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POUSH 1, 1424 BS

e-mail: nextstep@thedaily.net

NEXT STEP

THE LEAN MARKETING MACHINE

The marketing primer for startups

Let's say you just started a business. If it's a tech company with a vague revenue model, congratulations, You're a startup, 'arry! If it's a normal business, you probably have a solid revenue model and value chain; if not, you've far bigger problems than marketing. For the rest, without relevant experience, marketing can be a daunting task. Here's a short crash course on the thinking process behind your marketing.

Manage your expectations

A small marketing budget rarely ensures mass success and if you are banking on becoming "viral," you might as well play poker for a living. Virality can be achieved through small budgets as shown through numerous cases like Dollar Shave Club and Will it Blend? by Blendtec, but those are exceptions to the norm. What you can however do is use that budget to improve your product so that people do the marketing themselves through word of mouth. More on that later.

Target a niche

Let's say you are making a ridesharing app (if you are, please stop) then you should be targeting the communities built around cars or traffic. Groups like Traffic Alert are often littered with complaints that your product can specifically address. Once you have a community rooting for you, they themselves will feel as if they are a part of your product design. These users will carry your brand everywhere and recommend their friends as well. More importantly, a lot of these group admins are key opinion leaders that can at times make or break businesses.

Push out that minimum viable product

Your MVP has to be pushed out into the

market to fine tune and correct any mistakes. This is where your community feedback comes super handy. The first 50-100 users are essentially your beta testers who might have golden suggestions. Make sure you treat them well.

Provide a unique selling point

No, "Bangladeshi Uber" is not a good idea for your app. Nor is offering every single service on the planet. Narrow down your focus into one area that solves your niche's problems. Have a one line answer for your brand: "It's a carpooling platform for university students." Does it differentiate you from Uber? Yes, as of now. Does it target a niche that has frequent transport problems? Yes. Once you establish that, consumers will demand that you move into other areas like office carpooling, etc.

Shareability = Win

My first work for a startup was for PaperTree.com.bd. I had a KPI of selling 100 copies of Harry Potter and the Cursed Child and I accomplished that without using any traditional marketing tools. We simply delivered a Hogwarts acceptance letter, wax sealed with the Hogwarts emblem to our customers. The effect was instantaneous, we sold over 200 copies and people were coming back for more and

asking if they'll get the letter. Our reply was "Only if you have magic in your blood." The bonus? Most of the buyers shared the picture of the letter on their social media pages. This is a prime example of giving your target group something they truly care about with minimum cost. Try and see if you can integrate a shareable aspect to your product. Finally, remember one thing: people only share exceptional experiences. This can be good or bad. Up to how well you strategise.

Content Marketing is your lifeline

Some four or five years ago, Urban Truth began their #UTPeople campaign. Basically, people who uploaded pictures wearing UT products on their Instagram profile with the hashtag #UTPeople and Urban Truth picked out the best pictures to feature on their Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The ones who get featured receive a voucher for the picture. These sort of content-centric giveaways vs contests work to not only build your brand but provide great exposure of your service. Even Apple does the same with their #shotoniphone Instagram hashtag. Think how you can integrate content into your long-term marketing vision.

Collect those emails!

Regardless of what activity you do, make

sure there is a newsletter option from day one. These emails and contact information you collect can be used later for targeted media buying.

Stop saying Bangladesh everywhere

No, your USP cannot be "Bangladeshi." Consumers are now global citizens of the internet. They are using the latest Silicon Valley apps. There is absolutely no demand for Bangladeshi labelled services especially if it's inferior to the [global] competitors. Once you have reached the same level in terms of functionality, only then can you share your Bangladeshi story. Before that, you're asking the user to associate themselves with a brand that may or may not succeed under the Bangladeshi label. A good example of a business doing this right is MIB Spirit - Made in Bangladesh.

Next up, how to implement these into your marketing process. Watch this space.

RUMMAN R KALAM

Rumman R Kalam is the founder of Rantages and uses his 8 years of content experience as a consultant to help brands develop their long-term vision and bring stability to their marketing activities. Reach him at rumman@rantages.com.



ILLUSTRATION: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY

HEY, IS THAT YOUR FAMILY PHOTO? DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD ONE SINCE YOU SPEND ALL YOUR TIME HERE



WAIT, ISN'T THAT OUR CLEANING CREW?

BOSS MAKES ME STAY SO LATE, THE CLEANING CREW IS ALL I GET TO SEE EVERY NIGHT.



I NOW HAVE WASTE BASKET DUTY.

Why you should take liberal arts courses

In university, students of pretty much every major are required to take up a few courses like psychology, sociology or geography. It's natural to wonder why you, a science or business student, would need courses seemingly unrelated to your core syllabus. Read on, for this article will help you make sense of that very question.

Critical thinking skills

The graduates applying for a particular job already meet the CGPA bar set by the hiring company. So, what sets you apart from the fifteen other people who have applied to the same position? The answer is critical thinking. Employers don't just look for number-crunching minions, they look for people who can add value to the organization through intelligent insights and creativity. A 2014 survey by the Association of American Colleges and Universities shows that 93% of employers believe that a graduate's ability to think critically is more important than college major. This is where liberal arts fit in. Unlike subjects where everything can be explained with specific formulae, liberal arts require you to evaluate things from your own perspective as well. This means that before reaching a conclusion about whether a major event in history had mostly good or bad impacts, you'll need to first understand the facts and then interpret them in your own way. You'll be equipped to develop multiple, unique perspectives, something very valuable to employers.

Well-rounded learning

Individual university courses focus

on only one area at a time. But once you start applying your learning in real life, you'll quickly realize that linear knowledge isn't enough.

Your knowledge of marketing tools is not useful if you don't understand how differences in cultural and social context require

Liberal arts teaches you this crucial lesson: people can have different opinions and still be right.

different marketing approaches. If you want to develop software, you first need to understand that user experience (UX) design is most effective when you know users' psyche.

Most of the time, you'll end up needing the things learnt from psychology, history or sociology to

solve on-work and off-work problems.

Self-reflection and improvement

The world is so small and diverse that you'll inevitably come across people whose views may challenge yours. How do you deal with such differences, especially if you're not a hermit and have to interact with neighbours and co-workers regularly? If you ever study a history course, you'll see that historians often strongly disagree with each other on the same issue. Interestingly, most of them are right in one way or the other. Liberal arts teaches you this crucial lesson: people can have different opinions and still be right. There is more than one way of looking at things; learning this will liberate you and make you more open to ideas and constructive criticism.

In sum, liberal arts courses help you be better at life and work, even if they have seemed unnecessary to you at some point. As long as you can, do explore some of these courses in university regardless of your major.

TASMIAH HAQUE

Tasmiah is a senior at IBA, DU.

Making a DIFFERENCE

Bangladesh is rapidly moving towards middle income status by 2021. Our businesses definitely offer immense opportunities for the growing economy and this diversity needs a stage for the stories untold. See Bangladesh make its mark on the global map as Making a Difference brings you our proudest success stories from across the country.

Unconventional ways to beat distraction

Do you have a bad habit of patting yourself on the back and taking a 2-hour long break after working for just 5 minutes? Is procrastination slowly ruining your life? Then you need these tips.

Quarantine your laptop (and any other device causing the distraction). Either hand it over to someone for safekeeping or lock it in a drawer. If you really need them though, a much easier and more practical method would be to use apps that keep you from visiting time-consuming websites such as Freedom, Cold Turkey, Focus Booster and so on.

Find a background music that works for you; something that you enjoy listening to, but at the same time keeps your mind from wandering. It might just be music, or white noise. For example, if you are finding a hard time concentrating while painting, try listening to a podcast. It keeps you entertained and keeps your mind from drifting off.

Keep a procrastinator pad. Use a piece of paper or keep a notebook around and jot down every sidetracking thought that comes to your mind and aim to go

through that later. The logic behind this is to clear your mind, and get it to focus. Indulge in those thoughts during breaks, or when your work is complete.

The biggest obstacle to productivity is unrealistic expectations rather than distractions. Set your objectives and expectations practically and stop feeling guilty about getting distracted. Although, you should probably get to work now.

RAHMA MIRZA

Rahma is a junior at IBA, DU.

