Strategies to Overcome Dark Side of Social Media for Organizational Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

Social media has provided the organizations a massive platform to reach masses and is considered as a highly effective tool for organizations to connect and promote their brands and messages all over the world with huge potential to attract clientele with virtually no or very low investment. It has given organizations a collaborative innovation medium also where shared wisdom can help organizations bringing out innovation in their products and services. Social media reach can result in the spread of positive sentiment about the organization’s products or services very fast to large number of people. However social media is a double edge sword. If it has potential to help boosting an organization’s business, it can also result in propagating negative image and that too at a very fast speed and to very large user segment. A single negative comment on organization’s blog or profile, or a complaint by some customer about organization’s product or services on social media may cause a negative and long lasting impact on an organization’s and/or a brand’s reputation. Hence, social media can make or tarnish an organization’s sustainability. Organizations need to be on high alert always. Staying away from social media is not a solution as you are not aloof in the virtual world of social media. Anyone can put anything on the media and information spread is so fast that no one can control the same. Though organizations can be benefitted immensely from use of social media, there are chances that either your internal dissatisfied employees or your customers or even your competitors can spoil your image by putting wrong or unwanted information on social media. Either competitors may hire specialized hackers or individual hackers may hack an organization’s media campaign and convey totally opposite message to tarnish the organization’s brand image and blackmail. Organizations need to keep a hawk eye on such brand assassins and their social activity and take counter measures very fast so as to defeat such wrongdoers. To succeed in the highly technologically advanced environment, organizations need to make use of social media for their own advantages. They need to conquer dark side of social media by remaining vigilant all the times and adopt such strategies that not only counter malicious intentions of wrong-doers but proved to be effective marketing strategies to effectively promote organizations’ interests. This paper is an attempt to understand role of social media in making or tarnishing an organization’s image and evolve out strategies to help the organizations conquering dark side of social media.

KEYWORDS

Benefits of Social Media, Dark Side of Social Media, Negativity Spread on Social Media, Organizational Sustainability, Social Media Success Strategies, Social Media

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INTRODUCTION

Internet and mobile gadgets have entirely changed the way people communicate to each other. It is a daily routine or common sight to see people sticking to their mobiles and using social applications for communication and sharing information with their contacts. Face to face conversation is losing sheen in this devices connected world. At any public place or travelling through public transport, one can witness that even close relatives or friends are all engaged and engrossed with their mobile separately even while sitting together rather than talking to each other. Like any media, social media has its own benefits. It is instant, spontaneous and lively and uploaded contents are forever. This communication can be personal or public both. Social media applications generally put uploaded information on public platform unless private and restrictive settings are applied.

This availability of information to all users of the media is of great advantage to all but especially to organizations and businesses. Information reaches to and is instantly available to millions or rather billions of people. A single post on a social media site like Facebook, Linkedin or Twitter and so on in public domain is accessible to all members using that site. Not only this, this post can create a chain reaction as any user can forward or share the information with his contacts and so on.

Social media has great potential to move, mobilize and change the society. Every day one or the other news keep publishing in newspapers how social media has brought to notice of everyone plight of some disadvantageous person(s) or group or a section of society and how this information becomes viral generating huge responses and support from community all over the world.

Social media with all its advantages is also prone to malpractices and misuse. It is ultimately a technology forum and its good or bad usage depends upon users. Social media therefore has potential of building or tarnishing an individual or an organization image. Organization sustainability is always prone to risk from negativity publicity and dark side of social media is one such threat. Organizations by enlarge have not formulated any strategy so far so as to make effective use of social media and avoid its pitfalls.

EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media may be defined as technology-facilitated dialogue among individuals or groups. User is the king of this media and has become both producer and consumer of contents on social media.

From the early days of late 1970s when public messaging started in its crude form with creation of Usenet and later development of Weblog or blogs, social media has deeply penetrated in society. With Web 2.0 technologies, blogs writing also became
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