

'Social Media Platforms' in organisations.

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There are over 50 mediums of social media platforms ("SMPs") in the global market place. Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Yammer and Google are quite common and many businesses/companies ("organisations") are already utilising these platforms in one form or another.

In essence, these platforms are communication mediums with the objective of giving organisations more exposure, more quickly and more competitively. They are also adopted for crisis management reactions by organisations and for making announcements of critical importance. Internal staff of organisations also utilise some of these platforms to communicate internally. There are extensive academic and professional arguments on whether SMPs should be adopted and utilised in the market place or internally to the organisation. SMPs are not confined to the private sector but are also adopted and used by non-profit organisations and the government sector. For the purposes of this publication, the scope will not include the use of social media platforms internal to organisational communication.

Adopting and utilising social media.

The primary determinations for the organisation in deciding whether to adopt a SMP are:

1. Will it add value to your products/services?
2. Who will be the dedicated and qualified people to manage the SMP?
3. What will be the cost to the organisation?

(i) Does it add value to our products/services?

The decision to implement SMPs requires planning and should follow a decision-making process. It should either be incorporated in the marketing or strategic plan or some other form of targeted stand-alone strategy. Wise is the organisation that applies research and thinking to this decision-making process and foolhardy is the organisation that implements such a critical communication medium without planning of substance. Does your organisation's product/service warrant SMPs? There is no specific answer that can be applied to the general.

Would a SMP impact on your status against your competitors? Once you have a SMP, do you become part of the mass and does it impact negatively on your differentiation strategy? Indeed, these questions warrant investigation and self-assessment.

(ii) Who are the dedicated and qualified people to manage the SMP?

Delegating the implementation and management of any SMP to anyone less than senior staff of your organisation would be negligent. The criteria for selecting the appropriate person(s) should be premised by the following questions: Does this person have an excellent command of the language so that meanings are interpreted correctly? Does this person(s) have the legal training in order to avoid contentious and/or derogatory language? Does this person(s) have the time to manage the SMP?

(iii) What is the cost to your organisation?

SMPs, if implemented with a quality of purpose and with correct planning, are not as cost-effective as initially thought. SMPs should never replace other substantive proactive marketing initiatives such as person-to-person business relationships and; for the delivery of quality products/services to your clients. SMPs should not be the 'lazy' desktop duty for a person, that will be convincing you as the line manager, that they worked very hard that day in marketing. The cost of SMPs should be proportional to the budget and how it integrates into the overall marketing planning. Measuring the success of an SMP is reasonably more accurate if you allow market feedback and other financial sales measures. Measure of a successful SMP requires much thought.

Conclusions

Consideration commences on whether your organisation and/or industry/profession is suited or needing a SMP. There is a risk of becoming part of the mass market and an unbalanced focus on a SMP could forego your differentiation factor, however, this risk factor may not concern your organisation. Keep at the forefront of your thinking that once you enter that mass market, you are competing for the same micro target as your competitors. Positioning and labelling your organisation as such will make it difficult to reverse your position.