



Honing Your Online Presence

While there may be some downsides to personal social media, for most businesses, especially small ones, it has become a necessary evil in order to grow their customer base. Birgitta Stone, founder of Local Social Media LLC, agrees that a solid social media presence is essential. “You may not like it, or want to do it, but if you want your business to succeed, you have to have it,” says Stone. She counsels that if you can do your own social media, you should. “No one knows your business, your inventory, or what you can offer, better than you,” she says. If you can’t do it yourself, hire someone. Her company has been helping businesses navigate the social media scene since 2011. In 2019, Stone launched Local-Insta to help connect small businesses with local customers by using town-specific Instagram accounts.

Having helped over 300 local and national accounts with their online marketing and advertising, Stone has few tips to make using social media less intimidating and more successful.

LET’S GET ENGAGED

When social media platforms first started to emerge in the early 2000’s, the primary goal was connection. “The entire premise of social media is for people



to make connections and engage with each other,” says Stone. It’s not enough to simply post, you have to strive to get people to engage with that post – if you comment, like, or share a post, your followers will see that. Much like that infamous Faberge shampoo commercial from the 1970’s “and she told two friends and so on and so on,” - by engaging people with your post, you open opportunities to engage followers of those people and so on.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

It’s important to identify your target customer, which will determine which platform you use. The lasting benefit of Facebook is the groups – people with a specific interest or event in common. Instagram gives you the most control over what gets put on your page and how it’s going to look – people can’t just post on your page. TikTok’s reach is worldwide, so not necessarily your audience if you’re promoting a local business. It’s important to note, that people aren’t necessarily going to your page, you’re just hoping to end up in their feed. “Make sure you put your website and contact information on every post, so people know how to reach you,” Stone says.

A REEL GOOD TIME

Stone thinks that posting reels, when done with appropriate frequency, can be very effective. “You have to have interesting content and good music,” she says. A quality photo or reel is so valuable because if people “like” it, that’s going to naturally

increase your exposure. “The perfect blend of social media is a combination of three things: a little bit of selling, a little bit of education, and a little bit of fun. You want to draw people in with pretty pictures, but you also want to give them information they might not know about your business,” says Stone.

FREQUENT PITFALLS

One common misstep is not acknowledging the law of diminishing returns – don’t over post. You don’t want to saturate your market. She advises about 2 - 3 posts per week, consistency is preferable to sporadic posting. Scheduled posts are often a tool that businesses use and while they can be helpful, Stone thinks staying nimble and open to spontaneous and timely posts is equally rewarding.

Security is another important consideration. “Hackers are getting better all the time,” says Stone. “You need to try to stay one step ahead.” She recommends using a two-factor authentication as an added level of protection – if anyone tries to log in from somewhere, you’ll get a notification. Lastly, don’t click on anything unfamiliar – while it might seem that way, Facebook and Instagram are not emailing you, it’s probably just george@imahacker.com. “It’s usually not a matter of if, but when you’ll be hacked,” says Stone. Saving your photos on another site is another helpful tip. “Facebook should not be used to store your important photos. If you do get hacked, you will lose all of them,” she says.

The world of social media is here to stay, but used thoughtfully, it can help your grow your followers, your presence, and most importantly your business. ●

