

This is how start-ups should be using Facebook

SOCIAL MEDIA



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WHETHER you're on a tight budget or have factored ad spending into your expenses, one platform to never exclude is Facebook.

For many years, all scales of businesses have used the world's largest social network to engage with their followers and to reach out to potential new clientele.

In the decade of the start-up, and with more than 80 million active small businesses online, what are some of the key tools that newly founded businesses should be taking advantage of to maximise their reach and profitability?

There are many options when it comes to advertising, and any start-up needs to be able to advertise to the right audience as cost effectively as possible. In the digital space, the advertising channel should be determined by the nature of the service being advertised.

Where a brand is selling a product or service that needs to be discovered organically, that is without a directed search for such a product or service, Facebook is the gold standard.

Facebook allows for fine-grained ad targeting, which helps advertisers to get their content to the right people, and more importantly for these ads to find their way to the correct audience while that audience is in a passively receptive state to content.

Further to this well understood paradigm of advertising on the Facebook platform, ads can be syndicated across to Instagram from within the

Facebook advertising platform, since Instagram is owned by Facebook. Start-ups in the B2C space will need to use Instagram to keep interest alive, specifically with a younger audience or products and services which rely on look, feel and influence.

It goes a step further to allow for dynamic re-targeting. Ever wonder how after looking at a specific pair of shoes on an e-commerce platform that you suddenly see that same pair of shoes advertised wherever you go online? No, it's not some form of conspiratorial digital Baader-Meinhof effect, it's dynamic re-targeting.

Facebook makes this a breeze. Upload your product catalogue, put a snippet on your website, and Facebook does the rest. Online ticketing company, Quicket, uses this system to remind users about events they may be interested in.

If a user displays an interest in a particular event, they will be shown an ad for that event, while cruising

the social media platform. If they buy a ticket, the ad stops showing.

Event organisers using the platform who previously had found this type of advertising beyond the scope of normal advertising and needed a way to reach their specific audience, are now able to do so.

In an age where immediacy is ubiquitous and no longer a "nice-to-have", but an expectation, customer service has begun shifting from email and telephone support to Facebook Messenger. Brands that are to be taken seriously need to acknowledge this and to respond to their customers quickly via Messenger.

Start-ups should be using a support ticket system for managing support queries, and most of these systems allow for integration of a brand's Messenger channel to the support desk, allowing for seamless customer interaction whether it be via email, Messenger or other channels from within a single environment.

Start-ups have a lot on their mind, and providing support may be a restriction on their budget or time available for focusing on growth. If this is the case, Messenger allows for chatbots to fill the gap and help provide basic support immediately to users, without needing to invoke personalised human support.

The chatbot explosion came with a number of platforms that help users to make chatbots in a simple intuitive way, overcoming the need for technical knowledge to design and

implement such bots.

Taking it one step further, Messenger can also be used for programmed messaging between a start-up's website and its users. Some airlines have embraced this for sending digital tickets, and retailers are using it for shipping updates. This type of messaging is called transactional messaging, and it is expected to come to Whatsapp (another Facebook owned company) as they gradually start allowing more start-ups to gain access to transactional messaging on the Whatsapp platform.

Lastly, it is important for start-ups to create a rolling groundswell of thought leadership that is visible to their audience (and their audiences). It builds credibility in your field and with that comes the trust that is often hard to come by in the early stages of building a business. Speak to your audience via your brand page regularly. Find out what makes them tick, and be open to their suggestions while providing them with honest responses.

Let Facebook's suite of platforms be your mouthpiece for organic and paid content, use it for customer engagement and support, and use it for transactional messaging, and you'll be well on your way to benefiting from the platform in the most effective way – something that all start-ups should be doing.

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