

Do and don'ts to building a digital strategy

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While there are no hard-and-fast rules when it comes to building a bang-on digital strategy (how can there be, when the digital landscape shifts and goal posts continuously change?), there are some dos and don'ts I've picked up on while working in this space.



Supplied. There are dos and don'ts to a digital marketing strategy

True authenticity

Overwhelmingly, one of the biggest challenges holding brands back from meeting marketing objectives and creating a truly engaged online community is inauthenticity – promoting the brand, its products and services are still taking precedence over bringing audiences content that adds value to their lives.

That being said, true authenticity is not an easy feat to achieve and I don't think there is a brand that has got it 100% right and managed to build an authentic online community of engaged followers.



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That's also not to say that social media can't be used to promote – social media is an incredibly effective sales and marketing tool, and the massive growth that social commerce has experienced in just the last few quarters alone speaks to this fact.

It's just how brands seem to be going about it currently that leaves me with a few reservations.

2 key steps to achieve digital marketing objectives

Achieving digital marketing objectives requires brands have a properly ideated and effectively executed strategy in place. That, I believe, involves two key first steps.

1. Knowing your audience (who is your target market, what space and context do you exist within as a business).
2. Understanding your value. That is, what value do you bring to South Africans' lives, and how does your value translate for audiences online – why should someone choose to follow you and engage with your content?

Once brands have these two crucial aspects down, they have a stronger foundation on which to start building a strong, effective, and successful digital strategy.

4 what not to do

On that note, here's what brands really need to stop doing as part of their strategic digital approaches from here and into the future, based on my observations and experience as the digital manager at South Africa's leading fibre provider.

1. **Stop trying to block the 'bad stuff'** This is by no means a new piece of digital marketing advice, but the fact that many businesses and brands are still looking to block negative comments from appearing on their channels means it bears repeating. Don't delete the negative stuff – you simply have to know that if you are going to share content online, people are going to engage with it. And whether their feedback is positive or negative, there is still a lot of value to gain from it.
2. **Don't just jump on the digital bandwagon** I've seen many instances of brands getting pressured into creating a profile on a particular social media channel, simply because the channel is popular. Again, this comes back to knowing your audience, your brand and your specific value-add. Your content is just going to get lost and engaging on the channel will become a burden instead of aiding your brand and business. Be targeted, do your research and then post.
3. **Stop creating content for content's sake** This is a classic case of quality over quantity. Don't overproduce content and share as much as you possibly can online simply for the sake of saying something. Make your goal to produce quality content that intentionally and strategically resonates with your audience, and that's tailored for your different digital platforms. Be consistent with when and how you post. It's also important to track your objectives against your online activity, then re-evaluate and refine where necessary.
4. **Don't expect to move mountains in minutes** Despite the instantaneous, 'always-on' nature of digital, it's important to understand that results will not happen overnight. From boosted Facebook posts to influencer partnerships, getting results takes time, don't be disheartened or frustrated if your website doesn't immediately rank top of the search engine results pages, or if you aren't racking up high sales volumes within a week of an intervention. Be patient, keep at it and trust the process.

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