

Socially Inclined

McGuckin Hardware Captivates the Community on Social Media



McGuckin Hardware added an event.
December 29, 2017 at 5:55 p.m.

It's Tent Sale Time!

Stop in Thursday through Sunday, May 10 through 13 for our annual Spring Tent Sale! Save up to 70% off an array of items in the tent representing our many departments and save 10% off the ENTIRE STORE*!

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McGUCKIN HARDWARE

McGuckin Hardware's slogan is "the everything store," and for the Boulder, Colorado-area customers it serves, that certainly rings true. Since opening in 1955, the store has grown to offer 18 departments inside the 60,000-square-foot facility with nearly 200,000 separate SKUs. Part of McGuckin's staying power and its growth in recent years has been because of the way the company has developed its social media presence.

The company is present on several social media platforms, and most of its followers can be found on the big three: Facebook, which has about 20,000 followers; Twitter, which has nearly 3,300 followers; and Instagram, which has just over 1,500 followers. See Page 86 for more about how McGuckin Hardware utilizes each platform.

Whether it's getting the community excited for in-store promotions and events or letting customers know what's

happening in Boulder, McGuckin is a go-to source for information for many residents of the mountain town.

The Appeal of 'Shoppertainment'

McGuckin Hardware marketing and communications specialist Steve Wilke says social media is a vital marketing tool for local businesses because it adds dimension and allows customers to stay connected.

"Social media offers another great portal for your customers to keep in contact with you, and it makes you more relevant," he says. "Creating new content helps you stay fresh, and maintaining those avenues of communication keeps customers coming back."

Social media is also a powerful advertising tool for in-store events McGuckin Hardware hosts, Wilke says. Aside from shopping, customers make their way into the



The **McGuckin Hardware** Holiday Shop attracts customers of all ages. The company hires musicians to play holiday music in the aisles, and it advertises the event on social media so customers can make time to check out the displays and enjoy holiday cheer.

store for events like Seed Swap Saturday, where community members can trade seeds to mix up their gardens each spring.

Along with serving customers, McGuckin also connects with community organizations in Boulder.

“We pick an organization to sponsor each month, and for one week during that month, we ask customers to round up their purchases to the next dollar, and that money goes to the organization,” Wilke says.

Groups like Meals on Wheels and the Humane Society of Boulder Valley are two charities the business has recently supported.

The company lists all upcoming events on its Facebook page—whether it’s customer-focused or a fundraiser—so customers can plan ahead to participate.

In addition to philanthropy, social media keeps McGuckin customers informed about sales and available products. Last summer, the company was able to capitalize on an in-demand item. The August 2017 solar eclipse reached 93 percent totality in the Boulder region.

Social media helps McGuckin Hardware deliver what Wilke calls “shoppertainment.”

Prior to the event, employees noticed many Facebook followers were on the hunt for special eclipse glasses to view it safely. The business ordered about 34,000 pairs of glasses, advertised them directly on social media, and soon sold out, with lines of people out the door, Wilke says.

Social media also does the heavy lifting to spread the word about McGuckin events. Wilke says the company’s Facebook page is an integral element to advertising the annual Holiday Shop and biannual tent sale. Social media helps McGuckin Hardware deliver what Wilke calls “shoppertainment,” or giving customers a memorable experience within the store.

“Every year in September, we set up a 5,000-square-foot holiday aisle,” Wilke says. “The Holiday Shop has everything from international ornaments to nutcrackers from the Black Forest in Germany. We bring in a violinist, harpist and cellist who park right in the middle of the store to play Christmas carols and rock ‘n’ roll covers for shoppers.”

The tent sale has been held twice a year for nearly 40 years, once in the spring and once in the fall. At the event, McGuckin sells special items that buyers collect throughout the year, but it’s also become a prominent community event.

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How McGuckin Spends Its Time Online

The Boulder, Colorado-based hardware store has grown its online presence across a half-dozen platforms over the last several years. Each space offers the company a different opportunity to connect with community members and customers.

"A lot of what we post is spur of the moment," says McGuckin Hardware marketing and communications specialist Steve Wilke. "We are kind of the community center. There's always something going on in Boulder, so there's never a shortage of things to post about."

While it's important to stay tuned in to your community, having a plan during slow news weeks is also crucial for a solid social media strategy. To get started on your plan, visit TheRedT.com/social-media-toolkit.

Facebook

Facebook is McGuckin's largest social media base, with more than 20,000 likes. The company uses Facebook to share store events, promotions and generally stay connected with the Boulder community.

"Facebook has our biggest reach and is our most powerful tool," Wilke says. "We give our followers content that's relevant to the community. If our local newspaper posts an article, we'll share it and offer an angle of how we can help."

Instagram

Facebook owns Instagram, so linking the two platforms takes just a few clicks. With the platforms linked, it's easy to cross-post content, which means posting the same content on both platforms at the same time. Because Instagram is used to share photos and videos, McGuckin cross-posts visual content on both platforms.

"Instagram and Facebook are our most robust platforms, when it comes to content. We try to mirror them, but the visual content is mostly geared toward Instagram," Wilke says.

Twitter

Wilke says Twitter functions a little differently than other platforms because it's more in the moment. McGuckin uses Twitter to connect with community members,

alert followers to changes in store hours and to get the word out about natural disasters and emergencies.

"We're known as Boulder's 'second responders,'" Wilke says. "In 2013, we had a 1,000-year-flood, and we provided an update feed of what was going on. The first responders and emergency personnel rescued people out of their homes, and the community basically came to us next. We were there to help them get back into their homes."

Nextdoor

This website connects people to their neighbors, and residents can request service people or post about community events, missing animals or other neighborhood occurrences. McGuckin uses the website to find out what's going on in its neighborhood and stay tuned into people's needs.

"We use Nextdoor as a window into the neighborhood and to see what people are talking about," Wilke says. "The information we get there may inform what we run in an ad that week."

reddit

Boulder has a dedicated space on the online forum website reddit, and Wilke says the conversations that happen in there offer a similar glimpse into the community that Nextdoor offers.

"We look for our name in the posts, and it gives us a little more of a pulse on the neighborhood," he says.

Pinterest

The project-sharing website has a home for McGuckin and its customers, too. The company uses the platform to share project ideas and get inspiration. McGuckin's boards are organized by hobbies, projects and locations, including fairy gardens, backyard chickens and Boulder, Colorado.

"We use Pinterest for project inspiration, and sometimes we put our own twists on existing projects," Wilke says. "We also use our own Pinterest page to post unique designs of our own, projects that are thought up by the marketing department or the diverse brain trust that is our staff on the salesfloor."

“Make sure you’re creating original content on a weekly basis to make people want to follow your social media channels. You’ll see traffic grow, and soon your community will see your page as a dependable resource.”

—Steve Wilke, McGuckin Hardware

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“Our tent sale—especially the spring one—is the landmark sale,” Wilke says. “The sales run Thursday through Sunday, and we get a permit from the shopping center next door to put up a huge tent in the parking lot.”

In addition to helping the company advertise events, social media has also helped McGuckin Hardware communicate store updates, such as when the store was remodeled last year. Departments swapped locations, impulse items moved close to registers and LED lighting was updated throughout the store. Thanks to the hardworking staff, patient customers and regular social media updates about the progress, the store never closed during the remodel.

Wilke knows that not every hardware store is able to have a dedicated marketing team to oversee its website and social media, but he recommends a few simple things every home improvement business can do to boost its online presence.

“Social media is a very powerful tool that doesn’t require a lot of money,” he says. “Listen to your customers and take note of what they’re searching for. Make sure you’re creating original content on a weekly basis to make people want to follow your social media channels. You’ll see traffic grow, and soon your community will see your page as a dependable resource.”

What’s Next?

Wilke says the company plans to experiment with other platforms and digital capabilities that social media offers this year.

“Over the last five years or so, people have started asking, ‘What’s McGuckin going to come up with next on social media?’ Right now, we use Facebook Live to show customers what they’re missing during in-store events

and to capitalize on the idea of shoppertainment. At Christmastime last year, we rounded up all of our employees and they sang Christmas carols on Facebook Live,” he says.

Wilke says video- and photo-based content is crucial for success, and it can also help bring in younger customers.

“Our goal is to find new and creative ways to appeal to the younger demographic,” he says. “That’s something we’re always tinkering with. We’re going to work with Snapchat this year, since it’s geared toward a younger crowd.”

The company is also looking to grow its email list by focusing on community-related content in its messaging, although Wilke says he is happy with the performance of the current e-newsletter, which has an open rate of about 25 percent.

“We send a monthly e-newsletter to about 41,000 recipients,” he says. “We want to expand our reach, and we try to do that by not selling something every time. We make sure to fill our newsletters with information about what’s going on in the community, what we’re doing and how it’s all related.”

Wilke says everything about being successful in digital spaces boils down to content.

“Making yourself as relevant to your local community as possible will help your customers recognize your value,” he says. “They need to know they’re more apt to get service and get someone who cares about their project.”

While Wilke says “content is king,” he also says coming up with fresh content shouldn’t be a stressor.

“Content comes from your people: your employees and your customers. Open your eyes and ears to your store and your community, and the content is often right there, hidden in plain sight.” ➔

Hardware Retailing staffers Melanie Moul and Todd Taber contributed to this article.



Manager Jason Hight presents a check to the Humane Society of Boulder Valley.