

Small business owners: avoid these social media mistakes

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Given the immense popularity of social media sites, it almost goes without saying that a company needs to include a social media element as part of an advertising strategy. While large companies can afford to hire people who specialize in social media to build their online presences, small business owners often have to handle the matter themselves. Many make mistakes in using social media, and it can end up hurting their companies. People can take steps to avoid some of the most common small business social media mistakes.

Not having a social media plan

Many small business owners dive into social media without having a plan for what they want to accomplish by using it. Rather than randomly filling out profiles on various sites, business owners should consider what they hope to accomplish through using social media, as well as how they intend to measure whether they are successful. Going forth without a plan wastes time; when small business owners waste time it costs them money.

Those without social media plans also frequently fail to take advantage of branding opportunities available to them on social media profiles, such as logo and slogan placement, because they have not fully thought through what they hope to gain through social media advertising.

Trying to accomplish too much

Another common mistake that small business owners make with social media is trying to be active on too many sites. They set up profiles on a number of sites and then realize they do not have the time to commit to maintaining all of them well. They update the accounts sporadically, or may even let some of them go dormant. They end up having many bad social media profiles rather than just one or two really effective and up-to-date accounts.

Not monitoring responses

Some small business owners do not realize the unique characteristic of social media advertising is that it is more than just broadcasting a message to potential customers; it is a chance to engage in conversation with those potential customers. They simply use social media as another means to transmit an advertisement, rather than monitoring and responding to the feedback that others give on the sites. Customers get turned off by a company that seems unresponsive, and the business' social networks do not grow.

Not regulating employees' use

Legal issues can arise out of social media use. Employers should have a comprehensive social media use policy for their employees regarding a variety of issues such as how employees mention the company in personal social media, what employees may post on behalf of the business on the company's social media accounts, who owns social media accounts with the company's name on the profiles when one employee is responsible for maintaining the account and that employee leaves the company and similar matters. Failure to have such a policy can lead to employment disputes and possibly lawsuits.

Consulting an attorney with experience in business and employment law matters can be useful when trying to draft a social media policy for employees. If you have questions about social media use and employment law matters, speak with a knowledgeable business and employment law attorney who can advise you about your specific concerns.