



How to Find New Leads Through Social Media

This transcript was lightly edited for clarity.

Chris: Okay. Today's episode is going to be something special that we've never done before. I have the pleasure of having a guest host, Kat Kozyrytska on the podcast today. I'll introduce her along with Hannes Amon who's returning for his second visit to Life Science Marketing Radio in a moment, but first, let me tell you how this came about. Hannes recently posted something on LinkedIn about social media to which I replied "Is it time for another podcast?" because he's been on before and Kat who I met last year at the ACPLS Annual Meeting saw that and she said, "Yeah. I want to know more about that." In the spirit of letting your audience tell you what they want to know, I thought, "Why not let Kat ask the questions?" Here we are.

Let me introduce Kat. She is the Academic Marketing Manager for North America at Sartorius. Prior to that, she was the Director of Marketing and Communications at the Hofstra Group. She has a Masters degree in neuroscience from the Stanford University School of Medicine. Kat, welcome.

Kat: Thank you.

Chris: Johannes Amon, also known as Hannes, has been a guest on LSMR previously while he was working at Zeiss and in that interview, he described for us the process of developing an app for Life Science Marketing. Johannes specializes in online communications in marketing. He's currently on a sabbatical looking for new exciting opportunities. Today, Kat and Hannes are going to

be talking about promoting your content through multiple channels specifically through social media. Hannes, welcome to the podcast.

Johannes: Thanks for having me and I'm really excited to be here again.

Chris: All right. All right. Kat, thank you for being willing to participate and sit in the host chair this week.

Kat: Thank you, Chris and thank you for making it such a comfortable chair. I love the podcast and it's just so great that you gave me the opportunity to ask my questions in real time today. Thank you.

Chris: All right. Take it away. I'm going to let you run the show.

Kat: Hannes, it's so nice to meet you. As per your post, my very first question is you have built such a strong social media program at Zeiss. When you set out to do that, what were your goals?

Johannes: In the beginning when we first talked about this, and you also have to remember that back in 2011, these social media networks were not only still kind of new to the world, but particularly to most of the life science companies, and the initial thought was... My supervisor at Zeiss was an absolutely awesome guy. I have to admit right now even if I won't call his name. Before he took over the marketing at the headquarter, he was the sales marketing guy in the U.S., and what he felt back then was that the company was not as ... You would say "approachable" as it should have been, but the initial main goal really was to become a more approachable company to really improve in ... The bigger frame was really to really improve in external communication to more directly interact with the customers, to more directly learn from them, talk with them, give them support and service and of course, which then in the process also led to the very nice opportunity that over the years, you just had such great and very cost efficient... I also have to add that - that you have very good online communication channel, so you can distribute your content on a global scale and also in turn, then what we also learned was that the lead generation also works quite well over these channels. It's basically ... In short, we set out to become a more approachable company and in the end, it helped us also to fill the sales funnel in a really, really massive way.

Kat: Got it. It sounds like lead generation is such a big part of the process for everybody or basically so critical, so it's very exciting that social media that is

also fun to do and has all of these great parts about it leads to lead generation.

Since you address so many channels, I wonder how did you manage to create so much content?

Johannes: That is one of the most fundamental questions that from my experience, each and every company has and is a kind of ... I would say maybe even afraid to start establishing these channels because everybody will say, "Oh, how do we fill them? We don't have enough content and it will be an additional workload." The thing is for once, what we learned is you have to start at some point. If you then choose the channels that you really wanted to do and you think that you can maintain them, there's also no shame in starting slowly at the beginning. From my experience, each and every company generates content all the time. What your job then is if you are at the interface of product management, marketing, external communications, your main task is to be aware of the content. What is there and what are the work flows? Where is it generated? Where is it distributed? Additionally, particularly in the beginning, you also have to ... I would say create your own content, which sounds at first, "Oh my God. I have to write white papers by myself or something."

No. Absolutely not. Apart from the fact that product management will definitely hang you for this, and maybe rightfully so. The thing really is that you can, for example, really easily create great posts and great photos and image content if you go to the events, the workshops and the trade shows that your company does anyways over the year. You go there. You have your photo camera with you all the time. You have your smart phone with the Twitter account and the Instagram account. You have it with you all the time, and this really is where you get very easily a really nice photo content where you can create awareness for new products that you show on the trade shows for very, very happy customers on workshops and you train them how to use the product and you're laughing. Why are you laughing?

Kat: Well, it's just the happy customer is something that I have to think so much about.

Johannes: Okay. That was also one of my main targets. Keep the customers happy at all time. This is like the best thing that you can do. As I said, nothing worse than an angry customer. Maybe we will come to that later particularly with the

Twitter, because this is really a very special topic maybe by itself, but just as a side note, what you want are happy customers all the time.

Kat: Yeah.

Johannes: Just also let me add this. What I became also over the past two years was you become a bit of a treasure hunter. Also, if my colleagues chose other words, they called me sometimes a Truffle Pig. I hope I got that right. In German, you can say, "Trüffelschwein." Yeah. It's really like every company has to have some content that your product management, they never even realize that it would be suitable for digital distribution because they just do not have the awareness. They have their very narrow view on their product, and the additional content that they have to provide. A nice example, another ex-colleague of mine is working at a small company, a startup company here in Munich and she invited me because she heard that at the moment, I'm doing consultation for food.

I looked at what they have and what I saw was that they had a really beautiful, huge, print product catalog and when you went through this product catalog, there was so much knowledge inside. I just told them because they were also ... There were some product managers in there and they were like, "Well, if you start this with your content, we have to do so much work and additional stuff." I was like, "Guys, look at this catalog. There is so much knowledge in there. You just have to split it up, split the articles or the chapters, split them into pieces. Distribute them as PDF, distribute the stuff that is already there and in there, as graphics, infographics, images, put it on your web as a web content."

This has been really you and you try to break up this narrow tunnel view. I don't know if you have the same expression in English. Then also for example, when you have colleagues working in the marketing team that design very special campaigns for one product launch and very special content for, I don't know, newsletter nurturing campaigns. A lot of times, they just don't realize because they don't know that you can very, very broadly share those assets in basically each and every communication channel that you had established. I saw that myself. They completely forget to announce that there is a webinar happening that you not only invest a lot of money maybe, but also have the very unique chance to get great and very high quality external new leads.

A very big part of your work then is also to really get an overview of all the stuff that is happening and really tell the right people, "Guys, this is something that we also have to promote over these channels and this is also where in turn overtime, over one year, two year, you really create awareness in your organization." "Hey, guys. Okay. If you create something, if you plan a campaign, let me know. I can assist you with social media. I can assist you with online channels with what is the right content for the various channel?" Yeah. It is, of course, always and basically every job is this. In every company, it's a bit of an uphill battle, but it gets easier overtime.

Kat: Hannes, would you say that ...

Chris: I want to jump in.

Kat: Go ahead.

Chris: Sorry, Kat. I'm just going to jump in real quick and say, I love the fact that you are , first of all, repurposing and realizing what's there, but a big aspect of this is educating your own people that this is possible and that it doesn't have to be hard for them, but that takes time.

Johannes: Exactly. From my experience, usually the people you work with, sometimes even in marketing, but of course mostly in product management, some of them are not so active in social media and online. You are the expert. You are the expert yourself and you also have to educate them a bit, and this also in turn makes it easier for you and they are not so hesitant to really ask you and propose some new content to you because just as a side note, for example, as I work now for a German-based companies, the German copyright system, particularly online is a complete disaster. It's a nightmare. It's so complicated and it took me a while to even make it clear to some product managers that yes, we are allowed to upload stuff to YouTube. We are not giving away the copyright to Google when we do this. Yeah.

As I said, in particular in the beginning, it is an uphill battle, but if it helps anybody out there, it gets easier with time. If you have a bit of patience and you explain this stuff to them, it will get really, really good collaboration and the outcome always is that you ... As the initial correct was the content at some point definitely will be there. In the end, it was even that I had a bit of a luxury problem that sometimes I had so much stuff sent to me that I did not even know when to use it.

Kat: That sounds like a good problem to have.

Johannes: Oh, yes.

Kat: Elaborating a little bit on that copyright thing that you just mentioned, would you say that any of the content is premium or it should be reserved for devoted customers, only distributed through personal email? Maybe not even putting newsletters, definitely not on social media. If no, then how did you make an argument in your company for this?

Johannes: The thing is from a simple customer perspective, there was no such thing as premium content for me. I know that some companies and some marketing organizations handle the stuff like that, but personally, I really do not think that there's any value and like, "Oh, this newsletter, you get the very exclusive white paper PDF, whatnot." So what? These guys are already subscribers to your newsletter. These guys are already in your CRM, and why should they get an exclusive content that you will not openly distribute on the internet that is kind of a bit non-sense to me. What you, of course, can do and that was also sometimes the compromise that I luckily had to do quite seldom was that you do a Times exclusive, so that you send it out and after one month or maybe two or three months, you say, "Yeah. Okay." Now, we distribute it to the rest of the world. It's like there might be some sense in there that I just do not understand or the other things, for example, is we had some discussions before about how to handle the webinar recordings.

This is where we said, "Well, okay. First of all, you announce the webinar. People reaches us for the webinar. People attends the webinar when it's live. Afterwards, all the registered participants, not the participants, but all the registered users get the link to the recording." This is where we said, "Well, okay. The webinar will not be put directly on YouTube, but we will have the recording for a limited time like one or two months. We will have it gated, so that somebody ..." Of course, we announce very openly that the webinar is now available as a recording for everybody, but when they wanted to watch it for a certain amount of time, we still had gated access where also the new leads or whatever you will call them, the interested parties had to register with us, so they could actually watch the recording. Of course, the whole gated versus non-gated topic is a bit differing from this, as you said, exclusive or premium content stuff.

Kat: Okay.

Johannes: This is just the part where you say, "Well, okay. I really want to focus to the webinar," where you invest a lot of money, a lot of capacities most of the time. "I really want to focus on the lead generation." Then, when you say, "Okay. The topic or the webinar is not hot anymore after one or two months. Maybe then, this might be the point where you just take the recording, put it on YouTube and integrate a link to the product page or to a contact form and then you can still do some kind of lead generation with it."

Kat: That makes a lot of sense what you said. Thank you. I'd like to ask the question more in the tactical aspects of putting content through social media. When you repurpose the white papers or other materials that have been generated by the company for different social media channels, what would you say are the differences between different channels? I guess I'm looking both for how you would do the different content and also different formatting for the different channels?

Johannes: Actually, there is a lot of experience in there and also, a lot of ... Well, in Germany, people would say, "[German 00:19:39]." (Instinct) maybe. The thing is yes, the various channels or at least let's focus on the leading social media and networking channels, they differ a lot and it's dependent on some factors that you already mentioned. The suitable content for the respective audience that is also differing quite a lot on these channels and the kind of posting, the layout, the style of the posting that we would do. This is also while ... Just as a side note, I always try to heavily avoid those software platforms like for example, Hootsuite, where you can create your postings and put them in the same manner and the same style and the same text, blah, blah, blah, the two various channels at ones because this in my experience just does not work because it did not get the optimum efficiency out of their end and it sometimes also creates just the unsuitable postings that are not really nice to your followers and your audience.

Facebook in the end ... At the beginning, we very much focus on Facebook, and actually for professional company working also in the B2B business that most of us are in and the life science stuff that you really want to reach your professionals, I would not invest too much time, let alone, budget on the Facebook anymore. This is where you really mostly reach a kind of a general audience. The Facebook is ... The focus here really is about your brand marketing and people who were from the microscopy business. These were people that were basically interested a bit in science, popular science and most of them just wanted to look at that great, colorful and amazing images.

In that respect, for really saying, "Well, okay. I want to sell more instruments." Facebook wasn't that interesting in the end.

We just used it because it was a nice opportunity to distribute the ... For example, when you had nice technology videos or product videos, if you host them directly on Facebook even if you do not pay for sponsor content, they will still have quite a reach in a more or less, specific audience, but in the end, we really focus on Twitter and LinkedIn. This is where with Twitter, you can have ... Similar to Instagram, you can have quite a high amount of postings, so just short bits. Maybe sometimes you own the URL to a specific webpage or a blog article. Sometimes if you feel like you have the time, you can also create some nice animated GIFs from your videos, which people also very much like. For LinkedIn, I had a bit of a slower posting frequency, but it's there. It was really extremely professional. That was really announcements, basically. You do not post, I don't know, a random image or a random video on LinkedIn, but you really try to have your ... Kind of your high value content on the LinkedIn.

This is also where it might make sense to discuss if you wanted to sponsor campaigns because on LinkedIn, for the B2B business, you can really reach the desired.... You can reach the people that actually might be interested in the technology, but they are not aware of that yet and you can tap into completely new customer groups, for example, with the sponsored campaign system of LinkedIn. In the end, the Instagram that was really a fire and forget. You take any photo or any image. You have to use the bloody app in your bloody smartphone because they still do not have any web user interface. If somebody from Instagram or Facebook is listening, please finally make this happen.

You can reach a massive amount of people, but to really say, "Okay. We got leads from Instagram." You cannot add any meaningful clickable URLs in this system. You have to use a lot of hashtags and it's a bit ... I would say at the moment, it is still a bit similar to Facebook. You reach a very, very general audience. You can hope that some possible customers and possible users might follow you and be impressed by the images, but for a really clear lead generation and sales funnel workflow, Instagram is still not there.

Kat: It sounds like Twitter in your opinion is a more targeted ... It's a way to reach a more targeted audience?

Johannes: Twitter and LinkedIn basically. Yeah, because from the ... For example, the Twitter perspective, of course, you also have to see the Twitter on quite a global scale because widely, it is still highly used and very widely accepted in the English speaking communities or UK and North America mostly. For Germany, Twitter was mostly useless. The Twitter in, for example, German is not working very well and usually also, when you look at Europe, Italians or Spanish guys or French people, they will not necessarily be interested in following a channel, and we did a global channel, so basically, 99% of our postings were English and they are usually more interested in following channels which post in their own language.

Yeah. There's really ... Also, with the life sciences, we underestimated this in the beginning a bit and there's really a lot of influencers particularly in the Twitter because researchers very much like to and still like to network themselves on Twitter . That was really interesting to look at these networks and also use them for an organic growth that we always drive.

Kat: Okay. Maybe I can ask you a selfish question then. I work on a weekly Twitter post, and since I work on it, I think it's really great and I want everybody to see it and like it and share it and repost it. How would I find and use influencers and micro influencers on Twitter to help my post gets seen?

Johannes: First of all, you really have to grow your community, which means your first task when you established a Twitter channel for your company really is to get followers and there are some ways to do that. Twitter, of course, also offers you to pay to get your followers to have this sponsor content shown in the Twitter feeds of people that according to Twitter are more or less likely to be interested in following you. I don't know if they have improved now. The last time I had to look at this stuff and these algorithms was I think like four years ago and it was horrible. If your management says you need to get a lot of followers in a short amount of time and they allow you to burn the money in half the budget, then yeah, why not? But it's, in my opinion, really definitely burning the money because you will get a lot of followers that are just not worth the money and the time but if you are willing and able in the beginning to really invest some time in research with this network.

If you know about people, names from conferences, from scientific publications, maybe even ask your sales force, ask your sales guys and maybe have a look at the CRM. It's always very surprising how many of those people you can actually find on Twitter and then, when you identify those

influencers on Twitter, you follow them. Most of them will also very politely follow you back. This is a bit of my strategy that I think I call it stalking the customers. Chris loves it when I say this.

Chris: Yeah.

Johannes: At this moment, when they follow you back, you basically have already won because sooner or later, they will share the content that you post also with their network, and then you can also have a look on Twitter because most of that stuff is public. Most of the time, it is publicly available. You see who is following a certain influencer, a key opinion leader. You can research this. You can tap into their network and really see, "Okay. Maybe I also want to follow this guy," and hope that he will follow you back, and that is also what the organic growth behind is all about. If you combine this also with good hashtags and by this, you really have to research the hashtags a bit, but when you can find a not too specific and also a lot of people like to make up new hashtags. Really, don't do that. It's a waste of time, waste of letters that you can use in the limited, I don't know how many signs are now available on Twitter, but really made up hashtags even for conferences. Use the conference hashtag. These are the established ones.

If you combine this, and of course, spend some time, you can really build up a sustainable community that will, in the end, really be interested in following you and looking at your postings and in the end, maybe if they have a nice result with your instrument, this is really the best thing in your work. Then, they will post this to your channel and say, "Hey, I'm Sartorius. I just had an amazing result with your instrument." These testimonials, this is the best thing that you can achieve on Twitter particularly.

Kat: Okay. That makes sense. Hannes, we've been talking about all these wonderful things that one could do on social media, but I imagine a lot of people listening are wondering how many people do they need to hire and how much they need to allocate in their budget to build the strong social media and following and generate all of those leads from social media, but we did talk earlier and you mentioned that the social media program that you built was a one man operation, as in you built the whole thing. I was wondering how do you achieve these results with the limited manpower that you have and also, how long did it take you?

Johannes: My first point now, if any manager should listen right now to this podcast, hire a social media team. Do it by all means. Do not think that one person is enough particularly if you really want to do a global channel because on this world, you actually have different timezones, for example. That is also one of the first things that you really, in the beginning, think hard and not necessary open up regional channels because this is something I really do not like and also do not recommend particularly in the beginning, but really have people who also have access to those channels and also can align themselves and takeover, for example, when in Germany, it's a sleepy time, but at West Coast, somebody starts tweeting to your channel like mad, so that the one person in Germany does not need to stay up and desperately try to fix the situation or something.

Coming back to the question, this can somehow be done if you very, very closely and efficiently align this content and campaigns on all of your channels like what Chris mentioned earlier and I have to admit, I learned this from that guy, because he wrote it in some best practice white paper some years ago, if you really focus on recycling or repurposing your content between the channels. This is one of the mistakes that in the beginning is done quite often. People think that, "Well, I posted this PDF or this image already on Twitter. I cannot post it on Facebook now because I already posted it on Twitter." This is like, "Yeah. Okay." But a certainly person will most probably follow a company on his favorite channel. He will most probably not follow a company on all social media channels that the company offers. 90% of your audience will not even see that you posted the same content piece on various channels maybe even at once.

For example, this one is absolutely no problem. It is actually really recommended to do it like that. One of the most important tools that I had in the background was a well-curated digital asset management platform, a DAM. We had this from the ... I think I can say this at the moment. We had it from the Widen company, and I have to say that I very, very much love to have this thing because them such as the Widen is not only integrated very nicely into your company network and infrastructure and the internet. I really can only place them platforms like the Widen because they integrate really beautifully into your internal marketing content creation and distribution workflows, and it is a really great archive where you can hunt for the content pieces that you then can access from basically anywhere.

This one thing like a backend had ... It's a huge content database helps you a lot to really very efficiently find the content distributed, downloaded, have additional information, metadata, tech with the content from product management or marketing specialist. Excuse me. For the outside world, the other thing that reduced my workload in a massive way was really to have a company blog. In our case, it was the WordPress blog platform, which is the industry standard nowadays and this company blog then gives you a really rapid way for all the web-based distribution that we want to do for basically all sorts of articles. The blog really helps you. You do not have the need to actually create new web or landing pages where all this approval nonsense most of the time is attached to it where maybe two or three other people also have to work with them.

You just do it by yourself. You create articles with the WYSIWYG interface in a very rapid way in your company blog. This can then become the central source and the foundation of your whole external communications and content marketing, and something that I did not mentioned before, it also drives search engine traffic to your webpage. With this dynamic content, you can massively improve the SEO and reduce your SEA budget in that way if you do it right. The third part to this answer would also be what is also very helpful is that you ... I did not mention yet the ... I called them the content channels or the content social media channels, which would be Flickr and YouTube, and this is where you can also very easily distribute the image and video based content between channels and partners and directly embed the stuff into your blog and your product webpages.

I can only say that when you really manage to have everything connected in this communications network, Google absolutely loves this. Google recognizes this. Google boosts your SEO. The SEO of your webpage will go up and you can say for a lot of SEA budget, if you use those channels efficiently, if you link them, trust link them, link them to your webpages to your product webpages, so that stuff really works beautiful in the end.

Kat: Thank you.

Johannes: It has a lot of advantage.

Kat: I think that was all very good and interesting things, and I'm really looking forward to implementing what you said this week and next and hopefully after that too.

Johannes: As concluding, I think I should say that you should plan for a bit more time. It took me around ... I had really the big advantage. The big advantage in my position back then was that I told the people that demanded some ROI and KPI and benchmarks and whatnot. I told them to basically F off and leave me alone with the growth of my channels, and so I was happy with that after maybe two years. This was the part that took me around two years and of course, they got some ... I would say from my market research experience, I'm still saying that those were ... What I got them was not a quantitative analysis but a qualitative where I really showed, "Hey, look at this customer interaction distributed with the company." Maybe put it in the internet and show the people, "Hey, look. Somebody really love this product. Really had great results with that one instrument or it was shared a lot," stuff like that that you spend like, I don't know, 30 minutes on a short PowerPoint and doing it once per month or maybe once per quarter in the beginning.

In the end, also with the blog, I think four years, it was the better part of four years, but then I was really happy. This was the part where really routine came into play. Yeah. You have a great future in front of you.

Chris: I just want to say, first of all, thank you for that summary and putting a realistic timeline on all of these and something I've said I'm sure in some blog post or whatever and people look at this and say, "Oh, it's going to take me two years or four years." Well, if you're planning on having your company be in existence four years from now, wouldn't you like go be where Johannes is now and not where he was four years ago. Right? If the future is coming, you have to start and do these things even if it took a lot of time.

Johannes: Exactly. Very, very, very good point. Very good point.

Chris: Otherwise, you're going to be that much farther behind even if something takes a long time. Product development takes that long and no one blinks an eye at product that might take long to finally bring the market, so why should it be any different?

Johannes: From a marketing perspective, people really should blink an eye to that.

Chris: Yeah. Marketing channel is a ... I always like to think that some of your marketing is a product, and it takes time to build and you earn and you add features and so on. I really appreciate that long term perspective and the

realistic look at it, but obviously, it was worthwhile and short term measurements don't work.

Johannes: Chris, the thing is I've seen it too often and this is really concluding now for me at least. I've seen it too often that companies do some kind of management project initiatives, which run for one year. If you want to go digital, if you want to go online, if you want to establish new communication channels and I promise every single company, you will get new leads through that stuff. If you plan to do this as a management initiative for one year, don't. Just don't start. That's the whole point behind it because if you do not say, "Okay. There is a commitment and we want to have this as a sustainable project," then maybe best to just don't start.

Chris: Yeah. I think that's a great way to just wrap this up. That's a strong message to leave people with. Johannes, I want to thank you for again, sharing this incredible knowledge on social media. I think this is going to be a hugely valuable episode for our listeners. Kat, I want to really thank you for jumping in and being game to do this. You did a fantastic job.

Kat: Thank you. Thank you.

Chris: It was really fun. Actually, I'm sitting here smiling the whole time for many reasons. I'm often smiling when I'm getting great information on the podcast. Today, I get to smile and go, "I don't have to do anything. I'm just listening in," and just absorbing like thinking about what notes I'm going to make and how I'm going to put this out. Thank you both.

Kat: Thank you.

Johannes: Thanks, guys. That was awesome. Thanks for having me.

Chris: Yeah. My pleasure.

Thank you also to our Sponsor/Partner, ACP-LS. The Association of Commercial Professionals- Life Sciences. ACP-LS provides marketing, sales and customer service professionals opportunities for ongoing education, networking, and professional development. Those networking and development opportunities have been very valuable to me and would be equally valuable to anyone listening to this podcast. To learn more, visit ACP-LS.org. And while you are there, subscribe to the newsletter to receive content and activity updates.
