

Increasing Brand Awareness Through Social Media Communications




Introduction

Voted 'Luxury Retailer of the Year' in 2013, Harrods is a department store with a difference. Its unique brand is recognized across the world. Seen as a British institution, its mission is to become *'the number one department store in the world for luxury branded merchandise, maintaining an unprecedented level of retail standards, expertise, and profitability.'*

Harrods has been located in Knightsbridge, London since 1853 and is one of the world's few single site department stores. With 14 million customers from over 178 countries visiting the store each year, Harrods has a reputation for always delivering the highest standards of customer service.

The Harrods motto is 'anything is possible' and the company works as a team across three locations – the flagship store and its recently opened Thatcham distribution centre and Hammersmith offices - to exceed the expectations of its customers.

'This means we have a steely determination to get things done, find ways around the impossible, and see challenges as opportunities.'

Communicating Harrods' brand values - British, Luxury, Innovation, Sensation and Service - is essential not just for its current employees but also in attracting new talent. It is also vital in engaging with existing customers and attracting new shoppers from across the world.

Social media is continuing to transform the way a business communicates, both internally and externally.

This case study shows how Harrods uses social media as a form of internal communication, a way of engaging with the external environment and as a means of recruitment.

Public Relations

A business can promote itself using a number of marketing strategies including direct mail, personal selling and sales promotions, as well as communicating through Public Relations (PR). 'Public relations practice is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics.' (The Chartered Institute of Public Relations). A business will have many 'publics' that it communicates with - for example its employees, shareholders, the media, as well as maintaining goodwill and understanding with its customers. The aims of PR are to achieve positive publicity about the business, build image and enhance reputation in terms of products and services. In today's competitive market, reputation can be a company's biggest asset and can help to set it apart from the competition.





Social media offers huge benefits in terms of PR, as it enables a business to directly communicate to a worldwide audience in a number of ways. Harrods social media strategy is based on two way communication and the company sees its audience as important contributors in the social conversations that take place around the brand.

Social media also provides opportunities to create social content with a point of difference, which is of particular importance in a sector such as retail where companies are often selling the same or similar products. Harrods has 28 restaurants across its store; using social media innovatively it ran a campaign named 'Twenty Ate Days', which featured a different restaurant everyday throughout the month of February. The campaign received very positive press coverage and a great deal of consumer interest, which built awareness of the Harrods brand while promoting the range of foods offered in its restaurants.

External Communications

There are a number of external communication channels a business can utilize to reach its intended audience, including a company website, marketing materials such as posters, advertisements, emails and telecoms. For Harrods the communication of its luxury brand and values is particularly important in reaffirming that it can cater for every level of luxury. Harrods uses social media to demonstrate that not only can it cater for everyone, but that it is much more than just a famous store. For many of its customers, Harrods represents special moments in time they have shared with family and friends - for example, bringing their children to see the Christmas window displays for the very first time.

A business needs to ensure that it uses social media to its advantage. Any business can set up a Twitter account, but for Harrods the use of social media means 'rising above the noise'.

'The ability to build loyalty and a continued passion for the Harrods brand via a Tweet or a Facebook/Instagram post is something that our business as a whole takes very seriously.'

By this it means the messages it communicates are presented in such a way that the content involves and truly engages its audience. Harrods is finding that this is helping to turn new customers into loyal supporters, and retain those shoppers who are already loyal to the brand and experience that comes with it.

Social media also enables Harrods to reach a more diverse and younger audience through maintaining a strong online presence with a variety of networking sites and by regular updates.

Social media can also be used in partnership with external companies. Harrods offers products from a vast range of luxury brands and works closely with each one to ensure that any marketing information about these products follows their brand guidelines as well Harrods brand guidelines. Further collaboration is undertaken through methods such as retweeting, which means that content reaches a wider audience.

THE MEN'S TAKEOVER
ONE FOR THE BOYS

UPDATE FROM JASON BRODERICK
ALL THE LATEST FROM MENSWEAR

The Bulletin
27.11.14

TOP STYLING SECRETS
FROM EDITOR OF HARRODS MAN MAGAZINE
VICTORIA GAIGER

THE REFINERY
GROOMING FOR THE MODERN GENTLEMAN

Want to include some news? Please email it to bulletin@harrods.com by 5pm on Tuesday.

BE EXCEPTIONAL Harrods



Internal Communications

Harrods' main objective for communicating internally with its employees is to provide consistent, regular and robust communications that help to ensure staff across all Harrods sites and functions feel as engaged and informed as possible about the business's purpose, activities and direction.

Harrods has invested in a number of internal channels to ensure employees are kept up-to-date on news from across the company and that there are appropriate platforms to share news and information. In August, Harrods launched a new look internal magazine to excite and engage employees. Key features included:

- Contemporary look and content that reflects Harrods external communications
- Snappy, easy to read, fold-out format
- New, friendly tone of voice with an accompanying creative that crosses multiple channels
- Print readership up +400 at launch

In order to encourage the sharing of ideas and feedback all year round, Managing Director Michael Ward hosts a series of popular breakfast events that are open to all and give staff the opportunity to talk to him directly about the issues that affect the business. The Satisfaction Forum is another route for employees who are elected representatives of their departments to speak to senior managers and directors about views, issues and potential ideas from each of their respective teams.



A news focused intranet site helps to keep employees stay informed about Harrods events, promotions and operational information as well as provides them with the essential materials they require to do their job effectively. The intranet homepage was recently enhanced to offer

- A 'takeover' background that allows the Internal Communications team to theme the intranet to store promotions and events
- Harrods twitter embedded
- New visual led news stories
- Countdown to key events

This year will also see internal communications continue to assess the opportunity for social media to increase the flow of information across functions of the business and encourage network and collaboration. Internal communications will also work closely with HR ahead of the annual engagement survey that offers all staff the opportunity to share their views.

'Alongside our employee survey and the opportunity for departments to make changes all year round, our Satisfaction Forum invites employees to be representatives of their departments, speaking to senior managers and directors about areas of concern for their teams as well as allowing senior managers to provide feedback on business performance and changes.'

Recruitment

Harrods offers a range of career opportunities; from sales associate roles in the fashion and beauty departments or selling support roles which includes careers in marketing, buying, eCommerce, IT and finance. Harrods airport outlet stores in Heathrow and Gatwick also recruit staff that can provide the 'Harrods experience' for international travellers.

Harrods uses social media channels as a means of marketing and communicating its variety of career opportunities which includes internships, graduate schemes as well as work placements. By using social media platforms as a means of recruitment, Harrods has increased the number of applications it receives and is able to attract high quality candidates. Through the use of different social channels for different audiences, Harrods is able to target its recruitment campaigns. For example, the Twitter content is directed towards graduates, school leavers and entry level



candidates. Harrods also uses LinkedIn to reach a far broader scope of applicants from graduates through to senior professionals.

One particularly special career opportunity comes in the form of Harrods School Leavers Program, which was launched in 2012, and has been designed for 18 year old school leavers who want to take a different path to university. The program lasts for 18 months and provides an 'unrivalled understanding of retail, selling, and how to work in a professional environment, with all the essential tools to a fast track supervisory career within our luxury departments.'

Natalia Burke, Sales Manager for children's-wear joined the company in 2010:

'Harrods has given me a variety of opportunities to work on different aspects of my personal development, which has led to promotion from Sales Associate, to Supervisor to Sales Manager.'



www.harrods.com

Using social media as a recruitment tool has not been without its challenges.

Harrods has traditionally been a self-sufficient company covering for example, its own alterations in house as well as its own cleaning staff, but being self-sufficient has resulted in many people not knowing what Harrods offers as an employer and the range of career and development opportunities available. Over the past 18 months Harrods has seen huge growth in its employer brand as a result of social media. From only a few tweets a day, the Harrods Careers team has been able to create an active multi-channel communication stream on which they provide a great service for candidates and job seekers.

Conclusion

A business needs to be able to anticipate changes in its environment and respond flexibly and creatively. The changing nature of communications means that a business needs to embrace social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn using them to communicate to a broad audience.

This case study has shown how Harrods is effectively using social media to promote its luxury brand to existing loyal customers as well as new and future audiences. By monitoring and looking for exciting new opportunities and trends, Harrods ensures that its brand remains current and relevant. Harrods was recently voted in the top five retailers to follow on Instagram, demonstrating that a business can use 21st century communication channels but still ensure that its brand and values are never compromised.

You have had the opportunity to read about how Harrods uses social media to promote themselves both internally and externally. IN a report, you are now going to come up with 3 additional ways Harrods can use social media in a positive way.

Using the event/company created for your culminating activity, you are going to discuss 3 ways social media can be used to promote your company/event. Explain why you think those methods would be beneficial.

Activity