

How companies #fail at using Twitter

Twitter is second only to Facebook in brand marketing (85% to Facebook's 91%, according to Social Media Examiner's 2013 Social Media Marketing Report). It's safe to say that Twitter is part of most organizational social media strategies. Yet, many companies do not seem to understand how to use Twitter or how to use it to connect with their customers.



FAIL stamp by Hans Gewirtz on Flickr.
Read more here:
<http://hans.gewirtz.com/2011/03/07/fail-stamp.html>

How do companies #fail at Twitter?

1. They fail to update their profile

Have you ever gone to a Twitter profile and found a link to a blog that has not been updated since 2009? Or how about a company that does not list its current website? It takes minutes to update a Twitter profile. There is no excuse. And don't even get me started on those companies (and individuals)

who are using the default Twitter egg as their profile pic...

2. They fail to seize opportunities

As on most Sundays, yesterday I watched CBS Sunday Morning (some of the best morning TV out there). There were lots of great stories, including one about a Brooklyn pickle manufacturer. It was a nice story, and gave the company great publicity. CBS tweeted out a link to the video and mentioned the company's Twitter handle. I went to check it. The company never promoted its appearance on CBS and the only mention of it was the re-tweet of CBS's video link after the fact. That is a missed opportunity.

3. They fail to use Twitter beyond self-promotion

Too many companies think that Twitter is a one-way megaphone where they can trumpet their awards and recognitions or think of it as an easy way to push out news releases and personnel announcements. While there is room for this type of promotion, if a company's stream is devoted solely to itself, it is not "engaging" with its audience.

4. They fail to understand how people expect companies to use Twitter

Related to the above, companies who use Twitter as a self-promotional news stream, don't understand people expect to be able to interact with them. Twitter is a social media network, and the word social is there first for a reason. Social has up-ended the way that companies must communicate with their audiences. Instead of one-way communication, social media has given companies a way of having two-way communications with their customers.

5. They fail to understand that Twitter is real-time

Perhaps waiting 24 hours to return a phone call or an email is standard business practice, but it won't fly on Twitter. When

somebody is asking something on Twitter (or other social media networks), they are expecting a real-time answer, much the same as if they were having an in-person conversation. Answering a Twitter @ query hours or days later is ineffective and completely inappropriate to the medium.

6. They fail to understand “social shame”

Companies who disregard/ignore/fail to check @ messages on Twitter are unaware of the concept of social shame. Like it or not, individuals turn to Twitter when they have a problem, figuring companies want to preserve their reputations and will respond or try to fix the problem. Many companies don't seem to understand the amplification involved in social media. If I complain about a company, my followers may see it but people who use Twitter's search function will also see it.

What other company failures on Twitter have you seen? Please add your thoughts in the comments.

UPDATE July 9, 2013

Failure can include auto-tweeting replies. Seems that Bank of America has been doing that, quite inappropriately, according to this story on Consumerist.