



UNIT - 21

Brand Building through Social Media

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ❑ Define terms related to social media branding
- ❑ Create a strategy for your social media brand
- ❑ Describe various social media platforms and identify what platforms fit your brand

Unit 21

An Introduction to Brand Building through Social Media

What is Branding?

What comes to mind when we say “brand?”

What is a Brand?

- Meaning
- Value
- Information
- Marketing
- Sales
- Emotions/feelings
- Senses
- Making your mark/marketing your territory
- Reputation
- Perception

There are many definitions of a brand, but our favorite comes from Simon Middleton, a British brand expert. In his book *Build a Brand in 30 Days*, he says, “**Brand is about meaning.** Your brand is everything that your customers and prospective customers think, feel, say, hear, read, watch, imagine, suspect, and even hope about your product, service, or organization.”

Add some more of your own ideas of what a brand might include:

What's in a Brand?

Your brand can include:

- A catchy name
- A logo (an image) or logotype (words associated with an image)
- Trademark colors
- Characters
- A particular style, look, and feel
- An attitude
- A set of feelings and values
- Anything you want!

What is Social Media?

What comes to mind when we say “social media?”

What is Social Media?

- The names of specific platforms
- Interacting with others
- Videos
- Audio
- Blogs
- Likes
- Followers
- Friends

Social media is a term used to describe how people interact, create information, share information, and build communities in a virtual environment. Social media in its current state started to evolve with the rise of the Internet in the mid-1990's.

The Rise of Social Media

1960's-1980's

During these decades, the foundation of the Internet and social media began to be established. In 1969, ARPANET was established, followed by the first commercial Internet service (CompuServe). Internet services continued to grow over the next 30 years with the addition of IRC (text-based chat), BBS (Internet bulletin boards), and ListServ (electronic mailing lists).

1990's

During the 1990's, the Internet as we know it today started to take shape. Services like The Palace, GeoCities, Six Degrees, Napster, Classmates.com, and Blogger were all started during this decade.

2000-2010

Social media and the Internet as we know it grew exponentially during this decade. 2003 in particular was a big year, with the introduction of Skype, LinkedIn, MySpace, Plaxo, SecondLife, del.cio.us, and the first version of Facebook. Wikipedia, Twitter, flickr, YouTube, digg, Tumblr, Reddit, and Posterous were also founded during this decade. As well, the first iPhone was launched in 2007, changing the face of the Internet dramatically.

2010-Present

Social media continues to grow. Google+ and Pinterest have joined the list of successful social media networks. App-based social media platforms, such as Instagram and Vine, are also becoming more popular. The mobile device market is growing, too; the first iPad was launched in 2010 and Microsoft released the Surface two years later.

What is Social Media Branding?

Social media branding is about making sure that your brand is the same online as it is offline. It's about creating a constant, consistent, responsive, engaging experience for the customer every time they encounter you on the Internet.

Your social media presence is about building relationships with each customer that encounters your brand. That requires:

- Creating a strategy that supports and strengthens your brand
- Identifying how to provide value to customers in meaningful ways
- Humanizing your brand to build connections with your audience

Building Your Social Media Branding Strategy

Key Ingredients for Your Branding Strategy

Social media marketing is an ongoing process of identifying your audience, engaging them, and keeping them engaged, so that when they need your product or service they think of your brand. There are five key elements to a strong social media branding strategy that will support this process.

What Do You Want the Brand to Say?

To begin, identify what your brand is all about. This includes the things that we discussed in the pre-assignment, like:

- Brand name
- Logo
- Trademark colors
- Characters and icons
- A particular style, look, and/or attitude
- Feelings and values

Now, identify what changes will be made to your brand for social media. (Perhaps you want to be a little bit more casual online, for example.) Keep in mind that in order to maintain your brand's integrity, your online and offline efforts should be consistent with each other.

What is the Brand Saying Now?

You need to know what your brand looks like online right now. This includes:

- Seeing what people are saying about your brand on every social network
- Googling your brand
- Establishing benchmarks for any existing social media tools (e.g. how many Facebooklikes you have, or how many visitors your website has per day)
- Using analysis tools like Google Analytics and Facebook Insights to provide in-depth data

From this information, you can create a picture of what your brand currently says via social media. This should include its public perception, the values it embodies, and its persona.

How Will the Brand Come to Life?

Now, you can create a plan for how you will create your desired social media brand. This will include building an audience profile, creating a budget, identifying what platforms and tools you will focus on, creating a strategy for building a presence on those platforms, and crafting engaging messages that bring your brand to life.

What Resources Will We Have?

It's important to be realistic when creating your strategy. Identify the technical resources, budget, and people that you will be able to leverage for your branding campaign. (This information should come from your marketing budget.) Make sure to identify any training or upgrades that might be required, too.

How Will We Evaluate Our Progress?

Finally, develop a plan for checking in on how your brand is doing. This might include:

- Setting up tools like keyword alerts, Google Analytics, or social media tracking software (like HootSuite or Radian6)
- Identifying what metrics to track and how often to track them
- What changes will indicate significant progress or cause for concern

Pre-Assignment Review

Identify the elements of a brand from your organization (or of a brand that you are familiar with). Consider these questions in respect to that brand:

- What is the brand name?
- What does the brand's logo look like?
- What colors are associated with the brand?
- What characters, people, or icons are associated with this brand?
- How would you describe the attitude or feel of the brand?
- What values does the brand espouse?
- Is there anything else significant about this brand?

Provide your answers in the space below:

Now, consider these questions the following questions in light of that brand:

- What social media presence does this brand already have? (Consider things like Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and hashtags, YouTube channels, websites, and blogs.)
- What social media areas are doing well?
- What social media areas could be improved upon?
- Identify how each brand element will translate to the social media brand.

Identifying Your Social Media Audience

Building an Audience Profile

Your first step in your branding strategy should be building a detailed profile of your target social media audience. This will help you choose the right forum and messages for your brand, ensuring that it connects with customers and sends the right message.

Building a social media audience profile is very similar to building a traditional customer profile. You will want to find out:

- Who wants, needs, and buys our product or service?
- What do these customers look like, in terms of age, ethnicity, religious preferences, political preferences, ideology, etc.?

- Where do these customers shop, work, live, and play?
- What social media networks do our customers participate in?
- What kinds of activities do our customers do on social media?
- What other online activities do our customers do (e.g. reading blogs, watching videos, shopping)?

Use the space below to provide answers for these questions. This will help you begin to understand who your online audience is.

The Key Social Media Platforms

Choosing the Right Platform for Your Brand

Now that we know who we're going to target, and how much money we have to spend, we can start identifying the forums that we're going use to bring our brand to life. Most social media platforms have a unique focus, so consider this in your planning. Here is a brief list of the most popular social networks at the time of publication.

Facebook

Facebook is currently the world's most popular network, with about 1.2 billion users in 2014. Businesses can create pages, post status updates, share pictures and videos, and communicate with customers. Facebook has also recently added support for hashtags to help users find information and connect with their interests. As well, Facebook apps can add functionality to buy products, request samples, and participate in contests right from the site. Your Facebook page should be an integral part of your social media branding strategy.

Flickr

Flickr is a photo and short-video-sharing site that is owned by Yahoo. Their focus is on making photos accessible and giving users ways to organize them. You can use Flickr to strengthen your brand by uploading images, tagging them appropriately, and linking back to your website.

Foursquare

Foursquare is a location-based social network. Users check into locations on their phone, earning points, unlocking badges, and receiving coupons. Users can also leave tips and recommendations for others.

Google+

Google+ is one of the newest social networks, although previous social media efforts by Google (such as Orkut, Wave, and Buzz) date back to 2004. Google+ allows users to organize people into circles and then share information with each circle. Google+ also includes Hangouts, which allow users to video chat with each other. Many companies have used this feature to connect with customers and create a casual, friendly, approachable brand.

Instagram

Instagram is a mobile app that allows users to create, edit, and share photos and short videos via Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr. Businesses can use Instagram to visually promote their brand and create awareness.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social network for professionals. Users and businesses can create pages and connect with each other. You can build your brand's trust and credibility by hosting groups, answering questions, and creating a page that provides value to readers.

Pinterest

Launched in 2010, Pinterest is among the most popular social networks. It allows users to pin websites, recipes, photos, and maps to virtual pinboards. These boards can be accessed by other users via a feed or search, or boards can be kept private. For businesses, Pinterest offers the opportunity to showcase products, share ideas, and provide incentives. Companies like Etsy, Kraft, L.L. Bean, Lowe's, and Nordstrom have been particularly successful in using Pinterest to promote their brand.

Quora

This question-and-answer website is crowdsourced, providing a great opportunity for businesses to establish credibility and provide value to its users.

Snapchat

This mobile app allows users to create “snaps” of photos, videos, and text and share them with recipients. These snaps are only available for one to 10 seconds before they are deleted. If you want to establish a brand as young, hip, and fun, this is the place to be.

Tumblr

Tumblr allows users to share whatever they want (photos, music, videos, text, etc.) from the Tumblr website or mobile apps. It’s a great tool for establishing brand awareness since pages are highly customizable. It also gives users a central place to share things from.

Twitter

The world’s second largest social network allows users to post 140-character updates (“tweets”) which are shared with their followers. Businesses can use Twitter to post news, share links, answer questions, interact with customers, and much more. Hashtags allow users to organize information and find information that they’re interested in. Twitter should be a part of your branding strategy.

Vine

Vine is a mobile app launched in 2012. It is now owned by Twitter. It enables users to record and share six-second videos. Brands like Dunkin Donuts and Columbia Records have used it to connect with a younger demographic.

Vimeo

Vimeo is a video sharing site that focuses on high-quality, creative videos. They were the first video sharing site to support high-definition videos. They also offer more video customization and editing tools than other video sites (such as YouTube).

YouTube

Owned by Google, YouTube is the world’s second largest search engine and the biggest video site on the Internet. It allows users to upload and view videos on virtually any topic. Videos are an essential part of

Facebook

- Showcase logo with profile picture
- Showcase key products with cover photos and albums
- Strengthen image of brand as family-friendly with stories, photos, and videos from families enjoying our product
- Strengthen image of brand as fun with offbeat questions and polls that engage target demographics

Google+

- Create vibrant, fun landing page that matches landing pages on other platforms to ensure brand integrity
- Give posts a more adult feel to focus on young professionals
- Focus posts on healthier options and community projects to enhance brand image

Instagram

- Engage younger demographic with pictures of people enjoying our food and activities in our communities
- Use custom and popular tags to establish brand values
- Link to Facebook and Twitter to enhance demographic reach and brand impact

LinkedIn

- Create company page that highlights our employees' achievements to promote company brand
- Offer support and advice to leadership and entrepreneurship groups to create trust for the brand
- Encourage employees to link to us

Quora

- Enhance brand's family focus by answering nutrition questions (not necessarily those that promote the product)
- Increase community presence by answering tourism questions for the areas that we serve

Twitter

- Create vibrant, fun landing page that matches landing pages on other platforms to ensure brand integrity
- Use custom and popular tags to establish brand values

- Be active in following and retweeting others

YouTube

- Create vibrant, fun landing page that matches landing pages on other platforms to ensure brand integrity
- Create and share videos of people enjoying our food and activities in our communities (particularly fitness activities)
- Create and share videos showing people how to make some of our recipes at home

Creating Brand-Focused Messages

What's In a Message?

There are four important elements of a successful social media message.

Two-Way Communication

Listening to what others are saying is the single most important aspect of engaging with social media. This will help you find out:

- What customers are interested in
- What customers are saying about your brand
- What customers are saying about your competition

Without this information, it is far more difficult to build a message that will engage your customers.

Successful messages take communication the other way, too, by encouraging your customers to do something when they read your message. This might be sharing it with others, watching a video, reading your blog, or liking your Facebook page. Your goal is not to sell to your audience (at least not right now), but to engage with them and build a relationship with them. Then, when they need your product or service, they know where to find you.

Storytelling

Nothing engages people like a story. Stories will tell people what your brand is about and how it can make their lives better.

Which of these tweets would you find more engaging?

- #Carry-All luggage is the best!
- #Carry-All luggage has the right bag for you. Check out our products at...
- Entrepreneur Sarah says she can't live without her #FlyAway briefcase bag. Find out why at...

Transparency, Honesty, and Authenticity

Make sure that your brand's message is genuine. Social media is about human interaction. If your messages sound programmed and automated, customers will be turned off of your brand.

This will vary by brand, of course. Some industries (like finance and pharmaceutical) may have legal regulations governing their online conduct. Do what you can to make your messages feel real.

Consistency

Another key element of building trust is consistency. Your brand's message should be consistent across social media platforms. Your approach may vary depending on the targeted demographic but your brand's values should be the same.

To build brand integrity, keep your social media handles the same whenever possible. This will help with search engine rankings, maintain brand integrity, and build trust.

Come up with some examples of brand names. Here are some ideas:

- 1-800-Flowers.com
- Chobani
- Coach
- Home Depot
- McDonald's
- The Travel Channel

Looking at the Message

Now, look at a few of your suggested brand names across a few different social media platforms (such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn). Identify what elements of each brand are consistent across each platform and what elements are different.

Brand One : _____

Platform	What brand elements are consistent?	What brand elements are different?

Brand Two : _____

Platform	What brand elements are consistent?	What brand elements are different?

Brand Three : _____

Platform	What brand elements are consistent?	What brand elements are different?

Dealing with Negative Feedback

Respond, Don't Delete

Negative feedback is inevitable, especially on social media. However, it can be an opportunity for your brand to show that it cares what customers think. It can also be an opportunity to solve problems before they escalate, improve your product, and build brand loyalty.

Never delete negative comments (unless they are extremely offensive and/or violate the terms of your social network). This tells customers that you don't want to hear what they have to say and that they aren't important to you. Often, deleting negative comments can snowball into a firestorm against your brand, creating more damage than the original comment.

Post Publicly, Then Take It Offline

The best way to handle negative comments is to reply to the comment publicly, and then take it offline. For example, let's say that Bob Smith posts this comment on your brand's Facebook page: "CarryAll luggage sucks!!! I just bought one of their overpriced bags and it fell apart on my first trip. Don't buy their junk!"

You could reply with something like:

- "Bob, we're so sorry to hear about your bag. If you e-mail us at support@carryall.com we'd be happy to help."
- "Sorry to hear about this Bob! We offer a lifetime guarantee on all of our products and would be more than happy to replace your bag or refund your money. Please e-mail us at support@carryall.com so that we can get your contact information."

In some industries, saying "I'm sorry" can be viewed as a possibility liability. If this is the case for your brand, find other ways to interact with customers. A message like, "Thank you for sharing your experience" should avoid liability issues but still send a responsive message to the customer. Work with your legal team to develop responsive, responsible answers to your social media audience.

Case Study: United Breaks Guitars... And Their Brand

In 2008, Canadian musician Dave Carroll was on a United Airlines flight from Chicago to Halifax. While the plane was being loaded, he and some of the other passengers witnessed the baggage handlers throwing guitars on the tarmac, but there was no response from the employees that Carroll complained to. Upon arrival in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Carroll retrieved his badly damaged guitar, but the airline was not willing to pay his claim for damages. Carroll wrote a song and created a music video, titled "United Breaks Guitars," which he released on July 6, 2010. As of this writing, the video has 13.8 million views.

Building Customer Trust

Text your knowledge

The things people or companies, do, or don't do, online can have a drastic impact on how they are perceived, and, in the case of businesses, their bottom line. Take these case studies and divide them into two areas: Builds Trust or Breaks Trust.

To thank constituents for their suggestions on reducing government waste, California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger made a casual, unscripted video and posted it online.

After actor Kevin Smith was ejected from a Southwest Airlines flight, he angrily tweeted about his experience. Southwest Airlines tweeted back promising a phone call, but made no other online response.

Many politicians, musicians, actors, and actresses hire someone to represent themselves on social media. Tweets sent from Barack Obama's account are signed "-bo" if they are written by him. Otherwise, the tweets come from his staff.

In 2010, The Gap launched a new logo that was mocked throughout social media. Days later, they issued an apology on Facebook and reversed the change.

When images of a particular pant style ignited a firestorm on fashion brand Loft's Facebook page, they apologized. They also posted images of real women from their head office wearing the pants in order to regain customers' trust.

In 2012, McDonald's launched a campaign for customers to share their stories about the brand using the promoted hashtag #McDstories. The campaign quickly backfired as customers shared horror stories and complaints. McDonald's quickly shut the campaign down with no social media response, other than an e-mail statement from their social media director.

When Hurricane Sandy devastated the eastern United States, American Apparel created a social media ad offering a coupon to customers in the affected areas "in case you're bored during the storm." Customers found the ad very offensive and social media response was extremely negative. American Apparel pulled the ad from Facebook and Twitter and made no response to the social media audience.

When a Twitter user tweeted about his negative experience with British Airways' customer service, British Airways took over 12 hours to respond. They did not apologize, but rather explained that their Twitter feed was only monitored from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Builds Trust	Breaks Trust

Developing a Communication Strategy

Developing Social Media Guidelines for Your Brand

Establishing guidelines for how your brand will act on social media is tricky. You want to make sure that the people representing your brand on social media have plenty of flexibility and the ability to be spontaneous. You also want to make sure that they represent your brand accurately and positively. Work with your social media team to build a set of flexible, sensible guidelines that will support your brand.

Ground Rules

The first part of your social media guidelines should set out some ground rules. This should include statements like:

- All messages should reflect our brand's values and support our overall social media strategy.
- All messages should also support our company's values and strategic plans.
- All messages should be well designed, without spelling or factual errors.
- Employees must not post on social media while intoxicated.

Response Timelines

Outline appropriate response timelines and methods for each platform. If more research is required, reply to the customer and give them an updated time frame.

Letting Others Speak For You

Turning Customers into Ambassadors

Your customers' stories and experiences are a valuable tool in supporting your brand. They confirm to others that your brand is real and genuine. They can also provide support when dealing with negative feedback.

Find the people on social media who are already advocating your brand and support them. This might include special VIP bonuses like:

- Coupons
- Sneak peeks
- Product samples
- Giveaways
- Exclusive contests

Case Study: The Fiskateers

During a 2006 rebranding campaign, Fiskars realized that although the crafting market was growing, there was no clear market leader. In fact, their market share was dropping. However, the online crafting community was growing and the crafting demographic was becoming younger.

Fiskars decided to help grow the online crafting community. They hired four women for 15 hours per week as Fiskars ambassadors. Their task was to build and manage a blogging community of people passionate about crafting. The women also attended trade shows and taught scrapbooking classes at local craft stores. Their goal was not to promote Fiskars, but to support crafting in whatever way possible. However, Fiskars did encourage product feedback, and in several cases the changes suggested by the online community were extremely valuable and saved the company money.

This campaign generated a huge brand following, known as Fiskateers. The Fiskateers community has grown extensively over the last decade, and now has a presence on Facebook and Pinterest in addition to their blogs, forums, and in-person events.

Building Partnerships

Another way to build brand credibility and visibility is to share the work of others using social media. Just make sure to be fully aware of what you are sharing: check into the background of the author, scan pages, and read articles before you share them with your audience. When sharing, always credit the original source. (On most social media platforms, built-in sharing functions allow you to link directly back to the original author/page.)

You can also consider allowing others to post on your blog, or having someone from your brand guest post on other blogs. Just make sure that the information being published supports your brand and its values.

Reviewing and Revising

Evaluation Tools

Your social media marketing plan should have some data monitoring tools in place, like Google AdWords, keyword alerts, or specialized software suites. Tap into these tools to see what people are saying about your brand online.

Signs of Trouble

Here are some signs that usually signify trouble in a brand's social media presence.

- There is a downward trend in visitors to your social media pages.
- Your social media presence is one-way: your audience is not replying to you or sharing your updates, and/or you aren't interacting with your audience on social media.
- There are more negative social media articles, posts, comments, mentions, etc. than positive ones.
- Your social media pages no longer reflect what your brand is about.
- Your social media presence is inconsistent.
- Your brand is missing from important social media platforms.

Choosing a Course of Action

Work with your marketing team and your social media team to get your brand's online presence back on track. Check over the key strategy elements that we discussed earlier in the course:

- Determining what you want the brand to say
- Determining what the brand is saying now
- Reviewing your audience profile, budget, target platforms and tools, resources, and overall strategy for those platforms
- Checking your target metrics against real-time data

Determine what is working, what isn't, and devise a plan to fix it. Be sure to try one thing at a time so that you can create an effective solution for your problem.

Further Reading:

- ✓ Deckers, Erik, and Kyle Lacy. *Branding Yourself (2nd Edition)*. Que Publishing, 2013.
- ✓ Gioglio, Jessica, and Ekaterina Walter. *The Power of Visual Storytelling: How to Use Visuals, Videos, and Social Media to Market Your Brand*. McGraw-Hill, 2014.
- ✓ Godin, Seth. *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us*. Penguin, 2008.