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FOR some, it's just another buzzword. To others, it's the way of the future. Looking at the present, social media is a gold mine for brands and marketers to reach their target audience. According to statistics released by We Are Social in January 2016, almost 87% of the entire Malaysian Internet population is active on Facebook.

Well, you might be wondering—do I really need it? The answer is a simple *Yes, you do*. Let's face it—not having an active social media presence in this day and age is like someone not owning a smartphone in today's fast-paced world.

Your brand's presence on social media should now be an integral part of your overall business strategy. For the Gen Z, your brand doesn't exist if you're not on social media.

Listed below are five things that brands should be doing on social media to better engage with their consumers:

BE REAL

One of the most important things a brand should do on social media is to be real. You'll need to truly represent your brand's personality to your audience. Ask yourself, if your brand were a living person, who would he or she be? How would they speak? What would they wear? What car would they drive? These questions help put into perspective the tone of voice for the brand on social media. It also helps to "humanise" your brand, thus, making your brand more relatable.

Never try to be someone you're not. Your audience will see right through you and you will be eaten alive by the vigilant trolls. Just imagine, wouldn't it be weird if you get up one day and CNN (Cable News Network) starts tweeting funny one-liners and "yo' mama" jokes?

BE CONSISTENT

Where brands tend to go wrong is they forget to create a clear direction or strategy for their social presence. In fact, some brands simply hire interns to run and manage their social media accounts. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but interns come and go but brands need a clear and consistent communications strategy and voice. Investing in an individual who solely runs the page would be the best way forward and would pay off in the long run.

Don't expect your social media page to instantly amass a few thousand followers as building a brand on social media is similar to building a brand —both do not happen overnight!

Before you jump on the social media bandwagon, sit down with your team and create a brand guideline and content strategy to ensure a unified and consistent voice across all your platforms.

This ensures that everyone is on the same page when it comes to what's being posted on social media and that the intern you hired will not be updating your Facebook page with a Kardashians meme.

LISTEN, LISTEN & LISTEN

Social media is not a one-way street. In fact, more and more people are now turning to social media as their primary touchpoint to a brand. Calling up or e-mailing a brand is just too tedious when people can immediately just jump on your Facebook to share their queries or air their dissatisfactions.

The turnaround time to respond to a query and the time taken to diffuse an unpleasant situation can make a huge

5 THINGS THAT BRANDS SHOULD BE DOING ON SOCIAL MEDIA



difference in building customer loyalty. If you don't act fast enough, you could be facing a full-blown social media crisis which makes it even more important to have an experienced person handling the page so they know how best to respond in a timely manner.

Your brand's social media page should not be limited to sharing your latest promotions or a platform to upsell your latest product to your consumer. It is best that you understand right from the start —whether you like it or not—it will also be a customer care platform. So make it a place where your customers can ask or tell you anything and they'll always hear back from you.

CONTENT

While brands see social media as a marketing platform, people hate being marketed to on social media. They see it as an invasion of their personal space. Where most marketers go wrong is when they try to force their traditional marketing strategy on social media. Well, if it works on television, it should work on YouTube right? Wrong!

On average, a person is served up to 150 stories on their Facebook newsfeed. Unless there is something compelling about your 30-second advertisement or your annoying banner advertisements, it's all going to end up being "noise."

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helps build a relationship with your consumer at an emotional level.

When was the last time a banner advertisement made you laugh or cry?

BE 'IN THE NOW'

What do they want? Great Content. When do they want it? Now!

Yes, great content gets thrown around a lot these days but it's

Is there any way around this? Well, yes. Create great content. If social media were a car, then content would be its fuel. One company that does this really well is Petronas. I mean, ask anyone and they'd be able to recall at least one Petronas commercial that touched them.

Creating great content not only gives you great engagement on your social media sites but it also

the best way to describe social media for brands in a nutshell. Your brand can remain relevant by staying in the now. Things on social media change so quickly that it can be both exciting and a little nerve-racking at times.

If you see something that is relatable to your brand, you'll need to hop

on it and execute immediately. There's no room to go back and forth, hold five different management meetings and then present the idea to the chief executive officer for approval before posting it up. If you're going to do something, make sure it is not "yesterday's news."

One local brand that has constantly done this right and well is Nando's. They've managed to build a reputation as the "go-to" digital brand by always staying current with their digital marketing strategy.

PARTING THOUGHTS

Having been in the media industry for the past ten years, the one thing I can say for certain is that social media has effectively changed the media landscape across the globe.

Small businesses are no longer held back by large marketing budgets of the big brands and with the right strategies, your brand building efforts are bound to pay off in the long run.

■ Prem Anand is the Head of Digital Content at a radio station. To find out more about digitisation and leveraging on social media for your organisation, log on to www.leaderonomics.com for your branding needs.

