

# How South African insurers are missing the Facebook boat

By Nick Paul

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It's no secret that in the digital world, the insurance industry enjoys some of the most expensive marketing costs, particularly when it comes to SEM channels like Adwords. It's not surprising then that they'll be wanting to generate awareness and leads through as many other channels as possible - particularly those like Facebook which can often deliver lower costs per lead and conversion for many advertisers.



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So, when I got my hands on this rather insightful [Unmetric report](#) on the state of South Africa's insurance industry on social media, I was naturally very interested to see who is winning this extremely competitive race.

What was most obvious to me about this report is that in fact there is no clear winner; each brand seems to be employing a rather different focus from the next and is consequently getting very different results.

## The loudest brand

Old Mutual definitely gets its voice out there in a major way with the highest number of posts in the industry and the second-highest engagement score. That volume of content also didn't go unnoticed by South Africans who engaged with Old Mutual's posts in their hundreds of thousands. In likes on posts alone, never mind on more meaningful engagement metrics like comments and shares (where, not surprisingly they also came out on top), they generated about four times that of their next-closest competitor, Hollard. To generate that volume of engagement two things are sure, Old Mutual is identifying its audiences correctly and is definitely putting a whole stack of cash into promoting their content. The days of the free ride on organic reach have unfortunately ended and it's great to see a brand like this making the most of the new playing field.

## The most loved brand

Now while it's true that organic reach is nearly entirely dead on Facebook, that doesn't mean companies need to switch their marketing goals to be only about advertising and generating direct response leads and sales. They're still able to do a great deal about branding using free publicity in the form of social customer service on their Facebook pages. And as any good marketer knows, positive brand stories told by impartial members of the public tend to be seen as far more trustworthy

than messages generated by the brands themselves.

It's here that one of the smaller pages really shone through with quality over quantity. MiWay, with 388 posts by fans to the page for the three months measured in this report, managed to beat even Old Mutual, a page which is double theirs in size. On top of that MiWay managed to get the highest sentiment score with just shy of 50% of their customer posts being positive in nature and they ensured that they responded to over 90% of these customer posts. That's a remarkable achievement for any industry.

How do they do it? Well, I'd like to believe that MiWay are just an awesome company to be insured through and perhaps they are. But, what I suspect is happening is that they're asking for positive feedback from their customers and they're taking time to show appreciation too. Every day, there are Facebook posts from the public naming specific employees and offering praise of their service and the brand always responds with a simple, yet genuine thank you comment from under each one. This is an easy thing to do and it doesn't cost an extra cent - at the end of a call, if the customer is happy, simply ask them to take two minutes to write about it on the Facebook page.

## So who's missing out?

Some insurers really battled to, or didn't show much interest in using Facebook as a means to promote their brands. Companies like Outsurance and Prime Meridian Direct engaged less than 2% of their fan-base, both companies appear to be spending a fair amount of time creating content regularly in multiple formats but neither are getting engagement proportionate to their effort. It appears that they promote only a minimal number of their posts too, begging the question as to why they bother to create this sort of branded content in the first place.

In terms of fan posts and sentiment, Prime Meridian was the only page included in the survey which blocked the public from posting to the page, a practice I find a little baffling unless you're getting a lot of negative sentiment and you're trying to hide it. And speaking of that negative sentiment, the brand with the highest proportion was Budget with nearly 30% of their customer posts being negative in nature. At least though, they were making an effort to respond to about 80% of customer posts, even if it was a little slowly at an average response time of around 16 hours.

## The takeaways

While insurance sure isn't a sexy, easy-sell product, there is an obvious benefit in maintaining a presence on social media, even if it's just to keep costs down by avoiding having all your eggs in the rather expensive SEM basket. Brands need to capitalise more on opportunities to generate positive stories about their company using user-generated content like reviews. And, if they're going to take the time and effort to create their own content, they need to be promoting it and ensuring it lands in front of the right eyes.

## ABOUT NICK PAUL

I started out in the world of social media growing Africa's largest Online Travel Agency, Travelstart's presence from just around 1500 followers to over 3 million across the globe, a

community which was also one of the most highly engaged in the industry. A creative problem solver who values honest marketing, I believe in demystifying what happens on social so that businesses are more clued up as to how they're achieving their goals.

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