

Social media brands and businesses being taken for a ride

 By [Gordon Barker](#)

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I believe that it is time that people in the media business start looking into social media from a more sceptical point of view.

There seems to be a number of new generation 20-Somethings starting web media companies in South Africa and they are playing on the innocence and almost mass hysteria that marketers in this country (and probably the world) seem to be fixated with when it comes to social media.



Generating exposure

These new media companies are selling clients on the basis of, we will create your website and Twitter and Facebook pages and to save you the trouble we will update these pages for you every day. This sounds a fantastic service at first and marketing people I have spoken to are falling for it faster than they can get their cheque books out.

The first problem is that the smart 20-Somethings tell clients that they will generate likes on Facebook and a large Twitter following, however anyone can generate hundreds or thousands of likes on Facebook to the extent that they feel a client will be happy with. Clients do not know enough about Facebook to question how this can be done, it does not even enter a prospective clients mind, their minds are currently so clouded by the service being offered, after all if the 20-Something service provider is going to do all the work that is such a great offer how can I refuse? A client will tell him/herself.

The second problem is leaving the 20-Something company to say anything they like on the clients behalf. Whilst they may have good intentions to add daily comments and tweets they cannot know what a marketers' company is involved with every day so they end up talking about rubbish.

As an example the social content of a well know brand covers anything from, "what's more fun singing or listening to your favourite album?" to "Some millionaires love to match - if your mansion, sports car, designer shoes and yacht had to be one colour, which would it be?" This is just gibberish twaddle.

Tweeting from within the company

I have noticed on the SABC3 News broadcast each evening they quote and include Twitter tweets which are really cool and relevant to the actual news content being broadcast. This in my mind is leveraging the technology correctly. Content on these platforms needs to be relevant to whatever you are doing in your business not just adding "meaningless paid for content".

So my message to any client is if they want to leverage Facebook and Twitter they must keep them updated themselves. Imagine if you are a famous super star and one of these 20-Something companies passes a comment that really makes people angry? Their whole life and reputation stands a chance of being ruined. A world famous person who actually uses social media ensures that they are in charge, so why do companies pass this work out to anyone offering to do the work; it does not make any sense.

If a company makes their own social comment they must have evaluated it prior to publicising it, if any comment is just gibberish it adds no value to the company or brand and is a waste of money which is currently willingly handed over to the 20-Something media agency. Clients need to do their own social media work or not bother entering these media platforms.

On the question of Facebook likes clients really need to study all the aspects to effective Facebook pages here is a study that was conducted recently.

Study: 99% of Facebook fans are useless

According to a study by the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science, an important sounding group, Facebook fans are basically really worthless. In an ideal world, all these brands would love to believe that consumers "like" really means something, but it seems that "likes" have little or no value.

Most people would probably ignore this study, except that Ehrenberg-Bass Institute is supported by some of the biggest brands in the world, including Coca-Cola and Procter and Gamble.

The study, in a seemingly slap to Facebook, even uses Facebook's own metrics, "People Talking About This," which is supposed to be a running count of likes, posts, comments, tags, shares and other good feelings towards the brand. Well, according to this metric, their own study shows that based on the top 200 brands on Facebook, the actual engagement of fans is 1.3%. Meaning that most of the people who like a brand on Facebook never do anything whatsoever.

Studies like this show why Facebook has rushed to go public and cash out, "just incase" their long term strategy doesn't work. Remember, just a few years ago, everyone was talking about Myspace. What's going to happen in two years if advertisers start to realize that people are ignoring Facebook?

More importantly what will these "20-Something" companies be doing? well they can just as easily turn to selling used cars which is what they will be good at.

ABOUT GORDON BARKER

Gordon's passion and driving force is in Internet technology, building brands and bringing new ideas to the web and has recently launched a live web streaming service.
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