

INTERNET

Donna Karan exec: Brand evangelism trumps ROI as social media goal

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By TRICIA CARR

NEW YORK - A Donna Karan executive at the Luxury Interactive 2012 conference said that social media engagement peaks when the brand provides consistent and transparent content that is tailored to the needs of its social audience.

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Since the brand began its social efforts in 2009, transparency has been a theme across Donna Karan's Facebook and Twitter platforms and has helped position the brand as a go-to source for not just brand news, but New York lifestyle updates. Most importantly, Donna Karan uses its social content to target brand evangelists, which translates into ROI.

"It is called social media and we say that all the time, but a lot of people do not keep the social in media," said Aliza Licht, senior vice president of global communications at [Donna Karan International](#), New York.

"Every brand, luxury or mass, has to examine what is right for it," she said. "This is very specific to our brand."

"We have a person, Donna Karan, and a city, New York."

Prima Donna

At the start, Donna Karan decided to focus on Facebook and Twitter.

The Twitter handle began as a faux personality that incorporated the events in various employees' lives. However, Ms. Licht soon took on the "DKNY PR Girl" persona when users began to respond to the content and it need to become authentic.



@DKNYTwitter page

The @DKNY persona also posts on a Tumblr blog. These blog posts have proven to be popular Twitter content as well, Ms. Licht said.

At the core of the brand's social strategy is brand evangelism.

"One of the things that marketing or public relations people want to see are the dreaded letters of ROI," Ms. Licht said. "I promise that it is there, but I cannot show it to you."

"I can say that there is brand evangelism," she said.

Ms. Licht does not schedule social media posts to go live automatically. When she is away from the Twitter account for a long period of time, she often comes back to see that other users have responded to tweets directed to the @DKNY Twitter handle.

"The fact that strangers have become brand evangelists – that is the ROI," Ms. Licht said.



Ms. Licht at Luxury Interactive

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Donna Karan taps its brand evangelists via social campaigns in quite a few ways.

"It is the random acts of kindness that create shock and awe," Ms. Licht said.

Once, Ms. Licht discovered at random that a Twitter user who was not intentionally engaging with the brand was looking to purchase a pair of black shoes.

In response, @DKNY tweeted at the user a personalized Pinterest board of nine pairs of

black shoes by the brand.

Meanwhile, Ms. Licht also looks for ways to take social media around the globe.

For Easter, the brand wanted to enact a global campaign rather than focus on its home city. The brand invited 30 bloggers in London and New York to spread the word and participate in a scavenger hunt.

The brand tweeted clues and consumers around the world could participate.

Donna Karan also hosted Fashion's Night Out in London from the brand headquarters in New York by live-tweeting on a projected screen in the store.

"Any time we live-stream events, we are taking ownership of that," Ms. Licht said.

Furthermore, Donna Karan reopened its London flagship store at the same time as the 2012 London Olympics hype.

"How were we going to get people to know that we were reopening the store?" Ms. Licht said. "Instead of a press release, we decide to investigate where people get news.

"Whatever social platform you are on, you will get the news faster than you will get it from a CNN breaking news email by 10 minutes," she said.

The brand created a video featuring notable personalities such as performing artists and bloggers. The video was distributed via social media with the #UK2012 hashtag as a representation of Donna Karan's influence on the channel.

Embedded Video: <http://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/yUrxaBBhvr>

#UK2012 video

"Every month I find that the more I tweet, the more conversation there is about the brand," Ms. Licht said. "If I am actively engaging, there are more responses.

"You have to really analyze what the copy is, because it makes a huge difference in engagement," she said.

Final Take

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