



Three Reasons Why Social Marketing Is the New Word-of-Mouth Referral

In an age where humans are increasingly forced to live online to conduct regular daily tasks and business, it only makes sense that they would congregate in communities. Social media is a combination of two common practices: socializing and marketing. Social activity reflects the deep human need for communities and connection, while marketing tries to catch the attention of individuals and communities with the intent of making money. While many online communities in social media are free to join, they could not exist if they were not somehow sustainable and profitable. Never under-estimate the platform's ability to influence the sales cycle.

Today's new demand generation efforts for sales leads are now a collaborative effort to impact social communities while pushing a product or service to the forefront. A savvy social media marketer lives in communities online, creates relationships and waits for opportunities to push the sales incentive. While social media is a relatively new phenomenon in the world of sales, it is really very similar to traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) advertising. It is becoming increasingly obvious that the less time people spend face-to-face or communicating on the telephone, the more WOM advertising is going to be accomplished through social marketing. In fact, a closer look reveals that social marketing has taken on many of the characteristics of traditional WOM referrals.

1. Great WOM Advertising And Great Social Marketing Both Start With Building Relationships

Humans are social creatures and live in communities. Have you ever heard the expression "people follow people?" The trick in social marketing is gaining trust through relationships. Great salespeople are great listeners. Becoming an integral part of any online community requires the same skill set. It is no wonder that, in a day and age where online communities are forming and thriving, social marketers are quickly catching on to the impact that they can have simply by engaging in conversations from the comfort of their own space. Half the battle of getting a WOM referral is simply showing up and staying present and engaged, which is why you see the presence of large corporations and their representatives in social marketing.

2. Similar to WOM, Social Marketing Starts by Giving The Audience Something to Talk About

If you have ever found yourself online killing time, you will have noticed the plethora of post and article titles vying for your attention. Chances are you have clicked through to a story or a post and thought, "Why am I reading this?" Humans are always interested in things that go above and beyond expectations. In the past, a typical WOM referral may have been the result of an organization going above and beyond with excellence. Nowadays, when a social marketer

posts in a way that is captivating and entertaining and the results are shared by friends, that activity can have the same psychological effect (and potential impact on the sales cycle) as a traditional WOM referral.

3. Great WOM Campaigns And Great Social Marketing Campaigns Always Ask For Referrals

Have you ever noticed the "Like" and "Share" buttons—calls to action (CTAs)—at the bottom of each post on social media platforms? Of course you have. Social marketing platforms are built to grab WOM endorsements. It's interesting to me that the CTA doesn't just say "endorse me." While your intention of sharing content may not have been to draw attention to a product, service or individual featured in a post, you may be doing just that. While most of us do not think that far ahead, the psychological impact of a post referred by a friend is just as powerful as the impact of a conversation. In essence, the brilliance of the social marketing platforms is precisely that they function as one big WOM referral system.

Sales and Marketing 101 teaches you that the most powerful referral you can get is a WOM referral. Once you understand that social marketing is the new mechanism for the WOM referral, it is much less surprising to grasp its staying power. When you can see the characteristics of the old incorporated into the new way of social marketing, the question no longer becomes whether social marketing is powerful or effective. It's not a matter of whether or not you should play the game. It is now a question of which platforms suit your needs and propel your brand forward. While the platforms and tactics will evolve and shift, both social marketing and WOM referrals are here to stay.

“ When social marketing arrived in the landscape of sales, many thought that it was a phase or a fad that would eventually fade out. ”



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