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How To Build Word Of Mouth Marketing



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Getting your customers to do your marketing for you is the most effective way to sell your products and services - follow our tips to find out how to build your word-of-mouth marketing.

Word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) has long been recognised as one of the most powerful tools in a B2B marketers arsenal, but do you know just how important it is?

It used to be that your customers and prospects would only get that recommendation from their immediate peers and people they came into contact with in the real-world. But now that we spend so much of our time in the virtual world, 83% of B2B buyers are researching online before making a purchase.

Incredibly 91% of B2B purchasers said that WOM is the most important influencer in their buying process.

So how can you make sure that these people are going to hear good things about your brand online? In answer, you need to develop brand advocates that spread the word about your products and services, giving them that much needed third-party endorsement.

Understanding WOMM

According to McKinsey, the first step in harnessing the power of WOMM is understanding the different kinds of WOM that marketers will come across, and these are:

Experiential
The most common and powerful form, typically accounting for 50 to 80% of WOMM activity. It results from a customer's direct experience with a product or service.

Consequential
Occurs when consumers are directly exposed to traditional marketing campaigns and pass on messages about them or the brands they promote.

Intentional
For example, when marketers use celebrity endorsements to trigger positive buzz for product launches.

How to build WOMM

So now you've got a handle on the different types of WOMM, we've pulled together tips and strategies from some of the best resources around to help you make the most out of it.

HubSpot have identified key qualities needed to make a powerful WOMM strategy, these are:

- **Know your audience and develop personas that are so specific they're bordering on the obsessive!**
- **Know everything there is to know about your industry, products and services.**
- **Build a very close social media community in the networks that resonate with your target audience.**

- Identify who the influencers are in your community and in other social media spaces where you'd like to get noticed.
- Find out what influences your influencers and where.
- Don't restrict what people can say but try and guide it instead.

WOMMA (Word of Mouth Marketing Association) talk about how to get people to share your content once you've identified your influencers and where you want the word to be spread. They include:

- Creating a story that's interesting, relevant and authentic.
- Starting to spread the word yourself and if the story's good enough the influencers will pick it up.
- Building a relationship with the influencer to turn them into a brand advocate.

It's worth the effort as research has shown that although 18% of people trust what influencers say about a brand, 92% trust brand advocates.



In the 2013 WOMMA Influencer Guidebook, WOMMA reveals how much things have changed since the advent of digital marketing and online media. **The report shows all the significant changes you need to know about in order to stay successful. Including:**

- The attributes that make up an influencer and the things you should consider when deciding on yours - such as will they improve the reach and connectivity of your existing network.
- The classification of five categories of influencers - advocate, ambassador, citizen, professional occupation and celebrity.
- The inclusion of 'key influencer' and 'influencee' in the definitions of influencer marketing.
- The differentiation between 'potential to influence' and the practice of measuring 'actual influence'.
- A discussion of three levels of consideration when constructing an influencer marketing program.

As well as showing you how these changes affect how you should approach WOMM, the guide also shows you how to set goals and measures, so you can tell whether you're achieving what you set out to do.

How to know if you're doing it right

Nichevertising have come up with the below warning signs that will show if your WOMM strategy is way off the mark. They are:



Not having systems in place to track where WOMM referrals come from - if you don't know where people are talking, you can't get in there and influence things. You also can't measure the success, or not, of your different tactics, so you'll never be able to tell if you're doing it right.



Being unable to explain your USP in 30 seconds or less - if you can't do this then you'll never create brand advocates that can either. If you want someone to recommend your brand you need to create a compelling USP statement and use it in your communications with them so that they'll then feel ready to tell it to others for you.



You're not viewed as an expert in your niche - you'll never generate WOMM if you're not considered a thought leader, so this goes back to the HubSpot tip that you need to know everything about your industry, products and services.



You can't clearly define your niche in one short sentence - you need more than one niche for every target market you're aiming at, so get your personas developed and then create your USPs for each one. The more focused and succinct your messages are the more they'll resonate and more likely they'll be to get shared.

Measuring WOMM ROI

As with every marketing activity, you need to be able to demonstrate the ROI of time, efforts and budget that goes into generating WOMM; so how can you prove this?



Another guide from WOMMA can help you do this too. Solving the ROI Riddle: Perspectives from Marketers on Measuring Word of Mouth Marketing gives marketers a practical introduction to measuring the business value of their marketing programs. It looks at the places, both online and offline, where customer sharing and recommendations occur.

Takeaways

So to recap, to build WOMM around your brand you need to:

- Be the fountain of all knowledge about your industry.
- Know who you're targeting, why, where and when.
- Build a community of influencers and advocates.
- Measure the results of everything you do.
- Keep changing and adapting in line with what the results reveal.

For more ideas on engaging customers online, download our eGuide What Exactly is Inbound Marketing?

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