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How much can you boost productivity in your project management office using social media?

Social media is not all about enhancing communication and engagement. If used strategically, in an effective and efficient way, it can boost productivity in your project management organization. The number of people signing up and using social media is growing rapidly on a daily basis and it does not look like stopping anytime soon, yet most PMOs and even organizations in other industries are still struggling on how best to fully leverage the social media in boosting productivity within their organization.

Some PMOs have already tapped into the power of the social media and are now scheduling and conducting online training, coaching and consultation services to their members and clients from different corners of the world. Others have developed social collaborative software and using the social media as a platform to promote their product while most are still yet to plug into the social media world.

Now, let me share with you a few tips that can help business executives maintain their focus and use the social media to boost productivity in their Project Management Organization:

Have a Social Media Plan: The first and most important step is to map out a clearly defined social media plan. To attract, engage, network and convert social media users and your followers into customers will need you to carefully map out a clear, effective social media strategy that best suits your PMO. Some outsource their social media marketing efforts to external social media marketing firms which I do not recommend. Your Social Media Manager should be someone who is directly involved in your organization. He/she should not only be well experienced and versatile in the social media world, but should also understand the culture, vision and mission of your organization.

Analyze and Choose Your Social Media Platforms: Each social media platform is different. To know which platforms are better suited for your PMO and which you should prioritize, you need to identify the demographics and etiquette of its audience. Its is preferable to start and focus on one or two or three platforms that are most likely to reach your target audience, rather than an ineffective strategy of creating membership account on every social media platform. There are some research companies online that offers rich insights based on the demographics of most social media platforms to help organizations decide which best suit their need and which they should prioritize.

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Create a Social Media Identity and Promote Your Brand: After analyzing, selecting and prioritizing the social media platforms that best suit your PMO based on your target audience, you can begin to create your identity by connecting and engaging with them. But be warned – this is the point where many PMOs start to get their social media campaigns wrong. Consider the uniqueness of your brand and associate that closely with rich contents and also in alignment with your PMO's social media goals. Remember, no two organizations in this world can have the same "identity" and that is what sets you apart from other organizations in your niche that offer similar products.

Involve Your Employees and Members: Now this where the productivity aspect comes into foreplay. Many PMOs create profiles on various social media platforms only to let them lie dormant for days, weeks, and even months. This creates a bad impression on your organization. Irrespective of the fact that your Social Media Manager has a critical role to play, you should set up a Social Media Marketing (SMM) team. The best way to achieve long-term commitment and success is to have an SMM team comprising mostly of your top-level employees and headed by the Social Media Manager. They will also become active members or fans of the organization's social media groups and participate in intelligent discussions concerning the organization.

Also, in a scheduled and efficient manner, they can share rich contents about the organization or promote its brand. Such active engagement can boost the productivity in your organization. However, not all members of your team or employees in your organization will understand the processes and values of the social media, but its increased use in your organization will require them to become social media savvy. And in due time, they will begin to have an idea of which types of content generally work better on certain social media platforms. However, as various employees in your PMO will utilize social media platforms, it is advised that there are processes and policies in place to ensure brand consistency and guidelines in the management of social media platforms.

Engage Your Existing and Attract Potential Customers: Social media has transformed consumer behavior and is fast becoming the most common way for current and potential customers to interact with businesses. To boost productivity in your organization, your SMM team should comprise of some members who will specifically observe or respond to customers' questions, order status inquiries, and complaints. This way, you can grow your fan base, increase engagement and enhance communication.

Your organization can implement a cross-platform plan that integrates several social media platforms. I would also recommend you once on while perform research on your audiences, most especially those who have demonstrated interest in your industry and find out the authority figures they follow. Get connected with those who have influence in your industry. Make your introductions to those influential figures through direct message and wait for the results.

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Get Connected With Other Project Managers: Do not shy away from following your competitors, their business partners and even assigning an employee who is part of your SMM team to become a member in their groups. Then, connect with people who are following them (that are not yet following you), most especially those whose profiles indicate they might be interested in your organization as well. A number of these people will most likely follow you back, increasing the size of your follower base. This in turn can boost your organization's productivity if well utilized.

Manage Your Time Efficiently and Avoid Distractions: One thing about the social media is that it is "social". The social media buzz can become a distraction to some of your SMM team members. An occasional social media break is not bad but during the workday, social media activities should be limited to professional endeavors as much as possible. So your Social Media Manager should always monitor and control your organization's social media activities as often as possible.

Ensure Continuity and Commitment: Embarking on a social media campaign to build an active community around your brand and boost productivity in your organization is a long term commitment. You will not see results overnight. To establish successful relationships with key audiences and to add and get value from social media, the conversations should be maintained and managed. The essence of social media is communication and engagement, therefore it will present great opportunities for your organization, its brand and your employees.

Utilize Social Media Analytic Tools: It is very important to continually monitor, measure and compare the results of your organization's social media activities. Some social media platforms offer inbuilt analytic tools freely for your use. There are also other online companies that offer analytic tools which you use to measure your organization's social media influence (examples are klout and peerindex), or manage your activities across various platforms at once (example is hootsuite), or offers your insights into the sources of your traffic and much more (example is google analytics).

So, if your organization or any of its content is ranked at the top or goes viral, that means your social media strategies are working. In my subsequent posts, I will give you more details on how best to use and understand the data on some of these web and social media analytic tools because the information provided by some of these tools could be worth its weight in gold.

Follow Up Offline: Social media is a revolutionary tool that has enhanced communication and boost productivity in most PMOs but, it cannot replace the human factor needed in project management methodologies. Though technology has also enabled organizations to automate certain processes, we cannot deny the fact that there is a strong need for 'real human' interaction in the follow up; that which simply boosts a customer's confidence. So, irrespective of the fact that social media, when

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embedded into the project management solutions that support project management methodologies, can improve the communication channel that supports information services required in project management which in turn boosts productivity, your organization should not ignore the human input required in the real world, if possible. All your organization need is the know-how of how best to strategically leverage the social media.

The social media world is always undergoing a transformation process, so your organization needs to be ready to change and adapt all the time as well. You also need to constantly monitor, evaluate and refine your social strategy. Doing this on a bi-weekly or monthly basis can help your PMO identify the tactics that are working and the ones to get rid of.

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Jerry Ihejirika is a Project Management Blogger, Freelance Content Writer and Social Media Marketer. His mission is to help project management professionals share their ideas, knowledge, and promote proper project management culture by leveraging social media - something which our industry badly needs. To this end he provides blogging, blog management, SEO content writing and social media services. Jerry also looks forward to organizing workshops on how project management organizations can effectively leverage social media. Jerry is a member of the Nigeria Association for Project Management and Global Project Professional Society. You can connect with him through his blog: http://jerryihejirika.com/