



Book The Thank You Economy

Gary Vaynerchuk
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Recommendation

According to the French expression, “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose” (the more things change, the more they stay the same). Marketing consultant Gary Vaynerchuk sees truth in these words. He argues that your great-grandparents probably knew the value of nurturing personal relationships with their customers, but their wisdom vanished when big corporations grew and managers found it more cost-effective to ignore customer concerns. Social media have changed all that, giving marketers the welcome opportunity to connect with current and potential customers in a manner unseen for several generations. If your customers like you, they’ll use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other networks to sing your praises. If they don’t like you, they’ll spread that news just as quickly. Vaynerchuk’s book might not be revolutionary, but it’s a thought-provoking addition to the discourse on social media, and a light, well-argued, entertaining read filled with real-world examples. *BooksInShort* heartily recommends it to managers, employees and customers – to everyone who expects open, honest and caring relationships in their business dealings.

Take-Aways

- Your great-grandparents knew a world where good customer relationships mattered.
- But corporations’ restless pursuit of profits has led to the elimination of all unnecessary niceties in order to cut costs.
- Social media have returned power to the customer, making firms more mannerly and creating the “Thank You Economy,” which cares “obsessively” about customers.
- The “culture of caring” must start at the top and reverberate through the organization.
- If you want your culture of caring to reach the customer, your employees must share your philosophy. Care more about them than about your clients or your competition.
- Interactions with your customers must be heartfelt, visceral and authentic.
- If your forays into social media haven’t worked, you’re probably doing it wrong.
- Quality is more important than quantity when it comes to social media initiatives. “Use shock and awe to blow your customers’ minds and get them talking.”
- Despite – and due to – technological advances, marketing is more difficult than ever.
- Social media likely will change in the future as new technologies give rise to new ideas and platforms, but the vibrant, vocal online community is here to stay.

Summary

Good Manners Are Back in Fashion

Most octo- and nonagenarians can recall living in a very different world – one where they knew their local grocery store owner all their lives, and where good customer relationships mattered. “Courtesy and respect” were prevalent in those days, and word got around if someone in the community was rude. If customers were pleased, they told their family and friends. If customers were unhappy, they told even more people. Businesses “lived and died” on their reputations.

“The world we live and work in now...is surprisingly similar to the one our great-grandparents knew.”

The growth of big corporations and the pursuit of profits changed these “old-world values.” Firms cut corners and “manners took a nosedive.” No longer did businesses build trust and loyalty through the countless small, personal interactions so crucial to all good human relations; instead, they tried to enhance their profits by eliminating all unnecessary niceties.

“Before, it made some financial sense for big businesses to simply ignore people they considered whiners and complainers. Now, dissatisfied, disappointed consumers have the power to make companies feel the pinch.”

Enter the Internet, which dramatically changed the face of business. At first, its electronic remoteness and sheer size only extended individuals’ sense of isolation; people experienced fewer human interactions when they could purchase anything they desired online – they “never had to leave the house.” But since the debut of Web 2.0 (now known as social media) in 2003, the “silent, anonymous, private Internet suddenly turned extremely chatty, personal and revealing.” People began talking to one another again. Social networking sites – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and so on – now provide a way to reconnect and recapture the social satisfaction missing from many business transactions. “Word of mouth is back.”

“We have entered a new era in which developing strong consumer relationships is pivotal to a brand or company’s success.”

The rapid development of social media has led to the emergence of the “Thank You Economy,” where business leaders revert to old-world ideals. The Thank You Economy rewards firms that authentically learn “to mind their manners in a very old-fashioned way,” online and off. Companies must join online conversations. Customers want to know they care. If they suspect that firms don’t, they will inform their social networks. Happy customers can become your strongest advocates. Unhappy customers are your best tutors.

Eleven Excuses That Don’t Hold Water

If you are tempted to dismiss the potential value of social media, make sure you’re not buying into the typical justifications that short-sighted nonadopters proffer.

“People don’t talk about things they don’t care about. So it’s up to you to make them care, which means you have to care first.”

Disregard these 11 criticisms:

1. **“There’s no ROI”** – Even if you can’t prove it with numbers, you know in your gut that gaining the trust of a customer is basic to making the sale.
2. **“The metrics aren’t reliable”** – Advances in gathering and interpreting data about social media initiatives already have and will continue to become more accurate.
3. **“Social media is still too young”** – Early adopters have the clear proven advantage. Don’t wait and see. Do it now. Playing catch-up is not fun.
4. **“Social media is just another trend that will pass”** – If Twitter and Facebook lose popularity, users will move to the next new platform. Savvy firms will move with them.
5. **“We need to control our message”** – Smart companies aren’t afraid that angry customers might post unflattering comments on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or their blogs. If you are apprehensive, it’s time to examine your business practices.
6. **“I don’t have time to keep track of what every Joe or Jane is doing”** – Disregarding the importance of customer comments is business suicide.
7. **“We’re doing fine without it”** – If that’s your attitude, you clearly don’t care about your customers. Competitive firms are proactive and are “always on the offensive.”
8. **“We tried it; it doesn’t work”** – Using social media is a long-term commitment. If it hasn’t worked yet, reconsider your corporate culture and how you value your customer.
9. **“The legal issues are too thorny”** – Company leaders must direct the legal department to serve company goals, including the firm’s new embrace of social media.
10. **“It takes too long to pay off”** – The benefits of social media far surpass those of traditional marketing at a tiny fraction of the cost.
11. **“Social media only works for start-up, lifestyle or tech brands”** – This is untrue.

Using Social Media to Win in the Thank You Economy

Effective use of social media in a business context involves more than just setting up a token Facebook page or sending a weekly tweet. To succeed in the Thank You Economy, you must care “obsessively” about customer service. The “culture of caring” must start at the top and reverberate through the organization. If you want your culture of caring to reach the customer and spread by word of mouth, your messengers (that is, your employees) must share your philosophy. Care more about your workers than you care about your customers or your competition. Achieve this by treating employees like grownups and ensuring they feel as though their “individual needs are being met.”

“Social media has transformed our world into one great big small town, dominated...by the strength of relationships, the currency of caring and the power of word of mouth.”

Employ the six building blocks of employee culture development:

1. **“Begin with yourself”** – As your organization’s leader, exude your company’s culture. Don’t try to create a hip workplace if that’s not what your firm is about. “Self-aware leaders don’t waste a lot of time or money trying to be something they’re not.”
2. **“Commit whole hog”** – The “mental commitment” to enhanced social media marketing is more critical than the “financial commitment.” Once you are resolved to pursue a social media initiative, you’ll reallocate your budget to find the money you need.
3. **“Set the tone”** – Take a personal, one-on-one interest in your customers. Don’t just tell your workers how to interact with your customer base; show them.
4. **“Invest in employees”** – Identify staffers who want to start your corporation’s Facebook or Twitter account, or who have other ideas about moving into the social media mainstream. Give their ideas and suggestions the credence and support they deserve.

5. **“Trust your people”** – Let your employees express themselves about the firm in their uncensored tweets and blogs. Give them the freedom they need to provide top-quality customer service, open communication and transparency.
6. **“Be authentic”** – In this era of instant social networking, good news and bad news both travel fast. If you make a mistake that receives public attention, take public responsibility and make a public apology at once. Authenticity brings long-term benefits.

“At its core, social media requires that business leaders start thinking like small-town shop owners.”

When you find a special employee who cares enough about your firm and its products or services to “adopt a sense of ownership and identification” with your customers, do everything in your power to keep that person working for you.

“Intent: Quality Versus Quantity”

While passion is critical to any personal or business success, the “single biggest differentiator” in the Thank You Economy is “good intent.” Customers will recognize when your intentions are good, and they will flock to you. On the contrary, if you lack good intentions, people will expose you in a heartbeat, and they now have the tools with which to do it on a very large scale and quickly. If your only reason for using social media is to sell at any cost, to garner more fans or to direct people to your store, you’ll lose.

“The platforms you use are incredibly important to successful social marketing, but they will always be a close second to your intent and your message.”

Having a huge following merely means you have a lot of “contacts, not connections.” If you stand aloof from the “emotional center” in your interactions with your audience, customers also will distance themselves from the emotional center, making them less-valuable clients to you. Social media campaigns should never be forced, but rather based on authentic engagement. Two practical mantras that ought to define your day-to-day intentions are “water as many plants as possible” and “put out every fire.”

“Shock and Awe”

Every once in a while, amaze people with something so outrageous that not only will they be wowed on a personal level, they will spread the word. This genre of campaign is difficult to execute, but it is effective. Rapper 50 Cent is familiar with the advantages of generating shock and awe. Responding to a critical slam by a disgruntled fan, Canadian teenager Pierce Ruane, who posted a YouTube video claiming that 50 Cent was a sellout for advertising Vitamin Water and other products, 50 Cent flew Ruane to New York City and posted a new YouTube video of them having fun hanging out together.

“A social media campaign in the Thank You Economy is never done! The Thank You Economy rewards marathon runners, not sprinters.”

What can firms learn from 50 Cent’s example? What if, say, a large electronics retailer spent \$4 million to send everyone on Twitter who turned 21 on April 21 a coupon for 50% off an iPhone 4? Or what if chocolate giant Hershey gave some of the people it interacts with frequently online all-expenses-paid family visits to Hershey Park, its chocolate-themed amusement park? These customers would speak positively about the firms, spreading precious word-of-mouth publicity and creating much more value than “a Facebook ad or even an SEO manager’s salary.”

“A lot of people are having fun clicking on the ‘like/dislike’ buttons they find on many brands’ Facebook pages, but their enthusiasm won’t last forever.”

You don’t need to spend a lot of money creating shock and awe. Even sending your top 20 or 30 social media followers a handwritten thank-you letter and a rose will create a positive effect.

“The Thank You Economy in Action”

The following case studies illustrate how businesses can use basic social media principles to great advantage:

- **“Avaya: Going where the people go”** – Known for high-performing communications systems and services, Avaya demonstrates that even a business-to-business company can use social media to great advantage. While Avaya mainly uses Twitter to handle customer questions and complaints, one astute marketing director noticed a terse tweet that simply said “shoretel or avaya, need a new phone system very soon.” Avaya signed a \$250,000 contract with the tweeter 13 days later.
- **“AJ Bombers: Communicating with the community”** – Angie and Joe Sorge launched their Milwaukee hamburger restaurant in March 2009, and they have spoken with its market about nearly every aspect of the diner since day one. The owners use social media for many reasons; to embrace customer input on menu items, prices, decor, promotions, and more.
- **“Joie de Vivre Hotels: Caring about the big and the little stuff”** – Aiming to perfect the “art of customization,” California’s largest boutique hotel company tries to bring the “joy of life” to its customers daily. Every month, employees vote to give the Best DreamMaker Award to the co-worker who found the most uniquely thoughtful way to deliver an “over-the-top experience” to a guest.
- **“Irena Vaksman, DDS: A small practice cuts its teeth on social media”** – A pioneer among medical professionals, Dr. Vaksman uses Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn to educate the public, to exchange information and interact with her patients, and to differentiate herself from thousands of other dentists in San Francisco.
- **“Hank Heyming: A brief example of well-executed culture and intent”** – Visionary Virginia attorney Hank Heyming uses social media to enhance his professionalism, connect with his clientele and offer affordable assistance to start-up entrepreneurs.

“It’s Not Your Imagination; Marketing Really Has Gotten Harder”

Despite – and due to – technological advances, marketing is more difficult now than ever. Markets are shifting and splitting into niches, customers are located in the least likely places, and the online world constantly is changing.

“The Thank You Economy has radically altered our consumers’ expectations, and businesses are going to have to get creative and personal in order to meet them.”

Companies must be willing to learn and adopt social media strategies. Firms that wholeheartedly embrace the principles of the Thank You Economy, rearrange their budgeting priorities and figure out how to use social media to their best advantage will realize “an incredible return on any investment they make.” If you’re waiting for social media concepts to become mainstream and produce Wall Street-style metrics before you make the commitment, you’re going to be left in the dust.

“The marketing initiatives we put out that might now be met with ‘Wow!’ will eventually be met with ‘Meh’.”

Customer expectations and behaviors have changed irrevocably, and businesses must take dramatic, creative steps to meet them. Social media likely will change in the future as new technologies give rise to new ideas and platforms, but the vibrant, vocal online community is here to stay. For success, invest the necessary time and energy now.

About the Author

Marketing consultant and speaker **Gary Vaynerchuk** is the founder of WineLibrary, co-founder of VaynerMedia, and the author of *Crush It*.
