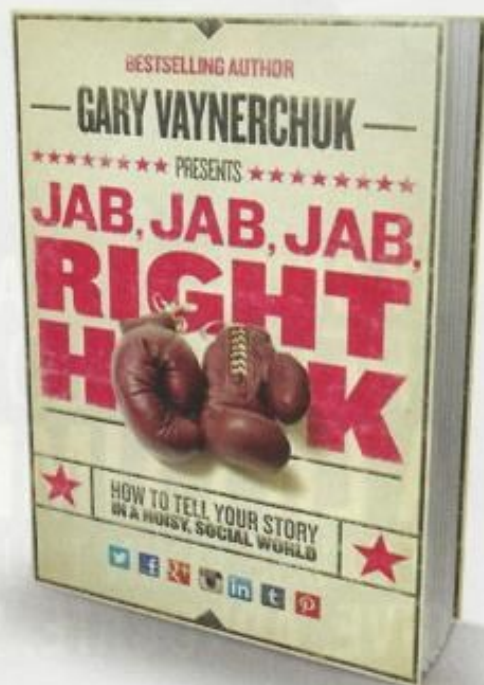


DELIVER

A SOCIAL MEDIA KNOCKOUT

BY GARY VAYNERCHUK

How to use the ever-changing nature of marketing to your advantage.





Gary Vaynerchuk is a *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author. He's a radio host, social media expert, and the founder of WineLibraryTV.com and VaynerMedia.

Just days before I was supposed to turn in the drop-dead, final version of the manuscript for *Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook* to my editor, Instagram launched a 15-second video product that competes directly with Vine. I was in Cannes, and as soon as I could, I went back to my hotel room and spent four hours looking at every Instagram video I could find. And since then, my team at VaynerMedia and I, and all of the most progressive marketers in the world, have been scrambling to figure out the best way to storytell in 15 seconds of video on a platform built for pictures. I can't think of a more fitting illustration of what kind of world we live in now.

Forget *Mad Men* and Don Draper. He lived in an easy world where nothing changed for 30 years, where you could spend your whole career figuring out how the print and television markets worked. This world, the one you and I live in, evolves every second, every day. The skill set it takes to be a successful entrepreneur, a successful marketer or a relevant celebrity today is a different skill set than you needed 10 years ago, even though that was the skill set that mattered for decades.

I have bad news: Marketing is hard, and it keeps getting harder. But there's no time to mourn the past or to feel sorry for ourselves, and there's no point in self-pity anyway. It is our job as modern-day storytellers to adjust to the realities of the marketplace, because it sure as hell isn't going to slow down for us.

Video for Instagram is just the most recent evolution. Soon Google Glass will launch and we'll have to figure out how to natively storytell on a screen hovering at the top of the customer's right or left eye. And as we go, we will have to continually re-evaluate just how many times we should bring value through apps and videos and glasses before we can ask our consumers to do something for us. We have to remember to give, give, give before we ask. That will always be the

real challenge. That, and moving fast enough to keep up.

The upside of moving quickly onto new platforms has been proved time and time again. The people and brands that overindex on Instagram and Pinterest are not necessarily the same ones who saw popularity on Facebook or Twitter—they just got to the new platforms first and figured them out sooner than anyone else. They're the ones that got out there and started testing, learning and watching others. They went all in.

I hope you will, too. I hope you'll fight for your place in the social media ring with the same ferocity and conviction as Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier during the Thrilla in Manila. If you don't know, it's been described as one of the greatest boxing matches in history. Ali was officially declared the winner, but it's been said that both contenders fought so hard and so well that no one actually lost that day.

I like winning; I hope you do, too!

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A SOCIAL MEDIA KNOCKOUT

Be a Social Media Brand Ambassador

Learn how bringing out the personality in your brand can lead to a successful social media marketing plan.

BY IVY HUGHES

Gary Vaynerchuk says today's companies are first and foremost media companies. But what does a food wholesaler know about media? How about a car manufacturer? Organic farmer? If they're playing the game right, they're going to know a heck of a lot.

It seems that everyone has a Facebook page, Twitter handle and Pinterest collage, but simply creating these accounts doesn't necessarily mean you'll see any rewards. Social media is not a system of communication osmosis nor is it a polite society where users sit patiently listening and nodding their heads while companies tell them what they should want to hear.

"You cannot underestimate people's ability to spot a soulless, bureaucratic tactic a million miles away," Vaynerchuk said recently to a social media blogger. "It's a big reason why so many companies that have dipped a toe in social media waters have failed miserably."

Building a strong relationship with customers means listening to how they feel, providing content they find valuable and remembering the 80-20 rule, which states that 80 percent of social media is engagement and relationship building and 20 percent is selling.

Ride the Emotional Roller Coaster

Social media is a means of expression, which means emotions count. Post things that appeal to your customers' emotions. This allows them to develop a greater connection to your brand than the service or product it delivers. Eventually they'll develop product loyalty and become brand ambassadors. This is an old business principle that's critical for effective social media engagement.

"I attract a crowd, not because I'm an extrovert or I'm over the top or I'm oozing with charisma," Vaynerchuk said in another interview. "It's because I care."

Starting a campaign or taking up a cause is a great way to appeal to your customers' emotions. When Starbucks was struggling to reinvigorate its brand on social media, it launched a campaign to become the world's largest buyer of "fair-trade-certified" coffee. This campaign resonated emotionally with Starbucks' customers, who followed the company and its progress through Twitter and the company blog.

Deliver What They Want

Whole Foods frequently lands on top 10 lists of companies most effectively using social media. Why? Because they have single-handedly nailed the 80-20 rule. Case in point—the Whole Foods Pinterest page. Instead of posting items related to Whole Foods products, the company posts content consumers want to read. They pin items about healthy living, recycling trends and green living that don't even mention the brand Whole Foods. By generating non-Whole Foods content that customers want to read, the company makes itself relevant in a way that attracts consumers to its landing page.

When your social media followers and friends have a problem, add value by offering a solution. Nike developed a separate Twitter handle—@nikesupport—to more effectively address consumer questions and concerns. While you may not need an additional handle, do not ignore customers who reach out to you via social media.

Mind Your P's and Q's

We live in an era of easily, immediately available information, what Vaynerchuk calls a "Thank You Economy." He says that only companies that figure out how to mind



80-20 RULE
**80% Social Media Engagement
 & Relationship Building**
20% Selling

their manners in an old-fashioned customer-service-oriented way have a chance at beating their competition.

In simple terms, this means bringing your off-line manners online. Don't ignore questions or only answer questions posed by influencers. Consumers will notice your silence just as they would in real life, and they will not like it. What they like and expect is good customer service. Just ask JetBlue. Delayed and canceled flights often drive consumers to social media rants about airlines. JetBlue not only answers these complaints, they try to help. In one example, they asked a customer to send in his flight details via Twitter for a real-time response.

As on the phone, customers on social media are put off by legalese, robot language and condescending tones. Customers do not react kindly to a Big Brother tone that says, "We are the experts, so listen to us."

In 2010, Nestlé posted a comment on Facebook that consumers viewed as preachy, and the post went viral—in a bad way. In it, Nestlé asked fans not to use an altered version of the company's logo as their profile

pic. Anyone who disobeyed would have their comments deleted. Fans vented angrily at the chocolate maker for telling them what to do and accused the company of trying to give consumers lessons in manners.

The lesson? Don't sound off about manners. Just practice them.

Give Back

Keep in mind that the little things count, too. Let's go back to Whole Foods. Not only does the company deliver valuable content to consumers via social media, but it pins content developed by bloggers and writers unaffiliated with Whole Foods. Everyone appreciates support, especially when that support comes from a company with a social media reach into the many millions.

"When I hear people debate the ROI of social media, it makes me remember why so many businesses fail," Vaynerchuk said to *Inc.* magazine. "Most businesses are not playing the marathon. They're playing the sprint. They're not worried about lifetime value and retention. They're worried about short-term goals."

Giving back can mean supporting other writers or causes, but it also means helping consumers when something goes wrong. Target gave a prime example of how not to do this via social media after the company experienced a security breach in which millions of customers' credit information was threatened. In response, Target offered Twitter followers a 10 percent discount on their next trip to Target. This did not go over well with the millions of people wondering who had their credit details and what they planned to do with them. While social media can be an outlet for consumer outreach, this doesn't mean companies can ignore crisis management planning.

Get Personal

If you can showcase the personality behind your brand through social media, your customers will respond. Here are a few tips to get you started.

- Find a cause. Whether one you start or one you can latch onto, support a cause that your customers value. This prompts emotional engagement and helps followers relate to your beliefs.
- Answer questions and ask some yourself. Not about your product, but about the things your followers are talking about.
- Support those who follow and engage with you by sharing their content.
- Develop a social media tone that isn't preachy, robotic or too technical.

By following these simple guidelines online, you'll create a following that's not only engaged but also loyal to your brand. Ultimately they will be your best marketing, because nothing sells like personal experience and passion. **SM**