

Boosting your marketing efforts via social media



Simon Jennings examines social media marketing using LinkedIn and the potential benefits to the can making business

You spend thousands of dollars each year participating in trade shows and adverts, because you know the importance of getting your product in front of the right people. So how can you add to this to get even better results?

As some of you know, I've been working on improving the consumer's experiences of beverage cans with a new end called Open Clean.

OPEN CLEAN AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Over the last year, the Open Clean team began experimenting with paid social media campaigns in combination with traditional trade shows.

In all likelihood, you already have a LinkedIn profile. Your business probably has a company page too. Growing a company page with quality content can be a great way to engage with your

clients, but that's just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the marketing possibilities of LinkedIn.

Last year, for the amount of money it would have cost to visit a trade show, we ran several targeted campaigns over six months, resulting in a broader and stronger range of contacts and sales leads – all without moving from our desks

We've found LinkedIn, as a B2B social media platform, to be one of the most efficient ways online to pitch our product to specific FMCG businesses and fillers across the world. Using targeting tools, you avoid wasting money, unlike on other broader sites like Facebook and Twitter, which will mostly be seen by people with no ability to influence the uptake of your product.

You can also match campaign content precisely to a specific audience. With such powerful demographic and geographical targeting, you

can increase the effectiveness of every impression you pay for by combining these tools with specially-crafted messages.

HOW IT WORKS

In brief, here's how LinkedIn marketing works. On your company page, you post blogs, images and updates for free. This so-called "organic content" is seen by the people who choose to follow or visit your company page – but how can you get people there in the first place?

You can pay to run ad campaigns, which show up in the news feeds of your chosen target audience whether or not they follow your page.

The best thing about marketing via LinkedIn is this ability to choose who will see your ad campaigns. LinkedIn lets you target by company, position, seniority, location, and more.

For example, if you wanted to reach business owners who were aged 40 or older and operating bars in London with an interest in innovation, you can run an ad campaign which reaches 10,000 people, or just 300 as in the example of London's 'innovative' bar owners.

Regardless of who you choose to target, you can of course design your ad to speak specifically to that audience. There are also different payment options available. You can either pay per impression, with LinkedIn charging you every time it shows the ad to someone, or pay per click, where you are charged only when someone clicks through the ad to view your website.

There are pros and cons to each method, and depending on the scope of the campaign and your end goal, one or the other may be more appropriate.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of LinkedIn, here's an example of a week-long campaign we ran last year. We wanted to reach a specific major drinks company, who currently uses a competitor to our product, but we didn't have any contacts at the company. We knew that to have a chance at generating a meaningful lead, we needed to contact specifically board members and managing directors.

First, we created content specifically designed to pique the interest of our target client, with visuals referencing their existing products and messages which we knew would get them to sit up and take notice.

Secondly, we created a target profile for the campaign, specifying the audience by job title and company.

By carefully narrowing down the campaign audience, we ensured that we didn't waste a single penny on advertising to people who weren't working at target company and/or who weren't in a position to influence uptake of our product. Our audience size was only 1,700 people in total.

Within three days of launching this particular

campaign, we had struck digital gold. The CTO had commented on our blog posts and even tagged in his relevant co-workers. We heard from the company the next week, eager to learn more about acquiring about our product.

A director at the company discussed on comments to colleagues on LinkedIn comments how they were impressed by the campaign; how this product was just what they needed right now – little did they know it was only their top executives who had seen the ads.

LEARNING PROCESS

Thanks to LinkedIn's highly specific targeting algorithms, we'd convinced the top executives at a major drinks company that we were running a major campaign targeting their current can-end technology, while actually spending a fraction of the cost of a traditional ad campaign – be it in print or a broader online campaign with Facebook or Google Ads.

Of course, there are downsides to using social media marketing. There is a learning curve when it comes to the targeting tools, and it often takes a few iterations of a campaign to iron out all the wrinkles and learn the quirks of your target audience.

Luckily the up-front investment is low (<\$1000), so trying out several different targeting strategies and versions of your content to see what works best, is not just a viable option but best practice for improving your campaign performance. LinkedIn also puts a series of paywalls in place, which means you may have to accumulate up to 300 clicks to see all the results and demographic data of your campaign.

At Open Clean we have found that LinkedIn advertising, in combination with our other marketing channels, is one of the most effective ways for us to get the word out about our product, especially from a cost perspective. There's still nothing as meaningful or valuable as meeting in person and sealing the deal with a real-life handshake. But, just like at a trade show, all our potential clients are present virtually on LinkedIn, ready and waiting for us to take the opportunity to tell them about our innovations.

Of course, if the message is aimed at the consumers more generally, then using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and others are extremely strong tools. This was clearly demonstrated by Friends of the Earth in on their anti-plastics campaigns much of which was driven through social media.

But for us can makers, unfortunately our marketing budgets don't ever seem to stretch that far.

If you want to talk to George Barnes, who has helped me out on our social media campaign or about Open Clean we would of course be happy to help. 