

Social Networking - Will It Create More Sales?

Today we have new methods of communicating. Social Networking - is a new vehicle that needs to be used just like print and TV advertising, web sites, emails, text messaging and all other forms of marketing. I only recently became a believer just a few short months ago, after one of my staff showed me how Obama used Social Networking to get elected. Read the Edelman report at www.edelman.com. (<http://www.edelman.com/image/insights/content/Social%20Pulpit%20-%20Barack%20Obamas%20Social%20Media%20Toolkit%201.09.pdf>)

I was turned off by many of the Social Network uses. I am a businessman, and as such, I am not interested in hearing about someone taking a walk on the beach or going fishing for the day. Most of what I saw out in the networking world was a major turnoff. You may not be an Obama fan, but if you've mastered Social Networking as well as Obama has, I expect your sales should be soaring!

Given our current sluggish economy, it is a time of huge business opportunities. Social Networking will allow you to get closer to your younger customers and communicate the way they like to be communicated with because they are not watching TV or reading the newspaper. Think beyond just customer service and begin a marketing strategy to reach younger customers who use blogs, text messaging, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube as we did when the Internet was new back in 1995; when Amazon started and went from \$550,000 in sales to over \$19 billion in 2008 using the Internet to grow its business, as they were the first firm to really leverage the Internet. Imagine what an inexpensive way this is to communicate your company's sales, specials and new products. If the objective is to create more sales and grow faster than anyone in your market, then blogs, text messaging, social networking, YouTube and e-mail are critical. Otherwise, business will be at a significant tactical and strategic disadvantage when their critics and competitors create a groundswell of their own."

Personally I hate text messaging, but young people these days prefer it to sending an email. In many other countries because of the high cost of telephone calls they prefer to text. Obama had 3 million people signed up for his text messaging program, with each person receiving 5-20 messages per month, 13 million people on his email list and 3 million online donors who contributed 6.5 million times. Obama never personally responded to any of these messages, his team did it. As the Edelman

report said, "Smart business will embrace this public engagement model as well, particularly in how they ladder engagement among natural allies such as customers, employees, retirees and suppliers. Obama had 5 million "friends" on more than 15 Social Networking sites. He had three million friends on Facebook alone! How many does your firm have? In April I had about 5, but today I have over 400. On LinkedIn I had about 10 in April and now have over 500.

Some older people like myself are a little reluctant to take advantage of these new marketing opportunities. What products and messages do you have on YouTube? Which of your products are there? Are your commercials there? Even I have a variety of Service Quality Institute or John Tschohl videos on www.YouTube. Creating an awesome customer experience is critical to keeping and getting customers and increasing sales. How many channels do you have for your customers to communicate with you? Can a customer communicate problems 24/7 through all these channels? This is your chance to be on the leading edge, and now is the time to be innovative. Your competition probably already is or very soon will be using all of these mediums. Do you want to be first, or do you want to let your competition build a brand with your future customers?

Maybe it's time you stopped fighting them and joined them, with your company, in the Social Networking revolution. Happy tweeting! **RO**

John Tschohl, an international service strategist and speaker, is founder and president of the Service Quality Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Described by Time and Entrepreneur magazines as a customer service guru, he has written several books on customer service, including Ca\$hing In: Make More Money, Get a Promotion, Love Your Job; Loyal for Life; e-Service; Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service; and The Customer is Boss. The Service Quality Institute (www.customer-service.com) has developed more than 26 customer service training programs that have been distributed and presented throughout the world. John's bi-monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

