

12 MOST IMPORTANT WAYS TO GET ROR (#RONR)

guide

**RETURN ON
RELATIONSHIP**
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12 Most Important Ways to Build Relationships and Get ROR (#RonR)

If you want to continue to reach your market in this social media age, the marketing focus needs to be on building relationships, and metrics need to expand beyond ROI (Return on Investment) to include ROR: Return on Relationship (hashtag #RonR)... simply put the value that is accrued by a person or brand due to nurturing a relationship. ROI is simple \$'s and cents. ROR is the value (both perceived and real) that will accrue over time through connection, trust, loyalty, recommendations and sharing.

So how do you build and strengthen relationships with your audience (as a whole, and as individuals) to increase your ROR? Here are 12 ways to do so:

1. Listen

If you want to be heard above the growing social media "noise," you need to first listen to your consumers so when you do speak, you get it right. What are they saying, what are they feeling, what are their pain points, what solutions do they need?

2. Don't just Listen, but Hear

Thanks to social media, brands can gather vast amounts of valuable information about consumer preferences... but to build relationships you need to go well beyond data gathering and actually *hear, and react to what your consumers are sharing*. **True listening requires a willingness to place consumers' opinions above the brand's own (usually biased) view of itself, and to even make product/service changes based on that feedback.**

3. Know the People in Your Audience

Short and simple: if you are only focused on the money, you risk completely overlooking the people. Don't make that mistake! If you don't know who *your* people are, you might as well toss your marketing money down the drain.

4. Make it be about THEM

First think about and first address what matters most to **your audience**. Give them a platform to show you what they need, want, are interested in, and expect. Whatever matters most to *them* should become what matters most to *you*!

5. Be consumer oriented (whether that be retail consumers, b to b prospects, or those who consume your personal brand)

We marketers like to think that social media is primarily a set of tools for *our* marketing purposes, but in reality, social media is also a strong set of tools *our consumers* use to share and influence opinion about our brand. Our consumers now have "the channel of *me*." Consumers' opinions now create the "reality" of the brand – if enough consumers say negative things about your brand, your brand loses its credibility, and (thankfully) vice versa.

6. Ask "How can I serve you?"

Taking the "ME" mentality one step further, when we are *advertising* instead of *building relationships*, we are focused on what our consumers can give us instead of how we can best serve them.

7. Aim for Ongoing Engagement

Your consumers will recognize in a heartbeat if you are simply trying to *get* something from them - and they will not stick around. It's not that you aren't allowed to want anything from your consumers, it's that there must be a *give* to go along with every *take*. If you truly want to make an impact, aim to always put more energy and

attention in your “give” column than in your “take” column. It *will* pay off.

Traditional advertising is going for instant impact and hoping and praying you make an impression: splashy billboards, off-the-wall Super Bowl television ads, eye-catching graphics, even shock factor (images of gore, poverty, nudity, animal cruelty, etc.). While those methods are effective in catching a consumer’s attention, they fall short of *retaining* that attention. Building relationships is about starting meaningful dialogue and taking the time to thoughtfully and genuinely engage in ongoing conversation. Relationships focus on getting to know your consumer and giving them reasons to stay engaged – not just getting them to react. This needs to be all the time... not simply campaign or initiative based. That is the biggest mistake being made today by marketers and brands... with consumers, and especially with influencers.

Brands tend to fall short on this one because real engagement takes time, attention, and overall effort, but I can assure you that working in a vacuum is one of the biggest mistakes a brand can make! A one-time Tweet, a quick Facebook posting, or an email here and there is an announcement, not engagement. Engagement requires a brand to reach out to consumers by asking questions, offering useful content and solutions to relevant consumer issues, providing useful community forums and feedback venues, etc.

8. Authenticity will set your brand apart from the rest in today’s highly competitive market

True authenticity in marketing requires brands to change their public filters. It used to be that a whitewashed image was the way to get consumers’ notice and buy-in (literally)...but now, if brands filter out any and all slight imperfections, consumers quickly get wary. If the only product/service reviews you allow the public to hear are about how amazing your product/service is, you quickly lose authenticity points.

9. “LESS fabrication, MORE facilitation”

In other words, don’t waste resources whitewashing your brand. Put your resources instead into giving Advocates the tools to tell **their** truth about your brand...because that is what consumers trust and what they trust, they will buy. “LESS fabrication, MORE facilitation” = a boost to your ROR.

10. In today's market, REAL trumps PERFECT because real is what creates TRUST

Give consumers ongoing chances to interact with you and your brand, so they can see that you always tell the truth. Don't waste your valuable marketing time making things up because your consumers *will* sense that you are not telling the truth. Do your products and services have all perfect recommendations, as your brand claims? Maybe - but unlikely. 100% on-time delivery? Maybe - but unlikely.

Of course you don't need to announce your errors or be proud of performance inconsistencies, but if consumers bring them up publicly, consider NOT filtering those conversations out of the media. Speak directly to any issues consumers have with your brand, and let your problem-solving conversations be public. These authentic conversations are the ones that build ongoing relationships - the ones that create Brand Advocates.

11. Integrate Customer Service with your social presence

Use social media for instant and ongoing engagement with your customers. Pay attention to them and address their needs early, often and publicly. Make sure your social team and customer service team are on the same page and communicate regularly and easily.

12. Focus on the relationship before the sale

When a brand adopts the marketing philosophy that it is all about relationships, they automatically begin paying more attention to the consumer needs and preferences to learn who the consumers really are. Consumers who feel valued by a brand will in turn assign value to the brand by buying the product/service and passing recommendations on to their networks. The sale then becomes a natural part of the ROR instead of a "hard sell" effort.

Relationships are like muscle tissue... the more they are engaged, the stronger and more valuable they become.