

Developing a Successful, Proactive Outreach Campaign *Ideas for Business Owners*

INTRODUCTION: Social media have become the leading means for individual and group communications and networking, perhaps more than e-mail and traditional public relations. Of the major venues, such as Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc., there are serious ones and frivolous ones, some favored by youth and others by adults and professionals. The best option, in my opinion, for businesses is a combination of Twitter, Facebook, the website, and traditional outreach venues like mail and press releases. I will discuss the important value of a blog later in this outline. The outcome of a well-planned and executed outreach campaign would be to establish the business and its management as thought leaders for customers, vendor-partners and other stakeholders.

TASKS: A proactive outreach campaign won't work without content. Consequently, in order for the company to be visible in cyberspace or the marketplace, it needs to create content, projects or ideas that could be promoted regularly. Regularity and frequency are fundamental principles of outreach and outreach. Content such as news, products and services, ideas, observations, events, projects, goals and activities can then be disseminated by the social media.

Proactive outreach also can't succeed without an audience. The organization must promote its social media and invite its members to participate via its regular mailed correspondence. Such an invitation with the appropriate logo can appear at the bottom of letters, statements, invoices and passbooks.

The institution's management, with my assistance, would develop a series of events and other occasions that can be promoted and then re-promoted recurrently to promote the mission. Re-promoting and retweeting are important concepts because not all of your followers are on line at the same time so in order to reach as many people as possible, the content must be re-promoted, retweeted and re-posted several times a day with slight variations in the wording. This also teaches the audience to return regularly for more information. In that manner you build, cultivate and nurture of community that is interested in what you have to say.

FACEBOOK: This social medium belongs in the category of a closed circle. People ask to join and the content is disseminated to them. Usually, people familiar with your institution ask to join. This is adequate exposure for most institutions. However, content should be provided to the audience regularly. I would suggest regular photo updates and announcements that show growth, new products and development can be posted. The organization could also create special recognitions for customers and interested individuals and then post them on Facebook so the members that participate in Facebook can have access to the information.

Frequency of updates: Not less than once a week with text and photos.

TWITTER: This social medium is most powerful in raising the image, prestige and thought leadership of business and NGO leaders among customers, vendors, workers, members, interested parties and other stakeholders. I would develop a Twitter account and use it regularly to Tweet information, news, ideas, observations on a host of relevant issues. The use of hashtags # and Twitter handles @ is vital in

reaching as many people as possible. I will build a library of these elements and use them with tweets and retweets. Twitter is also an opportunity for the cyber-audience to participate in a conversation on appropriate topics of expertise initiated by business or nonprofit's management, which should then expand the posted observations – but not polemicize. Tweets can also encourage building followers.

Frequency of updates: Several times a week, which would include the original tweet plus retweets. Tweets must always include the website's URL.

WEBSITE: The website must be the archive of all information about the organization. Interested parties can find it by googling and by stumbling on it. They can also find it by the other social media because comprehensive social media outreach strategy must point to the website. The website's content must be targeted at the primary customers. Any deviation from that category can deflect attention away from the business.

Frequency of updates: As needed and announced via social media.

BLOG: This will be the signature venue for establishing the thought leadership of the business, and its entrepreneur-leader. I suggest a monthly bilingual blog of 250-500 words on timely topics with industry relevance. I would work closely with the management to develop topics in advance, research them and finally edit management's blogs. The topics should pertain to the organization's industry or mission as well as its thoughts and observations on the topics. It is essential that the blog not sell anything but the expertise of the leadership and company. It should not be used as a platform for selling products.

Frequency of updates: To establish a sense of consistency in the members' and wider audience's minds, blogs should be posted monthly and reposted weekly. Twitter will be the main medium for announcing the new post several times in the course of a week.

NEWSLETTERS: Your direct approach to clients, trading partners and potential customers. Your company can provide timely updates, new product releases, industry news, and customer profiles. Useful in maintain regular, quarterly, contact with people and companies that are important to you and your business.

LINKED-IN: As a social media site for professionals, the business, nonprofit and their leaders could have exposure here as well. The content does not have to be original and even re-positioned information from other sources can help the cause. For example, tweets about the blog or a photo from Facebook.

OTHER: A current, up-to-date contact list of potential customers and advocates, other pertinent individuals and institutions should be maintained in a databank like Constant Contact. But this should only be used to distribute regular mass correspondence, statements, announcements and traditional press releases, etc. Distribution of press releases to media and B2B media can be facilitated with the normal "PR" distribution services.

CONCLUSION: Recent history has shown that serious and regular attention to social media have resulted in an increase in support and awareness about the mission, project or business. In other words, the small business can generate more leads and the nonprofit can attract more advocates. While social media may sound frivolous to some because of its prevalence among youth, it is a powerful marketing venue that must be used wisely by serious businesses and civic leaders. Infrequent or rare posts, tweets or updates after launching social media will confuse the cyber-audience and marketplace and cause unintended harm than intended good.

Frequency, regularity and consistency are keys to social media outreach success.

MY EXPERIENCE: I have been a bilingual writer/editor/journalist and civic activist all my life. I have been an active user of social media for several years and created two blogsites: Boosting Your Outreach (<http://boostingyouroutreach.blogspot.com/>) and The Torn Curtain 1991 (<http://thetorncurtain1991.blogspot.com/>). The Boosting Your Outreach blogsite deals with the topic of this proposal: how small business and non-governmental organizations use social media to disseminate their points of view and build their businesses. I have also developed a website about thought leadership at <http://thoughtleadership.yolasite.com/>.

MY FUNCTIONS

- Manage, research and write for the project;
- Create content;
- Launch each of these venues;
- Monitor their development;
- Develop series of events and activities that can be posted on Facebook.
- Prepare appropriate posts, tweets and blogs;
- Create library of useful hashtags and Twitter handles;
- Coordinate with management tweet responses;
- Report and tabulate activity;
- Devote a few hours per week in consultation with management and staffers;
- Other tasks as needed.