Transcript: Engaging your audience through digital

Welcome to the Digital Masterclass Series: the importance of going digital in a post-COVID world. Today's topic: we're looking at engaging with your audience through digital.

On the agenda today: why engage through digital; the types of digital channels that you can use; the importance of your audience; managing digital engagement through communities (and generating more responses); and how to use that through different tactics and tips.

Why should we use digital to engage with our audience? Well, most importantly, it's free. It's an organic way to engage with people online and many customers, and it also saves time. It is also easily accessible. This can be through your computer or your smartphone. The approach is safe and the way you manage your data is also very efficient. Not only can you make adjustments to your products or services while you engage through digital, but you can also develop relationships with customers online and get to know them better.

The types of digital channels that we can use on social media are below:
• With Google reviews, you can head over to the ratings and comments section to engage with your audience.
• You can also use Facebook, via a page or a group, and this is through comments and likes. You can also run a poll and have direct messages.
• You can also use Instagram. Instagram does a really good job for branding and pushing out high volumes of content, in a short format in a short time span. You can also check the direct messages link.
• You can also use YouTube, by engaging through different audiences. You can check the subscriber numbers, the likes on each video, as well as comments.
• And finally, delivery apps: they're very clever in how they're engineered and designed in that, after you receive your food delivery, it automatically takes you to a five-star rating system, where you rate how your experience was.

Next, we'll be looking at the types of digital channels that we can use, and that is through feedback forms.
For the first one: Google Forms can be done in multiple ways, through questions and responses based on what you would like your customers to fill out, and what your needs are. The second one is integrating a form on your website. This can have a combination of star ratings. You can run a poll and short answer questions, or multiple choice. Third would be Microsoft Forms. The responses can be short answers. It also provides graphs and statistics for you. It can be a combination of different radio buttons that you can use for multiple choice.

Next on the list is app ratings. This is something that Apple does very cleverly. They make you review an app during certain stages, while you're using it. It's usually in a five-star rating format that's nice and easy and simple. All you have to do is just tap and review it.

The next one on the list is text message. This can be a combination, because this text message can include a link to the form as well. If you go through open inspections, particularly for real estate, a lot of the time the real estate agent in front of the door will ask for some sort of contact details before you can view the property.

Finally, an email survey. This can be run on a poll or a combination as well. This can be done through various email software applications, such as SurveyMonkey or Mailchimp. This can be automated for you.

The importance of audience feedback: what's really important about people's feedback? Well, we need to know what people think about the certain product or a service. By knowing and responding to audience feedback, we can gain more followers online. It also leads to new ideas and innovation, and potentially more purchases in the future if done well. And finally, it also allows your business to eventually become a leader in that particular market or niche field that you service.

Moving on to why engaging with your audience is important, that's because a lot of reviews are conducted online. 82% of consumers read online reviews for local businesses, including 93% of people age 35 to 45.

Here are the types of different reviews that are read and shared online. The start is the most popular and the one that people read most, followed by the quantity of the reviews and volume. People also look for the recency of reviews – so, how frequent and how many people in the last week or two leave these responses. Another one is the length of review (how detailed and what the feedback is). People really pay attention to that. Followed by the sentiment of reviews, and if a business has responded to reviews.

Consumers that write reviews for local businesses wrote an average of nine in 2019. The next sentence is quite an interesting one: "18-to-34 year-olds write twice as many reviews as age people 55-plus." This particular demographic of the market is extremely active online and on social media platforms. That's because they have really easy access, but it's also part of their everyday life.

This example is a juice bar. A juice bar has a healthy and affordable menu, and wants more people to know about it by social media. The digital channels that this juice bar uses are: Google, Facebook, Instagram and delivery apps.

These are their main channels of communication with their audience. The purpose of using these digital channels: it helps with the brand awareness, and also affirms that the menu is performing as expected, and is up to customers' expectations.

The second example is an event company: after a successful event, the owner wants to know how they can improve, so that more people will participate in future. The company is also looking to explore new ideas, and has opened digital channels for feedback. The company decides to go with Google Forms, Microsoft Forms, and an email survey. The purpose is to allow for newer initiatives, and also adjustments to future events; but it also allows the owner of this company to gain insight into what activities performed well, and what people like or dislike.

Here are the five most common ways to ask for feedback via digital:

• First, in person;
• Next, text message or a link;
• Third, over the phone;
• Fourth, receipts;
• Fifth, through email.

Some of these digital engagement and community management tactics are quite important as well, depending on the kind of feedback that you receive. Here is an example of positive feedback from a customer, and a response from the business.

Here's how it goes: "Person X was so polite, professional, and delivered what they promised on time. They were also confident and knowledgeable in the area. Would recommend a hundred percent." Here's how the business ideally responds. "Hi, thank you very much for sharing your feedback. Person X takes pride in their work and always strives to deliver the best outcome. Hope to see you again."

The second example is a negative review. It's important to manage that. The review goes: "Service was disappointing and there was a lack of communication about the product. I've sent many follow ups and got no responses. Please address my concerns." The most appropriate way to respond to this would be to thank them for reaching out and acknowledge how they feel about it. "Sorry you feel this way, we would appreciate the opportunity to look further into the issue. Contact us here, and we'll help you work to resolve the issue."

Here are three top tips on how to manage community engagement. Tip number one: people are constantly online, comparing products and services every day. It's very important that we are mindful about this. Tip number two: after a good experience, people will be more willing to provide a positive review if you ask. It's very important to follow up with this positive review once they've had a great experience. Finally, tip number three: people who have a bad experience are more likely to leave a review online. Not to worry, though, just address it in the next five to seven days, and respond appropriately.

Here are some ways in which you can respond while you're managing digital communities. The column here shows how to respond when receiving positive feedback, and the column here outlines how to respond to negative feedback.

Finally, here are some great ways to generate responses through various tactics:
• Number one: ask the customers to rate their experience after a purchase.
• Number two: offer a reason for them to leave a review.
• Number three: use automation and collect responses.
• Number four: use multiple communication and digital channels.
• Number five: bring your customers' feedback to life. You can use a video, a graphic, or share something online to engage new customers.
Thank you very much for coming to this event, hope to see you at the next webinar. Bye for now.