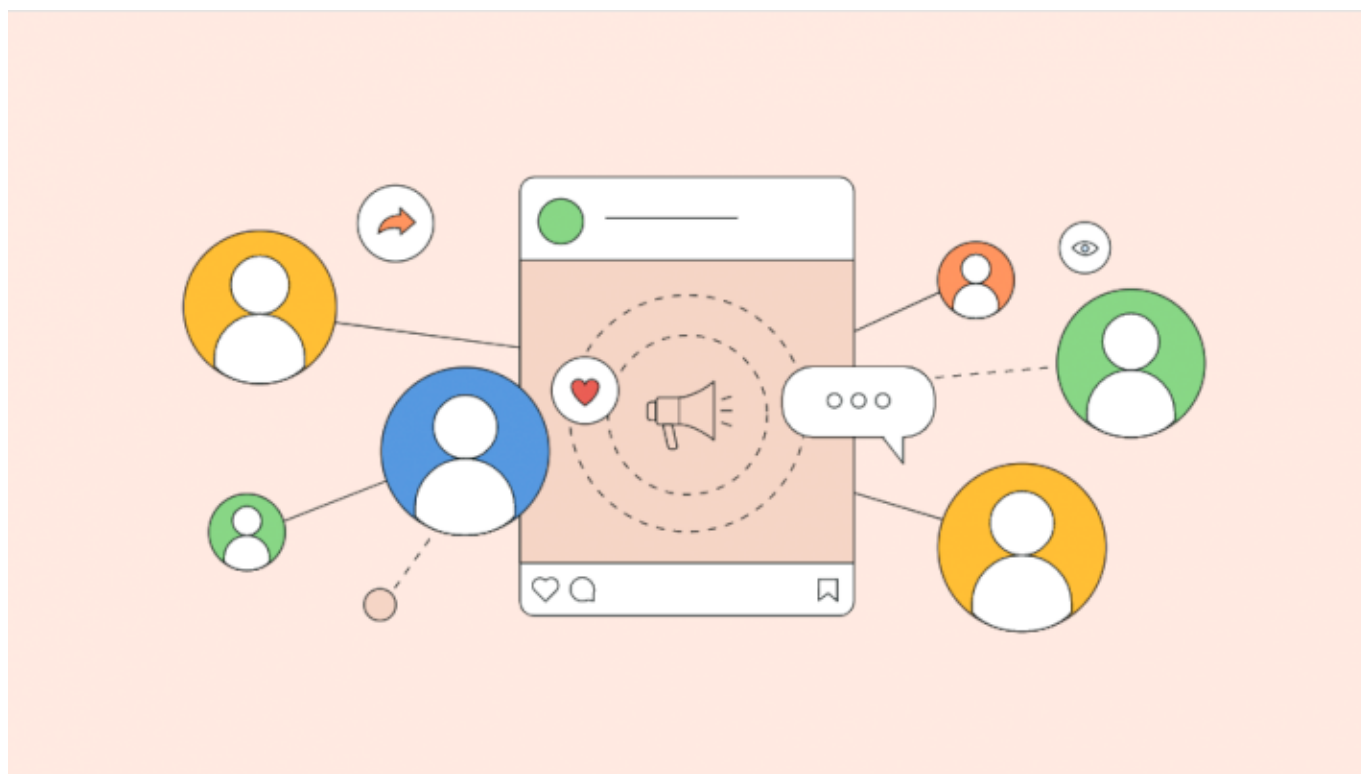


How (and why) a tech company shifted their social strategy from product- to community-focused

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Your first instinct when implementing an organic social media strategy for a technology company would be to showcase your tech, right?

But with organic social media (and the elusive algorithms that power it), you can't target a specific audience. That means your most loyal follower, a prospective customer and someone who would never be a customer each have the same opportunity to interact with your content. About a year after BentoBox invested in organic social media by hiring a social media manager, we shifted from a product-driven strategy to a community-driven one.

Community is a vague word though. What does it all mean? And is it really worth it? After seeing anecdotal success through our industry peers referencing BentoBox more and more, getting inbound requests to participate in social media franchises, and a 311% increase in impressions, BentoBox is continuing to see success with a community-driven social strategy. Now, let's talk about what community means.

Defining community

More than just an audience, your community will be your biggest brand advocates. They'll be the ones who show up to your events, who talk about your brand to friends and colleagues, who engage with your brand on social media.

Thinking about your audience as a community will allow you to constantly ask yourself, "How am I bringing value to these people?"

When we think about who these community members are, we're thinking in broad terms of people in our industry. For us, that could be a line cook or a bartender. They're not often the decision makers or end users, but one day they may be. We also know that having a positive brand affinity with people of all job titles in our industry will improve the overall sentiment and health of our brand. They show up for us, so creating content that brings value to them is key in building a strong, community-focused social strategy.

Part of why this strategy worked so well for us is because we clearly defined which people and organizations would fit for our community. Think about who your target audience is: Designers? Scientists? Makeup aficionados? Marketing professionals? Find specific people in that field who you could add to your community through content partnerships, franchises that live on your social channels, event attendance or user-generated content. When you've identified those people, engage and build connections with them on social media. Become an authority by introducing your community to the people, organizations and voices who make your industry what it is.

Implementing a community-led strategy while still getting your brand message across
Expand the depths of what your brand is, and use your brand's mission statement to guide your content and community. For example, BentoBox's mission is "helping restaurants succeed through their mission of hospitality." While our product is targeted to restaurant decision makers—owners, general managers, directors of operations—our social media content is designed to speak to anyone who supports the restaurant industry.

Examples include Rachel Karten, a food-focused social media expert and influencer, SisterSnacking, a restaurant review social media page, or Marianna Fierro, an illustrator who works with food brands and restaurants. Expanding those boxes and being a little more conceptual instead of so literal can help create sustainable, engaging content for your community.

Community management

In a community-led strategy, community management is huge. It's how you'll build and maintain connections with industry influencers and leaders, strengthen the bond you have with your biggest fans, and allow you to show up in the right conversations pertaining to your industry.

At BentoBox, we comment on at least five posts a day from people, restaurants, and organizations we love. We also make sure to share posts on our profiles of people and organizations we admire. Build a community management strategy by thinking about how often you want to show up in conversations about your industry, and what those conversations are.

Influencer content

This is really where you can tap into your community, and provide so much value. You may be thinking, “How does a product-driven technology company implement influencer content?” On organic social, we put our values and mission, the hospitality industry, front and center. This allows for us to work with influencers to support and uplift our customers.

Since we work with small, independent businesses who are stretched thin, they may not have the resources to work with influencers themselves. By doing that work for them, we’re not only proving our value to our customers—we’re creating engaging content and working with people in our industry who matter.

Recently, we worked with three restaurant review-style influencers to inspire restaurants who want to work with influencers, but don’t know where to start.

When thinking about how to create influencer content for your brand, think about what your community would want to see and ultimately how your customers can be front and center in that influencer content.

Employee advocacy

Your employees are amazing brand ambassadors, especially on social media. We share relevant articles and news from members in our community (or pieces that would be relevant to them!) on Sprout’s Employee Advocacy platform, which allows not only our brand account to engage and amplify the happenings of our community, but allows our employees to be tapped in as well.

We share new restaurant-related articles weekly, and make sure to remind employees multiple times a week to share them on their personal social channels. By having our employees share on-brand messaging, content and resources, it allows us to promote our values one step further.

Communities are where brand magic happens

Thinking about your audience as a community will allow you to expand the reach of people who know and love your brand versus just engage with your product. It will make people understand your ethos better, give your social team more room to experiment with content that’s engaging, and constantly allow you to breathe new life into your brand identity.

Tags: Technology & Software, Community Management, Social Media Strategy