

Think Social Media is Irrelevant in the B2B Realm? Think Again... How Two Big Players are Making Up for Lost Time

After reading an AdWeek article titled, [Some B-to-B Brands Make Strides in Social Media](#); I asked myself the question, “Why were B2B players lagging behind B2C players in the first place?” Could it be that these companies thought there was no benefit to using social media since they market to businesses only?

Who runs businesses?

Who works for businesses?

What can you not have a business without?

People!

And people are social. They’re social at work, they’re social out in the street and they’re social at home. They’re also mobile and they use mobile technology constantly. If your primary market is B2B, social media is no less important to your marketing efforts than if you were in the B2C mix. As long as **people** are buying your products and services, social media will help you reach them.

But how?

That depends. I know...you were looking for a direct answer, a revelation perhaps. Sorry. What I *can* do is show you two distinct methods for reaching B2B customers, dependent on what you sell and to whom you sell it. First, a direct route for service offerings...

The Power of Thinking Small

Let’s say you market financial management services to small businesspeople. Your customers use social media regularly for personal and business reasons. Maybe they see your social media profile or they’re directed to it from other forms of advertising you employ. What do you show them that can help them understand what you provide and why you’re better than the competition?

Let’s look to American Express OPEN for the answer. As one of the successful B2B marketers cited in the AdWeek article, American Express OPEN uses multiple platforms to stimulate the conversation and provide timely information about how to succeed in business. Over at their [Facebook page](#) we find a post asking for interaction from restaurateurs on National Waiter and Waitress Day. In addition, there’s a link to a list of businesses open and preparing to re-open following Hurricane Sandy.

On American Express OPEN's [YouTube channel](#) we see commercials for Receipt Match which allows business owners to take photos of receipts and upload them into their expense tracking software. We also find a series of videos called Top 5 Small Business Tips from the Pros, featuring videos from Seth Godin and Spanx founder Sara Blakely. Finally, we see a group of videos about Shop Small, the nationwide movement to support small business. American Express OPEN does a great job of building value in their brand by giving away all this free information. Business owners can't help but draw the conclusion that American Express OPEN cares about small business and can help them grow and succeed. Mission accomplished!

Image is Everything

But what if your company manufactures products or components that are sold to other businesses and manufacturers? Surely, a division Vice President doesn't go out looking for bids on Twitter. Perhaps not, but is there a chance the VP is a Twitter user? A fairly good one.

Here's an even more likely scenario... You're a respected B2B brand that manufactures innovative components and products. Engineers working for other companies hear your name and say to themselves, "My goal is to work on the _____ design team at _____."

There are a select few companies in every industry who can claim that kind of prestige. Google and Apple come to mind. The company we'll talk about here is envied for its engineering exploits in a number of areas. That company is General Electric.

General Electric does a great job separating its consumer products business from its B2B efforts throughout their various social media platforms. On GE's [Facebook page](#), the posts are very conceptual and geared towards the Brilliant Machines campaign, a B2B campaign focused on GE's concept of the Industrial Internet – the next stage in economic development following the Information Age. They feature interactive posts as well, which give the engineer fans a chance to answer questions about GE products and components.

GE's [YouTube channel](#) features several different categories of content including a series of videos called From the Factory Floor which allow you to see how GE's products are produced. GE invites interaction through the GE Wonderground game which invites visitors to go on a virtual treasure hunt in major cities like New York, Boston and Los Angeles. A click on a YouTube video sends you to the GE Wonderground website where you can click on a city and learn things that some natives aren't aware of while playing the game.

Obviously, GE Wonderground has nothing directly to do with selling refrigerators, light bulbs, or jet engines. What it does is help to create an image of GE as cutting-edge, youth oriented, technologically innovative company and at the forefront of the next industrial revolution. In other words – GE isn't your dad's General Electric. Mission accomplished!

Successful Marketing Always Comes Back to our Emotional Needs

Let's sum this up with part of a quote from another [article](#) I discovered during the course of my research. In doing so, we'll keep in mind the four basic human emotional needs.

Validation - the need for respect and personal significance

Excitement - the need for stimulation and variety

Security - the need for comfort and certainty

Transcendence - the need for purpose and legacy

"Tip: Remember that you're not selling to other businesses or to "consumers," but instead you're always selling to real people whose buying decisions are driven by emotion. Speak to that emotional side... Find your cause and use it in your messages and share it on your channels."

With [American Express OPEN](#) the cause is helping people live their dream of being a successful business owner. While their campaign touches on the need for validation and transcendence, American Express OPEN succeeds massively at fulfilling our need for security in two ways. First is the education they provide through their videos featuring successful entrepreneurs like Sara Blakely and Danny Meyer. Second is the Shop Small movement that's letting business owners know American Express is on their side, fighting for them and helping them become successful.

GE's social media marketing appeals to our need for excitement and to some degree our need for transcendence. [GE](#) works on exciting products in healthcare, transportation, and power production. They're exciting for engineers who understand the technology and they capture the imagination of people who didn't think these advancements were possible. In addition, GE's channels clearly communicate that their products and services are changing the world as we speak – especially through their Focus Forward videos. Seeing the dreams of others unfold stimulates us and gets us thinking about how we can impact the world.

Remember, even in the B2B realm, you're marketing to people and that means social media is a great tool to reach your customers and position your brand exactly where you want it to be. With our vast experience in content marketing through all channels, Penetration Media will help you create the image you desire and cut through the noise so your target market will have no doubt who you are and why they should work with you.

(Insert CTA here)