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Article 5: Selling with WhatsApp

Importance of having an online sales presence

An online presence and service offering is crucial for a business as they have a huge influence on how customers view your business, the accessibility of your business, engaging with your business and how your business provides services, access and markets itself to its customer base. This is important as your business is operating in an increasingly competitive and ever-expanding global market. Businesses need to ensure that they are competitive and relevant in the current market to ensure success and survival.

Why WhatsApp?

WhatsApp has a global user base of more than 1.3 billion people, communicating daily with friends and family, using it for business chats as well as entertainment. Utilizing channels that would allow your business to access an already highly engaged user base would enable your business to increase and enhance its access to markets.

There are multiple business apps available on the market that allows businesses to have a presence on WhatsApp. These apps have been designed specifically to allow businesses to custom design their own WhatsApp presence and communicate more effectively and efficiently with their customer base.

The mobile network operators in South Africa also offer specific data bundles for WhatsApp and/or other social media services which makes this a cost-effective way to utilise mobile data.

WhatsApp is commonly used on cellphones and 86% of SMMEs use their cellphones "all the time" (SME survey, 2019). WhatsApp can also conveniently be used on a desktop or laptop using the WhatsApp Web facility.

Deciding which application to use

Business users need to decide which application would work best for their business and meets the business' requirements. WhatsApp has their own business app which is free for business to use and comes well supported by the WhatsApp system developers. There are other apps that have integrated with WhatsApp that may have improved on services offered by WhatsApp, or may not be as good as the WhatsApp Business application. This would purely be a business decision. However, as a start you will be required to download and setup a WhatsApp Business account. This account will always account for, and support any future updates that third party applications may not cover.

If you do decide to use a 3rd party application be sure to check the following:

- How well supported the application is: take into consideration version updates to WhatsApp, Android and iOS operating systems.
- The data security.
- The reviews and how well comments are responded to.

Note: External applications will also require that a WhatsApp Business account is created.



Steps to setting up your business on WhatsApp

- Download the WhatsApp Business application from the Google Play Store (Android) or Apple iStore (iPhone) at no cost. Bear in mind that standard data costs will apply when downloading and utilizing the application. You can run WhatsApp and WhatsApp Business on the same phone but will need to use a different number for WhatsApp Business.
- You then need to configure your account by creating a business profile and include your business name, business description, email address, website link and any social media accounts (Facebook/LinkedIn/Instagram) links. Ensure you select a backup frequency for your messages and images etc.
- You have the option to create a catalog of your products, including images, descriptions and prices.
- Creating automated messages like greetings for new customers, 'not available' messages when you are not able to respond or quick reply messages will keep your customers informed and save you time.
- You can organize your contacts and chats by creating labels, using colours and names to help you manage your interactions more effectively.

Marketing your business and driving customers to WhatsApp

WhatsApp Business was designed as a tool for SMMEs, like yourself, to showcase products, services and manage engagement with customers, and not for marketing outside your existing contacts and network. It provides for easy communication and customer management tool to customers that are already engaging on the platform on a daily basis. The strength of the platform is its ability to engage with your customer base on a personal level that provides the added value and personalized service that customers are looking for.

In addition to your existing networks, you would need to drive customers to your WhatsApp business account through other platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Google My Business or Instagram etc. Ensure that you include your WhatsApp business account number on all your marketing collateral (business cards, flyers) and social media pages.

In combination with the messages sent to promote your product or service, the status function can also be used to post an update such as new product details or a special offer running. You can also send videos highlighting key features of your product or service and how customers can purchase them.

References

<https://www.callbell.eu/en/sell-on-whatsapp/>