

# Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy (and Why You Need One)



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## Question:

Your marketing team has launched a Facebook page. Weekly reports reveal what customers are saying about you across the social Web. Even your customer service group reaches out via twitter to troubled customers. You're "doing" social media, right?

This practical, in-the-trenches experience is critical to participating in social media. It is also the right step to understanding social media's value in order to adopt a more strategic use of this new discipline. In other words, it's a start. Now it has become essential for companies to step back and craft an enterprise-level social media strategy — how they can authentically and productively use social media to strengthen the financial health of their business and the value of their brand. Creating a social media brand or enterprise strategy is a little like designing, building and driving a car all at one time. No one can afford to put their social media initiatives on hold while a more thoughtful strategy is mapped out. We must work fast, and we start by defining just what social role a brand can play.

## Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy (continued)

We spend millions defining and communicating the brand via marketing and communications channels. We need to take a fresh look at how the brand can behave in social media. A crisp definition of our social brand will guide us from mere tactics to more impactful strategy. It will focus the efforts around best practices from ethics to results and help our brands reap the benefits of social media faster and with a more enduring effect.

### Why now?

We have reached a tipping point of acceptance for social media. The main qualities of that discipline — more direct and open relationships with customers, faster marketplace response and increased efficiency around marketing, customer service and product development — have proven themselves invaluable to brands. And it's not just for the usual poster children of social media — Dell, Zappos or Starbucks. Check the Master List<sup>1</sup> full of hundreds of examples of brands of all types actively engaging via social media. Social media is not a fad.

There are three reasons why brands must take this seriously and then start with the foundational step of defining exactly what their social brand can be. The first reason is the arrival of social media as a business-impactful discipline. Call it the spread of social media.

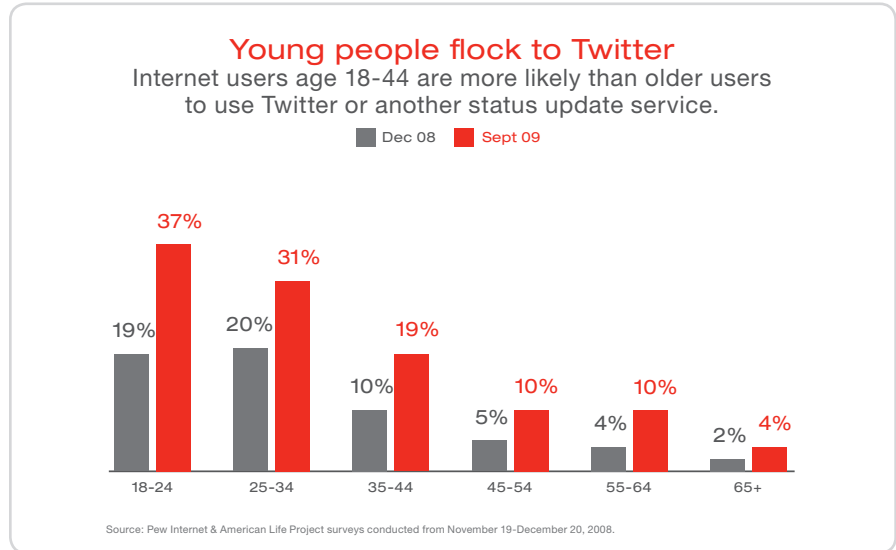
#### 1. Social Media is Spreading Out Beyond Just Influencers

The underlying principles of social media are here to stay regardless of which platform is popular today. Too many articles have been written about the new, empowered consumer to say much new or revealing here. What is worth paying attention to is the growth of social media behaviors and platforms around the world. Brazil has seen the fastest growth of Twitter than any market around the world. While Facebook's US user base grows older — from 26 in 2008 to 33 in 2009 — Twitter grows younger with 18-24 year olds jumping from 19% to 37% between December 2008 and September 2009<sup>2</sup>. Social media is spreading out from the early adopters to a much broader base.

<sup>1</sup> <http://wiki.beingpeterkim.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/17-Twitter-and-Status-Updating-Fall-2009.aspx?r=1>

**Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy** (continued)



Ultimately, everything social media enables is a new form of word of mouth. Whether I blog about my love for the new Ford Taurus, become a fan of Lance Armstrong Foundation on Facebook, tweet a link to Amex tickets for the Rolling Stones concert, or pass a video of Nick Cave reading from Bunny Munro to a friend — it's all word of mouth.

And word of mouth trumps most other forms of communication in influence on many purchase decisions and opinions. For brands, social media is an imperative way to embrace, in any way they can, the power of word of mouth.



## Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy (continued)

As marketers, our job now shifts as we strive to help customers, enthusiasts, fans, and “strangers with expertise” share about our products and the topics and ideas that bring us together with them. We want people to search in Google and find the endorsements of our advocates — third parties who say our products are as good as we say they are.

Social Media and Word of Mouth Marketing (WoM) has become big business. A recent study sponsored by the Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) tracks marketers’ spend on word of mouth and social media marketing.

“Total spending on WoM marketing is expected to increase 10.2% to \$1.70 billion in 2009 and grow at a CAGR of 14.5% during the 2008-2013 period, reaching \$3.04 billion as more brands include WoM in their media mix and ROI metrics improve.”<sup>3</sup>

More marketers and more investors are banking on the growing power of social media. As key hurdles are overcome from measurement to organizational to integration, this use and investment will skyrocket.

## 2. Social Media is Pressuring Business from within to Change

Brands across Unilever, P&G, Campbell’s, Pepsi and Coca Cola have all been actively engaged in social media experiments over the past few years. Consumer packaged goods companies represent decentralized brand empires that have followed their own path in social media. Even within product brands, different groups will spawn different tactics and strategies that can often leave a disparate collection of Facebook or YouTube pages out on the Social Web — many of them abandoned past their campaign. These may have served some short term campaign goal (or not) and, yet may create confusion or even more negative feelings amongst consumers who want to see brands behaving in a certain way on their social network platforms. Generally, brand exploration in social media is a good thing. It builds confidence and expertise within the brand organization. But it can also lead to something less than ‘best-practice’ use of social media. Now is the time to tame that “English-garden growth” of social network experiments and beachheads. The consumer must come first, even before our 90-day needs, for launching product variation X. Brands must apply

<sup>3</sup> www.womma.org

## Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy (continued)

some order to this chaos without squelching the entrepreneurial drive that got them doing something in social media in the first place.

As more groups within a corporation start using social media and when leadership realizes that with 30,000 employees they already have thousands of people engaged through Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and more, risk mitigation becomes a must. Even when a brand wants to empower its employees to speak openly about the brand (there are fewer of these than you might think), they still must establish some clear guardrails to protect intellectual property, their customers and those same employees. Add to that a competitive gold rush between marketing and communications groups to establish their “creds” via social media marketing, and the occasional unforeseen public crisis, and you now have ample reason for companies to establish social media guidelines that cover off on everything from best practices to ethics.

A third pressure within business is the annual budget cycle. With a collection of experiments under its belt, any brand will want to budget appropriately to grow that activity in the proper proportion next year. That requires a common measurement criteria across those experiments or, at the very least, an effort to establish one. In lieu of measurement standards, many brands are planning for additional investments — some in excess of \$2 million — so long as a common benchmarking model is established to judge against. This type of measure must happen at the corporate brand level and begs the questions: Just what is the opportunity for the brand in the social space and what will we measure that indicates how we have met that challenge?

### 3. Measurement of Social Media Is Changing How We Measure Business

The third major reason why brands need to take a more strategic position in social media now is the emergence of the new measurement models. Not only is it possible to measure the performance of social media programs but the newest models will likely change how we all measure the impact of our marcom and customer service efforts in the future. No, we don't have new standards in place yet. Any marketer who holds out until that is delivered to them on a silver platter will find themselves deeply

**Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy** (continued)

behind the curve of innovation. Many major marketers today are experimenting with new performance metrics for social media and just how to integrate them into their brand dashboards. There are two undeniable trends in measurement that may someday demonstrate how social media can become a lynch-pin discipline — the rise of the Net Promoter Score (NPS)<sup>4</sup> and the emergence of value metrics for social KPIs.

The NPS is a proprietary model for benchmarking the health of a business based upon some version of the simple question, “would you recommend us?” Compare that to the fact that there are billions of brand mentions everyday online (and offline). Inherently, these brand mentions can be read and classified as positive, neutral or negative, given some context. Brand marketers want to activate and increase positive word of mouth about their product. That is the conceptual equivalent of increasing one’s NPS. It is also a conceptual equivalent for increasing brand preference. As more brands engage with social media, they will value and adopt some form of an NPS metric. This WoM-based measure indicates actual sentiment because it is based upon a behavior via unaided mentions. The simple value of impressions will take a back seat.

What’s next? How about the value of a Facebook friend? The value of a WoM mention? Or the value of my social graph? Each of these metrics — which seem intuitively valuable — will find some form of simple and plausible metric within the next two years. Add to that the measure of the compound effect of owned, earned and paid media and marketers will have a whole way to assign value to their market-facing activities. The new Metrics Best Practice Guidebook<sup>5</sup> from WOMMA to be released in November 2009 aggregates the best models for evaluating the performance of social media-based programs. Tools like this give marketers what they need to establish their own models now even while the industry continues to debate standards.

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4 <http://www.netpromoter.com/>

5 <http://www.womma.org>

## Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy (continued)

# Strategic Approach

We have all lived through the years of social media as an emerging discipline. We are past “emerging” and have segued into full-fledged growth. The purely entrepreneurial drive within companies from that “social media guy” or the brand team that “got it” are not enough to guide the level of adoption and discipline we need to apply to our business today. We must take social media seriously.

To develop a comprehensive strategic approach to achieve the biggest impact possible, companies must do three things:

1. **Define their social brand** — just how can they and should they participate in social media that is authentic to them. Not every company should put their 1,666 blogging employees in an aggregator like Microsoft.<sup>6</sup> Not every brand should enlist women to tell men how they can score like Axe does via Facebook.<sup>7</sup>
2. Decide how to move your organization to adopt social media best practices via an **Enterprise Change Framework**.
3. Establish a Marketing & Communications (Marcom) **Social Media Engagement Framework** outlining the best way for the organization to plan marcom programs.

## 1. Defining the Social Brand

You spent millions defining your brand, millions more communicating that out. You have built complex marketing and communications programs that try to speak consistently across channels. You may have even aligned your call centers to that brand positioning. The “360” approach to brand stewardship is standard operating procedure these days.

But what about the social identity of a brand? Is “social” just a few more degrees around the 360 “wheel?” Is it just another way to iterate the “big idea?” Or is it a different identity all together requiring a different process to be successful? Social media is not some new channel. Brands must choose the role they want to play in social media and what they will do there, not simply what they want to say. Defining the social brand means deciding how you will behave in the social Web, what voice you will use and how deeply you will interact with your customers.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.microsoft.com/communities/blogs/portalthome.mspix>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/axe>

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There is more than one way to be “social.” Does every brand need to jump into a daily two-way conversation with people to demonstrate that they “get it” and to serve their customers? What enables Starbucks to invite customers to co-create via My Starbucks Idea may not work for McDonalds. Ford’s Fiesta Movement<sup>8</sup> may be right for them but not for Louis Vuitton. Brands have long been described as personalities. That metaphor means more now than ever. Social media has also been referred to as ‘personal media,’ and brands must think and choose wisely about what is a natural personality to portray.

Brands can choose to:

- Humanize themselves through their people and their stories
- Demonstrate openness by inviting customer opinion, whether it be good or bad
- Be of-use to their customers in some new way
- Delight customers via innovative entertainment
- Steward customer communities for feedback and to trigger word of mouth
- Extend customer care via social tools that are more immediate and answer questions publicly
- Deliver relevant content via the Social Web to the places their customers are already congregating

Each of these is a legitimate way to act “socially.” Each can be extensions of the authentic brand personality. Some brands are enablers trying to help their customers achieve something. Some brands deliver fun. Some feel more exclusive. In some ways this is not too different than Jon Iwata, the CMO of IBM, when he spoke recently about the Brand System<sup>9</sup>. He champions a different approach to defining the brand and one that seems to lend itself to defining the social brand: “Picture a framework with five columns. From left to right the columns are labeled what it means to look like IBM, to sound like IBM, to think like IBM, to perform like IBM and ultimately to be IBM...To really activate the System, you go from managing outward expressions and manifestations of the company — visual identity, naming conventions, messaging, design and the like — to the behavior and performance of people. This Brand System is necessarily inclusive of corporate culture.” He is making a case for a new discipline within the enterprise that puts corporate culture at the center of everything a company does including how they operate “socially.”

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.fiestamovement.com/>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/JI\\_IPR\\_Lecture8.pdf](http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/JI_IPR_Lecture8.pdf)

**Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy** (continued)



How should your brand behave in social media? Like the relentless helper, Zappos, known for their friendly, even quirky, customer service? Or are you more like Campbell's Soup providing a virtual kitchen for women to share their recipes and experience with other women?



Ford's enduring brand position has always been the democratization of technology. They mass produced the automobile making it available to many. Their current 2010 Ford Taurus embodies that same spirit by combining every new technology available in one car. As they dive deeper into social media, that heritage guides their choices in social media. They embrace the voice and experience of their customer by aggregating blog and Twitter mentions, images and videos from owners and prospective owners. That is consistent with their democratic heritage.



Axe is that wingman who will help you score with the ladies. That comes across in their advertising as well as the apps that fill their Facebook page. They have chosen to be the enabler with a twinkle in their eye and a smile on their face.



Clearly these brands are finding that their social brand is rooted in their larger brand position. It makes no sense to be two-faced as customers will figure that out. If you operate within a regulated industry like pharma, financial or alcohol, you will need to proactively address the requirements of those regulations. That may affect how your social brand manifests itself. An alcoholic beverage company might need to embrace a social voice and message around the responsible use of the product to earn the right to engage in deeper discussions.

Hold a workshop with your brand and social media leaders. Peter Friedman from the social media community company, LiveWorld<sup>10</sup>, likes to call this the "socialization of the brand." Ask yourself some simple questions:

1. If you met your brand at a party, how would you describe it?
2. What voice should your brand speak in?
3. From within your company, who would be a good archetype for that voice?
4. Is your brand more likely to engage in conversation or help others do the same?
5. If you could invite your customers over, what would you do together?
6. What social causes do you care about?

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.liveworld.com/>

**Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy** (continued)

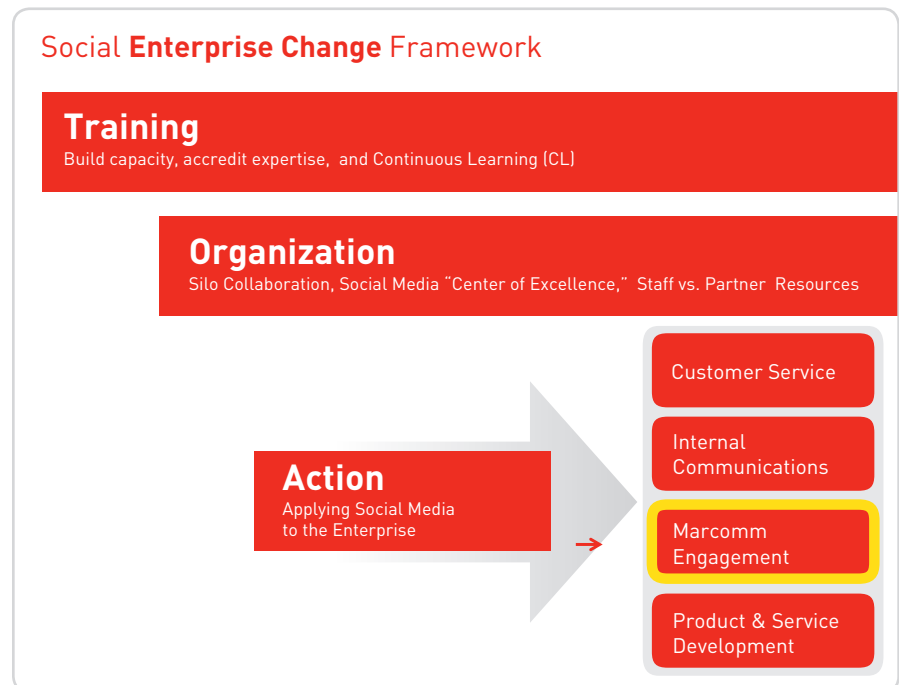
Some questions seem hokey. Give yourself a little room to explore and freedom to be corny. In short, suspend your disbelief in order that you might reveal what would be a natural position for your brand. You may find that you are not ready to jump into direct conversations with your customers via social media, preferring instead to help them share amongst themselves. You may find that it is not your brands job to entertain your customers but rather to be useful to them in a new way (like an iPhone app, for instance).

Once you have a definition for your brands social self, your strategic choices will become clearer.

**2. Building Your Enterprise Change Framework**

Social media is not just for marketers or communications experts. Many brands are finding that social media can inform or even change basic business processes from customer service to actual product development. Consultancies are springing up around business change management via social media.

You don't have to set out to transform your enterprise to gain advantages from social media. Most companies don't take all of that head on. Rather, they start in a few distinct places like training and organization to introduce change at a level that will impact the business immediately.



## Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy (continued)

### Training

Social media cannot be outsourced, at least, not completely. Nor can it be learned through books. This is one discipline that really requires hands-on experience and non-stop training. We have developed a complete training program delivered via live seminars and immersive sessions as well as via an on-demand, online solution. By offering experienced marketers a way to acquire strategic and tactical expertise, we keep our selves in a “continuous learning” state.

Intel has adopted an accreditation program for their staff. By taking “digital university-level” courses, staff can acquire knowledge and status within the organization. At Ogilvy, we have designed a “belt system” allowing marcom staff to work their way up to black belt or expert status within the organization.

Actively educating ourselves is key to building capacity and judgment within our brands and organizations for using social media well.

### Organization

Social media doesn't belong to marketing, public relations or customer relations. It doesn't sit neatly within any of the existing discipline silos. Rather than create a new, distinct organization, brands are opting for a “center of excellence” model which pulls people from all disciplines to form a federation of sorts. Their mission is most often to define and socialize best practices, share knowledge and actively work towards integration. Intel, American Express and others have adopted this model and sidestepped the question of “who owns social media?” Social media will accelerate the integration of communications and marketing. It will likely spread from there. If you work in an organization with competitive marcom silos today, chances are they will all be one unit in the future.

Next you need to decide who will do the actual work within the brand and how to carve up what you will do internally vs. via your agency partners. How can you determine which key positions to hire before the actual revenue impact of those positions is revealed? Most companies grossly underestimate or overestimate what they need in order to create an effective social media program. Many settle for hiring that one social media person and then wonder why their business is not magically transformed. Still others assume that industry leaders like Dell have a legion of social media-specific people and unless you get that legion no progress can be made.

**Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy** (continued)

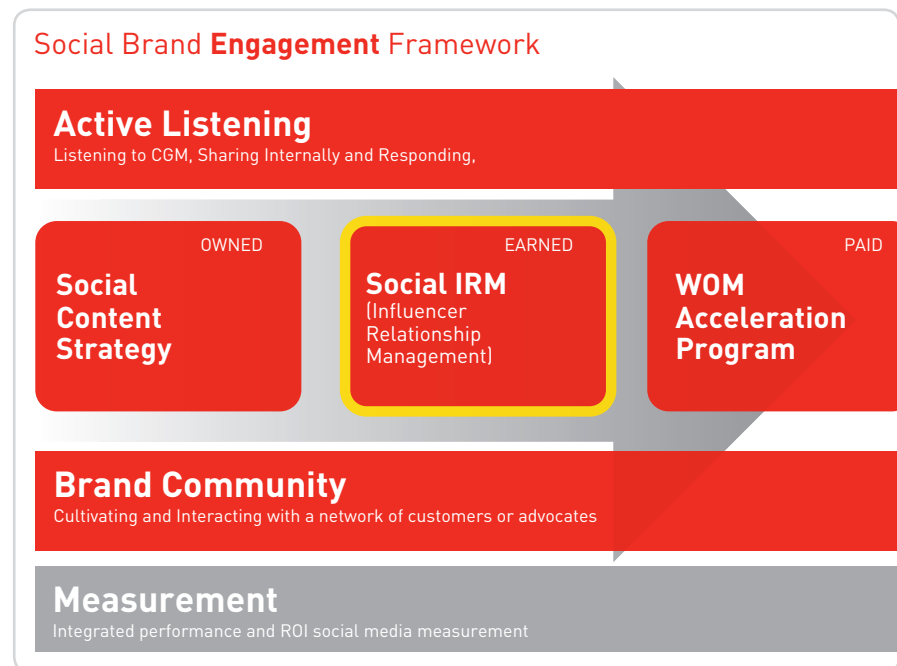
The truth is somewhere in between. Managing customer care extended out into the social Web can be resource-intensive. Just the live coverage on Twitter alone can require 2-3 team members. If you are trying to manage the “conversation calendar”<sup>11</sup> of your Facebook page and content publishing elsewhere in your social Web, you may find that you can centralize all of that with a single, very busy person. But that is just one key platform. The organizational task is to identify the least number of resources you need internally and then thoughtfully augmenting those folks with your agency partners. Time will tell where you need to staff up.

Chances are if you chose well, your agency has a lot of experience bringing social media to bear for different brands. They can help you develop your social brand position and plans for changing how you work. They can also serve as a useful filter of the fire hose of new technologies and solutions springing up in the marketplace every day.

**3. Using a Social Media Engagement Framework**

Once you know how you will move your company towards change via training and organization models, you need a model to plan your social media marcom efforts more strategically today.

An Engagement Framework maps out how to organize your efforts in social media in six discrete categories.



<sup>11</sup> “Conversation Calendar” is a term used by Facebook sales reps to describe the daily and weekly rhythm of updates to your brand Facebook pages to keep your followers engaged

**Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy** (continued)**Active Listening**

Whether you are listening to gain insight that drives marketing or to rapidly respond to customers or stakeholders, every brand must adopt some type of commitment to listening. That doesn't mean that every brand needs to implement an enterprise-wide solution to listening to every utterance or content posting across the social Web. One of the balancing acts in listening to consumer generated media (cgm) is to balance an effort to not "boil the ocean" with a desire to detect a crisis before it becomes a crisis.

Brands are putting in "pretty good" listening solutions that deliver short, relevant reports on a daily or weekly basis. Some have limited their sift to Twitter and a major forum (think TripAdvisor) and come up with some valuable reports. One way or another, brands need to implement a pretty good system for listening. The "active" part is all about knowing what you will do with the information. Do you have a commenting policy that will empower your communications staff to "story correct?" Will the insights from consumers make their way to the CMO and influence future marketing and product efforts?

**Owned, Earned and Paid Media**

Every brand has the choice of how they will use their own Web presence and content. This is "owned media" and offers the ultimate in control, yet clearly without the complete benefits of two-way dialogue with consumers. From your Web site to your Twitter account, owned media can actually be done more "socially" than the press releases, white papers and videos you may have pumped out a few years ago. Today, owned media should be shareable and findable. That means embedding Web standards for sharing and bookmarking (e.g. Share This<sup>12</sup>), and it means creating all content with search results in mind. Search remains embarrassingly underutilized for most brands. The state of the art starts with search intent modeling, a process advanced by our SEO experts, Global Strategies International<sup>13</sup>. Not only do we listen to what consumers are talking about in relation to our brands, we are also paying attention to how they are searching. Using the language that our customers are using is the key to creating highly relevant owned media that pops up high in Google search results.

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12 <http://sharethis.com/>

13 <http://www.globalstrategies.com/>

**Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy** (continued)

The new earned media is word of mouth. That's what happens when we engage a new set of influencers in a way that causes them to pass something along, comment on or participate in some way. We earn word of mouth through the right value exchange with people. We pay attention to them and understand what would be valuable to earn their attention and possibly their advocacy. While there are billions of brand mentions every day via word of mouth, don't mistake that for how willing people are to just chatter about your brand if you ask them nicely. To succeed in earned media, brands need to know how to earn that attention.

Social Influencer Relationship Management (Social IRM) is the process of managing these relationships well and encouraging people to be vocal about a product, service, brand or topic. Unlike CRM, it's not about a simple ROI of stimulation. How many emails before someone clicks through...that sort of thing. Social IRM never stops being personal and high touch. It presumes the brand values advocacy in a way similar to customer revenue. The future of Social IRM points to a time when we connect the influencer and customer databases to understand who our most vocal customers are and what motivates them to share.

**Brand Communities**

Every brand can support some type of community. Part of that truth lies in how loosely you define "community." Victoria's Secret Pink has over two million fans on Facebook who may find themselves interacting with each other and not just the brand. That is a form of community. Some communities are looser than others, and brands may not be able to take advantage of them. I feel a sense of belonging with my fellow Rainbow Vacuum owners, but I don't know them nor am I going to spend any time with them. Still, if I run into someone who reveals they are an owner, I will have a conversation with them.

Every brand should know what their communities are or where the potential for community lies. If Campbell's Soup can foster a community, then many brands have the potential. You may find as Maker's Mark did that there are loyalists out there who will take pride in their community and membership in Ambassador programs<sup>14</sup>. As you engage influencers to share word of mouth, it only makes sense to build a deeper relationship via community to create a more cost effective platform for vocal loyalists.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.makersmark.com>

**Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy** (continued)**Measurement**

Even as we advocate for all this sensible strategic approach, one of the keys to succeeding in social media is experimentation and iteration. Anyone who portrays social media as a highly predictable universe with power laws like the average click-through rate on a display ad, is just kidding himself (and others). Brands will succeed by trying lots of things. You need a reliable measurement model to know if you are winning or losing on any given day.

Every brand can decide which KPIs they will follow today while we all wait for Facebook to get around to floating a value KPI for a “fan” (they have a lot on their plate right now). We developed Conversation Impact™<sup>15</sup> as a simple model for brand marketers to report reach, brand preference, and action based upon readily trackable metrics. Beyond important conversion metrics like click-throughs or email sign ups or fan acquisition, you can also track your positive word of mouth online. Whether you use Conversation Impact™ or some other model, use it consistently. That frees up marcom teams to try different tactics knowing they will at least be able to compare them to each other to gauge what is effective.

Social media is not some new channel. It is an enduring change and represents a new discipline for marketers. Consumers and brands are adopting it differently in most markets around the world but they are adopting social media. Now is the time to make change within our brands to use social media more strategically and prepare for its growth in business. The experimentation and evangelist-led tactics that got us this far will not be enough to reap the true benefits of a social world. Our marketing and branding discipline can help us all use social media more effectively. Let’s start by defining our own social brand.

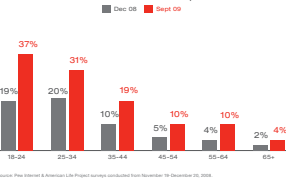
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<sup>15</sup> See Conversation Impact™ from Ogilvy: <http://blog.ogilvypr.com/conversation-impact-social-media-measurement-model-by-ogilvy-360-digital-influence/>

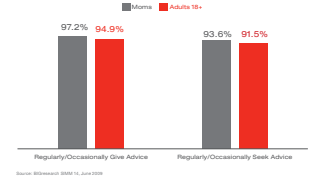
**Time for Brands to Adopt a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy** (continued)

## At A Glance

**Young people flock to Twitter**  
Internet users age 18-44 are more likely than older users to use Twitter or another status update service.



**Do you regularly/occasionally give advice to or seek advice from others about products or services you have purchased?**



Its time for brands to take a more strategic approach to social media. There are 3 major reasons calling for this shift:

**1. Social Media is Spreading Out Beyond Just Influencers** — just like other forms of communication, social networks like Facebook, Orkut and platforms like Twitter are spreading beyond their original user bases proving they are more mass than niche. That trend will likely continue. Ultimately, social media leads to new more powerful forms of word of mouth where users are sharing, commenting and passing content to their peers. This is more influential for purchase decisions than other forms of marketing. Word of Mouth Marketing is big business — \$3.1 billion in 2013 — with an increasing number of brands adopting programs to convert customers and influencers into advocates.

**2. Social Media is Pressuring Business from Within to Change** — tactical experimentation has led to an inconsistent use of social media which, in some cases, may harm a brand’s reputation. Short term campaign mentality may spawn Facebook pages that brands are not prepared to maintain or worse. The critical mass of employees on social networks will drive brands to make the hard choices between empowering them to speak and restricting their activity on behalf of the brand to protect IP and regulated business practices. Finally as brand managers plan budgets for next year, they must have metrics and a strategic plan to justify the new, higher spend.

**3. Measurement of Social Media Is Changing How We Measure Business** — we can now measure the performance of social media programs. New models will lead us towards a Net promoter-like metric and eventually new value metrics for fans and advocates. Waiting to gain experience may set your brand back.

To develop a comprehensive strategic approach to social media and achieve the biggest impact possible, companies must do three things:

- 1. Define their social brand** — just how can they and should they participate in social media that is authentic to them. Not every company should put their 1,666 blogging employees in an aggregator like Microsoft. Not every brand should enlist women to tell men how they can score like Axe does via Facebook.
- 2. Decide how to move your organization to adopt social media best practices via an Enterprise Change Framework.**
- 3. Establish a Marketing & Communications (Marcom) Social Media Engagement Framework** outlining the best way for the organization to plan marcom programs.

**Social Enterprise Change Framework**



**Social Brand Engagement Framework**

