



## FRANKLY, WHEN IT COMES TO SOCIAL MEDIA, DO IT RIGHT, OR DON'T DO IT AT ALL...

Social Media is now as much a part of everyday life as chatting over coffee in Starbucks or going for a beer with your mates. People meet, interact and converse on-line almost as much as they do in real life. And, these people aren't stereotypical 'basement-dwelling-uber-geeks' - this is society, you and I, writ large across a massive digital playground.

As a result, we consume our entertainment, and indirectly our advertising, in a completely different way. In fact, interaction has become such a big part of internet activity Datamonitor reckon, in just three years time, 70% of online content will be user-generated.

But, don't for one minute think the internet and, by extension Social Media, has almost taken the place of television and radio - it hasn't.

It has, in fact, subverted these mediums to fit the 21st Century lifestyle.

As a result, marketing and advertising can't simply be transferred from one medium to the other. Just as film makers, TV moguls and pop artists are re-thinking the way they offer their products, big and small businesses alike should be re-thinking the way they market themselves ... bearing in mind today's consumer is as media savvy, and as cynical, as the mythical 'Ad Man'.

Bizarrely, one thing that is becoming more and more apparent is how little effort brands put into their Social Media. A company will spend thousands and thousands of pounds on a web-site, while their YouTube, FaceBook or MySpace channels often look like

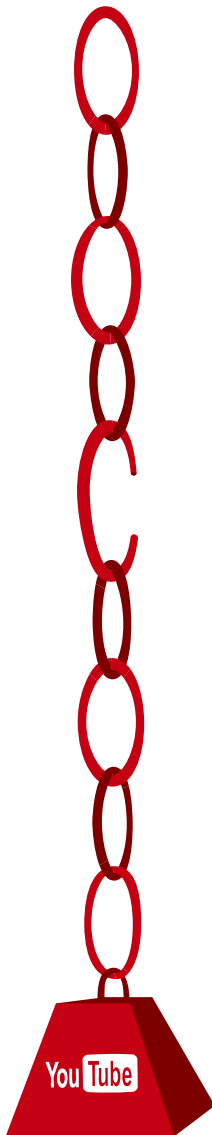
they're being run by the office junior during his tea break.

Frankly, when it comes to Social Media - do it right, or don't do it at all.

Let's take YouTube as an example.

The myth has developed that YouTube is a place you can post just about whatever you want and someone will watch it. Well, that's just not true. There has to be a reason for people to want to see your videos ... and, the more creative, or shocking, or interesting, or funny they are, the more people will watch. And if they like what they see, they'll share it with their friends.

The number of YouTube channels owned by major retailers and big name brands packed full of >



amateur, downmarket videos is incredible. It seems they're buying into the belief that 'amateur = honest'. Well, as I mentioned before, the media-savvy internet user just ain't that dumb - they're not falling for it.

Every single day users can see hundreds of exciting, creative and unique videos on YouTube - made by amateurs and professionals alike. Why would anyone waste their time looking at a badly put

together piece from a major brand?

Make your YouTube channel worth watching by having it managed in a professional manner and by posting interesting, informative content. Think of it as TV, or even film. As a means of distribution it costs virtually nothing, leaving you free to spend that extra few quid on getting the image, and message, of your brand right.

It may cost more money than posting any old rubbish, but it's an opportunity to interact with your customer base, build brand loyalty and increase brand awareness.

People will, and do, share links with each other if they find something worth sharing. And, as nearly all Social Networking sites offer the mechanism to share links with each other the potential to reach a large audience is mind blowing.

It isn't hard to create interesting video content for a site. You could include footage of media events you have sponsored, or send a crew out to make a short documentary. That way, not only do you have the kudos for sponsoring the event for the day, but you can be associated with it for months, maybe even years, to come.

Interviews with interesting people sponsored by, or associated, with your brand is another way of generating interest. Again, doing this in a professional manner is key.

During a quick visit to the Debenhams YouTube channel I found an interview with Ben de Lisi only a die-hard de Lisi addict would watch ... while, on the same channel an interview with Henry Holland looked like it had been filmed for a top-notch fashion magazine program.

This sort of inconsistency is part of the problem. It wouldn't happen on a 'real' TV program, so why let it happen on your Social Media.

YouTube is only one example though.

As most Social Networking sites offer video upload/hosting, your chances of interacting with your customer base are infinite.

As the old cliché goes 'a chain is only as strong as its weakest link' ...well, a brand can only be as strong as its weakest promotion.

Don't make Social Media an after thought in your Marketing Strategy and avoid the pitfalls of an online presence.

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