

Competencies Needed for Social Media Managers

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Abstract. With the quantum leap of the popularity of the social media, contemporary organizations are stepping into utilizing the communication tool such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Yelp, TripAdvisor etc. to promote their products. Besides that, social media also serves as a shepherd in driving the marketing direction. However, there are no studies that address the specific knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAOs) considered necessary for social media managers in hospitality industry. The goal of this study was to fill this gap and make recommendations as to what KSAOs-set is necessary for successful social media managers. The results could be used to develop a comprehensive job description and job specification; training; and performance management of social media managers. In addition, the findings ought to be incorporated into the education and training of current and future hospitality professionals in this field.

Introduction

A multitude number of researchers believe that the new marketing tools, especially social media, greatly influence today's hospitality industry performance [1]. Social media managers, perform a leading role in conducting the social media presence, and enjoy an indispensable position in any service company [2]. Although a series of studies have been carried out in the field exploring the importance of social media managers, the majority of them focused on the relationship between social media performance and the social media managers and the abilities that social media managers are supposed to possess [3]. A comprehensive study of the social media managers' knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics still leaves a gap to fill, which also constitutes the main orientation of this thesis.

Statement of the problem

To our knowledge, there are no studies that address the specific knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAOs) considered necessary for social media managers in hospitality industry. The goal of this study was to fill this gap and make recommendations as to what KSAOs-set is necessary for successful social media managers. The sub-questions of this study included the following:

1. What are the basic competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics) needed for a social media manager?
2. What is the rank-importance of the KSAOs?

Methodology

This research employs a two-round online Delphi Method. The experts email address was obtained from LinkedIn. They all belong to the social media manager group. After several rounds, the answer will converge to a more "centralized and correct" result. The range of the answer will also decrease [4]. The instrument for this research was a self-designed questionnaire, which is generated by Qualtrics.

After two rounds of survey, only ten responses were complete and useful. The responses were processed and analyzed automatically by the Qualtrics software. The aggregated number of the response was used to explore the rank of the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics of

the social media managers based on the consequence of the significance. The percentage value got from Qualtrics was used to acquire the demographic conclusion from the chosen experts.

Findings

What are the basic competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics) that a social media manager is supposed to have?

The first round of the Delphi, used brainstorming, and asked the participants to list knowledge, skill, abilities, and other characteristics that experts felt were important for a social media manager. The form also provided a column that experts could add comments. Table 1 summarizes the specific competencies and accompanying explanations.

Tab. 1

Knowledge	No.	Skills	No.	Abilities (Natural Talent)	No.	Other Characteristics	No.
Technology savvy	4	Strong creative blogging and writing skills (English grammar, Good spelling and punctuation is paramount to your representation of your client)	6	Ability to think outside the box	6	Self-motivated	3
Knowledge of internet marketing or sales background	4	Project management skills /manage up	4	Ability to be proactive and active on new trends	3	Clever	2
Understanding of HTML and CSS coding	2	Language skills-excellent good command of both mother tongue and English/ well spoken	2	Ability to examine social behaviors based on different demographics	3	Empathy	2
Monitoring software(Analytics tools) for social media	2	Multi-task skills	2	Ability to fulfill things before deadlines	2	Futurist	2
Digital platforms (Facebook, Twitter), new technologies and trends	2	Strong research skills	2	Ability to establish goals, strategy campaign and then establish the metrics to attain them	2	Eager to learn and find differences/Thirst for learning	2
Understanding of B2B and B2C operations	1	Leading skills	1	Ability to internalize and display passion for products and services.	2	Keen eye for design	2
Search engine optimization	1	Time management skills	1	Ability to handle stress	1	Outgoing	1
PR and communications knowledge	1	Interpersonal skills	1	Ability to make a presentation to community	1	Hardworking	1
Know-how systems	1	Team work skills	1	Ability of problem analysis, judgment giving solutions	1	Ambitious	1
Experience in an agency setting	1			Ability to understand customers' needs and experience/ empathy to customers' needs in service	1	Responsible	1

Experience in a corporate setting	1			Ability to develop and execute successfully integrated social media campaigns including integrating social strategies to web content, web navigation and user experience	1	Patience	1
Basic web knowledge	1			Ability to nurture social relationships	1	Reliable	1
Base knowledge of digital laws in place	1					Productive	1
Deep knowledge of social networking site's user agreements, privacy and policies	1					Quick thinking	1

Knowledge. 1. Digital platforms (Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor, Yelp...)

Social media managers are supposed to have a comprehensive knowledge of the features and structures of those diverse platforms. The demographics they are designed to, the ways they are operated, and the influence they exert.

2. Systems Know-how

This includes the search engine optimization, social media analytical tools, basic knowledge for Web 2.0, paid search (pay-per-sale, pay-per-click, pay-per-lead), contextual search, knowledge of HTML and CSS coding. From this perspective, certain kind of IT background or knowledge is the prerequisite for the social media managers to monitor the daily operations of the social media websites and the successful distribution of a certain product or a travel plan.

3. Knowledge of internet marketing and knowledge of sales

It is essential for a social media manager to equip the knowledge of marketing and sales. It will facilitate them to direct the social media team to better promote a product with an ideal portfolio of diversified distribution channel. For example, in relation to the distribution channels, it includes the common B2B and B2C operations.

4. Knowledge of agency setting and corporate setting

Since social media managers are responsible for the promotion of products and services, it is necessary for them to effectively and efficiently coordinate and communicate with the employees from other department to get more knowledge in order to provide more integrated background information for the customers. For instance, they are supposed to communicate with the IT department to acquire the IT support; they may cooperate with the department of marketing and sales to design a unique portfolio featured with a mixture of elements and present it on a specific website; they may work with the department of finance to obtain the price information; or even they may collaborate with the customer service department to help to deal with some reviews or complains on the virtual or real settings.

5. Basic knowledge of digital laws in place

Experts suggested that it is vital for social media managers to follow the rules in order to fulfill their business goals. When it comes to the laws and rules, it includes the social networking site's user agreements, privacy policies, company page policies, contest guidelines, advertising guidelines, and community standards and so on.

Skills. 1. Strong creative blogging and writing skills

A competent writing skill is paramount for a social media manager to manipulate the effectiveness of the writing content for a product and service. This skill is about the adeptly using of the English grammar, good spelling, and punctuation, which are important for the image of company and social media managers.

For the enrolled experts, "Creativeness" is second to none. A creative slogan or advertisement is decisive for the successful promotion of any brand or company. Take FedEx as an example, its

slogan is “Relax, it’s FedEx”, which is unique, easy to remember and differentiate from the competitors. Apart from that, interactive, customizable, contextual, entertaining, playable, useful features are the six foundations of a great social media promotion’s success.

2. Strong research skills

It is significant for social media managers to have strong research skills. That is to say, he or she can point a problem from the daily data or the reviews on the company’s website, analyze it and come up with a solution to deal with it.

Moreover, it is more promising for a company if its social media managers obtain the skills to mine the “big data” from the current client pool; build conversations with the current or potential clients to consolidate and establish relationship with them.

3. Skills for multi-tasking in a certain time periods

It is common for a company to promote more than one product or service in a certain period. Under this circumstance, social media managers have to work with many tasks at one time. In this sense, they are supposed to have a strong power to withstand the stress and a competency to solve a multitude of problems in an ordered manner.

4. Project management skills

Since the design of a certain Internet marketing campaign is a project, then a project has to be completed in the right time for the right people. All projects are specific and unique, and vary widely in size and type. Besides that, projects are always multidisciplinary. It requires people with different knowledge and expertise, so it is complex in its nature. In consequence, he or she has to calculate the duration of each task, arrange their importance and deliver them smoothly in a predetermined way.

5. Leading skills

Just as all the managers, leading skill is one of the most important for social media managers. Managers ought to cultivate their own charisma for a specific group of people under a specific working environment.

6. Bilingual language skills

Thanks to globalization, market today has already expanded to a world scale instead of only a constrained region or country. Besides that, Internet also exists in a global scope. From this point of view, a social media manager will be better process the work if he or she is familiar with two or more languages. In other words, they are supposed to act as an excellent commander of both mother tongue and English.

Abilities. 1. Ability to analyze a problem, provide judgment and give solutions

Quick thinking accounts for a large portion in the daily operation of social media managers. Due to the fast pace of the daily business and internet marketing, when encountered with a specific problem, social media managers should be able to point a problem exactly in time according to the data, analyze it, judge its attributes and come up with alternative solutions which can solve them directly or indirectly and choose the best one in a quick manner.

2. Ability to understand customers' needs

According to experts, social media managers must have experience and some background in the customer service or have a strong sympathy towards the situation that a customer may encounter. Relating to the Internet service marketing, the process of customer decision making and evaluating services encompass all three stages, pre-purchase, service encounter, and post-purchase stage.

3. Ability to be proactive and active on new trends

Proactive ability means to act before some new things happen. Active ability means to fully engage oneself in the ones work and tasks. As cited in the literature review---Harvard Business Review has surveyed 2100 companies, among them only 12% says that they tap the social media tool effectively and efficiently. In this sense, social media managers are supposed to create a vision for the company’s future on how to utilize the Internet to do marketing and how to realize the organization’s mission in a measured way.

4. Ability to think outside the box

Think outside the box, which is the synonym of creativity, serves as one of the most significant abilities that a social media manager should have. In common sense, an attractive website, which means a flashing combination of the design style, words’ color, sounds, pictures, will absorb customers’ attention in a glimpse of time and may in turn promote the sales and revenue for the organization.

5. Ability to establish goals, strategy, campaign and then establish the metrics to attain them

It is significant for a social media manager having the ability to build and execute the strategy as well as to establish a metrics to measure whether the strategy takes effect. Besides that, in order to make a strategy successful, social media managers could launch strategic campaigns, which comprise integrating social strategies to web content, web navigation, user experience, and along with nurturing social relationships.

Other Characteristics. 1. Eager to learn and find differences

Our experts emphasized learning as an important attribute for social media managers. The preference to keeps one-self learning all the time, can pave the way that the person is informed, having a vision, and acting proactive and active before the new trends.

2. Self-motivated

A leader should be highly self-motivated and further monitor his or her employees or team members. For many companies, displaying passion for the product and services is one of the most important traits a social media manager could possess. It is the fierce passion that makes him or her keep motivated and provide the best presentation for the company, no matter in the virtual website or the real working environment.

3. Keen eye for design

This characteristic is signified by the ability of thinking outside the box. Just as what have been mentioned above, only when the web page is attractive to the customers, they will remain on that page, search the information and make a purchase decision in the end.

4. Futurist

This is the attribute associated with the ability to be proactive to the new trends. Social media managers should act as a futurist to create the vision for the company and direct the company to the foreseeing future.

Besides the characteristics mentioned above, the participant experts also mentioned other characteristics that a social manager might have. It contains hardworking, empathy, patience, responsible, reliable, productive, ambitious, outgoing, and clever etc.

Is there any rank of importance of the KSAOs?

In the second round of Delphi Research, participants were provided with the consolidated KSAOs mentioned in the first round. They were asked to rank all variables in the importance to their jobs. From Table 2 we can obtain the rank of the KSAOs clearly.

Tab. 2

Knowledge	No.	Skills	No.
Knowledge of digital platforms (Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor, Yelp...)	9	Project leading and management skills	10
Knowledge of Monitoring software (Analytics tools) for social media	8	Strong creative blogging and writing skills	9
Knowledge of sales and internet marketing	6	Strong research skills	6
Knowledge of cutting-edge technologies	5	Language skills (Good command of both mother tongue and English)	3
Knowledge of HTML and CSS coding	2	Multi-task skills	2
Abilities	No.	Other Characteristics	No.
Ability to understand customers' needs	10	Self-motivated	10
Ability to set goals, strategy campaign and then establish the metrics to attain them	7	Responsible	9
Ability to mine the data in order to reach potential customers and convert them into real customers	7	Eager to learn new things	4
Ability of problem analysis, judgement and giving solutions	4	Keen eye for design	4
Ability to examine social behaviors based on different demographics	2	Good traits to represent the new product	3

Qualification of Participants: educational background

From the Qualtrics analysis, half of the experts in this study (50%) had a master's degree and the other half has achieved a bachelor' degree.

Previous work experience

As the result, eight of the ten participants had worked in the marketing field. Six of them had sales and public relations experience. Four of them had work experience in IT field. And none had worked in the news and broadcasting realm.

Summary

This study employs a Delphi Research to explore the competency of a social media manager. The results indicate that “the knowledge of digital platforms (Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor, Yelp...)”, “project leading and management skills”, “ability to understand customers' needs” and “self-motivated” are the top four requirement. From the above analysis, since social media manager is a newly-set position, most of the managers have been working in the field of marketing, sales and public relations field. From this perspective, the author of the thesis believes that since the social media work is multi-disciplinary, whether the social media manager can perform well largely depends on the person's previous working experience---the wideness of his or her working and competency's scope, not merely the deepness of one specific discipline. Less than half of them have worked in the IT realm. All in all, a good job description for a social media manager leading to a good performance in his or her self-learning and enrichment and also benefit companies to hire the most competent manager who is excels at the social media realm.

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