

Dear Client,

Welcome to our monthly newswire. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and find it useful.

Best wishes

John Harrison

SAMSUNG GALAXY ALPHA

The Samsung Galaxy Alpha is Samsung's first phone with a metal frame, and it's the most aesthetically pleasing smartphone that the company has produced. Unfortunately, it is priced at a premium and doesn't have the same set of features as the Galaxy S5 (available for the same price) so it is something of a compromise. Nevertheless, the Alpha is a very capable alternative to Apple's iPhone 6.

The Alpha has a 4.7-inch 720p Super AMOLED screen. For a handset of its size, this gives fantastic image quality that is similar to the Sony Xperia Z3 Compact, which is one-tenth of an inch smaller. The iPhone 6 is slightly better at 1,334 x 750 (326 pixels per inch), but this difference isn't very noticeable.

There is a 12-megapixel camera on the back of the phone, with the camera's LED flash and a heart rate monitor positioned to the camera's left in a vertical arrangement. Underneath the back cover, you'll find a removable 1,860mAh battery and nano-SIM slot. Additionally, the finger scanner from the Samsung Galaxy S5 has made its way into the Alpha, allowing you to use your finger or thumbprint to unlock your phone. You can also use the scanner to input registered website passwords (once you've entered the initial details).

Another of the special features to have made its way into the Galaxy Alpha is a heart rate monitor. Combined with the S Health app, it lets you monitor your heart over a period of time. S Health has other functions besides measuring your heart rate, however. For example, you can track your calorie intake, or start an exercise routine based on running, walking or cycling. Additionally, the app can make use of the phone's GPS and music-playing systems, and can track your distance and calories burned.

A useful feature for business users is the Ultra Power Saving Mode. When the battery is running low, this feature allows it to run for longer so you won't miss that important call or message. Overall, the Samsung Galaxy Alpha is a viable alternative to the iPhone 6 and Sony Xperia Z3. These 3 handsets look to be the best business smartphones on the market at present.

ONLINE MARKETING METRICS

Businesses often wonder if their online marketing is successful. Here are a few metrics which may help your business measure online marketing success.

New Business and Increased Revenue

This is the ultimate sign of a successful marketing campaign. While driving traffic to your site, gaining relevant social media followers and building your base of inbound leads are all steps in the right direction, the main goal is to grow your firm. When you see an increase in new business and revenue from leads which originated online, it's a safe bet that your online marketing is successful. However, if you aren't gaining new business opportunities as a result of your marketing efforts, it might be time to re-evaluate. For instance, if you notice an increase in the amount of traffic to your website, but not a higher number of inbound leads, it might be time for a website redesign. Why? Bounced traffic is an indicator that your homepage lacks clarity and/or engaging conversions. Or, if your content is frequently being read and downloaded, but your prospects aren't taking the next step, you might want to re-evaluate your calls-to-action.

Followers and Shares

Before beginning a new marketing campaign, take a moment to track your existing number of followers across each of the social media platforms currently employed. With this knowledge, you will be able to assess the degree to which your latest marketing efforts have increased the firm's visibility. It is also helpful to know the average number of shares your content generates, as this will tell you which types of content generate the most interest.

Website Traffic

A primary goal of online marketing is to drive traffic to your website. It is therefore essential to know what your traffic numbers are prior to any campaign. If your website begins to see more traffic after the initiation of a campaign, this is a good indicator that your marketing efforts are working. Monitor the sources of your inbound traffic to identify the sites or pieces of content that are bringing in the most traffic, and use this information to plan future campaigns.

Inbound Leads

The actions your prospects take in reaction to your marketing efforts are one of the best ways to measure your success. When more people reach out to your firm for consultations or fill out contact forms, it's a sign of a successful campaign. If your list of prospects and influencers is growing, your marketing is doing its job. All of your online activity—from the content you produce, to your social media interactions—should work towards driving more prospects and influencers to reach out to your firm and show interest in your services. Your prospects might show interest by simply sharing their contact information or signing up for a webinar, or they might ask for an appointment to see one of your sales people.

MANAGING DIFFICULT EMPLOYEES

Effectively managing difficult employees can be a challenging prospect. Whether it is the employee who is consistently late, who complains incessantly or who seems to constantly upset their co-workers, every company must deal with difficult employees.

These situations drain management's time and energy, impact on the morale of co-workers and interfere with overall workplace productivity. The key to effectively addressing such situations begins with an understanding of the issues and a clear identification of the actual source of the problem.

Even the best employee can have an off-day (or week, or month). Before deciding if an employee is difficult, managers must first step back and neutrally assess the situation. The first question to ask is whether the behaviour is critical enough to implement a formal HR process. Another important concept to consider is that 'different' does not equal 'difficult'. There will always be employees that a manager does not gel with, understand or even like. However, this is not enough to deem an employee difficult. To constitute a "difficult employee", behaviour must exceed acceptable standards, policies and procedures or interfere with productivity.

Define the Problem

When addressing the problems created by difficult employees, the focus should always be on job performance. It is management's duty to clearly explain why the issue is a problem, and how the problem is adversely impacting the company. At this stage it may be useful to refer to the employee's job description and the company handbook.

Clarify Roles

It is important that both the manager and employee are absolutely clear on individual roles. The manager's role is to ensure business success by leading, coaching and supporting employees. The employee's role is to meet predefined performance and behaviour standards, and function as a cooperative team member. A key concept that employees must grasp is that it is not only the level of their performance that is important, but also how their performance affects the functioning of their team, department and the company overall.

Identify Expectations

This is where the manager should clarify four things – the employee's performance, responsibilities, impact of their behaviour and the consequences if it doesn't change. A follow up and ongoing review should be scheduled and regular updates between the manager and the employee will help to move things forward and get the employee back on track.

EXECUTING STRATEGY

Failing to plan, plan to fail. We all know this. However, many businesses who create a strategy or business plan fail to execute it to any significant degree. This is because it requires change, commitment, innovation, leadership and numerous other things to align your business in a way that facilitates the execution of your plan.

These 5 steps will help you to successfully execute your business strategy:

Clarify your vision

Define what the business will look like if your strategy is executed successfully. Develop a summary of that vision and communicate it to all stakeholders. Communication must also be consistent - keep the vision in front of your team and make it a part of their daily lives. People cannot follow you successfully if they don't know where you want to go.

Set goals

As part of your planning process, you should develop 4 or 5 critical goal categories. Each of these categories should be broken down and given specific goals with due dates, metrics to show progress and the names of the people that are accountable for their completion.

Align systems and people

This is the step where most businesses encounter trouble with strategy execution, as they do not take the critical step of aligning people and processes to attain their vision. They just assume that the firm will "figure it out". All systems, people, incentives and business processes must be aligned with the new strategy. People must understand what they need to do and how their role affects successful execution of the strategy. They must get help in establishing priorities on what to do, as well as what not to do, to ensure that the overall strategy doesn't get lost in the day-to-day.

Review

The business should hold annual reviews of their current strategy and how outside forces have impacted on it. The aim of the review should be to determine whether the strategy is still valid, whether the firm is making adequate progress and what customers think. Strategy execution doesn't just happen; it must be driven with the same commitment that built the business in the first place.

Please contact a member of our team if you would like to discuss any of the issues raised.