# Social media marketing - a must in business

By Walter Wafula

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Many companies in Africa are embracing social media to reach their online customers like elsewhere in the world. Moses Serugo, an arts journalist, social media marketer and proprietor of Kampalaone.com spoke to Bizcommunity about the benefits of social media marketing in Uganda.



***How effective is social media in marketing events today?***

Moses Serugo: Social media counts as an add-on marketing strategy to target those who do not buy newspapers, listen to the radio all the time or watch TV to catch specific advertising spots. It mostly targets the 500 000 or so Ugandans on Facebook and pages like Trade Links Africa are prime advertising spots.

Of course there is the bother of coming off as 'spamming' information, but on the whole, those that spend most of their time on say Facebook and Google+ appreciate the fact that these are information portals that have dedicated "events" links that aid one in picking and choosing what event to go for or not.

***Which is the most effective social media platform for marketing in Uganda?***

Serugo: Facebook is the most effective by far. Cross-linking with Twitter also helps. Google+ is gaining ground as are LinkedIn.

***What are some of the high profile events you have successfully marketed?***

Serugo: Bayimba International Festival of the Arts in 2010 was huge. It was all over Facebook, in people's inboxes, name it. Then there was the 2011 Amakula Kampala Cinema Caravan Festival and The Myth of the Night Dancers performance by Tabu-Flo at the National Theatre.

***What are some of the critical building blocks in effective social media marketing?***

Serugo: Having a good idea of each media's platform helps. Facebook has an "events" link, so you can easily create an event and invite people. It helps to have so many friends on Facebook. A fan page can be used to bait revelers where they get something in exchange for "liking" a page. Facebook also has "insights", statistics that show how effective a campaign is. Twitter also has "Tweet Reach' to help keep track of the buzz around an event.

***How many friends does one need to make marketing via Facebook valuable?***

Serugo: Facebook usually gives a maximum of 5 000 friends so anywhere over a quarter of that would be ideal.

***What gives Facebook an edge over Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn?***

Serugo: Facebook has greater options by way of your own profile page, posting on friend's pages and in groups. It also has additional platforms where you can create buzz by getting people to like a "page' or creating a "group' where info about a band's membership can be put. Twitter only lets you create a "handle" and enables you go viral by way of a hashtag. Here, information is only output in 140 characters that is tricky.

LinkedIn is more like a Facebook for professionals where you can post on your profile page so that everyone you are networked with gets to see what's on your post. Google+ is rather new and the most potential competition to Facebook. It has a better aesthetic and is not as cluttered.

- ***Many businesses in Uganda remain skeptical about relying on social media to sell their products or services because most Ugandans are not computer literate. What's your advice to that group?***

Serugo: Depending on their demographic appeal, they should target social media because 500 000 Ugandans on Facebook is quite a market. Social media also provides better audience feedback.

- ***Which businesses would you advise to embrace social media marketing strategies without fail?***

Serugo: The media because they need to aggregate their content across Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube, Fast Moving Consumer Goods. However, everyone who needs a permanent online presence beyond a website needs to be on Facebook and YouTube to run their commercials, etc. They should think of social media as online billboard space.

- ***Is there a possibility that social media will one day 'kill' traditional media?***

Serugo: Not really. Twitter may have broken the news of Whitney Houston's death 27 minutes earlier than other platforms but it was the traditional media that offered deeper insights into the "so what" and "what next" aspects of that story.

Social media ensured a breaking news sort of angle to the event because of live tweets. Traditional media had to sleep on the story. With social media, the news "broke" as it happened.

## ABOUT WALTER WAFULA

Walter Wafula is a seasoned journalist who has reported for the *Daily Monitor* newspaper in Kampala-Uganda. He is also a contributor on Bizcommunity.com website. Email Walter at wafwalt@yahoo.com and connect on LinkedIn.


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