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## Should you outsource social media?

Aric Zion, Contributing writer

Most businesses have joined several social media sites in hopes of bringing in more customers and revenue. The follow-through of creating an overall social media strategy is where most of them get into trouble.

We have seen several businesses struggle with the idea of keeping social media in-house or looking elsewhere to help with the commitment, content and strategy. About 85 percent of our clients use our social media services — even those that have an in-house person or team.

Each business has different social media needs that affect the decision to outsource. They include not understanding how to use the available platforms, being overwhelmed by the number of sites that need to be tracked, and understanding how to leverage marketing campaigns online.

Many of our clients have said the main reason they find outsourcing so appealing is they just don't have the extra time to do it right — and doing it "right" is the key here. Time to determine current and new platforms that make sense for the business; to organize and post a calendar of content; to relate current events and marketing efforts on the social media outlets; and to interact and respond to online users.

For clients that do have an in-house team and time to spare, we encourage having a consultant involved. In both outsource and consult situations, some areas in which an agency can benefit the client are:

- Creating a strategic overview that incorporates all marketing and PR campaigns to help keep brand messaging consistent.
- Integrating email marketing into your efforts. Emailing coupons, certificates, etc., to respondents to your social campaigns ensures they will become part of your email list.
- Using specialized software to create Web content that adapts based on the social channel and geographic location the Web visitor is coming from. We even tie demographic databases to the visitor to identify demographic and psychographic characteristics of visitors based on their geography.
- Investing heavily in conference attendance and training. We send each social media team member to two to three out-of-state conferences a year to hear the industry's movers and shakers speak and learn of the latest advancements in the field.

Outsourcing can be a great partnership between a business and agency, as long as the agency has a grasp of the brand and understands the company's target audience.

**Aric Zion** is founder of Zion & Zion, a marketing, advertising and Web development company based in Tempe.



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