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Avoid Social Networking Mistakes

By Intern Rachel Rodgers

Today, almost every business uses social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to promote themselves and connect with clients. Yet, when used incorrectly, social networking can lead to disaster.

Recently, fashion designer Kenneth Cole was publically criticized for posting an insensitive tweet relating the crisis in Cairo to his new spring collection. The tweet read, “Millions are in uproar in (hashtag) Cairo. Rumor is they heard our new spring collection is now available online.” The tweet, which was meant to be humorous, was not taken lightly.

Even though Cole has since apologized and removed the offensive tweet from his Twitter page, it has not been forgotten. A fake Twitter feed entirely dedicated to mocking Cole’s insensitive tweet has popped up on the Internet. Thousands have already flocked to the fake page, which means that it will be awhile before Cole can fix his reputation.

Kenneth Cole Productions, Inc. is only one of many companies and corporations that have made serious social networking blunders. However, multinational corporations are not the only ones that can harm their reputation using social networking incorrectly. Small businesses also have to be careful.

So how can a small business use social networking effectively?

First of all, every status post should be planned and analyzed. Mistakes like Cole’s can be avoided if careful thought and consideration are put into every status. Cole’s attempt at adding humor to his page was a great idea, but it was ineffective because he did not consider that it could be taken the wrong way. So plan before adding a touch of humor to a status. Without planning, that lighthearted “joke” could be detrimental to business.

Another mistake is inactivity or completely abandoning a social networking page. Many small businesses make this mistake. They create a Facebook or Twitter page, but don’t make time to post statuses and interact with fans. It is important to post at least one status a week because it looks bad when potential or current clients visit a page that hasn’t been updated in months. A client might not trust a business’ ability to be dependable if they have completely forgotten about their social networking pages.

It is also vital that a business engage in conversation with fans and clients. It is called “social networking” for a reason. The purpose of social networking sites is to socialize with others. Encourage conversation by posting statuses that are informational and others that

congratulate clients on successful ventures. When recognizing clients, take it to the next level by tagging them in the post. If a client asks a question or makes a comment on a status, make time to respond. Remember that if there is no socializing, a social networking page is useless.

Lastly, never argue with fans. If someone makes a negative comment on a status or about your business, work out the situation in a professional manner and make sure that a communications specialist responds to prevent further controversy.

Even though social networking takes time and planning, it is still worthwhile to create Facebook and Twitter pages. Social networking is a free and effective way to promote your business while interacting with clients and fans. So go ahead and join the social networking movement, just make sure to plan and put in the time and effort required to maintain a successful page.

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