

THE MOBILE MARKET

According to recent figures from Ofcom, smartphone market penetration in the UK now sits at c. 58%. With widespread 3G coverage, Wi-Fi hotspots and now 4G rolling out across the UK, mobile phone users are consuming more media and content than ever before.

Devices such as the Apple iPhone, Blackberry, Android smartphones such as the Samsung Galaxy, etc. have driven the market in a new direction. A phone is no longer just for making calls – it is an email device, media viewing, news gathering, social media interface.

The latest TV adverts from Apple boldly claim that “every day, more photos are taken on iPhone than any other camera”. Smartphones are becoming an ever more convenient way of accessing the internet – so much so that many firms offer “mobile optimised” versions of their websites.

Further innovations which are gathering traction include m-commerce; essentially using one’s mobile phone and a PayPal account to make purchases. In economies such as India and China an estimated 40% + of consumers make purchases using m-commerce platforms on smartphones (according to Worldpay’s global online shopper report). In the UK innovations include airlines which offer online check-in services where a barcode displayed on a smartphone screen can be used as a boarding card.

So what are we dealing with here? Essentially, a market shift. Smartphones have changed the way we consume media, the way we stay in contact and the level to which we are connected to our businesses, our contacts and our lives. Businesses must now adapt their I.T. strategies to this new market shift. Many firms already employ Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policies for things like tablets and smartphones. Smart companies will view this change in the market as an opportunity to bring new products and services to new audiences.



USING TWITTER AS A PR TOOL

Many businesses use Twitter as part of their social media strategy but many fail to utilise it properly as a public relations (PR) tool. Some businesses view the 140 character limit per post as a negative but that is potentially due to a lack of understanding in terms of how best to use Twitter.



The 140-character limit is, in fact, a good thing. Today’s business people are very time poor, they need information to be easily digestible and to the point. Twitter’s character limit forces users to convey a point concisely.

Use Links

One of the more effective ways of using Twitter is to share links with a brief description describing what the tweet links to. For example a tweet could be, “come to our seminar and find out how we can help you to reduce your tax bill – click here for more www.taxbill.com”

Shorten Links

Given that Twitter limits users to 140 characters, it is necessary to shorten hyperlinks. Services such as tinyurl.com are free of charge and allow you to shorten even the longest hyperlinks to just 10 or 15 characters.

Follow People

If you want to generate useful PR from your business’s Twitter account you need to identify the right target audience. Once you have worked out which segment of the market to target, start following people on Twitter who match that profile. When you follow someone on twitter they tend to follow you back (usually!). If you are saying something which is relevant to them they will begin to take an interest in your tweets, therefore giving you an effective way to reach out to your target audience.

Be different

Many businesses lack the time or resources to reach out to customers individually. Instead they rely on mass campaigns to connect with existing and potential customers. You can differentiate your businesses by messaging your targets directly on Twitter. Many of your competitors will only use Twitter to post updates and announcements. You can go one step further and use Twitter as a call to action, a means to respond to customers and make them feel like they are truly being heard.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

In today's hyper-competitive business world, project management has become an essential skill for managers. As businesses grow and develop they need to adapt to change. A good project manager can ensure the successful delivery of projects that help to move the business forward.



Time management

Projects are temporary in nature with a pretty defined beginning and end. Projects are normally created by businesses to develop a new product, service or to effect a business transformation. As such, project managers must be really good at managing deadlines, and can only do so with strong time management skills.

Interpersonal skills

It is important for the project manager to possess excellent interpersonal skills. They could work with more than one project at any point in time. These projects might not have the same team members, sponsors or stakeholders. As such, a project manager needs to be able to communicate with different groups of people effectively. For example, a project manager who is in charge of building and launching a new office might be required to report to senior management about project progress and also work with the different internal departments such as IT and finance.

Budget management

Project managers also have to pay attention to the budget of the project while ensuring that the final results adhere to the required quality standards. In the first place, they should work out the project scope with the stakeholders, senior management and project sponsors. Using the project scope as a reference, the project manager can then construct an estimated project budget and seek opinions to determine if it is realistic.

Scope creep

Once the project begins, the project manager needs to watch out for scope creep. This is where the project begins to deviate from the agreed specification in terms of cost, timeline, etc. A good project manager will be able to create and agree a project specification which has tolerances built in and monitoring / reporting in place to help minimise scope creep – this is essential as significant deviations from the project specification can have an effect on budgets, deliverables, etc.

MENTORING

Business leaders are not born – they are created. Effective training and mentoring are the foundations of most successful managers, chief executives or business owners. Business leaders of the future must learn from those that are in leadership positions today.



Future proofing your business means investing in your people to create the next generation of managers. A willingness to learn and sometimes sacrifice in order to reach goals is an absolute requirement in today's fast-moving corporate environment – but somebody needs to guide the next generation.

Training is important in any field. Proper training is even more important in today's demanding business environment. As a business owner or manager you should invest in the future of your business by mentoring those who are willing to learn. These people will take your business to new heights. They will bring fresh insight and in years to come keep the business moving forward.

In choosing to become a mentor for one or two talented people in your team, you should prepare to impart your knowledge, experience and tips for success. The advice and instruction that you give could be invaluable to the future of your business.

Natural talent is very difficult to find. However, if you have one or two talented people in your team take them under your wing and help them to develop their skills. Those that are mentored will bring an eagerness and flow of new ideas to your business. Your mentoring programme should be built on the following foundations:

- Providing career development advice
- Offering your future managers / leaders an opportunity to develop new skills and expertise
- Providing access to new, commercial perspectives
- Enhancing networking opportunities for your team
- Setting goals (SMART objectives)
- Refining organisational awareness and “big picture” thinking

Please contact a member of our team if you would like to discuss any of the issues raised.

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