

Social Media

A local running store owner wants to introduce a new trail race as part of her product offerings to customers. She wants to market this event and currently relies on the local news, in-store advertising, and social media to update customers. With this in mind, she should now consider how to use a strategic marketing communications plan to advertise the new event. The key is to ensure similar messages are

How can the store owner use social media in conjunction with more traditional forms to deliver this message? She has finalized the event details: when the trail race will occur, how much the race entry costs, what route the runners will take, and what amenities will be offered during and after the race. Additionally, she is offering a series of training runs, which will occur every Saturday morning in the weeks leading up to the race. Now that the store owner knows these details, she can use her media outlets to broadcast these details.

With traditional media, she knows that she has limited opportunities. She can send out a press release to every local news outlet, and these outlets may choose to include the event on their daily or weekly list of things to do for their viewers. They may choose to send out news cameras and reporters to cover the event and/or interview the store owner and participants before or after the race. In this way, the store owner must rely on others in spreading this information.

Social media is a game-changer for her because she can make decisions about when, where, what, and how as she provides information about the event. No longer beholden to the traditional media outlets, she may initiate and continue ongoing delivery of these messages to users. For example, she may create Facebook pages and Twitter feeds for the store and the event. She may use these pages constantly to update people about the event and the training races leading up to it. She may post promotional messages on these pages, such as "Sign up today and receive 10% off the registration price." Additionally, when potential participants or current registrants have questions about the event, they may visit these pages and post their questions. The Facebook feed is then like an FAQ (frequently asked questions), as other users may read the owner's responses to those questions. This may facilitate a greater level of engagement beyond simply registering for the race and showing up on the day of the event.

She may use other social media platforms as well. For instance, the owner could use Instagram and Pinterest to post photographs of the course and participants before, during, and after the race. In this way, a visual story of the event is captured, allowing people to relive the event in this online setting, again creating another level of engagement between the store owner and participants. These interactions are in addition to leveraging traditional media. However, in the event those media outlets are not interested in the story or only cover it once or not to the degree the owner would like, she now has other options for spreading the message. The store owner may use these options in conjunction with traditional outlets, extending her reach and potentially reaching out to a new audience that may not have been privy to some of these options previously.

Discussion Questions

1. For the store owner, what are the potential advantages and disadvantages of the social media platforms discussed? Which platforms would be best to promote the event?
2. How can the storeowner follow the five strategic marketing communications steps outlined to develop a successful social media strategy and achieve her organizational objectives? Discuss each step in detail.
3. How can the store owner monetize her presence via social media? How can she quantify ROI and measure her social media efforts?