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Social Media Marketing Integration: Agile Project Management

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### Social Media Marketing Integration: Agile Project Management

Social media marketing has become an imperative component of any marketing strategy, so much so that marketers now depend on an integrated marketing strategy to optimize the success of their efforts. Social media marketing, however, is not an easy field to understand, as there is no one-size-fits-all answer, and the technologies and requirements are constantly changing. With the changing nature of social media marketing, it is important that those working within these fields approach their strategies and campaigns with an open mindset, willing to change as new opportunities arise. From a project management standpoint, marketing strategies and campaigns can be considered projects, as successful marketing campaigns have specific goals, but the approach will vary depending on the type of campaign or target markets in mind. Application of project management principles will require interdisciplinary cooperation to determine appropriate goals and strategies of implementation. With social media marketing in mind, an agile project management approach will be most beneficial, as it allows the project manager to reevaluate and determine the success of the project as it is being completed.

The increasing pace of the global business environment forces all participants to become more flexible and open-minded. The principles behind agile project management provide project managers with the opportunity to incorporate project management principles and flexibility as deemed appropriate by the progress of the project. Dinsmore and Cabanis-Brewin (2014) explain, “the speed at which our business and social environments change in this connected world requires all of us to be agile, to be nimble and flexible, in our plans and actions” (p. 442). Essentially, agility is an imperative component in all fast-paced environments to ensure flexibility. For project managers, the ability to successfully implement agile project management techniques will influence the way project managers respond to changes in the external

environment. The field of digital marketing is under constant change, requiring project managers and marketers to employ agile principles to ensure successful implementation of strategies.

Project managers are aware that projects often do not go according to the proposed plan. According to Rasnacic and Berzisa (2015), “Today only 2.5 % of all companies worldwide manage to complete a project 100 % successfully” (p. 122). In other words, one of the greatest downfalls of project management is the rate of failure or unsuccessful completion. These issues include projects not running according to schedule or increased costs for project completion, with the worst being projects left incomplete. From a project management standpoint, it is important to accurately analyze a project to assess risks and potential critical points in order to implement the most appropriate project management approach to avoid project failure. Although agile project management does not eliminate project failure, the method allows for reevaluation during the project and implementation of necessary changes as required by the project to reach success.

One of the main benefits of an agile project management system is that it allows project managers to consistently review the success of the project and make changes where necessary. Understanding that these processes in some cases do not provide a clear solution at first, agile project management allows the project manager to test specific probable solutions. Gonzalez (2014) points out, “Organizations are also likely to increase the flexibility of their resource utilization when responding to change as a complex adaptive system” (p. 1450020-7). Essentially, the ultimate purpose is to allow for flexibility within organizations by understanding that proposed solutions might not provide the greatest success of a project, allowing changes to be made throughout the project life cycle. The ability to make changes throughout as the project

requires will enable more efficient use of resources and greater accountability for project completion.

Incorporating project management techniques and practices into marketing strategies allows for greater chance of success for these projects and changes. The Bible urges believers to act with wisdom and seek guidance to ensure decisions are made based on knowledge and not emotions or desires. Luke 14:28 provides a great biblical foundation for project managers, “for which one of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?” (ESV). For project managers, it is important to not start projects without a plan on how the project is going to be finished. Although projects might fail or not go according to the initial plan, a plan based on knowledge and principles will provide the best starting point for successful completion of projects.

Integrating social media marketing to the marketing tools and techniques utilized enhances the ability to reach target markets. Digital and social media marketing provide new ways for marketers to integrate various channels to further convey their message to their audience. According to Carlson and Lee (2015), “Understanding the potency and competency of capturing and utilizing both social media and social networking, is leading to the next generation of marketing and customer relationship management” (para. 2). This means that only through an understanding of the target market and their behaviors on social media will marketers truly be able to capitalize on the new opportunities available through these digital channels. Integrating social and digital media strategies to an already existing brand image is not an easy task and should be carefully considered in order to reach its full potential. Marketing across online and offline channels requires tremendous expertise in various marketing disciplines to be successful.

Although most available social media platforms are free to use by both individuals and organizations, there are costs associated with social media marketing. Understanding the costs involved with integrating marketing channels across multiple platforms requires adequate understanding of change within an organization. Crumpton (2014) explains some of the costs associated with social media marketing, “cost of time for content creation for materials to be posted. Cost of time for implementation, or posting of materials” (para. 6). These are only examples of some of the costs marketers encounter when implementing seemingly free social media platforms into the marketing strategy. A project manager’s perspective can be utilized to create an overview of the associated costs, as the implementation itself can be considered a project. Being able to more accurately estimate the costs associated with social media marketing strategies is an important part of the decision process when deciding to integrate these strategies into the overall marketing mix for an organization.

One of the main issues faced when attempting to implement social media marketing within an organization is the uncertainty of return on investment. The time, effort, and monetary investments provided to integrate social media channels into already existing marketing practices do not guarantee a return on investment. Roberts and Zahay (2013) urge, “the conventional wisdom of marketing says that reluctance is because they cannot be sure that SMM will produce measurable RO(promotional)I” (p. 247). Essentially, being able to accurately predict the outcome of social media integration can reduce some hesitancy among decision makers within the organization. Although specific monetary return on investment might be difficult to predict, there are still benefits of social media marketing integration that can be pointed out to decision makers within an organization.

In terms of project management involvement in the implementation of social media marketing strategies and projects across organizations, it is important for project managers to be able to defend the importance of this implementation. The issue pertaining to ROI on social media marketing strategies has been discussed by several scholars and appears to be an area with much controversy. Gilfoil and Jobs (2012) explain, "Unit of analysis is important here because so much of the complexity and confusion in the SM ROI literature is caused by a lack of clarification around this issue" (p. 641). This means that explaining the benefits of social media (SM) to organizations can be difficult to do in financial terms, providing the project manager with the challenge of convincing organizational leadership through other means of explaining value. The lack of a common unit of measurement creates a challenge for project managers when defending their decision to implement social media as part of an integrated marketing strategy, and it requires a greater understanding of the concept and its overall benefit to the organization.

Agile project management principles need to be included when preparing the implementation of social media marketing within organizations. One of the biggest sources of uncertainty within social media marketing is the constantly-changing trends and fast-paced environment. According to Cervone (2010), there are two key concepts to agile project management, "The first is that risk is minimized by focusing on short iterations of clearly defined deliverables. The second is that direct communication with partners in the development process is emphasized in lieu of creating copious project documentation" (p. 19). For implementation of social media marketing in organizations, utilizing these principles obtained from agile project management theories can aid the process of successful integration. The nature of social media marketing requires fast-paced decision making, as well as the ability to act with specific goals in mind.

The implementation of social media marketing as a project requires expert judgment and the right staffing to achieve the desired results. It is essential to acknowledge that social and digital media strategies will differ greatly from traditional marketing strategies. According to Valos et al., “early integrated marketing communications frameworks were developed to allow marketers to achieve the optimum mix of communication elements to reach target markets effectively” (p. 22). This means that new integration frameworks have to be developed with social and digital mediums in mind to achieve project success. Integration of social and digital media strategies to already existing marketing practices requires careful implementation by project managers to ensure the brand image and messaging remains consistent with current practices.

Principles from agile project management can be utilized in specific marketing strategies or campaigns, in addition to implementation of digital marketing within an organization as a whole. Specific marketing strategies will provide more specific deliverables, with greater ease of success measurement. Roberts and Zahay (2013) identify the most crucial rule regarding social media marketing analyzation, “establish clear objectives for your campaign and choose the appropriate metrics before the campaign begins” (p. 245). This rule allows marketers to know the specific purpose of the social media campaign, much like the scope of a project, to better determine if the campaign is successful. Specific goals and purposes for campaigns help marketers know what metrics to analyze to determine success of the project, making this process smoother. Although the ability to measure success is easier, project managers or marketers are even more dependent on flexibility and responsiveness to the external environment when dealing with specific marketing campaigns or strategies. Smaller scale projects will have even more



specific deliverables, with concrete goals to uphold in order to measure the success of the campaign.

As projects, social media campaigns start with the planning phase of the campaign and end with the evaluation or closing of the project. In social media marketing, a critical component of the closing stage is the analysis of the campaign through metrics such as impressions, reach, engagement, and impressions, to name a few. Brooker, Barnett, and Cribbin (2016) explain, “with data collection and analysis as one seamless process, exploration of an initial dataset may lead to new questions which may in turn feed back into new rounds of data collection, with findings emerging throughout the ongoing iterations” (p. 3). Essentially, this technique can be compared to agile project management techniques, where the goals and deliverables are modified as new needs or requirements arise. Depending on the information available to the marketer conducting the analysis, different conclusions or recommendations might be suggested based on the data. Additionally, the campaign itself might be modified or changed to better reach original goals or objectives set forth by the campaign. This suggests there is a need to implement agile project management techniques of flexibility and reevaluation, and not to be afraid to change what is not working according to agreed standards.

When combining the disciplines of project management and marketing, it is important for both parties to show respect and value one another’s expertise. It is especially important that the marketers understand the role of the project manager as a driver and implementer of change, and not as an intruder attempting to eliminate the job of the marketer. In this process, education and respect will be key for the coexistence of these two fields, as well as for the greatest benefit of the project at hand. It is important for leadership within an organization to explain the purpose of a project management team in order to avoid marketers and others within an organization

feeling threatened or insecure due to their presence. Only when working together to obtain the goal of the organization can the two successfully maximize the success of the change or implementation.

The Bible urges believers to welcome change and put their trust in the Lord. It is important to be willing to serve Him and His plans, and only through an open and willing mindset will this be accomplished. Success of organizations and projects can be utilized to glorify Him and His Kingdom. Proverbs 18:15 explains, “an intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge” (ESV). This means that project managers and marketers alike need to seek knowledge and understanding before making conclusions. Additionally, believers should seek wisdom and knowledge from God to lead in situations that appear intimidating or scary. For marketers, it might appear as if project managers are trying to eliminate their jobs, but it is important to keep in mind that He has a plan and that trusting His will will ultimately lead to the greatest blessings.

The ability to consider marketing strategies and campaigns, as well as changes to overall marketing practices within an organization as projects, allows project managers to intervene in these processes for greater success. Incorporating expertise from both marketers and project managers allows organizations to not only effectively reach target markets, but also to implement strategies and changes in an effective manner. Within the field of project management, different practices have emerged to suit the nature of projects, and agile project management techniques will be most beneficial to the area of social and digital marketing. Although agile project management techniques were primarily developed with IT projects in mind, the benefits of flexibility throughout the duration of the project provides a strong argument for its use in social and digital marketing. The changing nature of this field of marketing requires greater flexibility

for not only marketers, but also project managers, to be able to effectively respond to the constant changes in the external environment. Agile project management will allow for evaluations to be made throughout the implementation of the project to ensure appropriate goals and expectations are met. In the long run, this type of project management practice will enhance the success of the social and digital marketing practices within an organization.

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