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Social Media for SMEs and startups

“Social Media doesn’t work for anybody! Social Media is just a fad. You need huge investments to drive social media campaigns. Social media is equal to Facebook, right? Why don’t my likes increase?”

These are some of the many myths and misconceptions that are plaguing the mindsets of many SMEs and startups. Here is a brief attempt to break these myths and help you do social media(SM) the right way.

1. **How to start** – First question you need to ask yourself is what is the objective of your SM campaign? Do you want to sell your products? Do you want to spread word about yourself? Do you want to hire people? Or do you just want to be on SM because everybody else is?
2. **Choosing your platforms** – Once you are done with answering the above, you need to decide the platforms which you will use for your campaign. If your target is working professionals, make more use of LinkedIn. If you want to reach out to a global audience and want to focus on the internet savvy in India, use twitter. Facebook can answer most of your questions, so it is in any case a good idea to be there. Even though google + may not have taken off, having a google + profile that you update regularly will help you come up in search results.
3. **What to post** – Before you even start to post, you must first check if you have a website? If not, can you make one? If you don’t want a website right now, can you at least set up a free blog on word press or BlogSpot? Without a central source of information on you, having SM profiles is not really going to solve much of a purpose. You need to drive people from SM to somewhere, and this somewhere needs to be your website or blog.
4. **When to post** – Most people who create SM profiles have the habit of starting off with a lot of energy and vigor but then the enthusiasm seems to cool off with the passage of time. Till you don’t learn to stay patient with your online campaigns, you will never be able to receive any results from them. SM is no magic wand which will drive results for you overnight, but it needs constant care and nurturing to bear fruit over a period.

5. **Got nothing to post** – Profiles are created, few posts have been published and now what? SM is a tool to broadcast what you do to the world. Whether you are engaging in some marketing activity offline or hiring people for your company, or got yourself a new office space, or signed a new partnership, you need to tell the world about it through SM. For SM to work for you, first you need to work for SM. Activities offline translate into online content which end up spreading word and good will about you which eventually helps you get endorsers and thus partners and clients. In cases where you are not up to much at the company front, you can share articles from your industry, or write some yourself, put them up on the blog and share them on the pages.
6. **Nothing's happening** – Few days and weeks into the campaign you may realize how nothing's actually happening. Your cash registers haven't started ringing and your brand awareness is also low. But if you continue your regular efforts for some more time, then you will automatically see tangible results. This may begin with your facebook friends knowing about your company and a one off friend even passing on a lead to you. You need to carry on your all round efforts on all platforms and as a result you will start seeing more people visiting your linkedin profile and more people checking your facebook page. Good way to analyse all this is to see how many more people are visiting your website. You can make use of google analytics for the same.
7. **Nobody likes me** – Likes are the biggest myth of the modern day world. Increasing your likes by forcing your friends and relatives to like your page will not help you, but getting relevant people to check out your profile will. Don't worry about number of likes on your page, they don't really matter. In a population of billions, even if a few thousand like you, it's not a big deal. What you should be bothered about is that when a prospective client comes to your page, he/she should see enough happening there to be able to get impressed by you and eventually associate with you.
8. **Advertising is expensive** – No it's not. Facebook ads are affordable, and you must use them to reach out to your relevant audience online. Yes, professionals don't use facebook as much as college goers, but that doesn't mean they don't use it at all. People from all age groups can be targeted on the platform even with a limited budget from your side.
9. **So it's all about faceook?** – NO! Facebook is important, but it's LinkedIn where the main potential lies. Network more, interact in groups, send people messages, probably buy a premium account and see how you will benefit from the potential of LinkedIn
10. **Will this work?** – If you give it time, energy and patience, it will work for sure and end up reducing your overall cost that you have been investing in sales, marketing, hiring and other functions previously. But if you can't commit to SM, then you might as well not take it up, because without that it will never work for you.

The bottom line is that everybody wants to increase their bottom line but nobody wants to invest the right kind of effort, time or money for the same. SM is here to make our lives easier and to help

startups & SMEs get the right visibility and launch pad. Gone are the days when to make a brand famous you necessarily needed millions for print and TV campaigns. Gone are the times when to hire people you necessarily needed consultants. Gone is the age where only a sales professional could help you drive sales. Use SM judiciously and make it work for you, because whether or not you like or accept it, it is working for others and making them smile. You want so smile too, don't you?