

Social media

You just can't get away from social media these days.

Well, actually, you can. You can throw your phone out of the window, go to Antarctica and lock yourself in a cupboard.

It's not a great way of promoting a product or service, but social media is. It's a great way to reach a huge number of your customers easily and quickly. And it's cheap.

To use it effectively though, use the four golden rules of social media marketing.

Rule number one - cater to your audience.

This doesn't mean serve them tea and sandwiches. It means work out exactly which group of people you're trying to reach, and which social media platform will be the best way to reach them.

If your product is a new skateboard, you probably don't want to advertise on a dating site for pensioners.

Think about what type of posts are going to work. Written posts, video, images or a combination?

Rule number two - grab their attention.

Sorry, I mean GRAB THEIR ATTENTION.

Your posts need to stand out from all the other content. An intriguing image, or short video, often engages attention more than words and text and when you do use words, grab your readers with a short and memorable headline. You can always explain things in detail later, once you've grabbed their attention.

You could post and re-post the same message over and over again, but your audience are likely to get bored and tune out. Quality is more important than quantity.

Rule number three - drive interaction.

What makes social media special is that it allows people to have a conversation.

You can't do that with a poster at a bus stop. Well, you could try, only people would think it's a bit strange.

Bitesize

But if you're raising awareness for a project, and you get a lively discussion going online, then everyone can get involved and feel engaged with your project.

And to create more interaction, ask questions, tell jokes and encourage feedback.

Get people to 'like' and 'share' your posts with photos or hashtags. That spreads your word further, and it's free.

There are so many platforms and so many ways to connect, you might forget why you're doing it in the first place, which is you're trying to promote a product or service.

Rule number four - always link back to your product.

It's not enough having people talking about how cool your product is. Add a link to make double sure that people know where to find you and how to buy it.

There's only one other thing to keep in mind - be careful. A post can be seen by the entire world. Forever.

So check that people in photos don't mind their image being shared, and never reveal personal information. A first name is fine, but people don't need to know your surname, where you live, work or where you go to school. Think before you press 'send'.

Get all that right and you're likely to sell more using social media than you are hiding in a cupboard.