

Five important tips to creating viral content

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The other day someone said to me "Why don't you just shoot a video, publish it online and make it go viral?" Viral meaning share thousands of times on the internet by people all over the world.

A statement like this can only be made by a person unfamiliar with what it takes to 'go viral' and the intricacies of digital marketing. There is an art and a science to creating online content and a campaign that goes viral. The art and science are in brands tapping into the psyche of their target audiences whether B2B or B2C and getting them to click the share button.

The main KPIs of a viral campaign are in the volume of engagement that is significant enough for brand awareness, increase in share of voice and in-turn increase in share of market. There are five key factors and considerations when creating content with the intention of it becoming viral.

1. Specifically target your audience - who do you want to reach? This question is mainly answered by the business objective. Whether the company is a B2B or B2C business, the segment being targeted digitally is exactly the same even though the media reaching them is different.

Our audience's physical and online demographics are important, as for example there would be no point in reaching people in Accra if services in Johannesburg are sold. Online we need to know what sites they visit and which social networks they play on. Knowing this helps us reach them better, we get to hone in on creating great content focused on specific platforms.

2. Apply the listening rule - once we have established who we want to reach and where they are, we need to listen to what they are saying. Using a powerful Online Reputation Management tool plus an analytics tool will give a clear overview on our targets issues, concerns and conversations. We learn a lot from listening, we learn what our audience likes, is interested in and what they want to know more about.

This is where big data and analytics play a critical role, the data is analysed so that it can inform the marketing, business decision. We listen to the data and strategise accordingly to reach audiences more effectively.

3. Create great content - storytelling, regardless of age or creed, we all love hearing and/or telling a good story. We have an innate need to connect to someone or something and a good story gives us that opportunity. The media telling the story could be video, text, infographic, podcast, and a social media update ultimately because it must touch us emotionally and/or intellectually, to be thought provoking and challenge status quo and norm. The stories need faces and personalities behind them and who better to endorse your brand/internal story than your staff members. Social media teams know they need to

be encouraged to share and promote the story.

4. Have a call to action - no marketing campaign should ever leave a marketer's desk without a strong call to action. This can vary from leading people to considering something, thinking a certain way, changing their mind or picking up the phone or buying something online. Whatever the action is or desired outcome make sure it is clear and bold in the content.

5. Set a budget - every project needs a sponsor and some financial backing to succeed. This budget would be for creating quality content worth sharing and/or different types of content, as per the list above. Sometimes one needs to throw money at something to make it work, a professional produced video, a beautifully designed infographic and thought provoking blog entries.

Paid media is also an important item in the budget list for a campaign to go viral, literally buying eyes to see the product, service or company. A percentage of the budget should be set aside for traditional/on land activation of the digital campaign. This is usually under-estimated by the online marketer but it goes a long way.

Here are examples of content that's gone viral and worked really well

Dove beauty

Schwarzkopf You | A Declaration of Love

Brand South Africa

Suli Breaks

WestJet Christmas Miracle

Creating a viral online campaign is not grasping at straws it is in fact hard work of listening, planning and executing. Digital marketers need to fret when creating this content.

ABOUT SIBONGILE LEHLOO

Sibongile is the Digital Manager at KPMG taking care of KPMG SA's digital footprint and playing an advisory role for KPMG Africa's digital presence. She has over ten years of professional experience in online branding, marketing, web design and digital media strategies and implementation. She specialises in B2B integrated digital campaigns and this includes online reputation management, social media strategy (for companies, professionals and youth), content management and paid digital media strategy which she is currently responsible for.

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