Managing Social Media During a Consumer Product Recall
Thanks to the advent of social media, companies and consumers now have a direct line to each other to exchange information and voice opinions, whether positive or negative. While social media can be a great tool to manage a company’s reputation and directly communicate with customers, it can also be a disaster waiting to happen when a recall notice is posted.

But that doesn’t have to be the case; companies are now using the power of social media to work in their favor during the recall process. Social media is a great tool to help reinforce regulatory compliance procedures during a recall, notify affected parties, control the conversation around the product and even boost public perception of a brand.
Recalls and Social Media

Bad news travels fast on social media. Recalls are no exception to this rule. Leveraging all appropriate social media channels, like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, or other online forums, to reach and inform customers of a recall is crucial within the first 24 hours. By proactively reaching out to affected consumers, notifying them of a recall and guiding them through the recall process, organizations facing a recall can maintain their long-term brand reputation and retain customer loyalty.

The tone of a company’s recall messaging should be casual, but serious, on social media. Interactions with customers should always point towards a pre-established recall page, blog, or website with the information they need to know laid out in a clear, concise manner.

How Social Media Can Improve Brand Perception

A planned, targeted social media campaign during a recall provides an opportunity for a company to prove its dedication to consumer safety and to stay in compliance with the law. The latter point is particularly salient because the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act holds companies liable for the effectiveness of a recall. If the Consumer Product Safety Commission isn’t convinced a company did its part during a recall, they can place massive fines on the company or take it to court.

More importantly, social media offers companies a great medium to engage and notify affected customers in a targeted manner, while letting them know the company has their well being in mind. It also enables companies to defend their brand from any unfounded fears consumers may have as a consequence of the recall. Taking such an active role in the recall process can help companies guide the conversation surrounding a recall, and give companies the opportunity to respond to any falsehoods about its product, the safety of its product, or to any consumer-created remedies that may cause more problems.
Recall Notification

The most important step in initiating a recall over social media is having an established plan before a company needs it. Typically, this means designating a social media rapid response team, who are tasked with developing all messaging related to the recall and conducting outreach to the appropriate outlets. This helps to keep the recall messaging clear and to keep other parts of the company focused on the recall process. Testing a response plan via a mock recall can also help companies detect weak spots before they become a pain during an actual recall.

When a recall looks likely, organizations should reach out to the proper regulatory agency, to establish the scope of the recall and issue a unified press release. This is also the time to establish a recall website, notify partners and vendors, start monitoring consumer conversation on social media, and to start the proactive recall messaging needed to mitigate damage to a brand’s reputation.

Managing a recall can be stressful regardless of the size of the organization. But, through planning and real-time engagement over social media, brands can build long-term trust with its consumers and head-off any regulatory actions, inquiries, and litigation.
Common Missteps to Avoid

Not preemptively answering customer questions

Information, and misinformation, spreads quickly over social media. Without guidance, customers tend to exaggerate a recall situation, which can further exacerbate the situation and propagate the spread of misinformation. Companies need to make sure they’re doing everything they can to take control of the situation by preemptively addressing customer questions and concerns as soon as they arise on social media.

Not linking to a recall page

According to the CPSC, all consumer product recalls are required to have a recall page in prominent view. Part of being prominent, however, is promoting it. Almost every interaction over social media needs to contain a link back to the company-established recall page, so that consumers have access to all the information they need to know during a recall.

Not monitoring conversations on social media

It’s easy for a company to keep an eye on public sentiment on social media by using tracking tools to monitor specific keywords or hashtags related to the recall. Doing this enables the company to track the pulse of the recall and directly respond to any severe incidents.

Not contributing to the conversation

A company shouldn’t assume its job is done simply because it posted a recall notice on a few social networks. When a company directly engages its customers online and elsewhere, it proves its concern for their customers’ safety.