



A STUDY ON IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN INDUSTRIAL PRODUCT MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

Today, social media is becoming not only a major vehicle for marketing, but for conducting business in general, from customer service to sales, market research, and recruiting. Social media presence sets the stage for all of these activities. But there is a common concern about execution and effective use of social media for creating and maintaining a social presence for the business for want of the resources or budget required for the same.

There is a need to figure out how to a) build a successful and sustainable program and b) communicate the importance of doing this using a well-thought out strategy and the proper resources. Through this paper the researcher is attempting to put together various aspects of Social media strategy, various channels used by marketers & its impact on improving brand awareness & lead generation for industrial product by understanding how much behind-the-scenes work is needed to create a well-oiled social machine.

Keywords: Industrial Marketing, Social Media, B2B marketing, Content, Hashtag, Tweets

INTRODUCTION:

Industrial Marketing for reaching an audience of engineers, technical professionals and industrial buyers' is different from consumer marketing or even general business-to-business (B2B) marketing. Of course, the industrial prospects and customers are people too. Effective marketing boils down to engaging with people and nurturing those relationships. Companies sell to people and

not to other businesses. However marketing strategies and tactics used to reach an industrial audience are different, which makes industrial marketing unique and challenging.

State of Industrial Marketing Today –

The internet has permanently changed how manufacturers market and more importantly, how industrial buyers interact with the sellers.

Outbound marketing tactics like Direct mail, telemarketing and trade journal ads have become ineffective in generating sales leads as industrial buyers are finding ways to tune out these interruptive marketing messages both behaviorally and technologically.

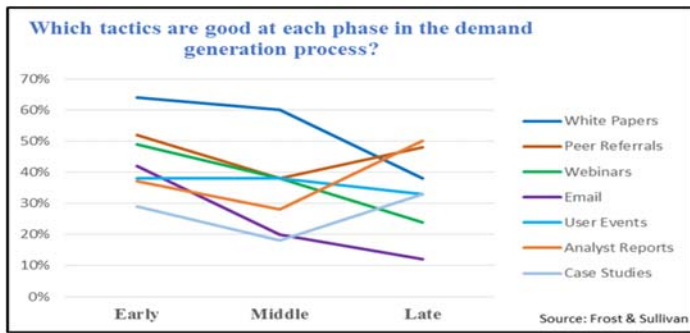
Even though, the industrial buy cycle has not changed, the internet has changed the way engineering, technical and industrial professionals look for information now.

46% of industrial professionals spend 6+ hours/week online for work related purposes¹, this shift in buyer behavior requires organization to adjust their industrial marketing strategies and tactics to reach to the technical audience. The industrial buyer is now in control and will only interact with the sale people on their preferred schedule and often at the tail end of their buying cycle.

Online Industrial marketing strategies and tactics should be adjusted to this new reality by matching the Marketing content closely with interest of the audience, their role in decision making process and where they are on the buying cycle.

Without a clear understanding of the stages in an industrial buying cycle, it is difficult to align Marketing Content with customer's decision making process.

According to *Frost & Sullivan*, there are four stages in the industrial buy cycle. They are – 1) Need awareness, 2) Research, 3) Consideration & Comparison, and 4) Procurement.



Key to Success:

- Find prospect early & regular basis
- Offer relevant content
- Offer a variety of content

Variety of content is the key in the early stages of industrial buy cycle.

Inbound Marketing refers to marketing tactics that focusses on helping prospects and customers to reach you as opposed to interruptive outbound marketing such as telemarketing, direct mail radio, TV advertisement. These days, industrial and technical buyers start their search online and go much deeper into their decisionmaking cycle using the internet. So it would make a lot of sense to make content marketing a priority to attract these people to the business website.

Inbound marketing fill the top of the sales funnel with a large quantity of high-quality leads.

Thriving in today's content driven online marketing world, Industrial marketer need to take inbound content marketing up a notch by persuading the readers to take action in order to improve Return on Investment (ROI), usually measured by the number of high-quality sales leads generated, increase in sales and growth in revenues.

Making customer centric content a cornerstone of the inbound marketing which will nurture and move prospects along their buying cycle in a logical manner which helping them to make a more informed decision.

As a result, business generate more high-quality leads and drive sales at a lower cost while bringing a larger base of loyal customers.

Today's technical buyers and engineers expect suppliers to have a substantial online presence with a website packed with relevant content in a variety of formats and easily searchable.

"Engineers are looking for solutions tailored to their specific needs. They prefer access to "live experts" on technical questions. When these engineers visit a website, they want a mechanism by which they can ask technical questions and expect a response live online or by email within 24 hours of submitting a question" (Source: AlchE's survey)

There is increasing trend in re-designing the website so as to ensure that visitors gets attracted with its layout, content, interactive module and gain their deeper attention into the conversion enabling to generate & convert more opportunities into the sales.

A landing page in online marketing refers to a page on business site that visitors see (land) first after clicking on a link from another page of the website or from the email campaign. Traffic to the landing page can come from other sources such as clicks from search Engines (SEO), pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns and social media sharing. A landing page is the key to capturing leads from the lead generation campaigns.

The image shows a web browser window with a 'Request Form' for Houghton. The browser's address bar shows 'www.houghtonintl.com/en-us/MSDS/Pages/MSDS-Request-Form.aspx'. The Houghton logo is visible at the top left. The form itself has a title 'Request MSDS' and a note 'Fields marked with the (*) are required'. It contains several input fields: Name, Phone, Company, E-Mail, Address, City, State or Province, Zip/Postal Code, Industry, Product Line/Service, and Product MSDS Needed. There is also a 'Questions or comments' text area and a 'Submit' button at the bottom.

Effective lead nurturing requires a dip marketing campaigns that deliver **the right content** to the **right prospects** at the **right time** and in the **right format**.

79% of marketing leads never converts into sales opportunities

(Source: Marketing Sherpa / Knowledge Storm)

Under this study, the researcher is focusing his work on the research related to increasing importance of digitization in general and social media in particular on improving brand awareness, lead generation thereby increasing the revenue of the business.

According to Forrester's newest B2B Social Technographics® numbers, fully 100% of business decisionmakers use social media for work purposes.

- 98% of business decision-makers are Spectators (they read blogs, watch videos, or listen to podcasts)
- 79% are Joiners (they maintain a profile on social networking sites)
- 75% are Critics (they comment on blogs and post ratings and reviews)

— all in the context of their business activities.² It's critical to understand how to use social media and content to help attract and engage these buyers as they research their options and evaluate purchasing the product or service

Over the last several years, social media has emerged as an effective tool for generating leads. Two-thirds of online adults use social networking, and almost half use it daily³. The prospective customers are using it to discover new offerings and educate themselves through the buying journey. This makes social media a vital channel to engage with the target audience across, with the end result being greater amplification of the message and more qualified leads generated.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research design used for this research is exploratory for secondary data collection. This is

a conceptual research with explorative methodology. The secondary data was collected from different authentic sources like various research papers, articles, newspapers, blogs and presentations on Digitization trends in Industrial marketing segment.

III. OBJECTIVE:

1. To study importance of social media presence in improving the lead generation process for the industrial product segment.
2. To understand the way forward for effective use of Social media in improving brand awareness.

IV. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

There are many social media sites which can be used to support the lead gen programs. Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and LinkedIn receive a lot of attention and deservedly so; they are the big four of social, with massive memberships ranging from LinkedIn's 225 million members to Twitters' 500 million and Facebook's 1.1 billion. Despite a late start, Google+ is catching up fast and has already acquired second place in total users, with user base of over a half-billion.⁴ When starting out, one should focus on one or more of these networks. The choice of channels to pursue first will depend on the industry, the product or service offering, and where the customers/prospects have matriculated online. As one gain experience and grow the content database, efforts can be made to expand to other social sites that appeal to the buyers. One should use every channel that is relevant to the buyers, but make sure that have the bandwidth to execute well in any and all channels in which decide to

have a presence. It has far more impact going deep than going wide.

Numbers of followers and fans, by themselves, are necessarily not the only thing that should be considered. Ideally, every connection made would likely to be linked to organizational goals and objectives in business, both now and in the future and thus appropriate social strategies to be developed for effective implementation.

V. SOCIAL MEDIA LEAD GENERATION STEPS:

1. Understanding the buyer and how they use social media:

Business should ensure that they know how their target buyer is using social media. Understand where they spend time, how they use different social platforms, and the key behaviors that they exhibit when using social media. The same buyer may behave differently on Facebook than on Twitter and thus need to be studied while deciding on channel-specific actions.

2. Content development appropriate for social:

Offering compelling content or vertical specific content makes it more likely that the potential buyer will engage quickly. Developing Contents such as blog posts, white papers, infographics, memes, graphics, and webinars that the buyer will find helpful (and perhaps fun) as they spend time on social sites.

3. Developing content promotion plan via various social channels:

Research to be conducted to identify of the sites where the target buyers spend time, usually the major social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and LinkedIn) are likely. Among B2B decision-makers, 81% use topic specific communities and forums for personal and professional reasons⁵ so it would be ideal to include prime ones in your social media mix. A casual survey amongst existing customers can point out the best places to begin.

Whichever channels one choose, a plan to be developed for each that specifies how to attract buyers and promote content, as well as a posting schedule to know what content is shared across the various channels and at what time of the day. There are best times to post on social media

channels to attract the highest number of impressions and posts scheduling can be done accordingly.

4. Use Facebook for lead generation:

Among online adults, 67% say they use Facebook.⁶ With over one billion members, Facebook provides the opportunity to engage a massive audience. Of these, 751 million use Facebook mobile, and 80% of those mobile users check their phones early each morning⁷ Effective lead generation on Facebook depends on sharing content that is engaging and useful to the target buyer and renders visually well on mobile devices. Even though it has a consumer focus, there is a significant opportunity to engage B2B buyers on Facebook by using images and sharing links to blog posts, white papers, webinars, etc. Facebook Insights can be explored to know the best times to address the target audience. Facebook offers self-service advertising options as well. A little extra leverage can be provided to the white paper or webinar offer by boosting the post or running a sponsored ad that targets a specific audience or interest segment. This will help to extend the reach of the social promotion and increase the number of active registrants.

5. Use Twitter for lead generation:

Twitter has 140 million monthly active users.⁸ *It is a highly effective platform for targeting groups of B2B buyers.* High quality content here will attract followers and generate clicks, and if people like it enough to retweet or favorite, the reach can be amplified quickly.

Short tweets are more likely to receive engagement than tweets over 100 characters, and proactive requests for retweets on specific posts are far more likely to be retweeted.

When issuing tweets organically, without promoting through the advertising feature, two hashtags on each tweet can help to get the best results. This helps to increase the reach of tweets and places the tweet into larger related conversations happening on Twitter. Twitter also offers self-service advertising options that allow marketers to promote tweets in search and timeline, and target based on interests, keywords, followers, and demographics. When promoting a tweet, it is

best to include only one call to action, like the URL. If one wants to use @handles or hashtags in their promoted posts, it will be charged for any click on the post. As a marketer, the objective is to drive the buyer to complete the action of registering, completing a form, etc. If the marketer has more than one hyperlinked option in the post, they are giving the prospect too many options. If they click on the hashtag or @handle in the post, they are being driven away from main call to action.

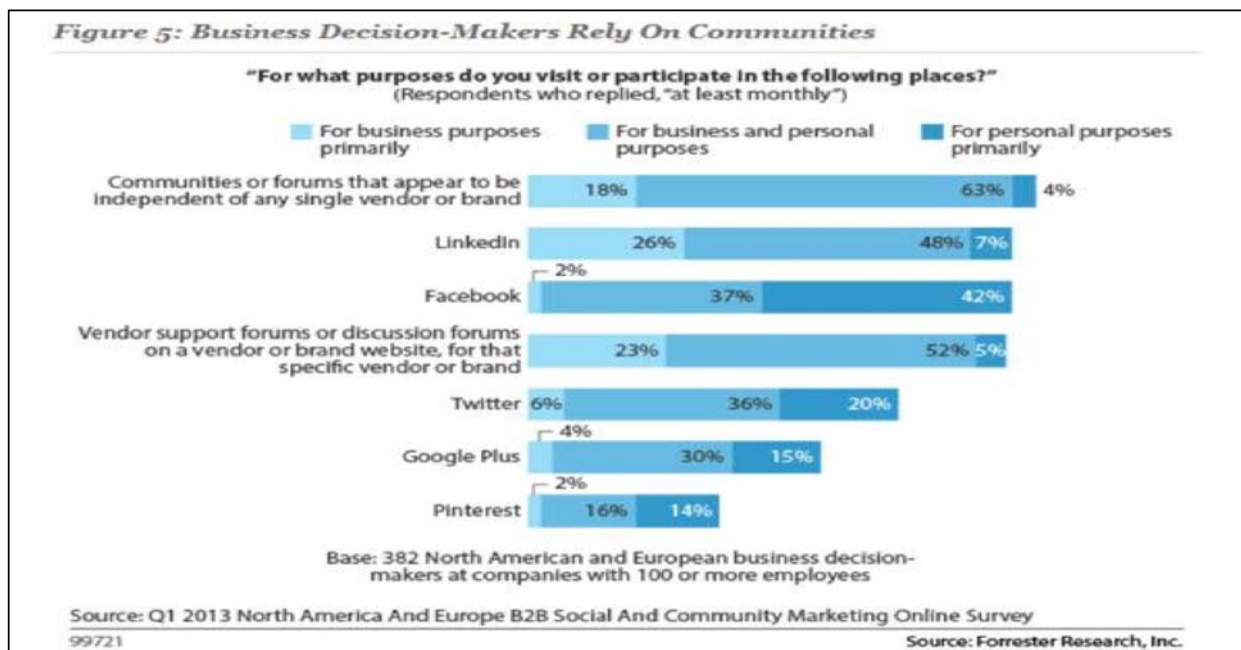
6. Use LinkedIn for lead generation:

LinkedIn is the social network most used for pure business purposes⁹. With over 225 million members, the network provides extensive reach and offers unique ways to target and engage a professional audience. Among B2B decision-makers, 81% use LinkedIn, with 26% using it primarily for business and 48% using it for both personal and business purposes. For B2B marketers, LinkedIn has proven to be the most successful channel for customer acquisition. Based on an infographic by Wishpond¹⁰, LinkedIn is 277% more effective at generating relevant leads than Facebook or Twitter, and 77% of B2B marketers say that they have acquired a

customer through LinkedIn. It is important to note that LinkedIn is most often used right before and right after work hours. Tuesday and Thursday typically receive the most social media traffic from businesspeople, and posts during work hours receive less traffic. Remember this when building out a social posting schedule.

7. Use Google+ for lead generation:

The most organic way to use Google+ to generate leads is by posting compelling content updates that include links back to the business website. Google+ is a great content distribution platform. Google+ plays an important role in authorship and online visibility and is pivotal to the amplification of a company's content. For engaging the target audience, it would be important to develop & maintain quality content. Decision on Timing and frequency of the posting to be ensured to see what works the best. Google recommends tagging other Google+ users in your updates to achieve personalization: Just add a + sign in front of the name of the person you want to tag, and select the right user profile. This helps your update appear in search results on Google+, giving your content more reach



8. Use of independent forums for lead generation:

Forrester research shows that independent communities and forums get more traffic

from B2B decision-makers than branded social networks. Of those surveyed, 85% visited these forums, and a large majority of them for both personal and work purposes.

9. Use technology to power the social media lead generation:

Social media marketing is really fast-paced and can be challenging to keep up with. There are technology solutions and tools that the marketers can use to do more with less, particularly when it comes to automating the sharing of content and measuring the impact of your efforts. Some marketing automation systems integrate social tools, allowing you to do all your social marketing from one platform.

10. Generating buyer interest through pictures and image sharing:

Instagram: Today's prospective customers are visual; they want to see what the marketer is talking about. Instagram is a great supplement to the other social channels where you share more text-heavy content. On Instagram, the marketer can not only sharing photos with their audience, giving them a glimpse into what the businesses is doing. It gives the target audience a backstage pass to the culture of your company, and it fosters community.

Pictures speak for themselves and help to sell a brand's products; this makes the saying "pictures are worth a thousand words" very true. On Instagram, one can share photos of staff members, company sponsorships, tradeshow booth presence, corporate events, and products. Highlight and show off products, and use hashtags to make the photos more searchable. The goal is to get Instagram followers over to the business website to become paying customers. If you offer a tangible product, then Instagram is a great platform for showcasing products to your followers. One can also synch Instagram feed with other popular social networks, like Twitter and Facebook for instantaneous sharing on these social platform as well.

Pinterest is a pinboard-style social networking platform where users share their favorite pictures, videos, and online discussions to themed boards, as well as to their own personal "likes" pages. The site is gaining a lot of traction: 25% of Fortune Global 100 companies have Pinterest accounts, and Pinterest is now the third most

popular social network in the United States in terms of traffic. 69% of online consumers who visit Pinterest have found an item they've purchased or wanted to purchase¹¹. Currently, Pinterest is retaining and engaging users as much as 2-3x as efficiently as Twitter was at a similar time in its history.

When the business creates company's Pinterest account by completely filling out company's profile (with the company name, description, logo, location, and website), they normally link the Pinterest account to the other corporate social media accounts, and verify your account. Once this is completed, they find relevant users and boards to follow, create pinboards that represent the company, and begin repinning, as well as liking relevant pins from other users.

Out of all the various options for use of digital platforms for lead generation, let's understand how the major top 3 social media drivers helping businesses to generate more leads.

FACEBOOK AS A LEAD GENERATOR:

As mentioned above, Facebook is the world's largest social network. It has well over one billion members; over 700 million are active daily¹². While 42% of B2B decision-makers say they use Facebook exclusively for personal reasons, 37% say they use it for both personal and professional reasons, and 2% say they use it exclusively for business the opportunity is there for B2B marketers to use it for lead generation.

How Facebook works for lead generation: Effective lead generation on Facebook depends on content that is engaging and useful. It's a good place for images, videos, and interactive games. On Facebook, people share videos 12 times more than links and text posts combined, and people "like" photos twice as often as text updates. Other specialized features, such as Facebook ads can also been used. The goal is to target specific audiences and draw them to the brand page to engage with the content or offer.



Generating likes for your page:

People who “like” the page will see the updates as they gets posted. Start by inviting friends, customers, and employees to like the page. This is the most effective way to develop a core set of followers, who can be then requested to promote the business page and content. As this starts happening, it will start to show a network effect as more people share the Facebook posts. Then specify the information that needs to capture via the form and use that as the foundation for the form design efforts. Finally, tracking and optimizing the form conversion rates over time would depend on how effectively the backend work is managed for this social marketing initiative.

TWITTER FOR LEAD GENERATION:

Twitter has over 500 million users ¹³ with 200 million of them sending over 400 million tweets daily (nearly 60% of those through mobile devices) ¹⁴. It's a lightweight, high velocity platform sometimes described as “the SMS of the Internet.”

How Twitter works for lead generation:

On Twitter, people talk about what they care about and what's happening around them – right now. It's perhaps the most immediate of media. This creates context in which the marketer can connect their message to what's most meaningful to their customers in real time. Engaging with real-time tweets can influence conversations in a way that can help build business.

Attracting followers on Twitter:

While attractive prospective customers, it is very valuable for gaining influencers and thought leaders as followers. A little research to find out where the industry peers and potential customers congregate would help in

Set up a company Facebook page:

Company pages are easy to set up. Focus is always on writing a compelling, concise description of the business and using an engaging cover photo.

Post content regularly:

It's important to post content regularly. If someone comes to the Facebook page and sees that it hasn't been updated in a month, it's as *though you've invited people to your home – but you're not there when they knock on the door*. Build trust with the audience by posting on a dependable schedule. What the post shows up in the timeline and will often show up in the newsfeeds of people who have liked your page.

showing up there appropriately. It is good practice to follow the most influential tweeters. The business should have a strategy for engagement, and be prepared to move quickly with valuable content. When someone follows them, the follow back is very important with interactive response.

Tweeting and engaging: Though in recent development, Tweeter removed the restriction of 140 characters including spaces, it was indeed great way to encourage thinking & writing of good ideas in crisp manner and it was possible to extend the canvas by linking to content such as videos, blog posts, and landing pages with offers, such as a webinar registration form. Tweets that include a link to content are 86% more likely to be retweeted.

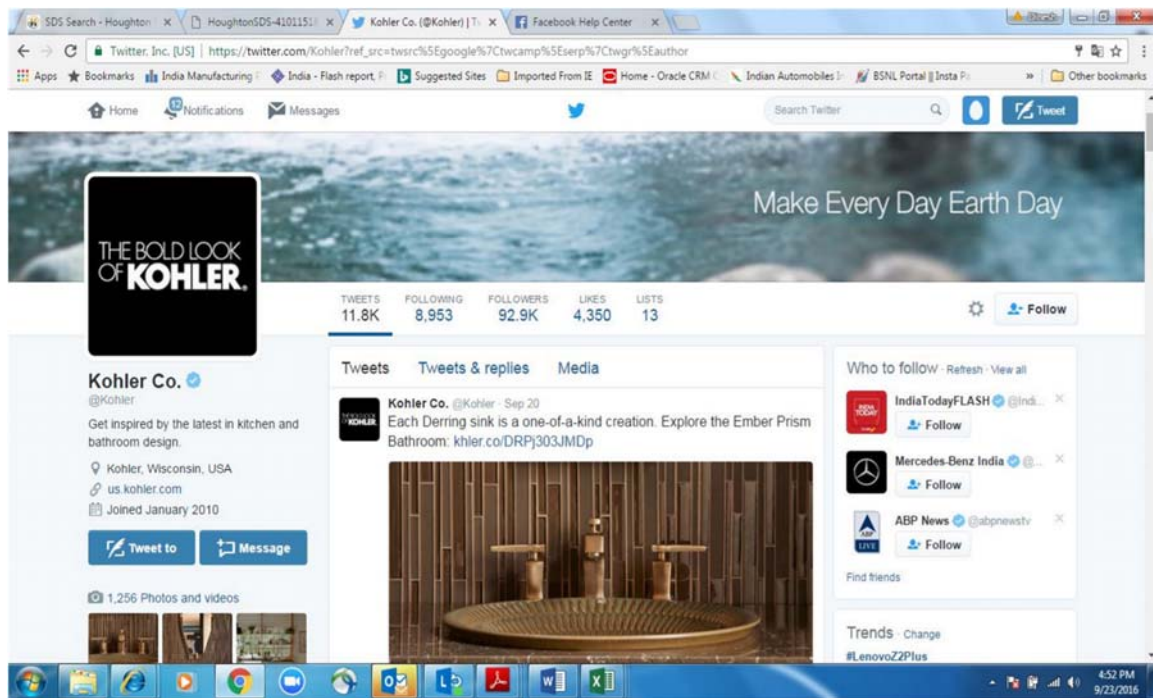
It is also important to use Twitter to retweet, reply to, and favorite other people's tweets.

This is a great way to get other people to promote their content for you and become part of the market's community. It is also helpful to keep an eye out for own customer complaints, and make sure they are responded to quickly.

Competitive intelligence: Twitter may provide in competitor strategy by closely monitoring the competitors Tweets & trends including customer service issues wherein a dissatisfied customers might provide good lead generation opportunity.

The Big Picture

1. The profile page articulates what it does for its customers in clear and concise terms.
2. The sample (pic shown below) company has acquired over 92,000 followers. This takes time, but it's possible by tweeting high-quality content regularly and participating in the community



3. The company's tweets link to high-quality content that is representative of the company and engages prospective customers. Each tweet has a specific purpose:

LINKEDIN FOR LEAD GENERATION:

LinkedIn has grown from what was originally almost an online resume service to a collection of much targeted communities. It has over 225 million members. According to a Forrester report¹⁵ 81% of B2B decision-makers use LinkedIn, with 26% using it primarily for business and 48% using it for both personal and business purposes. Of LinkedIn users, 40% participate in vendor-affiliated groups, nearly double the 22% that participate in nonbrand affiliated groups.¹⁶

How LinkedIn supports lead generation:

There are three critical pieces to successful marketing on LinkedIn. 1) Creating high-quality company page, 2) Making content as the foundation of the social efforts, 3) Participate on LinkedIn on a daily basis.

Building company page: A company page is the hub for anyone on LinkedIn to learn about the business, brand, products and services, and job opportunities. Content can be posted with offers, for lead generation; inviting people to events; posting company updates; and broadening reach through likes, shares, and comments.

Content as the foundation of all efforts: The average LinkedIn member values high-quality content that helps them do their job better. That gives the business an excellent opportunity to use content to target and engage prospective buyers. Sharing content should be the foundation of the social activities on LinkedIn, and it's a great way to drive people back to landing pages on the business website.

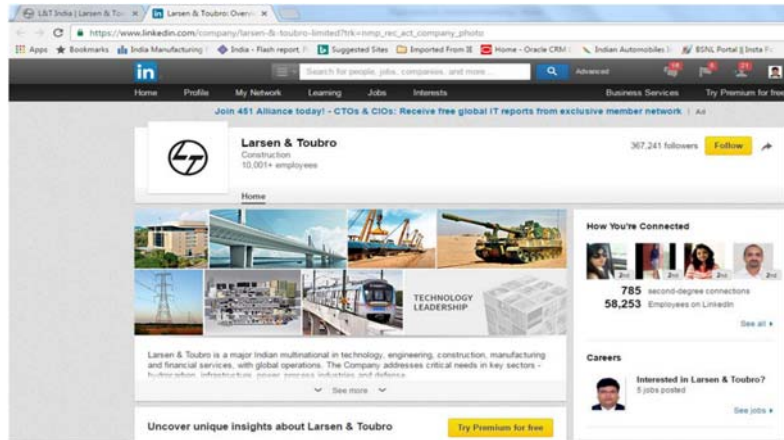
Attracting followers and engaging the community:

The success of the marketing efforts on LinkedIn hinges on the ability to attract followers. Every connection needs to be linked to organization goals and objectives in business both now and in the future. High-quality content will go a long way in this effort. Make sure that own employees are following the company, and encourage customers to do so. Invite them to share the content with their connections to get the farthest reach possible.

LinkedIn groups: People on LinkedIn join targeted groups that focus on specific topics, and they join more that are hosted by brands than those that are not. Hosting a group is an excellent way to share thought leadership and position the company in a niche. Encourage employees to join a range of groups and participate in discussions.

What not to do on LinkedIn: Don't spam your connections and LinkedIn groups with blatant sales messages or articles. Stick to things that provide true value, and stay away from anything that makes it look like posting are strictly to get attention.

1. The company page is the hub of the LinkedIn marketing efforts. It's the business home page on LinkedIn.
2. The main image on LinkedIn page (as shown in sample pic below) should succinctly state what company does and be visually engaging.



3. The Recent Updates section allows to share relevant content and offers with the followers.
4. Business can and should link to lead generation offers when sharing updates.
5. The products section of the LinkedIn company page is also important, major products can be highlighted in this section.

USING GOOGLE+ FOR LEAD GENERATION:

People are still on the fence about whether or not to incorporate Google+ into their social media marketing strategy. A lot of that vacillating has to do with being overwhelmed with where to start and how it works. According to a Global Web Index study, Google+ has 359 million monthly active users. This makes the social network the second largest of all the social platforms.

Why use Google+?

Google+ is a worthwhile tool because the activity directly affects SEO. A recent Google algorithm update referenced the importance of all social network activity as a factor in determining a company's Google search ranking. Google treats the Google+ content like another website page. When it comes to SEO and social media, Google+ content takes precedent to content on any other social platform.

Providing accurate information on the contact details, hours, address, etc. of the business will help in generate more transparent business leads. *The description section is a good place to use keywords, describe the products and/or services*

the business offers, and highlight the value proposition.

Google+ gives lot of space for a cover picture, so it should be capitalized for showcasing the company initiatives, milestones, or campaigns through appealing cover photos.

When Google+ updated its platform, they put user accessibility and content sharing at the forefront. Find industry experts to follow and add them to your circles.

Join Google+ communities. In addition to the circle feature, there are communities dedicated to very specific interests on Google+. Browse through them and join those that seem a good fit. A worthwhile community to join is one with a lot of followers, frequently shared content, and active engagement on the posts.

Use visuals and videos copiously:

With more variety of content, it is likelier that business followers to stay attentive. Videos and images are a good source of such variety and can be a welcome change of pace from plain written copy. In fact, nearly 90% of online shoppers say they find videos helpful in making their final purchasing decisions, which makes video a sound investment for brands looking to boost their visibility.

Users of G+ also have the ability to post to their pages a profile picture and cover photo. Business can take advantage of this feature by showcasing images unique to brand, and by including in those images links that track back to the business' main website. This should

increase the traffic the business site receives and enable visitors to investigate product more easily.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the evidence presented in this article, it can be concluded that the adoption of various social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google + and it's effective implementation will enable organizations to reach out to wider audience, improve brand awareness and thus generate good quality leads for the industrial segment. As the multichannel landscape continues to evolve, marketers will have to not only choose and execute their Social media strategies well but also respond to new trends and economic conditions. However, this can only be achieved if the guidelines for successful implementation of Social media strategy and subsequent use and adoption, are seriously addressed and followed.

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