



TIME TO BE SCIENTIFICALLY SOCIAL

In the third of a series of articles on sales and marketing in the home improvement and DIY industry, **Kate Newton** from home enhancement marketing agency Brookes & Co, encourages readers to think about the role social media can play in growing their business.

A director in the home improvement, DIY and housewares industry discussing the use of social media as a marketing and communications tactic said, "I realise I have to make this kind of noise, but I've no idea what it contributes – or could contribute – to my business." For many retail and supplier businesses in this sector, this sentiment is common as an acknowledgement of both the importance and the frustration of the role of social media.

Think back 15 years or so and there were companies saying much the same about their website – we need one because our competitor has one, but we're not entirely sure what it will do... nowadays the website comment probably seems absurdly outdated but the acknowledgment of need, without really knowing what can be achieved, is still current. It all comes down to the question of if and how being active on social media platforms can help to drive

sales. And, if it can, how that can be quantified in terms of return on investment. The good news for sceptics in our industry, whether retail or supplier is that it can, it does, and it can be measured.

For most businesses the overriding objective is sales and/or profit growth, achievable by some combination of new customers and more sales/profitability from existing customers. Given the background knowledge about who the potential and existing customers are and what motivates them to purchase, then social media is just like any other marketing and communications discipline – it will drive business in a quantifiable way. And, like any other facet of sales and marketing, if you don't know what's good and special about your business, if you don't know who your end customers are and what motivates them to purchase, then embarking on a campaign of any kind is likely to result in failure. So, before you try and evaluate every tweet, photo and Facebook

comment, be sure of the goals.

The first step in measurement is to generate a list of what you're trying to achieve. Let's assume you've done the research and you understand the tone of voice unique to your business, who you want to influence and who else can influence your customers, what all their various motivations are along their 'purchasing journey', what timeframe is realistic and what you can reasonably invest.

Broadly you can use social media to do four things: improve brand awareness/profile, gain new customers, drive more purchases from existing and new customers and develop loyalty to the point where customers themselves become advocates and thereby recruit more customers like themselves. Sensible businesses also know the costs associated with these four routes, so they can invest appropriate amounts in each of the four. They also know which platforms – Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, google etc – deliver in which ways against which

types of audience.

Here's a few examples of the results that can be measured:

- Brand awareness (engagement of current contacts, retention of contacts, redemption of offers for current contacts)
- New customers and prospects (new Facebook contact, new Twitter follower, new Instagram follower, new Super fan influencer)
- Conversion to customer (referral traffic to website, inbound link, new data capture, voucher redemptions)
- Brand and local engagement/advocacy (social sentiment, press sentiment, local review scores – trade recommendation sites, TripAdvisor, Yell, Google, Facebook etc)

There are lots of measurement possibilities depending on the objectives. If the focus is awareness, then use measures like volume, reach, exposure, and amplification. If you want engagement, then look for metrics around retweets, comments, replies, and participants. If the goal is traffic to the website, then track URL shares, clicks and conversions. If you're after advocates, then track contributors and influence. If the goal is an increased share of voice, then track volume relative to competitors. And so on. All the above can be evaluated as long as objectives are clear and the initial benchmarks are established against which to measure.

Given an awareness of the cost and return of different platforms against different audiences and different motivations, exposure on the best performing and most cost-effective platforms for the individual business profile can be boosted with paid for techniques. The most successful social media campaigns are often a combination of owned, paid for and earned coverage. Techniques such as sequential adverts, brand awareness video, carousel for product info and clicks to website, single image ad for competitions and further product information should be considered for Facebook if that is a relevant platform, together with a variety of ad types on Twitter and Instagram.

Overall, ongoing analytics are necessary for keeping up with the overall exposure for your brand and company. Campaign-focused measurement helps understand the impact of marketing initiatives. Many social analytics tools work in real-time, so it's important to plan ahead and set up measurement early. Accessing activity after the event can be expensive and unreliable. It's also the case that useful, meaningful measurement will take time so again, plan ahead and revisit data before drawing conclusions.

And, finally, use the measurement to refine and improve the activity – and then do some more!