

Connecting through social media

Social media continues to evolve as a tool for business as our culture places high value on virtual connections with each other — and with the brands they love. While I'm a firm believer that making online connections doesn't replace the value in face-to-face interactions, extending your overall customer experience through social media channels is crucial today.

Online platforms allow you to carry a positive customer experience beyond the doors of your business. Think about it — in just one post, you can communicate with hundreds or thousands of people.

It's amazing. It's powerful. It's also a little terrifying.

Social media can be an intimidating realm, especially when you're learning how to navigate the number of platforms and tools available. It can also feel like a burden, especially as people are looking to your social media presence as a representation of your brand and your business.

So, where do you even begin? More importantly, how can you use social media to grow a community of loyal customers and contribute to your overall customer experience?

Let's start with the basics and take a look at five easy tips to help you start building your customer experience and virtual relationships through social media:

1. Be social

This seems like an obvious one, but let me explain a bit further. There's a difference between communicating using social media platforms and being social on social media platforms.

When you're social, you're not only delivering a message, but you're also interacting with different kinds of content, listening and responding in real time. You're creating a dialogue between you and your customers through engaging content that's relevant to your brand and your audience. If



you're consistently engaged in your social media platforms, you will become more social naturally.

2. Be relevant

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter allow you to quickly get a feel for the type of posts your audience finds interesting. Your followers may engage with an interesting news article shared from a similar industry page. They may engage even more with an uploaded photo of your newest product or service offering.

Test different kinds of content and get to know the behavior of your followers. This allows you to provide content that is not only relevant, but spurs conversation! Facebook and other platforms track all these statistics for you so it is easy to get a pulse on where your audience is engaging.

3. Be an active listener

You can be a good listener, but are you an active listener? Take a close look at what you are doing with the comments and feedback you are receiving through social media channels. Actively seek out opportunities to address comments you receive, whether they're positive or negative.

How you handle the negative feedback is a chance to show your customers that you care. Each social media channel where you are regularly interacting with your customers is an opportunity to extend excellent customer service. People will take notice!

4. Be responsive

Keeping up with creating new content and responding to comments you receive can be overwhelming. It seems like there are new tools emerging daily and many are targeted toward businesses looking to connect and communicate with their audience efficiently. Take advantage of them!

5. Be yourself

You can communicate your brand values through social media content, whether you're posting articles that your audience will care about, responding to feedback, or sharing photos. Use it as a way to create a strong brand voice and strengthen those values.

Your social media presence is a reflection of your brand, and the best part is, you have a hand in establishing what it looks like! Be authentic with your audience and the connections you make will continue to grow.

As you continue to learn how social media can be beneficial for your brand and business specifically, these five tips can get you on the right path to growing your virtual connections into lasting relationships.

Let social media become a valuable tool for you to extend a positive customer experience to a large audience of current and future customers. Share information that's relevant and interesting to your followers. Listen to feedback and use it to better your business. And finally, communicate your brand and values.

Social media can produce the biggest brand advocates, so take advantage of the opportunities to connect today! ©

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