Social Media: Customer reviews & webcare

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AJ Bombers is a small Burger joint from the city of Milwaukee, United States. Joe Sorge opened AJ Bombers on March 9, 2009, and has enjoyed great success through social media and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) marketing. The success of AJ Burgers is even more significant considering that it was launched during the worst recession since the great depression, and was located where five other businesses have previously failed (Ray, 2010).

From day one, Sorge demonstrated very clearly the power of eWOM, and did his best to keep people talking about his brand. AJ Bombers has successfully created and maintained active engagement on Twitter and Facebook. With a short content analysis of these AJ Bomber's Twitter page, we can see that 80% of their tweets were a direct reply to someone else's tweet instead of simply pushing out content in the traditional marketing form. Furthermore, by analyzing AJ Bomber's Facebook page, we can see an active attempt to post interest content as well as to engage with their community of 23000 fans. Sorge has experimented with several campaigns such as offering FourSquare mayors free meals, and has seen huge success by encouraging repeat visits and checkins among its fan base. Lastly, they also experimented with various social media such as launching a YouTube promotion and contest, as well as taking part in the Travel Chanel's "Food Wars". This case highlights the need for businesses to create interesting online content, to send this content to the relevant people, and to approach negative reviews with transparency and sincerity.

In reference to his social media usage, Sorge emphasizes the importance of customer-centricity, and incorporates customer input and feedback to improve his business and to build a brand which values two-way communication on social media. In line with Edison and Geissler (2005), and Van Noort and Willemsen (2011), AJ Bombers has done well to provide a responsive and engaging outlet for customers to complain, and by doing so has led to a more favourable evaluation of the brand by customers. This can be done with a two-pronged method, quickly addressing any negative consumer concerns, and to proactively disseminate positive eWOM to mavens and other consumers (Edison & Geissler, 2005). The above example of how AJ Bombers used social media demonstrates how businesses can reward the right people (Vaynerchuk, 2011), proactively generate positive eWOM, and target mavens and early adopters, by looking to the platform FourSquare and incorporating location based services to boost sales. Furthermore, AJ Bombers has also known to be very proactive in their webcare activities, actively searching for conversations around their brand, and answering to customer complaints as soon as possible, with sincerity and a personal tone. This has proven to be a great strategy in curbing negative eWOM from spreading, as also pointed out by Cho, Im, Hiltz, and Fjermestad (2002), whose study showed that the lack of a rapid response tends

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to increase the intensity of the original complaint, and hence businesses should give faster feedback responses in an accurate and kindly manner.

As pointed out in the paper by Edison & Geissler (2005), companies also need to be proactive in identifying and reaching out to mavens within the social media community. This is because mavens high a higher propensity to spread both positive and negative eWOM and to a larger audience. By communicating with mavens an appropriate, targeted message, businesses can leverage on their existing networks to spread positive eWOM more efficiently, and stop eWOM from spiralling out of control. Lastly, when engaging in webcare and dealing with customer complaints, it is also important to maintain open and honest communication (Edison & Geissler, 2005), and to demonstrate a conversational human tone (Van Noort & Willemsen, 2011). Sorge does this well by using a personal tone to answer to complaints, and with the mentality that "customers are becoming the business", he has also managed to successfully build a community of burger lovers and turned them into advocates of his brand.

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