

A 12-Step Program for Social Media Afflictions

Change is good. New ideas are great. Yet sometimes businesses get ahead of themselves to embrace something new, ultimately rendering them powerless. The explosion of businesses all over social media is a great example.

Social media has grabbed our attention for good reason. It holds great promise and some companies are leveraging it well. It can open the door to community building, expand your company voice, create tighter connections to buyers, and teach companies what buyer's value—all in real time. Done well, social media can be a conduit to positively change brand perceptions. It can be a channel to demonstrate a company's responsiveness, sensitivity to issues, and to stay active and current with trending issues and topics. It is an inexpensive way to reach large groups rapidly. With this value proposition, it's imperative for businesses to understand social media's strategic fit in the marketing mix.

However, like anything new, sometimes companies jump in or follow the crowd before understanding the requirements and objectives. Not taking the time to craft a social media strategy is akin to an addict hunting down a quick fix—initial folly followed by

a dark void. Social media action without preparation creates similar

Executive Insights



Cheryl Isen

headaches. If you're wondering if your business is guilty, here are five common symptoms of becoming powerless over social media:

1. **The socially challenged:** You're lost in a social media space where your audience isn't. Perhaps you're a B-to-B company in a vertical market and you are on Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube and Twitter. Unfortunately had you researched each channel you would have discovered your key audience in a private members-only LinkedIn group.

2. **The socially inept:** You're asking everyone to like you and follow you, but your strategy has failed to carve out a reason why. This common scenario is indicative of missing one of the most important steps of all—thinking like a customer and building your social media strategy around answering, "What's in it for me".

3. **The socially complex:** Although you've succeeded in building an audience (e.g. fans and likes), you're deluging them with content they don't value. Perhaps your

strategy is focused on constantly connecting vs. delivering useful insights to your audience, or you might lack the resources to fix the issue.

4. **The social-extremist:** Although you've built a strategy for social media, unfortunately it's misaligned with the channel. You're approach is to sell-sell sell. Symptoms are ego-focused thinking fueling blatant self-promotion. You've missed a fundamental goal of social media—using it to listen, learn and build relationships. In the process, you've become anti-social.

5. **The socialite:** You believe your social strategy is solid because you're on every social platform, but unfortunately, you lack the bandwidth to connect anywhere. Perhaps because social media seemed like free marketing, you went all in without recognizing the hidden costs. A general rule of thumb is that it costs at least 10 hours a week to manage social media accounts. If you're not actively managing each of your social strategies, you aren't being social.

If your social media program is suffering from these afflictions, it might be time to consider an approach proven to help millions of people stop bad behavior. Here

is a tongue-in-cheek program based on the work of Alcoholics Anonymous. I'm calling it a 12-step cure for social media afflictions.

Social Media Afflictions: A 12-Step Cure

1. Admit that you were powerless over the attraction of social media— and that without a solid strategy it has now become unmanageable.
2. Believe that applying the powerful fundamentals of marketing strategy can restore the sanity.
3. Make a decision to turn your will and temptation to jump into every new social platform over to the fundamentals of marketing strategy.
4. Take a searching and fearless moral inventory of where you really need to be in social media.
5. Admit to yourself and to another human being the exact nature of your past social media wrongs.
6. Be entirely ready to remove all these defects of character when making future social media decisions.
7. Humbly ask for and seek help to remove your past shortcomings.
8. Make a list of the harm past social media mistakes caused, and build a strategy to fix them.

9. Make direct amends if your social media approach has caused issues, except when to do so would be foolish.

10. Continue to take inventory of your social media directions and when wrong promptly admit it.

11. Continually seek to improve your marketing consciousness and knowledge.

12. Become awakened as the result of these steps and endeavor to practice these principles in all marketing affairs.

Social media is here to stay. It has a place in marketing, but it's up to each company to find the right fit for their business. Avoid headaches tomorrow by taking the time to think through the resources your business can dedicate to social media. Then maximize your social media impact by strategically figuring which channels will connect you to your audiences, how to build relationships there and how your efforts in each social media channel will support your business and marketing goals.

This column is written by Cheryl Isen, founder of Isen & Company, a strategic marketing and public relations firm that helps companies increase visibility and brand awareness. Contact Cheryl at (425) 222-0779, Cheryl@IsenandCo.com.

Visit IsenandCo.com to learn more.
