

Brand Communication In The Age of Social Media

Reverse Thought specializes in digital & social media marketing, content creation, web & app development, and all it takes to build, promote and market a brand.

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Sunidhi Garg, would like to participate in stories like the above, through her comments or articles. Please do let us know if you'd want her to contribute to any stories in your publication.”

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It is now common knowledge that social media has the power to make or break a brand and is to be used with caution. However, about a decade ago, brands had become eager to make use of the new formed digital world of social media. The general idea was that social media would allow more brands to achieve real time communication directly with their audience in the palm of hands while possibly allow the freedom to skip the not so

pocket friendly modes of traditional media like television and newspapers for advertising. The 2010's gave rise to what is called branded content where apart from their regular commercials and branding clips, brands had the opportunity to create and share fresh content like gif, images and memes to make themselves more relatable, garner more engagement and communication with the audience. However, as the years went by, a new set of obstacles has taken birth that have to be carefully tackled to maintain a brands image which could not only be affected in the digital world but also in the real world.

In today's world which runs on social media, presents a rather turbulent time for brands and companies. Recently, one of India's most trusted jewelry brands was forced to withdraw two consecutive ads due to hatred on social media which also led their share price to plummet on the stock market, while a famous food delivery service app was criticized for advertising on a certain channel and a brand of packaged snacks has received a severe backlash for what was perceived to be disrespectful mockery of a deceased actor in their latest commercial.

With such intense scrutiny and dwindling tolerance online, despite the best intentions and care, brands can find themselves in the middle of a firestorm. They need to be exceptionally careful

about what and how they communicate and in addition to everything else, have a crisis management strategy in place in case things go sideways.

It is important to realize that today opinions are strong and everywhere; and there are certain red zones to be avoided at all costs. As a rule of thumb, religion and politics have become topics best avoided in social conversations - both online and offline. Many companies have realized it the hard way that coming across as arrogant or insensitive does not work in the digital space, just as much as it does not work offline. However, avoiding these red zones does not necessarily mean a smooth ride online.

So let's say the metaphorical tornado hits, how does one contain the damage?

Owning up to an honest mistake is always a good strategy. But, in case the marketing message has been targeted wrongfully or unreasonably, brands would benefit a lot by taking a stand and demonstrating grace under such pressure. A clearly thought containment plan and response strategy needs to be put into action to deflect negativity and reinforce the brand image in the eyes of the consumer.

The most important aspect of crisis management is early detection and swift action. Identifying red flags early is crucial to timely communication. Typically, the first 24 hours are the most important, so close monitoring for a 24-hour window is a good strategy to adopt around any big releases. Next, comes the response. Humor goes a long way in diffusing tension in some cases while in others, composure and empathy could possibly stop the opinion of a few from snowballing into something huge.

Inserting some positive & supportive voices into the conversation is another stellar response strategy. Gathering support from micro and macro-influencers acts as an antidote to a negative sentiment, provided the narrative is handled correctly and presented in the right way while proactive communication from top bosses also makes a huge difference, especially if the crisis



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originates from poor customer experience.

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