



Failing to Be Authentic Online is a Recipe for Disaster

The sad reality of the digital world is there are more frauds on the Internet than genuine articles. The other element that compounds this truth is that frauds will be exposed, singled out and attract considerable backlash.

So, what is authenticity in the digital world?

First, brands must be equipped with concrete knowledge of the forums they are entering and the target audiences. This rule applies even for companies creating their own online communities. You need to speak in a language the audience understands, offer visitors real value, engage and foster communication, and encourage user generated content.

In other words, authenticity is something that must be ingrained into every aspect of a company's digital marketing plan.

A key part of being authentic on the Web is actually conversing with people. In general, brands speak to their target audiences without having to listen, mainly due to the nature of the medium (print, radio and television). Social media has created two-way communications: companies can talk to consumers, and consumers can talk to companies. This means that an important part of being authentic is actively participating in the conversation, and letting users know there are real people on the other end.

An example of a company that has failed to embrace this approach is Wendy's. Around noon on many days, Wendy's posts a status update on Facebook about how they are enjoying Wendy's for lunch. Now, it is foolish for anyone to believe that every one of Wendy's employees is

forced to eat Wendy's for lunch. These updates are also not very compelling and feel automated with no personality. It ignores a fundamental ingredient of social media, which is to ignite conversation that enhances your brand and engages your audience.

The old adage to just being yourself is not a cliché but a rule within social media. By knowing and understanding your brand before executing any digital marketing plan, you should have few problems being seen as authentic.

And, if you are a fast food brand, let your employees eat whatever they want for lunch.

Takeaways:

1. Companies need to have a strong understanding of different online communities and their target audiences.
2. Being authentic online means talking with existing and potential customers rather than talking to them.
3. Be personal as opposed to corporate when engaging with people online.

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