be transparent with your intentions: Don’t “hide” your identity and don’t “spin” your responses into commercial messages. The other thing to keep in mind is that you WILL get it wrong now and again. In these situations, its best to apologize and be transparent as any seeming manipulation in a public forum will prove disastrous.

So, a couple of key points to get you started down this path.

Prepare your Agents for the Role:

Before you recruit Agents for your Social media team, decide on a “skill profile” that’s relevant to the role. To name a few - good grammar, proven track record of strong customer care and are they themselves social media savvy.

Provide Agents with Necessary Guidance:

Although some standardized email responses can be used multiple times with different customers, this approach cannot be used when responding to customers through social media. Instead, create reference library of standard, accurate information bits for your Agents to sculpt into a personalized message using their own unique personality. Adding a link, acknowledging other posters, mirroring poster emotions are ways responses can sound genuine and not canned. Your social media team should have a clear process that includes checklists, templates, and guidelines to moderate a discussion, manage trolls, and decide how to handle escalations online versus via the phone.

Engage your Marketing Team:

To drive consistency across media and with your brand voice, identify 50 of the top communication drivers and have Marketing develop the “50 Perfect Posts” for Agents to use as a resource. This will help the Agents respond confidently to different scenarios knowing they are supported.

Provide Good Day to Day Support:

Getting it right means that there are times where you might fail. Mitigate this risk by creating a process for Agents to quickly get a second opinion prior to sending a post. This is a great opportunity to teach and coach, therefore, improving their skills and confidence.

Know When to be Patient:

If someone is publically trashing your company – there are times when it is best NOT to respond to a negative post. You will find that if you are patient and you have strong brand presence, others will defend your brand with more credibility than you could. Be careful how you respond as your interactions are in the public record and sometimes viral upon posting a response. The impact is immediate starting with one too many and working at a speed unrivalled by any other interaction in spreading the ‘word’. No matter what you do, your impact is lasting forever somewhere no matter what you think – Facebook, Google or on some server where this information can be accessed at any point. If in doubt, not responding is better than responding inappropriately!

Twitter Twit, social media has the ability to expand and personalize your brand in ways not previously available. It works best when social media is well integrated into an overall marketing and advertising strategy. Social media also gives you an opportunity to get intimate with customers by listening to both positive and negative opinions about your

products and services. We live in a very exciting time where there is so much opportunity to innovate. Good luck!

Afshan Kinder

Mahatma Gandhi said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world". This resonates for me in the work I do and hopefully for the people I touch. Looking back at 20 years of running operations, there was always this excitement to initiate change, create innovative strategies, and build agile teams who can execute.

What has me jump out of bed in the morning (somewhere in the world!) is working with fast paced companies with complex problems to solve. Proudest moments? In the mid-1990's, we were voted Canada's #1 customer service centre at Sprint Canada at a time when we could barely catch our breath during double digit growth. Then more fun at ING DIRECT hitting Top Box customer satisfaction 6 years in a row. This Daniel Pink quote feels right on: "Meaningful achievement depends on lifting one's sights and pushing toward the horizon."

I live in Toronto, Canada with my husband, two children & two bossy cats.

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