



ARTICLES

Whoever Said Social Media Is Low-Cost?



By Anan Abu Rmieleh



Since the emergence of social media, most businesses and organisations are going online, which has created a 24/7 online community. The Internet has already started to deplete traditional channels and has led the world into a new era where having an online presence is more important than having a tree in your garden. Life is being transferred to another planet; a virtual one that is called Web. Nowadays, having an office and having a website are equally important. Actually, a website might be more important as it can be viewed concurrently by a greater number of people at any time during the day. With the help of social media, the Web has hosted millions of people who spend their time shopping, socialising, writing, drawing, listening, watching, and studying online. When it comes to assessing marketing efforts, social media dashboards provide you with detailed reports that you would not

have access to through advertising in newspapers, on radio, or through billboards. Advertisers have always considered traditional media to be an expensive tool where return on investment cannot be easily measured. Hence social media has evolved with a different vision that entails reporting, specific targeting, and relationship building. The problem lies in the fact that social media has been promoted as a low-cost marketing tactic; nevertheless, whoever believes this fallacy is not doing the right thing on social media.

Going social is not an easy decision to implement. It is not a part-time job or a simple task that can be assigned to an intern. Social media nowadays is the core of your image, values,

and online presence. Acute change management is indeed mandatory to turn your human and capital resources into social generators. Although paid advertising on social media is cheap and posting content is free of charge, you need a lot of staff to manage and monitor your social activities on a daily basis. Information on social platforms is disseminated faster than you can imagine, and a crisis may erupt within minutes.

Without enough resources and capabilities, the pros and cons of social media are mostly the same. One of the most significant advantages is dialogue, but hiring a skilled social writer who can initiate conversations needs a budget. Interacting with a diversified audience is another advantage; however, it requires subtle planning to satisfy the majority of your fans, who have varied demographic and geographic



traits. On the other hand, social media is an instant and easily accessible communication tool, which makes it an uncontrollable crisis inciter. Lastly, measurement and listening tools on social media, which are clearly better than traditional measurement tools, can be a double-edged sword. An always-online community using PCs, laptops, smartphones, and tablets is stalking you, and if your activities are not well studied by experts, your presence will be an embarrassment.

Theoretically, to perform well on social media, you need an experienced team that is well aware of the company's business model, branding, marketing strategies, and corporate communications guidelines. This team should cooperate with all departments to curate a comprehensive and compelling content. If the company's social culture is fragile, no real content will be created and your brand will not be well-humanised on social media. Humanising your brand is simply revealing the human side of your company. Online people like to deal with human beings, not sales machines!

Generally speaking, the social media team would include a content creator, advertiser, Web developer, and graphic designer. As you read this you might think that the responsibilities of each are trivial; nonetheless, a comprehensive list of their responsibilities might occupy the space of two more pages. A content creator is responsible for collecting, editing, publishing,

scheduling, and monitoring content on different social media platforms; blogging might also be included. The response and community management is also a major task that the content creator has to manage on hourly basis. That's actually the employee that never sleeps well, always thinking about every post that he/she publishes. The advertiser is responsible for running various ad versions on numerous social networks. This may include budgeting, targeting, researching, monitoring, and measuring all paid campaigns. You would not want to look at this guy's busy computer screen. Since the goal is to produce genuine material, the job of the content creator and the advertiser must be supported with graphic designs and images as well as webpages, landing pages, applications, and website integration; here comes the expertise of the graphic designer and the Web developer. In addition to human resources, you may need to purchase online tools to listen to your audience, monitor your activities, and measure your performance.

This constitutes only a part of the cost of the social team. Creating a social culture in other departments is a different story; in Palestine, it is actually the whole story. Digitalising your organisation will lead you to online sales, online procurement, online human resources, online networking, online customer support, online journalism, and online artwork. Agencies that used to have only graphic designers

must now have Web designers as well. Marketing professionals have previously worked on above-the-line-tools, now they need to know how to integrate social media activities and direct marketing techniques into their offline campaigns by understanding QR codes, shortened links, and hashtags. Public relations personnel have been liaising with newspapers and magazines, now they have to deal with bloggers, tweeters, and online news sites. Human resources people used to headhunt through connections and vacancy announcements in print, now they search on LinkedIn and post vacancies online. Customer support personnel have been answering inquiries by phone, now they need to satisfy customers coming through the website and social media outlets. All these additional tasks need training and more employees and "Change Management" initiatives.

Not being on social media is not even an option. If you're not there, you will cease to exist. At the same time, you need to do it right. So you're either there with a professional presence or you become invisible. Those who want to empower their presence online need to follow a "Go-Hard or Go-Home" approach. In several years, your bank will have no more clients without online services, your shop will not be selling offline, and your telecom services will become pointless if online top-up and e-customer support is unavailable.

Get social before you get to social media! Imagine yourself at a cocktail party where you need to interact rather than simply talk about yourself. A Like or Follow on your page is the crush that someone has on you. If they find you uninteresting, they'll look for someone else. Always remember that nothing is free – neither the drinks you buy for others nor the ones that are offered to you. It costs a lot to sustain every relationship that you cultivate!

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