

Exploiting the synergies between email, social media and storytelling

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By John Sadowsky

In the book *Email, Social Marketing and the Art of Storytelling*, I seek to demonstrate the power of using email, social media and storytelling in synergistic ways. Much of the research for the book was done with clients of Emailvision, a global provider of email, mobile and social interactive marketing technology, delivering four billion email messages per month on behalf of its clients.

Many of the organizations I studied have achieved remarkable results by combining storytelling and digital media. Their e-marketing programs use an intelligent blend of email, social media and storytelling to build strong relationships with their clients and prospects.

Here are some of the lessons I gleaned from interacting with these companies:

Email can help build your base of fans. Several companies I interviewed garnered thousands of fans quickly, simply by asking their subscribers to “like” the company’s Facebook page. When French kitchen equipment maker Mathon wanted to grow its Facebook community, they used a friendly email that encouraged all their contacts to become “fans.” The response was overwhelming. In the 48 hours following the email campaign, they had acquired 10,000 new followers on their page, as well as hundreds of comments from individuals thanking the company for reaching out to them.

Identify passion points. Communities come together around a shared passion. Companies can learn to find and use passion points to encourage development of user communities and to cultivate a sense of belonging. Filofax, the maker of personal organizers, follows activity on blogs and social networks to find people that are passionate about their products or about personal organization in general. In the process, they discovered Philofaxy, an online group whose tagline is “for the love of Filofax.” Interaction between this group and the company has helped grow the Filofax brand community.

Track engagement. More than counting followers, study what they are doing. How many are opening your emails, sharing them with friends or leaving comments on your Facebook page? At the popular Paris Saint-Germain football club, community manager Julien Jalouzet knows that he can reach large numbers of fans by email or on Facebook. But, he says this is not enough: “We want to see if our content is getting to the *right* people, if it is *speaking* to them and if they are *sharing* it. We don’t just want to know we have fans; we want to understand and measure their behavior.”

Contact influential individuals directly. Often, your potential brand ambassadors are already out there, unbeknown to you. They may be on your email list, blogging about you or a related activity, following you on Twitter or active in your Facebook community. Learn to identify them and tap into their passion.

The Paris Saint-Germain football team monitors more than 500 blogs and social pages to identify their most engaged fans. When they find influential bloggers, for example, they contact them directly to bring them into the “family.” Providing team jerseys and match tickets for these people has become

a win-win partnership for the team and the fans. The team uses key bloggers for insight into the fan community; the bloggers grow their readership by giving away the jerseys and tickets as prizes.

Make your fans part of your journey. Making customers feel part of your culture and your journey can be accomplished in simple and inexpensive ways. For example, each week Dunkin' Donuts features a different fan photo as its official Facebook profile picture. Of course, the chosen individual wants all of his friends to see him in action, and this drives traffic to Dunkin's Facebook page and website.

Encourage authentic stories from the community. There is simply no better way to engage prospects and clients than to get stories from other enthusiastic users. Filofax uncovers these stories by periodically asking clients to describe experiences such as "my first Filofax" or "how I felt when I thought I lost my Filofax." The stories they receive are a great way to discover people's passion for the product, and to share that passion with the community.

Use your newsletter to spread the best stories. If the stories you find and send are relevant and interesting, readers will then show them to their friends. Whenever Filofax runs a contest asking users for stories, they use some outstanding ones in their email newsletter. Inevitably, this storytelling by email leads to a "spike" in activity among their fans.

Define clear roles for each channel. Some of the most effective companies communicate on multiple touch points, with each one serving a single purpose. For example, you might use email primarily for maintaining contact and building trust, Facebook for creating excitement in the community, and your website for selling. By not selling with email or on the social channels, you are better able to position yourself as a trusted partner for clients and prospects.



John Sadowsky is an internationally renowned leadership coach and inspirational speaker with over 20 years experience on five continents. He is the author of several books about the use of narrative in business and leadership. John is Distinguished Professor of Management at Grenoble Ecole de Management. Find more information and read John's blog at www.johnsadowsky.com