

On a scale of Coca-Cola to Pepsi: How to make your brand pop on social media

By  Babalwa Nyembezi

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According to the Content Marketing Institute's [report](#) for 2016, in the year 2016 content marketing was increasingly vital to brands. A massive 76 percent of brands relied on content marketing last year, 50 percent of brands increased their budget for content. These stats only show what we already know, that if your brand isn't on social, is it even a real? What these stats also mean is that brands have to gravitate towards engaging their consumers online because that's where millions of people (read potential customers and clients) are.



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So, in a world where everyone is constantly scrolling down their screen, it's easy for brands' content to get lost in the clutter of posts on the timeline. There are a handful of brands that get it right. The brands that make you stop and actually watch the whole video on your timeline, or brands whose content you read and audibly "LOL" before you continue scrolling. These vary from Coca-Cola's adorable gifs and videos, to Pepsi trending for all the wrong reasons.



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On a scale of Coca-Cola to Pepsi, you want your brand to lean as far as close to Coca-Cola as possible. Brands like Coca-Cola work because their online identity, or brand, is authentic to what millions of people around the world have come to understand as the Coke brand. I've worked with many great, and not so great, brands over the years and below I've compiled a handful of tips about what you can do to make your brand stand out from the crowd on social.

Use your brand's social media to socialise with your audience, and be authentic

Social media is by its very nature intended for people to socialise, so if you're looking for success on any social media platform - find a brand voice that will engage people online. You wouldn't follow a boring acquaintance on your personal social media, so why would you expect your consumers/clients to do the same? It's important that a brand has a voice that sounds authentic to who, and what the brand claims to be about. One brand that does this really well is South African

communications giant, Vodacom. Their social media voice is personable, sounds South African and is consistent to what South Africans have always believed the brand to be. Authenticity is attractive, especially on social media where everyone is doing the same thing. Your brand needs to be unique and authentic to itself to truly set itself apart.

Use social media to pick up on proactive opportunities to engage your audience

The world will forever remember the infamous Oreo tweet that went out after an unfortunate lighting failure at the Super Bowl in America. The brand hadn't paid for any advertising at the event, but managed to gain traction by posting out a clever tweet at the drop of a beat. In South Africa, Portuguese restaurant, Nando's, has made a name for itself through its ability to pick up on the pulse of the country and satirically engage South Africans on social media. Many brands have advertising agencies, and need to go through numerous approval processes before a tweet (or any kind of social media post) goes live, this decreases the likeliness of picking up on proactive opportunities on a whim. One client wanted to approve what would be broadcast in a Facebook Live video, I laughed and cancelled the broadcast. They missed out on a massive opportunity to engage their audience on a unique new platform. (However, there's a fine balance between a brand that picks up on proactive content opportunities and a brand that loses relevance, and followers, for trying too hard).

Just, make great content

Manchester United is my boyfriend's life. So, in the past two years, because social media is my life, I've taken to following the Red Devils on all of the social media platforms I could. The football club has since become one of my favourite brands to follow on social media, and not just because they give me insight into the thing that gives my partner's life, but because they've mastered the art of making engaging content. This is true from the newsletter they send via e-mail through to the videos they shared on their (now dead) Vine account. The visual nature of sports translates really well on social media, and Manchester United's social team makes the most of this through their strategy. Their use of video content, inside peeks into the team, genuine appreciation for their players, and a jovial, good-natured personality comes through in all their posts, and makes them my top favourite sports team.

Pick your platforms

Quality over quantity, always. This applies to how often you post, but more importantly, to which platforms you choose to be present on. Instead of creating an account on every available social media platform out there, think about what kind of content would best suit your brand and which platforms your audience is most likely to engage with your brand on. Airbnb, a short-term rental platform that connects hosts to potential guests, has an amazing Instagram page and uses their @AirbnbHelp Twitter page to assist customers with queries. This is because Instagram, as a platform, is ideal for food and travel photos, while Twitter is more conducive to assisting people with queries.

This is why, in building your strategy, consider on which platforms your brand is most likely to succeed based on what you're looking to achieve via your social media platforms. Pay attention to who your audience is and which social networks they use. Then build your strategy around that. If you already have a following, there are various tools that you can use to learn more about your audience demographics. The social media landscape can be so tricky to navigate for young brands,

especially in a world where the world's biggest companies are spending millions on content marketing. These four tricks however, should simplify how you can make your brand shine on the timeline.

ABOUT BABALWA NYEMBEZI

Babalwa is a Rhodes University-trained journalist turned storyteller who believes that social media has the potential to change the world as we know it. She is an award-winning Social Media Consultant who has worked on brands including Coca-Cola, Vodacom, Uber, Lead SA and currently is the lead Senior Social Consultant for Standard Bank campaigns at VML. Connect and engage with her on Twitter: @babs_nyembezi.

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