

Social media should focus on human values

South African brands that want to craft successful social media strategies should focus less on the channels that they use to interact with their customers and more on the human values that social media embodies.

That is according to Mike Stopforth, CEO of Cerebra, who will be one of the keynote speakers at the Acceleration Digital Ignition Symposium 2014 in June.



Mike Stopforth

Creating social business

He says that social media is potentially much more than a set of channels, platforms, apps and networks for disseminating content and interacting with consumers. It could also be a platform for creating a more social business that is built on enduring human values such as authenticity, transparency and genuine concern for and interest in customers and employees as individuals.

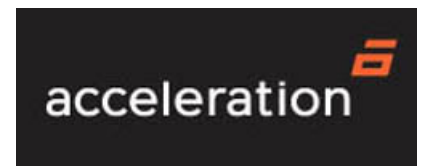
The challenge that most businesses will face in achieving this end is that it is "Hard to scale humanity."

"Most companies are immense corporate animals with multiple businesses, divisions, product lines and services. They find it difficult to represent a human approach to their customers and other stakeholders through one social media face such as a Twitter account." This leads to what he describes as a form of "social schizophrenia" - the distance between what a company promises in social media and what it actually delivers in real life.

Manage expectations

Narrowing this gap is not a simple matter because it involves reforming the business from the inside out to become more social. This demands a fundamental shift in the way an organisation hires and manages staff, handles finances, formulates policies and governance, designs products and communicates with stakeholders.

Until the organisation gets all that right, it is important to manage expectations in social media channels and refrain from making promises that the business cannot keep. "A gap between the promise and the delivery is a far bigger risk than not making a promise at all."



During his talk at the symposium, he will detail how social trends and technologies have changed the way people connect, communicate and collaborate and what that means for businesses. He will also offer some ideas about the right questions for brands to ask as they make sense of this new landscape.

Other speakers

- Elliot Reuben, principal business consultant, Exact Target
- Devon Tighe, VP of data strategy and operations at the WPP Data Alliance
- Steve Plimsoll, who is responsible for Mindshare's global technology and data vision
- Jeff Eales, director of systems & development at BSKYB and a TV advertising veteran of nearly 40 years

Says Richard Mullins, director at Acceleration, "The theme of the Symposium this year is 'Know Your Audience', an area where the latest social media trends are extremely relevant. Companies need to tie social media measurement to business metrics that really matter to their organisations rather than being caught up in the buzzwords. This will help them to drive

tangible value from their social media investments."

Acceleration's Digital Ignition Symposium in Franschhoek will provide digital executives with practical insights that will help them to create successful marketing, publishing, mobile, social and app strategies for their organisations. For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/1t8pIAN>.

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