



Education Marketing and the Social Media

What does the future hold for marketers in education with the growth of social media?

In a recent Market Data Retrieval Webinar, *Using Social Media Marketing to Drive Results*, Sandy Fivecoat, founder of WeAreTeachers, provided an update on social media trends and what the future holds for marketers in education with the growth of mobile and other new platforms and tools.

The audience had a lot of questions about integrating social media to their marketing mix. Read on to see what advice Sandy has for using social media to build brand and increase revenue in the education industry.

Is it best to have a staff person dedicated to social media marketing, or is it best to distribute the social media marketing role?

We generally recommend one key person be the social media “expert” on the team, so that one person can keep up with innovations, new tools, etc. However, there should be a social media component across many functions of the business—marketing, trade shows, new product plans, customer support, etc. This means that multiple people in your organization will benefit from understanding the basics of social media.

Do you pull in your customer service team at all to respond to product questions or complaints? If so, how?

Social media can be a very effective tool in dealing with customer support issues. Paying attention to the online conversations around your brand is critical to your long-term success. And you can often get your own customers engaged with one another—sharing best practices and giving one another tips about how to best use your products. These can be valuable online conversations for any brand.

Is social media all about triangulation (multiple platforms)? Do you create a running narrative through all different forms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)?

Your conversations, content, and programs should be coordinated among various channels for maximum impact. For example, if you run a program or contest, provide FB-“like” APIs (application programming interfaces) and Twitter opportunities on these landing pages.

Once content is created, generate conversation around that content, provide bit.ly URLs and other ways to link to that content. Showcase the “best of” responses to any campaign, and use that in your blogs or Twitter feeds. Think of social media as a multiple channel strategy/vehicle. First create user-friendly programs that your audience will value (NOT a marketing campaign or slogan). Then think of how each channel allows you to leverage that content in multiple ways.

How do you go about walking the line between product awareness and selling?

It is critical to use social media channels for establishing your thought leadership credibility first and foremost. It is also important to use these channels to listen and respond to things your audience cares about. Once your brand is associated with a thought leadership position, you can provide best practice sharing or research that aligns with your brand or solution but is not blatant marketing messaging.

Dial down the traditional marketing tone for this medium and dial up the conversation. That conversation can be around product, so long as it adds real value—like best practice or research results. Finally, get outside experts to talk about your area of leadership. Do podcasts or Webinars, interviewing your best users or outside experts. Post white papers. Get others’ voices in the mix and avoid one-way messaging.

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