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## Social Media Helps Small Businesses

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Social Media Helps Small Businesses

by

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## **PART ONE**

### **Introduction**

Beemer and Shook (2009) explain that developing customers one at a time is the only way. There are no short cuts to this. Traditionally, a small business would develop their relationships by going from door-to-door to raise awareness and grow their brand. How fast they achieved this depended on the budget and time available to their business. Traditionally, large businesses had the power of reaching their markets through huge advertising budget, which small companies could not match.

In today's business environment, social media has become a new marketing tool that is available to all businesses, that instantly develops relationships with potential customers. Social media does not require huge budgets or time investment. Small businesses can leverage social media to penetrate their markets, reach their customers and develop relationships in a personal and direct manner that can catapult their brand and raise their awareness as successfully as any large business. Social media enables a small business to reach a large and potentially global audience in a very short period of time with relatively little energy. This has opened a whole new opportunity to the way a small business can develop its awareness and marketing activities. An effective social media campaign is able to develop relationships by communicating positive images and dialogue about a brand.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to develop a social media-marketing plan for an online floral company in Singapore.

### **Objectives**

A small business has exactly the same problem as a large business; it has to tell its potential market that it exists. According to HeyGoTo.com (2010) in their YouTube video of Richard Branson speaking about marketing, he makes the point that if you are going to create

the best bus service in your town, make sure people know about it. A small online floral business does not have the same budget as a large floral online business in which to do that. Pepsi Cola can hire Britney Spears at a rate of \$1,000,000.00 to do a commercial that costs another \$2,000,000.00 on a 30 second advertising spot that costs another \$3,000,000.00 to a global audience during the super bowl and reach awesome marketing awareness levels. Traditionally, a small business will have to start with simple and basic awareness programs. Ben & Jerry's traditionally started selling ice cream with an investment of \$12,000 and created awareness by holding ice cream parties by projecting old movies and inviting people along (Byers, 2007). This is developing awareness one person at a time, which is going to take a long time.

### **Statement of objective**

The objective of this paper is to look at how small businesses, focusing on small online floral businesses, can leverage social media as an effective tool to engage with their market. Through researching all aspects of social media and small business marketing in general, we can understand what small businesses can achieve through effective social media campaigns and how they can attempt to implement a social media campaign.

### **Justifications**

With the fast pace world of multi nationals and information technology, most businesses do not have the time to grow slowly and develop. You have to stay with the times and develop your product according to the market demand –tastes and concepts change quickly.

Engaging with social media as a tool can assist in developing a company's brand, starting a dialogue about a brand that can snowball when done effectively. If it is not done correctly, it can backfire just as easily. If a business chooses to use social media to develop its brand, it is critical to get it right and do it effectively.

Social media can also be a powerful tool to develop loyal customers. According to Kerin et al. (2009), relationship marketing is the developing and maintaining of long term, repeat customers by having an ongoing and personal relationship with them. He also says that it is difficult to implement. It requires a sophisticated marketing machine that learns about each and every customer. Developing a good customer relationship management (CRM) system can do this. A good social media plan can represent the same activity as a CRM system and can also be less expensive. A small business is challenged by its ability to develop complex systems. To be successful, they need to find ways to do without and cut corners. Social media allows for businesses to develop strong relationships with their market without big budgets and sophisticated systems.

## **PART TWO**

### **Introduction**

In order to develop a social media marketing plan for an online floral business, we need to understand (1) social media, (2) small business marketing, (3) customer relationship management and (4) social marketing plans in general. Through examining each area, we can develop a clear and concise social media-marketing plan for an online floral business.

### **Social Media**

Social media, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), is defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (pg.61). Kaplan et al. (2010) created a classification scheme of that consists of six different types of social media; Collaborative projects, blog and micro blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual social worlds and virtual game worlds.

### **Collaborative Projects**

These are sites where users collaborate to create a product or write an entry. As discussed by Tapscott and Williams (2007), companies can create entire businesses using collaborative user generated content. In another book discussing this concept, Botsman and Rogers (2010) discuss how the collaborative model of business is soon to be its own economy and will change the way people live and interact.

As discussed by King (2011), the site that is most relevant to social media marketing for small businesses is Wikipedia. Wikipedia is one of the most authoritative and encyclopedic reference sites on the internet. For a large number of internet searches, the Wikipedia entry for that search term is often among the top five search results. Therefore a company that is listed in Wikipedia is more likely to be found than if they are not. Also,

companies only appear in Wikipedia if they are in some way “notable.” Hence being listed gives the company legitimacy.

### **Blogs and Micro Blogs**

These sites are ways for individuals or businesses to publish and communicate on the Internet. Twitter is an example of a micro blog, in which users publish very short statements or tweets. Twitter is noted for its reach and virility – the ability to reach exponentially large numbers of people in a short time frame. Blog entries are longer and can include images and other media. A blog generally does not have the same reach as twitter, but provides more substantive information about the company, once found. According to Scoble and Israel (2006), blogging can develop credibility for your brand. Small can develop a reputation via their blog, for being a knowledgeable person or entity in the specific area that your business specializes in. This gives weight to your brand. Readers that engage in your blogs, also develop a stronger relationship with your brand.

### **Content Communities**

These are sites such as YouTube where users upload original content, or create their own unique aggregations or collections of content. According to Staino (2012), creating excellent content can spread your brands reach and attract a new audience. As she points out, this gives a company with scarce resources, the opportunity to develop specific content that is valuable to their target niche communities. She poses two simple questions – who would pay attention to the blog and to what sites would you link it? Developing content is one thing, to making it relevant and making it reach your market is a separate exercise.

### **Social Networking Sites**

Social networking websites such as Facebook, function as an online community of Internet users. Depending on the website in question, many of these online community members share common interests in hobbies, religion, politics and alternative lifestyles.

Once you are granted access to a social networking website you can begin to socialize. This socialization may include reading the profile pages of other members and possibly even contacting them. For small businesses, participating in a social network lets them establishing their own brand presence by creating a profile, engaging with customers and posting content and campaigns with the hope that it will be widely shared amongst prospective customers, which can rapidly and greatly increase brand awareness.

Campbell (2012) discussed how statistically, Facebook only reaches 17% of your customers. As there is so much information already available on Facebook, she explains that the best solution to effective marketing on Facebook is to “get creative, get loud and get shocking”. More importantly, offer value that fans can ONLY get on Facebook.

### **Virtual Social Worlds**

According to Wikipedia (2012), virtual social worlds such as Second Life, are online communities that take the form of a computer-based simulated environment through which users can interact with one another and use and create objects. The term has become largely synonymous with interactive 3D virtual environments, where the users take the form of avatars visible to others. These avatars usually appear as textual, two-dimensional, or three-dimensional representations, although other forms are possible (auditory and touch sensations for example). In general, virtual worlds allow for multiple users. The opportunity here is for marketers to develop either product placement or develop their own virtual world.

Businesses are now seeing value in developing their own virtual world enterprises within these worlds as a form of virtual marketing. In Second Life, Coca Cola have their own store so that virtual characters can drink Coca Cola. Apple has also developed their own virtual store within Second Life allowing users to browse the latest products. This has allowed marketers to develop their brand using a different medium. Whilst you cannot actually



purchase items online, marketers are creating a visibility to a large audience. For small businesses, this would likely not be cost effective.

### **Virtual Game Worlds**

An example of a virtual game world is World of Warcraft. According to Wikipedia (2012), these are massive multiplayer online games that depict a wide range of worlds, including those based on fantasy, science fiction, the real world, super heroes, sports, horror, and historical milieus. The most common form of such games is the fantasy world, whereas those based on the real world are relatively rare. Players can create real time lives that travel, communicate and conduct lifestyles and businesses. At the moment, communication is mostly text but real-time voice is developing. The form of communication used can substantially affect the experience of players in the game. Similar to the Virtual World, Virtual games can be used for product placement. It is relevant to small business marketing, in the same way that virtual worlds are.

### **Other Social Media Classifications**

Another classification of social media is offered by Kerpen (2011). While he has similar classification as Kaplan and Haenlein, Kerpen also adds a review and opinion category, which is also relevant to small business marketing. He lists that there are three classifications that relate to the review and opinion classifications, which are product reviews, business reviews and question and answers (Q&A).

#### **Product reviews.**

An example of a product review online would be sites such as Epinions and Tripadvisor. Epinions tag line is “unbiased reviews by real people”. Similar to many restaurant online and review forums, this is an excellent way for the public to decipher quality and value in a product or service. According to Liu, Karahanna and Watson (2011), they identify goals for online reviews. The main goals are: (a) To assist consumers in making

accurate choices, and (b) to reduce the cognitive costs of making such choices. The intermediate goals are: (a) to help consumers form an unbiased understanding of the product, and (b) to construct a set of evaluative criteria.

However as discussed by Starmer-Smith (2010), they are not always trustworthy. Review sites are open to all manner of bias and thus readers are left to determine what is true and what isn't. TripAdvisor is a site that has become a forum where mediocrity is not assessed but extremes are highlighted. Readers look for their own review sites that they begin to trust. The public are holding businesses responsible. For small business marketing, monitoring your reputation and responding to feedback on the sites that are most relevant to your specific area is critical.

#### **Business reviews.**

A good example of an online business review is Yelp. According to Humbarger (2010), Yelp is extremely important to businesses today. This is because Yelp is emerging as the leading consumer review site for many types of businesses. When searching for a product or service, because Yelp has achieved a huge market share, the search engine results are well received. Not only does it give you access to your nearest service that you are looking for, it offers reviews about each one to assist you in making an informed opinion. What is important though is that sites like Yelp are not effective globally but mainly effective locally. If Yelp does not operate in your area, it will not be relevant. Yelp has opened an office and launched in Singapore in 2012.

#### **Question and answers.**

An example of a question and answers site would be Yahoo Answers. One of the largest knowledge sharing communities on the web, you can ask any question and a user anywhere in the world can respond. McGee (2008) emphasizes how important it is to recognize that there are many professionals and business owners providing valuable

knowledge and experiences on Yahoo Answers. By participating in this, you can use it as a form of marketing by creating a profile for yourself that single you out as a speaker. This builds credibility and a positive brand image, which can be used effectively.

### **Social Media Advice**

Kaplan et al (2010), also presented advice regarding social media. He makes the distinction between social and media. When it comes to operating on the internet in regards to media, he points out the need to choose carefully. Pick the application that will most suit your abilities and align it with your activities. It is important to ensure that there is a constant flow of activity and generation so that it can be effective. If you choose more than one media application, it is important to integrate each one. The key to successful media applications is that your market can access you via the applications. If you create barriers, your efforts will be wasted.

His first point about using the social element of social media is that everyone can see what you do. So be active, be interesting and be social. He stresses the importance of being interesting because ultimately, this will get you noticed. Avoid being unprofessional, as this will reflect badly on your brand. The most important value is the need to be honest. His points make it clear that whether you are a small business or a large business, social media is not a fix all solution to marketing. It must be used properly if it is to be effective.

### **Social Media For Floral Products**

There are specific channels of social media that have particular value for the consumers of floral products. Adams (2010) discusses successful social media practices that other florists have conducted. Jeff Madill's Flower Ship in Madill, OK created a business page and since doing so went from 0 to 150 likes. Lake City Florist in Lake City, FL uses YouTube to showcase their wedding flowers by displaying videos on YouTube and their website. Apple Blossoms Floral Designs and Gifts in Tampa, FL uses a blog to keep their customers

informed. He discusses that you can use various social media platforms and also develop specific goals for each platform.

### **Small Business Marketing**

According to Meyer (2008), the key to developing your business is having good intuition. While intuition can take you a long way, you also have to have a clear plan in which to carry out your intuition. Working and running a small business is challenging because often you lack the formalities of large institutions to guide the business working day. Therefore it is all the more important that a plan of action is set up to develop the marketing function of a small business. This is done in the form of a marketing plan.

Kerin, Hartley, Rudelius, and Theng (2009) describe the marketing plan as “a road map for the marketing organization for a specified period of time such as one or five years” (p.58). They go on to say that no one marketing plan fits all, but a marketing plan for an organization depends on the target audience and purpose. It also is relative to the kind and complexity of the organization. Organizations are structured in different ways, the scale of each one differs as much as each ones business model. Another important consideration is the industry in which you are working in.

They also state that for small businesses, the marketing plan and the business plan are virtually identical. Therefore the social media-marketing plan has to be part of a greater plan for the business.

### **Communication Tools**

The goal for any new service, as mentioned by Branson (2010), is to let everyone know you exist. To do this, Van Looy, Gemmel, and Van Dierdonck (2003) state that the key is to develop a marketing communications strategy using the following communication tools.

#### **One-way communication.**

An example of this is advertising where the communication is one way. This is an ideal first tactic, providing a source of information, attracting customers onto the next stages of the communication plan. In social media this can be done on a number of platforms allowing users to learn and orientate themselves with a product.

**Public relations activities and sponsorship.**

This involves a number of outbound communication initiatives, which allow the public to develop a positive brand image of your product.

**Two-way communication.**

This is the interaction between your customers and you. Social media platforms, where you can engage in a dialogue with users about your product, are excellent channels to develop a clear understanding of your market and develop a close relationship with them. Furthermore, they make the point that the customer always compares the experience with the expectation. Being active on social media allows a small business to get that comparison almost immediately, be it negative or positive. This gives them the opportunity to respond quickly to market needs, as well as to communicate with the user to remedy any disappointment that may have arisen from unmet expectations.

**Point of sales communication.**

In every interaction with a customer, you have an opportunity to communicate effectively with them. Effective communication consists of representing your brand and core values.

**Word of mouth communication.**

This is almost the most powerful of all the tools because the words of our friends, colleagues and trusted ones are more precious to our decision making process than anything else. Here too is the social media's greatest power. Social media has developed sites that become opinion leaders. So sites such as Yelp.com, as discussed before, have become their

own word of mouth opinion sites. There are thousands of other sites on the internet that blog, communicate and develop word of mouth discussion that effect the buying patterns of thousands of businesses.

When determining which tactics to use, Van Looy et al. (2003) state that each stage of the promotional cycle requires different tactic.

### **Marketing Tactics**

In order for small businesses to maximize their time and energy, clever marketing solutions need to be found. Social media as already stated offers a wealth of channels in which to communicate to your market and develop relationships. The key then is to develop fun and interesting ways to do this.

Jackson (2008) points out the need for development of referral partners. These are people and organizations that drive customers in your direction. Social media offers multiple platforms that can act as referral partners if used properly.

Another main tactic is to develop a public relations (PR) program. Advertising is what you say; PR is what other say about you. This is very much the basis of what social media is built on. A number of articles discuss effective PR campaigns. In her article Klein (2007) discusses the PR approach that many businesses make is often costly. Thus social media offers a more cost effective opportunity to develop a competitive PR strategy. Developing strong key messages and taking it to the correct target audience is the way to go.

As listed by Julian (2011) who writes for the business pundit, Richard Branson uses stunt tactics to attract attention to his business developments. His most note worthy stunt being to fly around the world in a hot air balloon branding his logo across the balloon. When he launched his wedding dress service “Virgin Brides”, he dressed up in a wedding dress as a bride. True to his own statement, if you are going to set up a new business venture, make sure people know about it (HeyGoTo.com, 2010).

## **Customer Relationship Management (CRM)**

Relationship marketing is a strategy for managing and nurturing a company's interactions with customers and sales prospects. It involves using technology to organize and sales and marketing activities. In his article, Reicheld (1998) states that the overall goal is to find, attract and win new customers while you nurture and retain those the company already has. Once you entice customers into the fold, you reduce the costs of marketing and client service. Relationship marketing emphasizes customer retention and satisfaction, rather than the traditional focus on sales transactions. It recognizes the long-term value of customer relationships.

Social media platforms provide powerful technology to maximize the effectiveness of relationship marketing, opening more collaborative and social communication channels directly with the customer. Social media platforms also include tools for managing relationships with customers that transcend simple demographic and customer service data.

There are two levels of relationship management discussed by Van Looy et al (2003). The first one is called level-one relationship marketing. This focuses on building loyalty through rewards that are primarily financial. Such as discounts, specialty pricing, gifts, coupons and other such schemes. These strategies are commonplace practice in our service culture as we see all manner of loyalty and discount programs that are used to entice consumers. The danger is that they are expected so vital but also easy to imitate by competitors, which therefore does not make you stand out.

Level-two relationship management is looking at the more intricate and social issues relating to the customer. By understanding the movements and decision-making characteristics of the customer, businesses can communicate with them in more individual ways. Customers are going to get a much more personal and individual level of service. Therefore level two relationship marketing is going to be much more effective at developing

loyalty than relationship marketing level one.

According to Van Looy et al (2003), to conduct effective relationship marketing, businesses first have to look at which market they want to convert, which we want to retain and finally, which need to be developed. Companies must understand the business value of their customers: Who are the customers that give them the best earnings? Who are the customers that best meet their unique qualities and will then develop the business for us. Having understood all this, businesses can then proceed to determine how exactly to meet the needs of that market segment, and how they need to treat them.

Customer satisfaction begins with the product and service itself. High product quality and service levels greatly contribute to customer satisfaction. As discussed by Van Looy et al (2003), customer satisfaction, profitability and customer loyalty are closely interlinked. Customer satisfaction and loyalty begin with good employees and high quality service. Heskett described a “service profit chain” in which customer loyalty and customer satisfaction are influenced by the internal service system. (Van Looy et al, 2003). They state that loyalty is created by “a customer having a positive buying pattern during an extended period driven by a positive attitude towards the company” (p.59). In the service profit chain, good employees are retained because of good systems that are supported by excellent work place design and job design. See Figure 1.

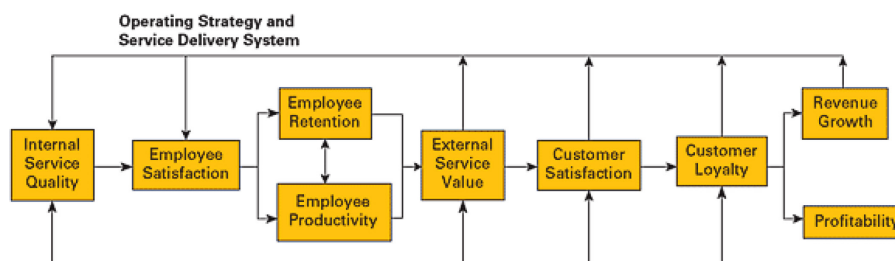


Figure 1. The Service Profit Chain. Adapted from “Linking Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty and Profitability” by Van Looy, B., Gemmel, P., and Van Dierdonck, R. (2003) Services Management: An Integrated Approach. London, England: Pearson



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Great service from great employees results in satisfied customers. However a satisfied customer does not always lead to a loyal customer. Relationship marketing can help promote the satisfied customer into becoming a loyal customer.

Relationship marketing is easy to understand, according to Kerin et al. (2009). It is the developing and maintaining of customers by having a relationship with them. In an ideal world he writes, relationship marketing involves having an ongoing and personal relationship with the customer and the organization. What he does say is that while it is easy to explain, it is difficult to implement. How can you offer each and every customer personal service when so much business is now done on the Internet, email and face to face? It requires a sophisticated marketing machine that learns about each and every customer. Social media provides businesses with access to data that can help them personalize their communication and offerings, and furthermore can automate them. This is a great opportunity that is available to use.

Whalen and Holloway (2012) wrote of the need to know what customers think. What they are doing, thinking and how do they make decisions? Knowing what they are doing is key to developing a strong understanding of how to satisfy them and develop their loyalty. Small companies can react to this information in an agile and flexible way – in the new marketing term called hyper cycle. It suggests that Traditional Marketing Planning (TMP) is no longer relevant because it is timely and costly. They discuss a concept of quick trials with small failures and learning from these quickly and acting faster than larger companies tend to move and staying ahead of trends.

Currently, much money is spent on developing tools to understand the movements, interests and buying patterns of customers. The greatest leader in this race is Google.

Through their customer profiles and web activity, they can track and develop information that they can learn about common threads the customer is taking. Another example is Facebook. By learning about who you are from the subjects and activities that you conduct, they can almost accurately market and advertise relevant information to you.

While data is very useful, companies also need to get verbal or direct feedback from the customers themselves. Companies can actually look at the customers experience or service encounters and evaluates what they did right and what they did wrong. Learning what you do right so you can improve it, and what you do wrong so you can fix it is key to the process of developing a business that can develop loyal customers. Companies must make sure they have processes and systems that take action on that feedback.

Van Looy et al (2003) describe further links between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty:

The first is that positive and negative feelings can co exist in regards to your service. In some cases a customer might feel positive about most aspects of the company but have also have negative feelings that relate to it. With social media, a small business can use feedback forums and opinion sites to gauge negative feelings about their business and develop effective strategies to overcome those negative feelings, converting the customer into a loyal user.

The second is that factors not related to your service can play a role in driving customer loyalty. We have no control over what people believe, how the economy develops and a multitude of other factors. What is important is that we stay in tune with our customers to gauge their habits and assess their buying activities. The data provided by what individuals reveal in social media is a great way to watch group and societal trends and fads.

Finally, Jackson (2008) says that in order to develop a business with no advertising, she and her husband developed a simple philosophy. “Appreciation wins over self promotion

every time”. She challenges us to ask ourselves whether we are sending out to our customer to give or to get? If we are sending mail out purely to get business from our customers, then customers will feel that all we care about is what we want. The key to Jackson’s philosophy is they want to feel appreciated. Sending out appreciation cards, thank you notes, birthday wishes and other mementos shows the client you appreciate them.

### **Social Media Marketing Plans**

As discussed by Rode (2012), the key to social media is to have defined social marketing plan. His suggested plan is examine your businesses target audience and understand who they are. Once this is done, you need to develop a proposed budget for the plan. It is also important to develop awareness measures to track social media campaign success against defined goals. An important consideration is also to format your social media efforts with a visual “funnel” framework. Social media is difficult because it is hard to see its effectiveness. Therefore your willingness and ability to track progress will set your social marketing apart. Finally he suggests that you work on strategies related with specific tactics and tie your social media-marketing plan back to company goals and themes.

### **Social Media Plan for Florists**

What do florists particularly have to do on the internet to develop customers? Bolton (2011) proposed the following seven tips for social media marketing.

#### **1) Commit to social media.**

He discusses that in a survey conducted for IMAGINE 2011, 54% of people answered that time is their biggest challenge. Time is the key to a small business so developing the plan must be manageable from a task perspective. Great intentions with no actions lead to nowhere.

#### **2) You are a pro.**

He also gives the statistic that 68% of floral professionals say they have been in the industry for 15+ years. It is important to represent yourself as a respected artist on the internet and develop a reputation. People have used YouTube to showcase their work and skills with educational videos for example.

### **3) King content.**

He suggests that you need to give your market what they want which he says is education, information, discounts and offers. Also be careful what you put out there. Develop the 80/20 rule where 80% is giving, and 20% is self-promotion. As Jackson (2008) also discusses, give to get.

### **4) Share everything.**

He points out the importance of showing what you create. Take photos and upload them so that people can see your work. He also makes the point that it should be one click away and not hard to access.

### **5) Tear down the walls.**

What is easy and convenient for people? Access to the website should be easy. If it is too hard to find collections – people will not bother and go elsewhere.

### **6) Laugh more!**

Social media should be fun. Use humor to sell the products and have fun. If you take yourself too seriously people will not be interested.

### **7) Be yourself.**

Allow your personality to shine through. People like to see the person behind the humans that are behind the screens. We want to connect as people so be a person and not a computer.

What is clear is that the plan needs time to execute. Understanding the plan in advance and making time for it will open up the opportunity of using social media as a tool.

## **Case Study: The Concord Flower Shop**

Sales Renewal reported that they assisted The Concord Flower Shop to more than double their online sales and be ranked by Google as the top 1% of local businesses. They are a sales and marketing consultant that came in to develop the strategy for The Concord Flower Shop. The strategy was to create a sales blue print first based on the floral shops desired goals. The next step was to bring the technology to a place that could support the sales blue print. The final step was to develop an ongoing management and fulfillment responsibilities within the organization.

### **Sales blue print.**

They developed effective communication systems such as email blasts and Facebook site to develop traffic and good communication. It was flexible enough to allow them to develop campaigns as they came up. For instance a teenage orientated email blast to develop high school prom business. They worked on the service requirements such as order updates and status communications.

### **Building the sales machine.**

The website needed to meet the sales blue print so that it could support the strategies. This required elements to be developed. This meant incorporating a promotional system with contest registration and awarding systems to provide the company with email addresses to build the database. Other development such as e-Commerce ordering, blog, search engine marketing and linking them with Google, Facebook and LinkedIn.

### **Running the sales machine.**

They developed a quarterly marketing plan, which included online Ad campaigns, search engine optimization and strategic media communications.

The result was that 17 months later they had increased their sales by 235%. Key holidays such as mother's day sales have almost tripled. They conclude that the key is to combine marketing with E-commerce in order to increase sales.

### **Social Media from the Consumers Point of View**

According to the Society of American Florists (2012), when consumers want to know about florists and flowers, they turn to the following sites. Aboutflowers.com, National Florist Directory, Flower Factor: A Lifestyle Blog, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Twitter and Pinterest. All these sites provide information and show images.

A study conducted by The Society of American Florists (2012) identified dedication, expertise, credibility and convenience as the consumers purchasing motivators when purchasing flowers. The four points are reported to be what keeps the consumers coming back.

The first being dedication where the florist shows a dedication to the craft in terms of quality, value and service. The second is the ability to show expertise in both professional experience as well as ability and good taste. Consumers are also looking for credibility so large established brands are trusted. Finally, convenience plays a large part as a motivator. Consumers are looking for images, one stop shopping, quick delivery and easy payment options.

The Society of American Florists also identified the demographics. Men are the bigger consumers of over \$30.00 arrangements and gifts. Women buy a wider range of gifts at a lower cost. Young consumers have less disposable income so are not a major buyer of floral arrangements.

Few consumers however claimed to purchase on the internet, those who did however are predominantly male and highly affluent. Consumers did say that the internet offers ease and convenience.

Understanding how to approach social media campaigns with a male audience is therefore important. McCrea (2012) looked at successful campaigns that were targeting a male audience and came to the following conclusions. She first says that you have to know your audience and where to find them. So when aiming for men, incorporate sites like YouTube or gaming and create engaging content. She points out the importance of avoiding unnecessary branding too. Make it easily accessible and shareable. Evoke emotions like anticipation, suspense, courage or joy and use humor and quirky one-liners to convey your message.

### **Analytics and Tools**

An important part of any social media plan is the analyzing of the success of any activity. Fuzz One Media (2012) discuss that the top five ways to measure success is as follows:

#### **Brand reach and exposure “Mentions”.**

It is hard to measure brand reach therefore you have to rely on data and the percentage growth rate on the various social media sites that you engage with. For example on your blog, look at the number of visitors to related posts over the month. Other indicators are not directly tied to social media. Website traffic and searches of your brand also show brand awareness.

#### **Engagement.**

Looking at how many people engage with your messages indicate how successful they are. For example, on Facebook you can assess how many views you receive.

#### **Share of voice.**

This is looking at how your brand compares with your competitors. This requires data collecting by assessing key words relating to your brand and another brand and comparing the results.

**Influence.**

Assess the number of sharing or likes you receive from your followers. This will show the level of influence your brand has.

**Measure conversions.**

Look at individual campaigns such as a discount offer or special season discount and look at the conversion to purchase.

There are various applications and tools exist that enable this. Forbeswoman (2012) shares four sites that can assist in doing this. The first is Google analytics that tracks users on your website in real time. Other information includes daily visits to your site, user demographics, how they found your site as well as how long they stay and what they found least or most interesting. Klout measures influence on social networks. Does your brand drive action? Klout will show you a map of your social activity. Wildfire is a social media monitor that offers different tools – some free and some that require purchasing. They offer tools that can compare your activity on Facebook with a competitor for example. My Top Tweet ranks your top ten tweets and rates how many times it gets re tweeted. It shows you what works and what does not work.



## **PART THREE**

### **Introduction**

In this section, we will use the research we have done in previous sections, to develop a social media plan for Fabulation Pte Ltd., an online florist in Singapore

### **Results**

The marketing plan needs to be concise and easy to adopt. The traditional marketing plan according to Whalen and Holloway (2012) is no longer relevant. Small companies need to react in an agile and flexible way. Thus Fabulation's social media marketing plan will allow it to move swiftly or pivot to take on opportunities as they arise and to respond to market changes. The plan will have a narrow focus and be inventive. The plan follows a four-pronged approach: Social, Media, Marketing and Planning.

### **Social**

#### **Target market.**

We need to identify exactly which customers we are targeting so we can craft campaigns that resonate with their needs and desires. We will look at 4 main markets. One being our historical main retail demographic, a new and promising market, and 2 other B2B markets

#### **Key messages.**

Our messaging will always convey our key differentiator, as well as our underlying values. We will develop a consistent messaging style that will also be unique to Fabulation and true to the brand.

#### **Communication strategy.**

We will follow the principles of Relationship marketing to communicate with our customers, including both level one and level two relationship management. .

Relationship marketing is attracting, maintaining and enhancing customer relationships, trying to move from a single transaction to a longer term, mutually profitable partnership behavior. A profitable exchange for both parties is central to the concept of relationship marketing.

Level-one relationship management involves offering price incentives to secure customer loyalty. We will ensure that we develop the means to record, recognize and reward our consumer's purchases by offering discounts and incentives for future / multiple purchases. Various special offers and packages can also be developed to hook people into the relationship.

Level-two relationship management involves creating social bonds through personalization and customization of the relationship. It requires a deeper level of communication. Customers want to be appreciated (Jackson, 2008). She discusses that the secret to her business success is that appreciation wins over self-promotion and that she sends to "give" not to "get". Fabulation must develop messages that gives to the client and shows them appreciation. Gestures such as remembering each client's special occasions and personal preferences make a client feel like Fabulation really understands their needs. We will create something uniquely suited to them, rather than an off the shelf design.

## **Media**

### **Internet Sites.**

Becoming a pro as well as developing king content (Bolton, 2011) means that Fabulation needs to identify the right platforms to showcase its content online.

YouTube is the ideal place to show how to videos, such as how to make your arrangement last longer or even impact videos such as seeing the amazing flowers being delivered.

Pinterest showcases the beauty and style of the flowers in a very visual way. People use it as a kind of scrapbook for when they are researching how to create something special.

Twitter, is much more text based, and is useful to communicate specials and for general communication. Even if Fabulation does not actively tweet, it should keep an eye out for tweets about Fabulation and other related information about florists in Singapore, and feedback about Fabulation itself, as Twitter is a good source of almost instant information. A user will often tweet frustration and excitement as soon as they happen

Instagram is perfect and convenient way to communicate products in a stylish way. It can be linked into Facebook so that posts on Instagram will be listed on Facebook. Products can be photographed in a stylish and trendy way without professional photography and uploaded instantly.

Similarly, it is good to monitor and encourage products on sites such as Yelp, which will spread the brand reputation, provide feedback and a mechanism to address users needs, and to assist in driving traffic to the website.

Blogs offer a deeper level of information to a reader. It puts the brand forward as an expert on the subject – it can also showcase YouTube videos and link to other social media platforms.

The most valuable to Fabulation, is Facebook as it offers many of the tools that the other platforms have in one place. Photos can be used for visual effect to showcase collections and products; customers can engage in interaction, feedback and dialogue; special offers can be communicated; and we can respond to customer service and feedback.

### **Referral sites.**

Jackson (2008) discusses the need for effective referral partners. Key referral sites in Singapore include Yelp, AngloInfo as well as Facebook. Other sites such as general

information and company listings must be looked at to ensure all information is correct. This will assist in driving customers to the website which must then be turned into purchases.

## **Marketing**

### **Technology.**

The technology must support the key messages as well as be made easy for consumers to access. The main technology is the website. This is the main point of sales with the customer.

The website itself must be fast, efficient and easy to access and navigate. Customers will be able to go into their profile to see tracking and progress of their orders. The website will also be able to develop reports on client data and other analytics.

### **Implementation Strategy.**

According to the relationship management principles outlined by Van Looy, Gemmel, and Van Dierdonck (2003), suggest a staged approach to implementing tools to carry out the strategy.

The first step is to communicate your products to your market so develop one-way communication tools to do that.

The second is to engage in positive public relation activities to develop an opinion about your brand. Then it is time to engage in two-way communication where we must develop an interaction between our customers and us. Social media platforms are ideal for this.

Another key area of communication is point of sales communication. Developing a strategy for this is important as this represents your brand and core values.

## **Planning.**

### **Scheduling.**

An important part of any strategy is the timeline and schedule for the work. Daily, weekly and monthly schedules for campaigns and evaluations need to be put into place. Staff will be hired and trained to maintain the consistency.

### **Analysis.**

At the end of all the activity, it is imperative that the plan has a way of analyzing its success in a specific and measurable way. Results need to be measurable against the goals set out at the beginning.

## **Conclusion**

### **Fabulation Pte. Ltd. Social Media Marketing Plan**

#### **Step One: Mission and Target Market**

Our Mission is to create online sales and provide beautiful, high quality, unique and well-priced floral arrangements to be enjoyed and loved.

The brand Fabulation has been in successful operation for over five years in Singapore and is known for “fabulous” design and style. Our unique selling proposition is that our products are stunning creations designed and developed by London trained international designer Susan Rathleff.

The floral products are available to be ordered conveniently online and can be purchased by credit card. Free next day delivery is guaranteed. Products come uniquely and stylishly wrapped with specialized props such as cake stands and birdcages that receivers can keep.

Identifying one specific market is difficult as there are so many different types of people that order flowers.

Our target market is divided into three categories; high net worth women, high net worth men and referral partners. Referral partners have two sub categories; style advisers and service providers.

Fabulation's current customers are mostly women, 35 and over, who have a high net worth. High net worth women are those who want to purchase well priced and high style products online as a convenient way to say thank you or celebrate a special occasion for friends or family. These ladies want to show off their style so sending a Fabulation product will do just that but they want the style at a good price. According to The Society of American Florists (2012) data, women tend to buy less at lower prices. Fabulation's social media messaging will convey the messaging that it offers lower cost, high value products that suit their budgets. Value is style and to impress at the lowest price possible.

The male market is an untapped market that has great opportunities. According to The Society of American Florists (2012), they are the market that is most likely to purchase online, and hence are a good market to focus on. Fabulation has not historically engaged in this and will need to develop messaging, campaigns and offers to suit the market. High net worth men are those who have busy schedules that need convenient solutions to sending gifts whatever the occasion. They want to order gifts for wives, girl friends, friends or family in a convenient hassle free way with no hiccups. If the service works well, they will not be as price conscious than women. Value is convenient service that works.

The first sub category of referral partners is style advisers. These people are online social media users that blog, write reviews and give their opinions. This can include press. Value is that they want to be in the know and be writing about the latest, the best and the most interesting.

The second category of referral partners is service providers. While some service providers will need to be engaged outside the realm of social media, we can assist them with

social media by keeping them up to date and in the know. We can also offer them access to visuals and information to assist in selling. These people include concierges, booking agents, secretaries and organizations that provide services.

### **Step two: Goals and achievements**

The primary goal for the social media plan is to increase the sales of the online floral business. The first goal is to achieve over \$5000 of online sales per month. That is just over a \$1000 per week. This is a sober and realistic initial target.

There are various secondary goals and metrics. The social media programs we develop need to drive potential buyers to the Fabulation website where they can be converted to buyers; We want to communicate and educate the joy and happiness that giving flowers can bring to a recipient; We want to develop the Fabulation brand as a provider of “fabulous” style and creativity; We would like to gain market share for online floral business. The floral online sales will also drive other revenue centers such as event flowers, event styling, weddings as well as decorating for seasons and contract work.

### **Step three: Key messages**

Fabulation’s key differentiator is that it is “fabulous”. All messaging and campaigns for each target market need to showcase Fabulation’s fabulousness, in a way that resonates with that demographic and motivates them to remember, be inspired, talk about, and purchase from Fabulation, repeatedly.

In addition, all messaging will uphold the principles described the study conducted by The Society of American Florists (2012), which identified dedication, expertise, credibility and convenience as the consumers purchasing motivators when purchasing flowers. In addition to that, our brand must stand for our values of quality, price and style.

The key message to the segment of high net worth ladies, who are motivated by style and lower pricing, will be to show off fabulous products and communicate the value and worth that they have.

The high potential but untapped segment of high net worth men value a product that wows the ladies in their lives, and a convenient service that works. Messaging will highlight the ability to pick, click and pay. They are not interested in gimmicks, discounts, sales or bargains. To help them connect with and impress their ladies, messaging can showcase how Fabulation can help them say “I am sorry”; how it can make their lady delighted, and how it can make the flower-giver into the star for the day. The easiest way for them to say I love you is with a stunning Fabulation floral gift.

The Style leader segment, if you have their support, can help drive traffic to the website. Bloggers and society queens’ value is they want to be in the know and first with the information. Fabulation brand therefore has to live up to the name. The products need to be developed quickly and updated often so there are lots of subjects to discuss. Clever eye catching and fabulous campaigns need to be developed.

The service organization segment wants easy hassle free guaranteed solutions to their problems. If a concierge wants to order flowers for a guest or a secretary needs to send her bosses mother a birthday gift, they need to have total faith and easy access to the service. They, like high net worth men, want it to work and to be convenient. However they need more information than the regular retail male customer, so easy convenient up to date information about the service is important.

#### **Step four: The tools**

Today, Fabulation has an existing, functional web site through which it conducts sales. **The website gets x # of traffic, generates \$ a month. It also has a FB page. The FB page has x likes/subscribers. Primary communication from our customers customers comes**



**through – e-mail? What kind of comments do you get? How much time to you spend on the current system?**

The first and most important tool we will improve is the website. After research and evaluation, the site is not as accessible as it was originally designed to be. In order to get to the point of purchase, you need to click three times to get to a product page. Therefore the first activity is to update the website so that when you reach the home page, there are products listed for immediate purchase. Customers that order will be thanked for their purchases. We will ensure that the website is up to date at all times and running smoothly. Users have the option to oversee their order at all stages and any service failures will be immediately rectified. We will conduct a standard service recovery intended to over exceed the client's expectation. Google analytics can handle most of the reports needed so that there is a one-stop shop for developing effective evaluation methods.

We will use our existing tools (the website and e-mail) to promote our social media presence, making it easy to “like” our arrangements, etc on Facebook. One of our fun conversation starting strategies on social media, following level 2 relationship marketing principles, will be that all orders will have a card that is attached: On the card there is a small statement on the back that says snap a picture and upload it on to Facebook and receive a Fabulous discount code for your next order. Discount codes for ladies will be brand-appropriate fabulous names like Bulgari and for men, something like Hangover, which is intended to amuse.

Facebook is Fabulation's main social media tool. It has the most diverse features and is used in some way by the majority of the potential market. We will first focus on maximizing our usage of Facebook before looking into other platforms.

Pinterest and instagram will be used for photography and visual branding in conjunction with Facebook. We may explore Twitter as regular tool to push out information.

Referral partners can be informed and linked up so that they can stay up to date with latest products and happenings.

YouTube would be the last area that we will explore. Our brand would require us to seriously think about how we can make savvy and sophisticated videos. We want our videos to look professional and fabulous at all times.

Each of these platforms has associated tools to manage posts and measure effectiveness. There are also tools that aggregate and simplify the management over multiple social media platforms. One will need to be identified and used.

#### **Step five: Strategic social media operations and campaigns**

Each marketing strategy will be taken into account when developing campaigns. For instance one way communication is achieved mainly by sending out information, photos and text about a new product and then that is followed up by further social media activity. Two-way communicating is easy on social media, as we will follow up on all levels of communication so that a dialogue is created.

We will create a social media activity schedule that is consistent and manageable. Then all campaigns will be developed in line with achieving the goals while being targeted at the market segment and produced to optimize the social media platform that they are designed for.

To keep up the buzz, products and campaigns will be developed on a monthly basis. Flowers are a highly seasonal product so each month we will have a different focus based on the season. January will be celebrating the coming Chinese New Year, February will focus on the romantic Valentines day and be hugely directed at men, while March will create unique Easter arrangements that develop the female market etc. A few products for each category will be developed and photographed. The main focus for each product will be to create a fabulous product, photo and information around it.

Once a week there will be a main update covering the campaign of the month with subsequently daily tags and updates for that week's communication. The idea is that there is an ongoing dialogue from us about our product and service. For instance we will communicate that month that Easter is on the way and we've fallen in love with the idea of a birds nest filled with flowers. Then the following day we could message a photo of a bird in a nest with a funny caption. If someone likes it we can appreciate him or her by sending him or her a thank you note.

In addition, we will develop daily updates on Facebook and eventually Pinterest, Twitter and Instagram, targeted at sparking the key motivators that drive online floral purchases, which as discussed by The Society of American Florists (2012), are dedication, expertise, credibility & convenience.

For referral partners, they will be sent images and copy to assist with their blogs and updating their information. We will share links so that they can share it on and reference it.

Monthly newsletters are another effective conversational tool and will of course have tie in with our various social media activities. They will be targeted by demographic. Women will have newsletters that communicate the product and communicate offers, such as: "first ten orders will have a 20% discount". This will engaged with the need for a bargain and low pricing and will become an expected email that ladies will look out for. Men will receive funny emails that will make them laugh. A joke that relates to men upsetting women and their need to make up with a bunch of flowers would be an ideal way to communicate what we do in a funny way, thus educating them on what we do and how they can make up an argument. For example: Not all ladies go with out kisses this "Movember." Send a special Movember arrangement from Fabulation asking your lady to put up with that moustache and be in their good books all month long. An "only one click away from placing the order" message will remind them how super simple it is.

Our monthly newsletters will carry discounts, as already discussed, as well as information about certain topics. The idea is that it is not intended to be advertising but formatted in a way that tells jokes and provides useful information. The primary message will be giving something to the customer; the secondary message will in fact remind the customers we exist.

YouTube is part two of the whole social media plan. Developing video content and producing it successfully is not as easy and immediate as other social platforms. In order to make a really good video, you need to hire professionals and this costs money. Not doing it right is not an option as we also do not want to come across as amateur as it will undermine our expertise and credibility. Everything we do must represent this. Ultimately the plan will be to make a Fabulation video that should be multi sensory – Fabulous as well as funny and be able to tick the boxes of a few of our markets.

In order to represent our dedication and expertise, we are setting up monthly schools where customers can come and be taught how to make their own arrangements. These will also be opportunities to maximize social media as these fun and informative events will be captured on photo and video, and shared both by Fabulation and by the customers themselves.

### **Step six: Evaluation**

Each goal is intended to have a measurable response therefore the evaluation is designed by relating activity to the goals. The idea is to make it simple and easy to evaluate and not to create miles of paper work that will never realistically be used.

Goal one is to increase online sales. We will look at sales figures and if they are going up, then we are doing a great job.

Goal two is drive potential buyers to the Fabulation website. We will look at the statistics on where our traffic is coming from. If we are working on a site that is not driving

us traffic, we will then dump the activity or develop it accordingly. We will be able to dump campaigns and develop new ones easily so that we stay fresh and relevant to what our online community is responding to. We will also look at each market segment and look at how they are responding to individual campaigns that relate to them.

Goal three is educational, as we want to teach people to send flowers. This is harder to measure but the effect of developing the potential market to give flowers and spread happiness will be the sales going up. We will also see in the number of likes and interactions that are positive. If we get lots of likes and dialogue about products we are sending out, then we can assume that we are developing the way the community thinks about giving flowers.

Goal four is the development of the brand. The best tool for this as mentioned by Forbeswomen (2012) is Klout. It is free and able to tell us the level of influence we have as well as compare that to our competitors. This is an excellent tool to measure the development of the brand.

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