

The Art of Listening on Social Media

On May 23 and 24, 2016, the Nova Committee of the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce will host its 5th Biennial SME Conference. This year's theme is Smarter Technology, Better Business. The conference will offer a variety of insights and solutions to help businesses leverage technology - including the use of social media - to increase competitiveness.

Social media is the public version of yourself. You can post a great deal of inspirational pieces and share pictures and thoughts. You might gain some mileage in fostering a professional image, but, the question remains: How do you listen?

Here are three tips to improve your listening skills on social media.

Respond to Comments on your Social Media Sites

If someone comments on your post, it is always a good idea to engage the individual in conversation. It's far better than just replying with a nonchalant "Come to my website and see what I have". That effectively amounts to telling a customer who walks into your store 'This is what you want and the cash register is over here.' As you can imagine, this is hardly the strategy to make your customer return to do business once more, or even for him or her to make a purchase in the first place!

Nurturing your social media friends and followers is important, so ask them questions about themselves and about how they found you on social media. Ask them to send you a message should they have any questions which you can answer. And of course, take time to read and comment on their profile.

Many of us are irritated by store attendants who follow us around while we browse in a 'brick-and-mortar' shop. The same applies in a virtual platform; try not to be too quick, therefore, to offer solutions if the person has not said anything that even hints at what they are looking for.

Checking your social site, a minimum of once per day, and responding to comments is like having your eyes on the floor to see who raises their hands. Keep in mind that social media is like life in general ... comments tend to encourage more conversation, so go for it.

A Page of Posts and No Engagement

As children we seldom enjoyed listening to our parents lecture to us. In a similar fashion, your posts on social media sites should entice your visitors to want to say something and not just listen to you.

The culture of the company will dictate what posts you should use to elicit comments and the action of 'sharing' from visitors to your page. In the world of social media, 'likes' count for very little in terms of engagement. The real benefits come from comments left by visitors and followers and the action of sharing the posts. It pays to avoid the pitfall of your social media site becoming like a lecture hall or a billboard. Give your followers space to shine!

Repeating 'Same Ole, Same Ole'

Page administrators often repeat the same image plastered all over several different social media sites. The subtext of that action appears to be: "I spent money on this graphic and come hell or high water, I'm going to get the most out of it!"

If you are promoting an event, you might get away with repeatedly uploading the same post. After a while, however, you should consider modifying it a bit. You can opt for changing the copy, or the call to action. Alternatively, you can add more copy thereby lengthening the post. Whatever you choose to do, the post should appear to offer something fresh and new.

In one of his courses motivational author Brendon Burchard pointed out that you can repeat your content, once it's done differently and in different places to re-direct users back to your core business location ... your web site. It stands to reason, therefore, that your profile and all of your product information ought to be on your web site, with your social media site functioning as a teaser for users to visit your web page.

Your business is unique and you are likely to have content other than pictures of your products which can be shared with your online community. So make your social media sites fun no matter what line of business you are in. Always remember that the biggest tip to improving your listening skills on social media is to let your fans, followers, and connections know that they are the best!

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For more information and to register for Smarter Technology, Better Business, please contact the T&T Chamber at 637 6966 ext. 1252 or e-mail sboodoo@chamber.org.tt

(The Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce thanks Bernadette Chin Lee for contributing this article).