

The Rocket Science of Social Media Marketing

Author : Valerie Levin

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At NASA, one of the world's leading space associations, social media marketing and rocket science combine in a way that could shock even the most weathered social marketer. The organization manages more than 500 social accounts. Imagine what their analytics must look like!

From broad agency accounts to specific accounts dedicated to certain NASA missions, their social media isn't selling products or services, but rather inspiration.

NASA has nailed down an elusive [social media success](#) around an incredibly complicated and naturally curious topic. Even with so many different accounts, NASA has managed to create meaningful connections with followers and spread a consistent message.

Although not directly marketing for profit, NASA has developed a strong social media marketing strategy that B2B brands and all marketers can learn from and use in their own content and campaigns.

How to Tell Your B2B Brand Story

If there's one thing NASA knows—besides the mysteries of space, it's their own voice. They have cultivated a brand image and tone that is based on history, exciting developments, generating buzz, some professionalism and a nerdy sense of humor.

In an environment where voice can vary from platform to platform, this is quite the accomplishment. From quick Twitter quips to informative Instagrams and straightforward Tumblr posts, NASA sprinkles their updates and science lessons with pop culture, [striking images](#) and conversational language. This tone complements their mission and still relates to the average follower.

To follow NASA's lead, B2B companies first need to find their voice. This means fully understanding your company, its intention with customers and its future goals.

For example, if you want your brand to be community-oriented, write like a community leader who cares. If you want your brand to be strictly professional, keep your tone clinical and simple.

The point of even giving your brand a voice is to humanize your company. A personal way of conversing as a brand allows you to participate in conversations naturally with followers.

Find your voice by asking yourself the following questions:

- **What do I want to accomplish with my social content?**
Maybe you want to educate or promote. This answer will guide the voice of your content.
- **What tones complement the voice I want?**
A tone is an expression of language that supports your overall voice, so find a few that are good for your brand.
- **What emotions are you trying to evoke in your customer?**
Identifying the emotional connection can help nail down the voice you are looking for.

Once you've established your voice, you can begin to develop your story. NASA has the advantage of having a built-in story of exploration and discovery, but you can also find the story you want to tell by using themes and hierarchies within your content.

Telling [a multi-channel story](#), as NASA does across the many social platforms, all connects back to your central goal. A story, regardless of the form it takes or how it is presented, should be specific in nature and relate to the interests and needs of your customer.

Sell the Value, Not the Product

Sometimes marketers can get lost in the microscopic focus of selling a specific product or service. Boasting the features of something and harping on its shiny new elements is an easy trap to fall into. But in the long term, it's not about the minutiae of a single aspect of what you offer.

It's important to take a step back and present the value of your company in a macro sense. For NASA, they have the ability to share information about an up close photo of the surface of Mars or an infinite photo of Saturn's rings, which is literally a zooming in and out of their content. But from a deeper level, they are trying to inspire their followers and generate genuine interest in their missions and work.



Their move to [post a photo](#) of dwarf planet Pluto before the official press release of the New Horizons' results was an impressive show of giving followers excitement and capitalizing on anticipation.

They knew the value of NASA is providing these fresh facts to a public with curiosity about the universe. Companies can also deliver social content of a similar vein by discussing the ways their product or service solves problems, avoids issues or brings certain emotions to customers' lives.

Think about how your customers' lives will be improved by making a purchase with you. Pinpoint a before and after effect to really determine the value of your product or service.

You can also use the tactic of [value and authenticity in generating leads](#), improving sales and affecting the company as a whole.

Involve Customers in Your Content

Another strength of NASA's social media marketing is to not just engage with followers, but to give them the opportunity to be a part of the social movement. B2B companies should also take user-generated content as a viable component of social strategy.

The NASA program, called NASA Socials, gets followers involved in learning about and sharing information on the organization's missions, people and programs. The program hosts events where social followers gather to get a behind-the-scenes look at labs and projects, hear from engineers and astronauts, and can meet fellow NASA enthusiasts.

The content these fans create at the event also gives them the understanding they need to make shareable content in the future. When the fans tell the story, NASA's story becomes more powerful.

In a way, this is an even stronger tactic for companies because of the importance and reliability of brand advocacy and loyalty. Testimonials, first-person accounts and user-contributed content tell a more convincing and credible story.

Here are a few specific ways you can involve your customers in telling your story:

- **Free Trial**

Offering your product or service for no cost for a short period of time gets customers comfortable with your company. You can also build in the stipulation that they must share their story on social media to receive the free trial.

- **Case Study**

The most traditional, but one of the most effective, forms of using your customers' experiences to your benefit is to tell their story in your branding. A case study is proof positive your product or service has performed well in a real setting.

- **Community Forums**

For hyper-specialized industries, it's good to provide a forum for professionals to gather

and discuss your product and new industry trends. You can use the ideas and opinions from the forum for social and blog content fodder.

- **Guest Posts**

Asking a customer to write a guest post for your blog or to collaborate on content shows a dedication to a partnership and presents your company from a perspective with some weight.

Getting your customers involved also shows you consider their input and are working to create an inclusive community. Customers who are part of a like-minded group will have more positive feelings about a company, increasing their [word-of-mouth marketing](#) and your sales.

Infinity and Beyond

NASA has infused their social content with originality, narrative and community. They take their mission in connecting with an interested public as seriously as an astronaut on a mission in space. They use their background in rocket science to good use in an unlikely place.

B2B companies should take away important lessons from the visuals, language and content NASA generates. They don't have to emulate the famous association, but can be inspired by both their images of planets and stars and their brilliant approach to inbound and social media marketing.

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