

A collection of social media icons on wooden blocks, including LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, arranged on a wooden surface.

SOCIAL MEDIA

☹️☹️☹️ it's not free, but it does work 😊😊😊

WORDS LARRY LOCKSHIN

By all means develop an online marketing strategy – but don't forget that it should only be one part of an overall marketing strategy, reports Larry Lockshin.

This article builds on my previous one on social media and internet marketing from 2011. A few things have changed, but overall much has remained the same in the past four years. The main reason is that humans still react as humans, so breaking through the clutter of so much media to remind enough people of your wine brand remains difficult.

Online should only be one part of an overall marketing strategy. One of the strongest ways of creating a memory node for your brand in a potential buyer is for he or she to taste your wine in a memorable context, like cellar door or at a dinner. So far this is not possible online. Yes, you can host an online tasting, and that is better than a banner ad online, but there is yet to be any evidence that such tastings reach new buyers or have the same effect as a visit to cellar door.

We should also separate an online selling strategy from an online marketing strategy. Small and medium-sized wineries should have an online sales presence. This is usually through their own website and should be part of a direct-to-consumer (DTC) strategy using newsletters (electronic or postal), wine clubs, wine events and other ways to sell directly to buyers. It can also include selling through regional or other online portals.

An online/internet marketing strategy is aimed more to drive awareness and to remind potential buyers about your

brand. One of the big differences is that an online sales strategy works mainly with regular/loyal buyers and does not bring in new buyers. However, individual regular and loyal buyers tend to decrease over time. A key element of a good marketing strategy is to grow the number of buyers purchasing your brand. It is fine to use some of your winery's marketing dollars to nurture your regular buyers, but it is not efficient to over-invest in marketing to them. Loyal buyers, by definition, already like your wine and purchase regularly. They don't need special financial incentives to keep purchasing. It is better to use some of that money to attract new buyers to your brand.

As discussed in my previous article (iMarketing, 2011), Facebook mainly caters to existing buyers. These are the people who click 'like' or visit the page more than once. To raise awareness for infrequent or new buyers, use of the internet has to reach beyond existing buyers. As noted in 2011, Twitter is better at reaching these infrequent buyers due to the ability for messages to be retweeted. However, there is little evidence on who or what content is retweeted.

Facebook is best used like a Yellow Pages ad. You maintain a Facebook page and update it with news and information about events, awards and other brand-relevant information. You have to monitor it and update the page regularly. You can have links there to your own website or



other relevant sites. And you can interact with visitors, who will be mostly existing buyers.

Twitter can be a useful social medium. More than Facebook it has to be used and monitored regularly. Many people would say daily updates and postings are necessary. This is no longer 'free' advertising, because of the regular time commitment. Our own experience is that it is used more by the wine trade (writers, distributors, restaurants, etc.) and is a good way of engaging with them. But it is a medium of instant or at least daily response. Don't use it if you aren't going to maintain daily interaction.

YouTube is another social medium that can be used to good effect. Anyone, including a winery, can have their own channel with a playlist of various videos. The key is to develop some videos that might be interesting to a general wine drinker, not just to regular buyers of your wine. For example, you might have a video on 'How to remove red wine stains'. This would be of interest to a much wider range of readers than just those who already buy your wine. By using the metadata and keywords properly, your video could come up in searches for removing wine stains. Within the video you can use your wine brand(s) and information about your wines in a clever way. You can also have videos about the winery, the vintage or other specific (and fun) information, but these are unlikely to draw many new-to-the-brand viewers. You can see that thinking up a clever set of broad-based wine-related videos and building a playlist could be a way to attract potential new buyers.

One online marketing tool that is being used quite widely is buying banner ads or homepage ads on specific sites. For example you can buy ads on the James Halliday website or Taste.com.au. These appear a certain number of days per week or month on websites that attract Australian wine drinkers. It is more direct but more expensive to buy ads on large platforms, like Google, when people use certain search terms. You can also buy ads for your brand that appear when people search for anything, once they have searched your product category. These ads are known as real-time targeting. They use recency theory, which shows that the last ad seen before a category purchase is the one with the

greatest effect on sales. So people thinking about buying wine see your ad during that process.

There is a big 'however' when buying ads on the specific online websites. James Halliday and Taste.com.au each get about 25,000 unique visitors for a typical buy of 2-3X per month with a cost of about \$1,500 per year. Six weeks of advertising in the Australian Gourmet Traveller costs \$30,000 but reaches almost 300,000 unique readers interested in food, travel and wine. Spending \$11,000 on one insertion in Better Homes and Garden provides 2,300,000 unique readers; and \$25,000 spent on 12 ads in the Sydney Morning Herald reaches more than 1,000,000 readers. When buying ads, you pretty much get what you pay for, even online. This is why I said earlier that online marketing should be only part of an overall marketing communications strategy.

One more point. Many wineries are hiring young people who have some expertise in social media to help them with their strategy and day-to-day activities. There is nothing wrong with this in general, however, many of these experts have little wine or especially marketing knowledge. It is fine to use someone with expertise in social media to help develop your Facebook, Twitter or other social media activities, but this doesn't mean they should develop your social media strategy. You need someone with marketing expertise to help you develop a multi-faceted marketing strategy and not rely only on social media.

Social media is not the answer to every winery's marketing needs. It is an important and growing part of the marketing activities for most businesses. It is not free advertising. Social media can be effective with an ongoing investment in expertise and time commitment. It takes work to use social media to attract new or infrequent buyers rather than just using it to remind your frequent buyers. Other marketing activities can also contribute to growing your customer base. Combining traditional marketing with social media/internet marketing is the best way to devise a successful communication strategy. ■

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