What does Zen have to do with social media?

Zen is about living an authentic life, according to best-selling author, speaker, entrepreneur, and web and television personality Shama Hyder, who has been called the “Zen Master of Marketing” by Entrepreneur and the “Millennial Master of the Universe” by Fast Company. She will explain how you can add Zen to your social media marketing—and build credibility, generate buzz, and increase revenue—during, “The Zen of Social Media Marketing.”

Click here to register for:
The Zen of Social Media Marketing
Thursday, September 17
12:30–1:30 p.m.

Hyder’s Business Success Motivated by Joblessness

Not being able to find a job may have been the best thing to happen to Shama Hyder. Today, Hyder is a best-selling author, successful entrepreneur, in-demand international speaker and television personality. “I couldn’t get a job, so I started my own business,” she says.

Since its founding in 2009, The Marketing Zen Group in Carrollton, Texas, has grown by an average of 400 percent a year. Hyder was named one of the Top 30 Under 30 Entrepreneurs in America by Inc. and her business was honored at the White House as one of the top 100 U.S. companies to be run by a young entrepreneur by Impact100. She has received plenty of other awards, including being named one of the top 25 entrepreneurs in North America under 25 years of age by BusinessWeek and making the Forbes 30 under 30 list.

Shortly after starting her business, Hyder began writing answers to clients’ frequently asked questions and the results were incorporated into a book, The Zen of Social Media Marketing: An Easier Way to Build Credibility, Generate Buzz, and Increase Revenue, which became a best seller after it was published in 2010; it is now in its fourth edition. She will discuss social media marketing during the Special Webinar Series webinar, “The Zen of Social Media Marketing.” To register, click here.

“I wrote it,” she says, “because there wasn’t anything out there. I was part of an industry that was just emerging. People wanted to know certain things and there was nothing I could point them to.”

The success of her book led to speaking engagements and television interviews. As a speaker, she’s shared the stage with some of the world’s top leaders, including the Dalai Lama and President Obama. She’s been interviewed by media such as The Wall Street Journal, Fox News and CBS News, and she hosts Tech Zen with Shama and Socially Sound with Shama on the television station KDAF-TV in Dallas.

Twitter Thesis

Starting her business on her own, right out of school and with just $1,500, she leveraged her most important business asset—her Twitter
Five Social Media Tips

For anyone planning to use social media as part of their marketing activities, Shama Hyder recommends the following:

1. **Start with business goals.** A company’s goals should determine the most appropriate social media strategy, including what platform to focus on. Do you want to attract more visibility? Increase conversions? Drive traffic to your website? Your goals should be very specific and your online strategy should identify which online marketing methods can help you achieve your goals.

2. **Be flexible.** Technology and marketing continue to change rapidly. It’s important to be able to pivot and take advantage of new trends. “A five-year marketing plan is an anachronism,” according to Hyder. “You have to have flexibility.”

3. **Be consistent.** While “consistency” is “the most unsexy word in marketing,” it’s also among the most important words in marketing. Businesses need to give marketing strategies enough time to show results. A blog post or a tweet may be immediate, but the results of ongoing efforts take time. “You have viral stars on YouTube. There’s a misperception of overnight success. There are always flukes, but the ones who make it usually do a lot of hard work first.”

4. **Find the right platform for your audience.** Business-to-business companies will find that LinkedIn and Twitter are more effective than Facebook. Platforms like Instagram and Snapchat can reach a younger audience.

5. **Create content continuously.** Blog posts and videos are a start, but usually other content, such as webinars and publicity, is also necessary. Content should be multimedia. Existing content can be repurposed and reused elsewhere or in another format.

account. While earning her master’s degree in Organizational Communication & Technology from the University of Texas at Austin, Hyder wrote her thesis about Twitter.

She had a few thousand users on her personal account and, “I was fascinated by my research,” she says. “I thought it would be a game changer and affect how we communicate. It was still so new.”

It turned out to be a “game changer” not only for businesses that learned to use it effectively, but for Hyder. Her business started as a social media consulting agency, then grew into a digital media agency. It now provides a full range of marketing communications services.

That her degree blends technology and communication is no small thing, as technology now plays an essential role in effective communication. That wasn’t true before the Internet and social media evolved.

“Communication and technology were seen as two distinct areas,” she says. “There’s so much crossover now, technology has become an inherent part of communication. It’s a marriage.”

The marriage is a happy one, as technology makes a tremendous amount of data available and, Hyder says, “data drives good creative decisions.” Businesses know more about their customers and their needs, and can address them more effectively than ever before.

In addition, social media has changed the way businesses communicate about their products and services. Traditional marketing was about “putting out a message about a business or product that was controlled strictly by the business itself,” Hyder writes in the introduction to her book. However, “The traditional marketing rules cannot be applied to social media because social media is not a marketer’s platform. It belongs to consumers.”

Because consumers can share negative comments about any business, many business owners fear social media. But not participating is “like putting a conference call on mute,” she says. “It’s already happening; they’ll do it without you. If you participate, you can direct the confrontation. The way a business responds can help a business more than a negative reaction can hurt the business.”

Doing nothing is not an option, according to Hyder, because consumers of a company’s products or services can still leave comments or reviews online. Companies that “play to it, rather than against it” may even be able to turn negative comments into positives by addressing issues that come up online.

Hyder has begun writing a second book, which will take a broader look at marketing in the digital age, including how to keep up with all of the options that are available.

To “get all of the juice out of the orange,” she says, businesses need to coordinate their marketing efforts.

“The future is not one platform or another,” she says. “It’s much more integrated. There will always be other platforms, and they will all be coordinated and connected. The line between online and offline will blur.”

The Robert A. Foisie School of Business is rooted in WPI’s strengths in technology, engineering, and science, and is known for developing innovative and entrepreneurial leaders for a global technological world. The part-time MBA program at the Foisie School of Business has been ranked number one in the northeast by *BusinessWeek* since 2007. The undergraduate programs for entrepreneurship and information systems were ranked number one in the country, and the operations management program was ranked number four by *BusinessWeek* in 2013.