

Tip Sheet

FIND THE NEEDLE IN YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA HAYSTACK

Cut through the clutter by letting each platform do what it does best

GIORGIO TAVERNITI, owner of Frank's Pizza House in Toronto, was savvy about social media but had limited use for it in his business; it's hard to write clever tweets when your hands are busy stretching dough and sprinkling mozzarella. Then, in March, Taverniti, a devotee of marketing guru Gary Vaynerchuk, heard about Meerkat, the new Vaynerchuk-backed app for streaming live video from smartphones. He downloaded it, mounted his iPhone on a tripod, and, on a Friday evening, broadcast a stream of himself making pies and answering questions. That night, the dining room at Frank's was unusually packed. It wasn't long before Taverniti made the connection. "Four people came up to the counter and said, 'We were watching you on Meerkat and we had to come in for pizza,'" he says. "I'm actually seeing dollar signs from this." Understanding how to reach your target customers on Facebook and Twitter can be confusing enough, never mind the new platforms that are constantly coming along. Sometimes, as Taverniti's experience shows, it's enough to just dive right in, especially on new services that have yet to be overrun. Where a more studied approach is called for, here are a few rules to keep in mind.



SWIM WITH THE CURRENT

"Every platform has its own use case," says Marcus Collins, executive director of social engagement at marketing agency Translation. People go on Facebook to keep up with their friends, Twitter to see what's happening in the world, LinkedIn to gather professional intelligence, and so on. Marketing

that doesn't reflect what users are there for comes off as irrelevant or annoying. But pay attention to those intentions and the possibilities open up. Pinterest, for instance, is all about planning for future projects, most often involving fashion, food, or home décor. Technology isn't an especially popular category there, so when the maker of a smart thermostat

The Jargonator Swatting the buzzwords of business

By **BEN SCHOTT**



CHAOTIC ARCHITECTURE / • noun.

"If we take advantage of ... chaos and have it as part of our architecture, we can move forward rapidly but in a structured way that will last." Chaotic architecture: as appealing as amateur dentistry.

Source: *Enterprise Project*



DADVERTISING / • noun.

The slew of Super Bowl ads that "celebrated fatherhood" is part of a new "dadvertising" trend. Thank heavens, after decades of feminist dominance, Madison Avenue is finally supporting men. Source: *CNN*

SPREAD: CLOUTIERE PHOTO; TOP: LEFT: BRIAN FINKE; EVAN KATKA; TULLY BECKER (3)

CUT THROUGH THE CHAOS
 You know your customers are out there, somewhere. Tailoring your message to the strengths of each social media platform will help you find them.



hired HelloSociety to promote its product to pinners, the marketing agency asked influential interior designers to come up with stylish frames for the device. The thermostat frame pins drove more than 17,000 website visits and generated 5,200 repins in the 11 days of the campaign, according to Kyla Brennan, HelloSociety's founder. "Obviously, there are some categories

where you have to reach a little further," she says, but with enough creativity, almost any product can be rendered Pinterest-ready.



CREATE EXCLUSIVITY

One of the best ways to attract interest in what you're doing is to put up a velvet rope. Snapchat's mix of features, which include self-deleting messages and the ability to limit conversations to small groups, makes it a useful way to create exclusivity. Ben Benalloul, co-founder of the New York City real estate firm RltyNYC, has more than 17,000 followers on Snapchat. He discreetly alerts buyers to off-market properties through direct messages while using the public Stories feature to give clients a taste of his lifestyle. "If I'm trusting someone to sell my home for \$1 million," he says, "I want to know who that guy is."



GO BROADLY NARROW

If the social media content you use could appeal to just about anyone, you're doing it wrong. On Facebook, with 1.4 billion active users and ad tools that let you hypertarget your message, you can reach your customer base with a level of precision not possible on other platforms. Targeted messages always perform better, says Vaynerchuk. "If you want to reach 27-year-old women who have 2-year-old children, who like baking, and who are into *Scandal*, Facebook has that capability," he says. Hypertargeted ads with specific messaging cut through the clutter. It's like casting lots of small nets instead of one big one. —JEFF BERCOVICI

NORM'S TAKE SHOULD SOCIAL MEDIA BE A PRIORITY AT YOUR STARTUP?



WHEN YOU START a business, you want to get your name in front of as many potential customers as possible. Social media is sometimes a great way to do that and sometimes it isn't. I have two cautionary pieces of advice.

First, every entrepreneur has two critical and limited resources: time and money. Your goal is to reach critical mass before you run out of startup capital. Critical mass is the point at which your business can sustain itself on its own internally generated cash flow. In other words, it is no longer dependent on savings, credit card debt, loans from friends and family, angel investments, or any other outside sources of capital. You may still need outside capital to grow rapidly and get bigger, but once you reach critical mass, you can relax a little bit because you know your company can survive without it.

Until then, you need to be cautious about how you spend your time and your money. If you run out of either one, your startup will fail. You need to take that into account when deciding how much time and money to devote to social media. Breaking through the pervasive social media noise takes a comprehensive digital marketing strategy and people who can execute it well. Can you afford to spend the time to do that, or the money to hire someone to do it for you?

Second, I think, for most startups, social media should be used in addition to, not instead of, more traditional means of getting the word out. One-on-one contact with prospects will always be more effective than mentions on Twitter or Facebook Likes. Never underestimate the power of personal, face-to-face meetings with prospective customers. Direct contact is especially important if your initial success will come from local sales. You'll probably find more customers by doing things like attending networking events, industry meetings, and trade shows than through a big social media campaign.

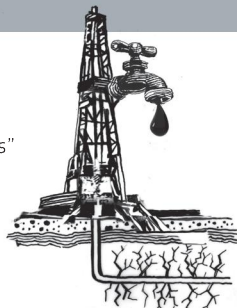
Social media platforms are tools that we should all use wisely. Just don't put all of your eggs in that basket.

Startup wisdom from senior contributing editor and veteran entrepreneur Norm Brodsky. Please send queries to asknorm@inc.com.

MODERN EXPLORERS / • noun. For hoteliers, "modern explorers" are "savvy, curious consumers who want an uncomplicated but intuitive experience." Make base camp at the minibar, then ascend the peak of room service. Source: Hyatt



FRACKLOG / • noun. Oil barons are sitting on a "backlog of unfracked wells" just waiting for prices to rise before they turn on the taps. Similarly, I am hoarding Forever stamps to fund my retirement. Source: Bloomberg



CLINTON BLUR / • noun. "The unique way in which Bill and Hillary tend to mingle their political, personal, and philanthropic interests." When did the presidency become a steppingstone to bigger things? Source: Clinton Cash, by Peter Schweizer

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