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Tips on how to build trust on social media

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If you've been using social media and feeling like watching paint dry has been speedier than building your online following, try some new ways to build trust on social media. Once you begin building trust you will in-turn build your following. Remember though, quality of followers is always more important than the number of followers; a viewpoint that was consistent across my recently attended, ICSC RECon show in Las Vegas (#RECon15).

At RECon, there was one particular session that struck me at the title alone, "Driving Revenue from Social Campaigns." Speakers included: Corbett Guest, CEO of Imaginuity Interactive; Brian Lutz, director of mobile & digital strategies of CBL and Dr. William Ward, director of Hootsuite. Though driving revenue from social was the focus - that only comes with building your brand and trust online. Below are take-always to help achieve this.

1. Start with your online profile. If people see your logo over and over, yes that's a good thing, it is memorable, but people want to make a human connection. You can do this by establishing a point person to be your face on social. Post photos of this person and even moments from their life. If you are a part of a larger company, post photos of your staff...out at a trade show, corporate event, volunteer day etc. One brand that does a great job with this is Kendra Scott Jewelry. Kendra Scott is the brand but she is also a real person and you see her across all mediums of their social media. My favorite is their Instagram; check it out for examples. A local example is Urban Grape.
2. Develop content that people find useful. This may be easier said than done but if you do create a blog or other valuable online material; people will come back and view you and your brand as credible. Again, remember quality over quantity.
3. Use geo-targeting to uncover nuances within new markets and interact with people within specific locations. A great social medium for this is Twitter. Search hashtags within your region (Ex. #Boston or #Waltham or #HarvardSquare) and see what's happening. If something is trending, retweet and comment on posts. This will make you a more active user, real, and most importantly, thoughtful.
4. Identify who your brand advocates are and listen. Your advocates are those that pay most attention to you and your brand. They are your responders and your fighters - those that stick up for you in times of doubt from others. You want to pay very special attention to these people online no matter how many followers they have. Listen to what they are posting and comment back, even if it doesn't have a direct correlation to your brand.
5. Have good ratings. In time, everything will have a rating. Work hard to respond to people that have written a rating for your company, good, bad or ugly. This will improve your customer service. Ratings are and will continue to be very important in SEO (search engine optimization).
6. Have referral programs. One of the best ways to build trust is to build your client roster based on referrals. Create a referral program and post it on social media.

Social Media Fun Fact: Comcast was named the least loved brand on Twitter this month and is

fielding complaints and troubleshooting @ComcastCares (which has 86k followers). They are also launching an app called "Tech Tracker" in Boston that allows you to see where your technician is in real time and give them a ranking after the appointment - all part of a \$300 million effort to improve service and their social presence.

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