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## Why your company must be transparent

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We all know marketing has changed immensely the last few years with social media but what does this all really mean? It means that in order for your company to survive, you must be transparent.

Before social media evolved, companies could hide behind their corporate messages; printed "About Us" collateral or brochure-like websites filled with stock photography and awkward verbiage about "fulfilling your business needs with strategic solutions." But now things are different, people are identifying with a company's brand based on its people, community involvement, social connections and engagement, passions, silliness and so much more. At the consumer level, people want to learn about the companies they are purchasing from - how it evolved and what it cares about - and social media is the culprit for these changes.

People often forget that social media is media produced to social network on networks like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and others. But these networks are more like lighter fluid to help share messages, they are not in fact the fire - your content is. Nowadays you must get on the social band wagon or your business may get run over.

Ways to make sure your business is more transparent:

- \* Revisit your corporate messages. If your CEO reads it and doesn't know what it means, you're in trouble. Make your mission a clear simple message (and don't use the word "solutions," please).
- \* Analyze your website and make sure that you are displaying your corporate culture. Do you dress up for Halloween? Do you have company volunteer days? Group lunches? Employee of the month? If so, share it!
- \* Be sure that you have custom photography - I've actually seen the same stock photo used over and over in our industry (a woman with short blonde hair wearing an apron in a retail shop from iStock). If you are using the same photos as everyone else, how is your company different from the next? Photography is really important in our current era of Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat and others.
- \* Identify with your key audience based on their interests. There is a huge opportunity here for educating. Be creative! Start a blog?!
- \* If you aren't on social media sites, get on it! If you are on social, you absolutely must be engaging with others. Social will not work if you only talk about yourself/your company. If you get a negative message on your Facebook, Twitter, Yelp etc. don't delete it; use it as an opportunity to communicate and set things straight. Be real, be transparent.
- \* As marketing genius, Seth Godin says, you need a purple cow. This means you need to be different than your competitors. "The only path to forward is to be one of a kind and you have to get there by owning it."

Fun Fact

To promote the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, Moscow subway stations added machines that allow

passengers to do 30 squats for a train ticket. Oh, and the machine can tell if you're cheating (hilarious video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojo9M1cPSPI>)

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