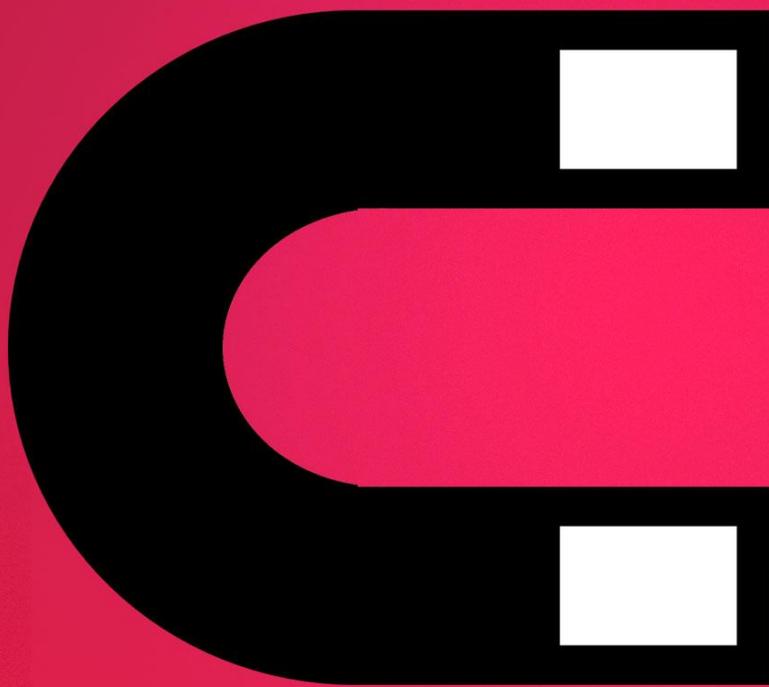


# LOCAL **ONLINE** MAGNETISM



HOW TO EFFECTIVELY **CAPTIVATE**  
**YOUR OFFLINE CUSTOMERS**  
ONLINE FOR MAXIMUM RESULTS

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# Introduction

Thanks to the rapid pace of smartphone and tablet sales, it is increasingly becoming apparent that the future of offline business marketing is going to be the internet. Whether you like it or not, more and more of your customers will cross reference your offline business' credibility and trustworthiness with online resources. Thanks to the fact that they are always connected to the internet due to their mobile devices, getting cross reference and review information has never been easier.

This is why it's extremely important for offline businesses to use the power of an online brand, and, most importantly, online engagement, to craft and manage the way their value proposition is perceived in the online world. If you stand by and let others define your brand on the internet, you might be in for a nasty surprise. You have to understand that when you let your customers define your brand perception, nine times out of ten, the result will not be to your liking. You have to remember that bad news travels faster than good news. For every 100 happy customers that you will have, maybe only one will get around to publishing a really good review online. However, on the flip side of that situation, if you have 10 unhappy customers, you can count on at least two making their displeasure known online. That's just how it works. That's the reality you're faced with. You can't let this process work against you. You have to be proactive in engaging your offline customers over the internet to ensure that your online brand is what you'd like it to be.

This report steps you through the process of realizing the resources you have at your disposal, and to properly use these resources to ensure that you have at least some control over your online brand. Understand that you can never have 100% full control over your online brand. Somehow, someday, somebody will post a negative review, or say negative things about your brand. That goes with the territory; that is unavoidable. However, by being more proactive, you can ensure that whatever damage the critics and haters may inflict on your online brand would be, at best, minimal. In fact, if you play your cards right, you can even deflect the criticisms to such an extent that they work for you instead of against you. What's important is to engage with your current offline customers in such a way that they help your online brand.

# Chapter 1

## **Engage Your Customers Through Social Media Content**

The first step is to recruit your existing customer base to engage with your brand through their social media accounts. Considering how big Facebook is, chances are pretty good that a healthy percentage of your existing offline customer base will already have Facebook accounts. In fact many of them probably already have Twitter, and Pinterest accounts.

Don't sleep on this information. Create a highly professional presence on the major social media platforms and encourage your existing local customer base to follow you on Twitter, like your Facebook fan page, and otherwise engage with your social media accounts. When you do this, you are inviting them to engage with the content that you will be publishing on these social media platforms.

## **Share The Right Content By Figuring Out What Already Works**

Now that you have invited your local customer base to engage with your brand on social media platforms, don't drop the ball. Don't just invite them and do nothing. They've taken the time and effort to like you on Facebook or follow you on Twitter. Now you have to give them the content that they signed up for. This is where a lot of local businesses screw up. They think that they can just publish whatever they want to publish. This is how you fall flat on your face. You have to remember that when it comes to social media content, there are certain types of content that work again and again. In fact, you can count on these types of content to help your brand stand out. However, the vast majority of content out there is simply not up to the job. The vast majority of content out there simply fall flat. You run the risk of publishing exactly that kind of content if you don't pay attention to content that already works.

This is why it's really important for you to reverse engineer the content of your competitors. Look at their Facebook fan pages, pay attention to the posts that get a lot of likes; look at their Twitter feeds, pay attention to the tweets that get a lot of re-tweets. Do you see what's going

on here? You should be able to see a pattern. You should see that certain types of content get shared more frequently than other types of content. Zero in on this material. Focus on the types of content that already have legs. Don't roll the dice and hope that the content that you think is awesome would actually turn out to be awesome in the eyes of your target customers. It doesn't work that way. Focus on content strategies that have been proven to work in the past for your competitors.

## **There's No Such Thing As Viral Content**

A lot of newbie local business online marketers subscribe to the idea of a viral content. I don't blame them for thinking this way because if you think about it, the whole idea is kind of lazy. You only need to put together content that is so magical that it all of a sudden pulls all this traffic from all four corners of the internet. I'm sorry to be the one to break this to you, but there is no such animal.

Viral content, in and of itself, doesn't exist. There is no such thing. However, there is such a thing as viral networks. Note the difference. It's the people who share content that determine whether that content goes "viral" or not. It's not the content in and of itself. You might share the very best content, but if you don't share it with the right people, with the right kind of influence, your content is just going to lie there like lump on a log. You don't want that to happen.

It's more important to pay attention to your current customer base who shares your content on social media platforms. There are certain tools out there that you can use to determine who's been sharing your content and figure out just how influential they are. Once you've figured out the truly influential people, then you can produce more of the type of content that they're looking for so they can push your content even further through their social networks. You see how this all works out?

## **Pay Attention To Your Customer's Content Engagement Patterns**

When you look at the initial pool of content you produced, you would notice that some pieces

of content get shared more than others. Pay attention to what works. If you did the reverse engineering step above properly, almost all the content that you put out there will be shared. However at this point, your job is to pick out the items that got shared the most, and create more of that type of content. The key here is to focus on what works and keep improving it so its performance and reach increases over time.

# Chapter 2

## **How To Properly Engage Your Customers Through Review Sites**

Make no mistake about it, I am not instructing you to bribe your existing customers to write positive reviews of your local business on review sites. I'm not giving you that type of advice. What I am telling you is that you need to encourage your existing local customer base to post reviews of your local business on review sites. Don't give any sort of incentive. Don't give them any sort of freebie or discount coupon. Just tell them that your business' website is already being reviewed at a particular review site. If they would like to share the positive experience, they should go to that site.

Of course, it's extremely important to cherry pick who you tell this message to. Don't create some sort of flyer that you give out to just everybody. If you do that, chances are very good that the only people who would bother to go to that review site are the people who are unhappy with your service. This is a surefire way of getting tons of negative review. That is not what you want. You need to focus on happy customers only. This means that you should print flyers and instruct your staff to hand out those flyers only to customers who have expressed their happiness with your products or services.

# Chapter 3

## **Don't Take Bad Reviews Lying Down**

As the internet meme goes, “haters gonna hate”. The fact of the matter is that bad news always travels faster than good news. People with an axe to grind and a chip on their shoulder will find the time to write a bad review that bashes your local business. I wish it was otherwise; I wish there was a way to avoid this, but this is a fact of life. Whenever you're dealing with the public, there will be people out there who are going to be impossible to please. There's just no pleasing these people. They will always find a way to nitpick; they will always find some sort of weakness, they will always find something to complain about. Worst of all, these are the people who are more than ready, willing, and able to go online and bash your online brand.

The good news is that you don't have to take all this lying down. Simply accept the fact that haters will hate; however you don't have to take it lying down. You need to actively rebut and present your side of the story. Nothing could be worse for your local business' online perception than a one-sided complaint posted by somebody who obviously hates your business. At the very least, you should immediately respond to the negative review, and as much as possible, explain what happened in that specific situation. This way you can turn the tables on the person complaining. In many cases, these people who complain actually were given good service or they actually were sold products that performed up to their billing. These people just have unrealistic expectations. When you present your side of the story, the unreasonable nature of your bashers will come to the surface, and people would still view your online brand favorably. The last thing you want to do is to simply let the bad review exist out there without telling your side of the story.

## **Your Consistency Will Eventually Prevent People From Bashing Your Brand**

If you develop a standard practice of almost immediately responding to negative reviews, the people who have it out for your online brand will no longer bother posting negative reviews.

Why? They can rely on the fact that you will almost immediately show up at the scene and share your side of the story. If you keep doing this on a consistent and continuing basis, they will tire out. They will find somebody else; they will find some other easy target to bash. There's no need to explain these people; there's no need to figure these people out. That's just what they do. What's important is you take care of yourself, and present your side of the story as quickly as negative reviews appear online.

### **The Bottom-line: Don't Let Third Parties Define Your Online Brand**

Make no mistake about it, your online brand is always being defined. Either you are defining it yourself or somebody else is defining it for you. I'm telling you right now, if you don't take an active hand in defining your online brand by actively rebutting negative reviews or posting positive and credibility building content on social networks and elsewhere, third parties will define your brand for you. You can bet that their definition will be far from ideal.

In many cases when you let your online brand run on auto pilot it can undermine all the hard work that you put in to build a serious offline business. Don't waste all those years; don't waste all that effort. Be proactive in rebutting negative mentions of your online brand. I'm not just talking about bad reviews; I'm also talking about bad comments on Facebook pages, or bad tweets on Twitter. Whatever the form may be, be there to effectively counteract the negative impressions of your brand that may be brewing online.

# Chapter 4

## **Engage Bloggers Through Comments And Content**

Bloggers are both a blessing and a curse for local offline businesses. They are a blessing because completely local bloggers enable you to get exposure among the blogger's loyal fans. These loyal fans can form an online community around your brand if the blogger talks favorably enough about your business. The downside to this story is if the bloggers have an axe to grind, then they can make it miserable for your online brand. It can be quite an unfair playing field because they have the power to approve or reject your comments. If they reject your comment explaining your side of the story, the blog's readers will only see the negative review of the blog and your brand can suffer tremendously. Keep this double edged consideration in mind when following the steps below. If you play your cards right, you can find local bloggers and engage with them in such a way that your online brand will get a lot more targeted attention. Not only can you get direct traffic from blogs that cover your business' local area, you can also get more traffic from search engines. Why? The more third-party websites link to you, the higher the likelihood you will rank higher for certain keyword searches on search engines.

### **Find Local Bloggers First**

The first step to engaging bloggers is to find local bloggers. This is extremely important. It's easy to find any blogger, but that kind of blogger is not going to help you. You need to find bloggers who are operating, or cover, the area that your local business serves. Focus on localization.

### **Find niche-specific bloggers**

Now that you have a short list of local bloggers that cover all the action in your particular geographic region, filter this list based on whether they cover your type of business. Look at their categories for clues. For example, if you own a local restaurant that specializes in Thai

food in Tampa, Florida, you need to first look for local bloggers that cover the local Tampa area. Next, you need to look at these blogs and see if they have a category or a tab that says restaurants. If this is the case, then you've found a niche-specific local blog. I hope you see how this works.

### **The Holy Grail: Local and Niche-Specific Blogs**

The Holy Grail type of blog that you're looking for, meaning the ideal type of blog, is a blog that is so localized and extremely niche-specific. In the Tampa, Florida example above, the Holy Grail type of blog is a restaurant blog that focuses exclusively on the Tampa, Florida metropolitan area. In other words, this blog only lists restaurants; it's not a general interest blog that just happens to have a category that mentions restaurants. This is a blog that is all about restaurants that are completely within the Tampa, Florida area. This is the kind of blog you need to reach out to. The problem with this is that they are relatively few and far between. So don't get your hopes up. My previous example, a general Tampa, Florida blog with a specific restaurant category, might be good enough for your purposes.

### **Engage Respectfully With An Eye Towards Value**

When you engage bloggers through their comments section, you will only stand out if you offer real value. In other words, you contribute content that they personally would be interested in. Does the content call them out? Does the content call your attention to a controversial topic? In other words, are you sharing information that pushes the conversation forward? This is the kind of engagement that they're looking for. This is the kind of comments that they would more readily publish. They're not looking for people who simply tell them that they did a good job with the blog post. Anybody can post that kind of comment, and it's absolutely worthless because it's too common. Make sure you invest the proper amount of time and effort in your blog comments.

At the very least your blog comments must build your credibility. If you play your cards right, the blogger will specifically respond to your comments. In fact they might even invite you to keep commenting. Once you reach this level of trust, take it to the logical next step and ask

for guest posting opportunities. This is extremely important because when they publish your local and niche-specific content, they are lending their credibility to your local business. In other words, their loyal base of customers will be more than happy to click on the link that goes to your local business because they know you are a trusted and credible source of information.

# Chapter 5

## **Remember: Engagement Is a Two-Way Street**

It's easy to define engagement in terms of how it would serve your interests. This is a serious problem, because to make money, you need to make sure that you get people what they want, so you can get what you want. In other words, it's about putting the needs of others first. It's all about serving others before you serve yourself. This is the proper perspective you need to use with customer engagement. This should be your guiding principle. If you lose sight of this, it can all easily blow up in your face.

## **Engage With Your Current Offline Customer Base With Their Social Network In Mind**

As I mentioned earlier, you should have already invited your current customer base to interact with your social media accounts. You need to engage with these people in such a way that they would be so excited about the content that you're sharing, that they would eagerly share this content in turn with their own social network. We're talking about local friends of friends. This is how you expand your reach operating from an initial small pool of tried and proven local customers.

## **Engagement Is Not Just Content Or Questions And Answers**

It's very tempting to think that the only type of content that you can share with your local customers is text content, promo codes, or simply answering their questions. I'm sorry to report that this is not good enough. You have to step into their shoes. Pretend that you're on Facebook. Which would you rather share, a nice picture with a quote that adds value to your life, or somebody's promotional announcement that they're now serving cheeseburgers for lunch? The choice is a no-brainer. Focus on what people are looking for. Look for graphical content that would enable you to maintain a brand conversion with your offline customers on social media.

## **Get The Word Out There**

It's really important to call people who engage with your content to action. Don't just tell them that they can consume your content and leave it at that. That's not going to do you any good. Dishing out content consistently and continuously is never good enough. There has to be a point behind that content production. There has to be an agenda that you are pursuing. Otherwise, you're simply wasting your time. You have to call people to action. This is why you need to keep experimenting with the kind of messages that you send out and see the level of engagement people have. Pay attention to content that gets the most likes and gets the most shares. Keep repeating effective content and see how this correlates to a perceived increase in actual offline business.

## **The Bottom-line Is Conversion**

The bottom line in any kind of online engagement with offline customers is conversion. Put simply, you need to measure the amount of warm bodies going through your business' physical doors to see whether you're succeeding or not. If you don't pay attention to this metric, you're simply wasting your time. Make no mistake about it, it's too easy to waste time, effort, and money doing social media marketing. You have to have a solid metric, and it doesn't get any more tangible than the actual amount of warm bodies entering your business.

# Conclusion

I hope that I've opened your mind regarding the power of online engagement with your existing offline customer base. The reason you're doing this is to tap into their massive local social network. If you engage them properly, they can become your brand champions. That's where you want to be.

The problem is it's too easy to become impatient. You have to understand that the learning curve is very steep when it comes to social media and blog engagement. What may work for other players might not necessarily pan out for you. You have to keep tweaking these general strategies into a form that makes the most sense as far as your particular set of circumstances are concerned. There is no absolutely no magic bullet solution. There is no such thing as a game plan that you simply need to copy and paste, or reduce to some sort of magical checklist for you to get the kind of social media marketing success that you are looking for. It doesn't work that way.

Instead, use this as a framework that you can customize based on the actual situation on the ground. This way, you can come up with a highly customized solution that works again and again. You have to play it by ear and let your customers lead. You have to remember, you're chasing after their dollars. You're trying to get them to do you a favor. The least that you can do is to listen to them and craft an engagement strategy that works for them. This is how you can ensure your online messaging strategy produces the kind of response you can be happy with.

Thank you

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