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# Leverage The Power of Social To Build Business & Community

PAST EVENT: KEEPING IT REAL - LEVERAGING THE POWER OF SOCIAL TO BUILD BUSINESS AND LOCAL COMMUNITY

When COVID-19 forced Otehlia Cassidy to stop giving tours, she still had her greatest single business asset: relationships. As the founder and owner of Madison Eats Food Tours and Madison trEats, she's changed her business operations because of the pandemic. But one thing hasn't changed. She's still engaging foodies via her social media channels.

At July's virtual SMBMad, Otehlia explained how her Instagram efforts helped build her business and strengthen connections. Although she's only offering small private group events right now, Otehlia still engages with her base through Instagram and Facebook Live.

Her enthusiasm for doing stories of her everyday life – in everywhere from her kitchen to her couch – foster a connection with followers.

“Stories give you the opportunity to show who you are and who is behind your brand,” she said.

During the presentation, Otehlia shared her tips and tricks and then encouraged attendees to create their own brief Instagram story.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

Otehlia encouraged attendees to try creating Instagram stories or taking their current efforts to a new level. She enjoyed sharing her knowledge with the following tips:

- Understand the power of storytelling and how it builds business
- How to make stories
- Build your confidence
- Find your voice
- Amplify others' voices

When creating an Instagram story, don't worry about producing a perfect product, she said. "People want to see who's behind the brand," she said. "Show who you are."

When Otehlia plans stories, she focuses on food, fun and community, often showing personal photos because her fans want to see her.

## **Pivoting after COVID**

Before the pandemic, Otehlia could take Instagram followers on behind-the-scenes tours and show off new places she was discovering.

After COVID hit, "business came to a grinding halt," she said. Like other businesses, she had to find a way to continue to connect with her followers.

Now, Otehlia shares business information for local restaurants, such as their hours or takeout availability. Now her Instagram stories—often shot from her home—have covered topics including how to make

cocktails, cook and even curl hair.

Other ways to engage with others on Instagram include:

- Takeovers
- Go Live with someone
- Share posts to your story
- Go to other people's feed/stories and post, share, like and comment

## **Supporting Black Lives Matter**

The Black Lives Matter movement pushed Otehlia to take another look at her business to see what she was doing. She asked herself, "Am I doing enough to support Black businesses and the community? The answer was no."

As a result, she is now encouraging Black-owned businesses to use her platform to tell their stories. In addition, she is committed to consistently supporting Black-owned businesses by including their products in the trEats bags and patronizing these businesses on tours. She also looks for other ways to support minority-owned businesses.

## **Create an Instagram Story**

Otehlia put attendees in the spotlight during her presentation. She took them through the step-by-step process for creating an Instagram story. When done, she asked participants to post their story @madisoneats #smbmad. The winner will receive a collaboration bag from Christine's Kitchens, Madison.

“Be yourself,” Otehlia urged. Vary your content and style to keep stories interesting.

“I’m the representative of my brand and know what I want to convey and share with people,” she said. If business owners don’t want to participate in social media, Otehlia suggests finding someone in your organization who would enjoy it. Just make sure they’ll correctly represent your business and what you do.

## **Check Engagement**

As a business owner, it’s important to check your social media metrics and engagement levels. Who watched your story and when?

Consider using different social media channels to reach different audiences. Otehlia posts on both Facebook Live and Instagram. She reaches different age groups and achieves separate goals with each platform.

The metrics reveal the differences:

### **Facebook (@MadisonEatsTours)**

- 3,100 followers
- More clicks to purchase and direct purchasing
- Ads can be effective
- Facebook Live gets good engagement

### **Instagram (@madisoneats)**

- 5,550 followers

- No ads
- More networking, not as many direct purchases

## Measure of Success

Through her Instagram stories and Facebook Live, Otehlia connects with her followers.

“When a follower engages with me, shares ideas or supports one of the places I suggest, that’s success,” she said.

## SMB Board Membership Changes

At the July session, Josh Klemons, Social Media Breakfast Madison board president, announced two new board members’ appointments: Hywania Thompson and Lynn Welch. He also bid farewell to Margie Romani, who is leaving the board after five years of fantastic service.

## Nonprofit Spotlight

SMB recognized the Badger Prairie Needs Network. It’s dedicated to fighting poverty and ending hunger locally. The network operates a food pantry that serves:

- Households in the 53593 zip code
- Fitchburg and Madison households in the Verona Area School District

- Households in the attendance area of the MMSD's Cesar Chavez Elementary School

Check out the website for additional services.

## Don't Miss SMBMad in August!



The next virtual SMB program will be

*Why You Need a Marketing Funnel, Not a Website* by Get Found Madison digital agency owner Eagan Heath. Join us for the August 19 free program via Facebook Live at 8 a.m. It's an official Forward Fest event.

*Leslie Blaize* wrote this post *on behalf of Winbound, a content marketing firm specializing in manufacturing and industrial clients.* *Winbound provides an all-in-one content marketing package specifically designed for small marketing departments.*

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