

WHITE PAPER

SOCIAL MEDIA, BUSINESS AND THE MODERN ECONOMY

What is Social Media?

It's not just social. It's business.

Social Media is any medium for social interaction, particularly those that are easily accessible to the vast majority of people across the planet. Social Media uses web-based technologies and platforms to turn communication into an interactive dialogue. The obvious and most commonly quoted modern examples are Facebook and Twitter. Social Media is also currently most noted for consumer generated content. Which is to say consumers are populating this atmosphere in their billions with their own stories, commentary, ideas, photos and their reviews.



Owing to the success of Social Media there is an increasing demand that businesses “go social”. Thus Social Media has become, by sheer demand of consumers, a business medium. Consequently, Social Media now also refers to social interaction between businesses and their consumers as well as business to business.

The Value of Engaging and Return on Investment

In the modern economy it is no longer enough to simply have a website and have email. Every business has a website and thus it has become an irreducible minimum. Business today is expected to communicate with its consumers far more honestly, far more dynamically and far more actively than a mere web presence affords. The explosive adoption of Social Media platforms has made them the biggest new form of readily accepted and acceptable communication around the globe. By 2015 it will be the accepted standard.

This makes planning and implementing a sustainable Social Media Programme an imperative for business.

With over 2 billion internet users the world over (30% of the world's population) and growing daily at phenomenal levels, we have truly become a converged, collaborative and communicative global society. Africa's online population is expected to grow at a rate of 50% per annum for the foreseeable future and will pass half a billion by 2016.

Through the growth of this new medium, tight niche markets have formed and communication within these markets is at a level unprecedented in human history.

“By 2016 there will be more than half a billion Africans online. So, if it's customers you're looking for that's a pretty good place to find them.”



More and more consumers interact with their networks for recommendations and suggestions for purchasing decisions. Of those engaged consumers, 90% trust Social Media recommendations while only 14% trust advertising. In simple terms the most powerful people in the world are people just like you and me.

Facebook has its roots in college and school networks which gave it, and Social Media in general, a reputation of being a youth activity. Through its evolution, a new picture has emerged: The average age of users is in their 30s across the economic spectrum. Because of its initial youth following, businesses tended to avoid engaging. Today, however, businesses are struggling to catch up with these social conversations.

Being disengaged from the conversation threatens to disrupt corporate identity and, in fact, this disruption is already underway.



If hundreds, thousands or millions of people are having a conversation about a business or brand and that business does not participate and add value to this conversation, complete disruption is inevitable.

The social web and the internet in general are increasingly more convenient, aided in large measure by the rapid adoption of smart phone technology and, accordingly, credibility has become entrenched. Smart phone sales numbers surpassed PC sales for the first time ever in 2010. Consumers see and believe what is on the web and they have become accustomed to purchasing online and sharing information about themselves online, via phone and PC; true word of mouth is now a global phenomenon.

The online landscape today is vastly different to that of 10 years ago. We have now reached what is referred to as “Web 3.0”. Where Web 1.0 and 2.0 were defined by access and knowledge, Web 3.0 is defined by connection, collaboration and convergence.

“The idea is that you do not want to fight Facebook, you want to embrace Facebook and leverage Facebook because this is where people are going to spend increasing amounts of time.”



Social Media implementation is not simply augmenting an ongoing marketing programme or appending your communication system. It is re-engineering business so it is ready to compete in the 21st century market.

There are potentially 1 billion customers waiting and willing to talk to businesses, follow corporate identities and purchase from those brands ready to plan and implement a Social Media programme.

Importantly, engaging is NOT simply blasting marketing messages on these new platforms. It is business actually conversing with its customers in a real & connected manner.

The answer therefore to the question of “should business engage?” is quite simple: There is no alternative but to engage. Any business that does not have a comprehensive Social Media Strategy will soon be as obscure as any enterprise that did not have a website and email at the turn of the century. But you must have a plan...



How to Plan

Even if your business has no social media programme at all, the technology of Social Media technology makes it relatively simple to catch up and become engaged providing proper planning is in place.

The five things businesses should be doing:

- Listening to the conversations taking place online about your business, brand and industry (and competitors)
- Preparing and building a social media team
- Brainstorming
- Identifying your market
- Engaging – joining the conversation.

STEP ONE: LISTENING TO THE CONVERSATION



Before undertaking any major project or programme it is important to do the necessary market research and homework. With a Social Media Strategy it is of utmost importance that this step be done completely.

By the end of this step a full data set will be in hand from which an analysis can be made. An audit and analysis of your brand, company, industry and competitors provides the factual basis from which you will understand the following:

- What is being said, and by whom?
- What portion of the conversations mention your brand as

compared to your competitors?

- Who is directing and involved in these conversations (demographics)? From this you will determine your “crowd” or target audiences/platforms which will be discussed later.
- Is the ‘live’ perception of your industry, brand, business and image (in general) positive or negative or even non-existent?
- What content is most appealing and/or dominates the conversations?
- Are there key people or people of influence, such as media or people with large followings, who dominate the conversation?

Depending on the industry this process may take anywhere from 1-4 weeks of daily monitoring. There are a number of free and paid services that can be used to monitor and listen to social conversations.

First, list the keywords (or phrases) for your industry including your brand names and those of your competitors.

Example: A hotel in Durban might list such keywords as: Hotel, luxury holiday, getaway, Durban holiday, Durban Tourism, destination Durban. There may be many more that would also include the hotel’s name as well as competing hotels.

By means of either free or paid free online tools, use these search terms to explore the social web.



Enter daily information onto a spreadsheet or similar data gathering tool. Keep detailed records of what you find.

Some free tools are:

SocialMention - mentions of a brand, a person, a company or even a subject can be analysed to determine how much conversation is being had and its positive or negative sentiment.

socialmention*

With Netvibes an entire dashboard is created that makes it easy to analyse mentions and sentiment across the social web from blogs to Twitter, as well as Google and news.



Twitter Search (search.Twitter.com) provides a very detailed filter to find exactly what information you want to know. This can be narrowed down to a specific area in a city if this is required. Twitter search is a great way to obtain much valuable information.

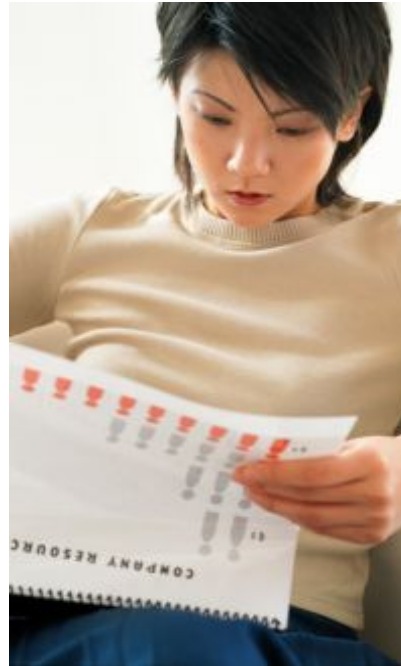
twitter

And lastly, a full analysis of your website can be obtained through **www.alexa.com**. Alexa will provide a detailed analysis of the traffic to your website, where it comes from, the demographics of those visiting, the search enquires that got them to your site and much more.



Once you have spent some time with these services and recorded your findings you will have detailed raw data from which you can determine the answers to all the questions set forth at the beginning of this section.

This data set provides an invaluable tool in showcasing the need for a Social Media Programme and will assist in building your team and obtaining buy-in from executive level.



“You might choose to ignore social media. However, you can’t choose to ignore the impact the conversation is having on your business and what your audience thinks of you.”

PREPARE - Build your Social Media Team

Senior Buy-In: Before a Social Media Strategy can go any further, buy-in at the executive level of the business is critical.

If key personnel at the executive level have not yet signed on to the concept of investing in a Social Media Programme for the business, it is recommended that the data gathered in step one be used as the basis of a presentation to the executive that will clearly show the advantage of an active Social Engagement Programme.



Building a Team: With executive buy-in your team can now be assembled. A Social Media Programme must also include buy-in from all relevant departments or sections within your business and the best team members to

select are those who have an enthusiasm for the subject and the personal will to be engaged.

Social Media does not fit squarely and solely in any one section of a business. Depending on the size and complexity of your business your team could include people representing:

- Marketing
- Human Resources
- IT
- Sales
- PR
- Communications

These will be the people who will have the big picture of where your Social Media will take your business. They will also help to drive the programme forward toward success, whether through driving and/or setting



policy that may or may not encompass letting employees engage directly, or in a managed framework that complies with Company goals and objectives.

Please remember that no guidelines for Social Media have ever been set. A new team will be essential, and a multidisciplinary team will function and deliver better. Social Media activity should never be viewed as a bolt-on to an existing single portfolio – its depth and scope way surpass any individual role or department when used correctly.

And lastly, elect one person from this team to be the CHAMPION for the Programme. This should be someone who understands and has a passion for Social Media. Without a champion Social Media Programmes tend to flounder. It is quite possible that members of the team will have had Social Media added to their job descriptions in addition to existing duties. If at all possible, the CHAMPION should be someone devoted to the task of Social Media implementation.

“Being a social media champion can be a difficult and challenging job because it not only takes a lot of energy but requires a commitment from senior management that social media isn’t a ‘here today, gone tomorrow’ activity.”

BRAINSTORM

In the preparation step you would have identified your Social

Media team members. It’s now time to activate them.

Set aside a time where your team can assemble, have them study and comment on this white paper, as well as the analysis undertaken as part of the “Listening” step.

Now you are ready to generate the ideas, plans and visions to take your Social Media Strategy forward.

Benchmarks & Goals

From the data already gathered you know where you stand on the Social Media front and it is important to define the benchmarks i.e.

- Image of brand/company
- Positive/negative sentiment
- Share of mentions

These are just a few examples. There may be many more based on the information you have gathered. It is against these benchmarks that you will measure and monitor the success of your programme.

Now that you have the benchmarks, these can be easily translated into stated goals, i.e.



- Increase share of mentions by “x” percent
- Increase brand or company searches
- Number of followers/likes
- Addressing complaints
- Promote the brand and its benefits
- Create interested communities (dealers/channel partners/user groups/devotees etc.)

Use whichever benchmarks and goals are salient to your business, to accurately track your progress and success and further develop your plans.

STRATEGY

It is quite likely at this stage that the will have formed the outline of your Social Media Strategy. During the process of brainstorming you will complete your strategy that must cover:



- Immediate steps to implement Social Media.
- Medium range planning (3-6 months)
- Long range planning (12-18 months)

Realise that the Social Media landscape changes rapidly and your strategy will not be fixed but will grow organically as you find that more opportunities and new technologies arise.

Policy

As with any part of your business, policy must exist to provide

guidelines to determine whom in the business may engage or is empowered to engage, what Social Media tools will be used and what form your



engagement should take. Most companies involved in any form of Social Media today are still engaging via a soft, unstructured manner – many are even unaware that in the course of their day to day lives their employees are already engaged – and such activity, whether sanctioned or not, needs to be monitored and controlled via policy and procedures.

A sample Social Media policy has been annexed to this White Paper that can be used as a template to develop your own policy. This should also align with any Code of Conduct already extant in the business.

In this step your team should establish the benchmarks, align your business objectives to your Social Media plan, set your goals and initiate your planned activities, even if this extends as a pilot scheme to ‘put a toe into the water’. Some brands have started by allocating as little as 5% of their marketing budget to test out social media.

Of course your Social Media Strategy and the goals you have set for this must align with the overall objectives for your business so that your online efforts match and complement (or grow) your real world goals.



“A content strategy is about building trust with your audience, your community or your customers. That takes time.”

Curate Content

Brainstorming must also include what content will be developed – the quality/extent of your content/dialogue will be key to your success. When you produce good content it is shared, tagged, followed, re-tweeted and so on. Remember content is not about advertising or trying to blast your message, shot-gun style, but rather sprinkling your message into the many micro-conversations taking place all day, every day.

Content is the lifeblood of the social web. As you have worked through this White Paper you will have observed the content that results in the most engagement and is preferred by your “crowd”.

Examples of content are:

- Video (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.): These could be training videos, customer experience, fun or innovative use of services or products. The list is endless.
- Facebook Page – photos and video, status updates, competitions, campaigns that invite customer engagement as well as links to blogs or articles of interest, showcasing your customers and much much more.
- Tweets through Twitter linking to pictures or articles or videos. Twitter is also a great way to keep your follows updated with short bits of news.
- Blog articles. These are of course longer forms of content and a great way to build your brand.

Know what content you will curate in the coming months. Good planning for content will avoid “dead spots” in your programme and enhance your engagement with your audience. Remember content should always add value.



IDENTIFY

You now need to identify, internally, who will help and who will hinder the process and then consult each to ensure all are in alignment with your planned strategy.

There are also the external players such as ad agencies - in fact anyone and everyone that has a direct influence on Company planning and execution. Similarly consult each group so that everyone is on the same page.

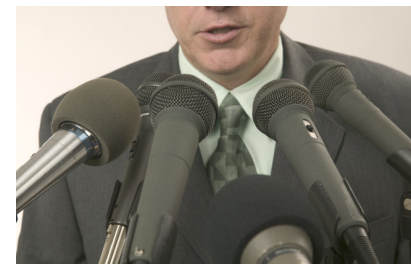


“Today, people are searching, buying, rating, interacting and using social media in a pressure-free environment. This is creating a large amount of raw yet accurate data.”

Finally determine the external target markets – who are the people that you will be engaging? These can be identified in web parlance

as:

- Trendspotters – they are people who are innovative and edgy and likely to influence sentiment.
- Evangelists – people who are passionate and will generate enthusiasm.
- Superspreaders – people who are noisy and broadcast messages.
- Sceptics – people who will keep it honest (and who are important in understanding what your brand is missing or doing wrong).



ENGAGE

And finally you arrive at the point where all this analysis and planning translates into direct engagement.

A map and timeline of your roll out should be plotted against the goals that have been set. This could be three months, six months or longer. It is advisable that your initial program follows a fairly short time frame so any improvement or changes can be made – probably three months.

The greatest single reason for a Social Media Programme to fail is lack of internal belief. Launch your Social Media Programme internally first, to iron out any technical issues and also get your own personnel excited about the programme.

Ensure your Social Media policy has been published and is understood by your internal staff.

Now you will be ready to launch your Social Media Programme to your customers and consumers externally.



Ensure your measurement practices are in place so that quantifying begins from the very start.

SUMMARY

1. LISTEN TO THE CONVERSATION

Monitor and analyse conversations on the social web.

2. PREPARE - BUILD YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA TEAM

- Get senior buy-in
- Build a team and elect a Champion

3. BRAINSTORM

- Set Benchmarks & Goals
- Develop strategy
- Set policy
- Curate content

4. IDENTIFY

- Identify internal and external markets
- Find Trendspotters, Evangelists, Superspreaders, Sceptics

5. ENGAGE

- Map and timeline roll out
- Launch internally first
- Launch externally
- Monitor and measure

Be Smart.

Be Engaged.

Be Human.

Good luck!

SETTING A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Introduction

Social Media: Services and websites that provide communities of friends, societies, businesses or any other like-minded or connected groups of individuals or industries to connect globally and that turn communication into interactive dialogues via platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Blogs. This is a fast changing medium and this definition will include such services as they evolve or new ones as they come to be.

Social Media is fast becoming a standard for communication both in inter-personal relationships and with business. For the first time in history, these lines have become blurred. If businesses are to succeed in modern methods of communication and dialogue, they will have to become more deeply engaged with their customers and all other audiences through Social Media as this is where more and more time is being spent by people.

Hence, it makes sense to have a policy in place for any Company to provide clear guidelines on how its employees should properly engage in the Social Media conversation in a proper, meaningful manner.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to encourage all employees/partner groups and consumers or other interested parties to become a part of such a conversation through positive engagement and contribution, and to provide guidelines on how to engage through Social Media.

We like to think of this as **Being Smart. Being Engaged. Being Human.**

Basic Policy guidelines

Know and follow the Company's Codes and Policies

As with any activity where you are representing the Company it is necessary to comply with Company policies and procedures as determined for other forms of communication – as well as to work within the confines as outlined in the relevant Code of Conduct and other policies.

You are responsible for content you say, do and publish online

What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in Social Media on behalf of the Company is not a right but an opportunity so please treat it seriously and with respect and as always, even if in a private conversation, communicate effectively in the public domain owing to the nature of the medium.

Be aware of security of Company information

Do not post Company confidential information or anything that is intended only for internal discussion or distribution. If you are in doubt as to whether information is confidential or not, don't post it.

Be transparent and disclose your affiliations

When engaging online use your real name and identity your affiliation to the Company. Honesty (or dishonesty) is quickly noticed in the Social Media environment.

Do not commit the Company

Unless you have proper authorisation, do not commit the Company to any action, statement or policies of intent.

Your Opinion

Always state that your comments are your opinion when discussing any aspect of the Company or its products. Do not speak directly for the Company unless authorised.

Always engage POSTIVELY

Whether through tweets, blogs, comments or any other medium, be aware that what you say will reflect on the reputation of the Company. Keep a positive tone whenever you engage.

BE RESPECTFUL and authentic

Do not get involved in slurs, name calling or anything that is disrespectful to person, religion or race. Be professional and use a positive tone. Show you have listened and respond positively.

BE TRUTHFUL

If you make a mistake, say so and fix or correct it. If you correct a comment or posting you have made, say so. Keep your comments and engagement to your field of expertise.

BE MINDFUL

It is almost impossible to remove something from the internet once posted. Even if you delete, it is quite likely it has been stored or even re-posted elsewhere. Rather state your error and correction.

Social Media is a CONVERSATION

Engage it as such: Use your real identity, don't be afraid to bring your own personality to the discussion, give your opinions and say what is on your mind. Use a warm, open and approachable tone.

Add Value

The conversation is not about spreading a marketing message. It is about engaging others so add an interesting point of view or something new. Don't just talk – listen and respond to others with your interpretations.

Build Relationships

Work to build relationships through your engagement and interaction.

Disclaimer

If you publish content online (i.e. a blog) use a disclaimer such as this:
“Postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the Company”

Respect Copyright and fair use

If you want to use something that belongs to someone else then get their permission to do so. Do not use logos or brand names or any other proprietary information without full written permission.

Above all use good solid judgment in all you do.

Failure to follow the above policies could result in any of the following:

Suspension of online participation
Disciplinary hearing and action
Dismissal