

# BRAND<sup>TM</sup> QUARTERLY

## SOCIAL BRANDS THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

ISSUE #20 | **SOCIAL MEDIA SPECIAL EDITION**

Promoting Social Media To The Integrated Communications Bullpen

3 Unconventional Ways To Measure B2B Social Media Results

The Rise Of Visual Content, And Why It Matters To You

Social Media Dominance And The New Social Business

Branded Video: The 7 Elements Of Virality

...and much more inside.

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BREATHE LIFE INTO YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

A background network diagram consisting of numerous grey dots of varying sizes connected by thin grey lines, creating a complex web-like structure. In the top right corner, there is a white rectangular box with an orange border, tilted slightly. Inside the box, the word "sysomos" is written in a bold, orange, lowercase sans-serif font. A small orange speech bubble icon is positioned above the letter 'o' in "sysomos".

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## From The Editor

Social brands think outside the box - does yours?

I'm sure you'll find plenty of inspiration from our 27 social-savvy experts in this issue.

And with that, I'd like to welcome you to Brand Quarterly's first ever Social Media Special Edition. This bonus edition of the magazine has been made possible by the awesome team at Sysomos, a world leader in the field of social intelligence and analytics - a huge Thank You to them on behalf of our team, and our readers :)

There's so much covered in this issue, by so many wonderful contributors - I'd love to list them all here, but I guess that's why my editor's note is always with the issue contents - so I don't need to. I will leave you to discover all of the contributors and their valuable insights in your own way, be that reading this issue cover to cover (wink, wink), or cherry-picking those topics that resonate most with you. Either way, you're in for a treat!

We love hearing from our readers and want to be able to offer you more of the content that interests you. So, if there's something in this issue you feel strongly about, or have more insights to add, tweet us @BrandQuarterly and let us know your thoughts.

And when you have a moment, as a way of saying "Thanks guys for the great special edition," you can follow / tweet @Sysomos or visit them at [www.sysomos.com](http://www.sysomos.com).

I'll see you next month for our regular scheduled programming...  
oops - I mean our regular May Issue.

Until then :)

*Fiona*



Brand Quarterly Magazine  
ISSUE #20 - SOCIAL MEDIA SPECIAL EDITION  
Published APR 2016  
[www.BrandQuarterly.com](http://www.BrandQuarterly.com)

Publisher/Design: Vesey Creative Ltd  
[brandquarterly@veseycreative.com](mailto:brandquarterly@veseycreative.com)

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**When social joins the integrated  
plan in the communications bullpen,  
you're setting everyone up for success**

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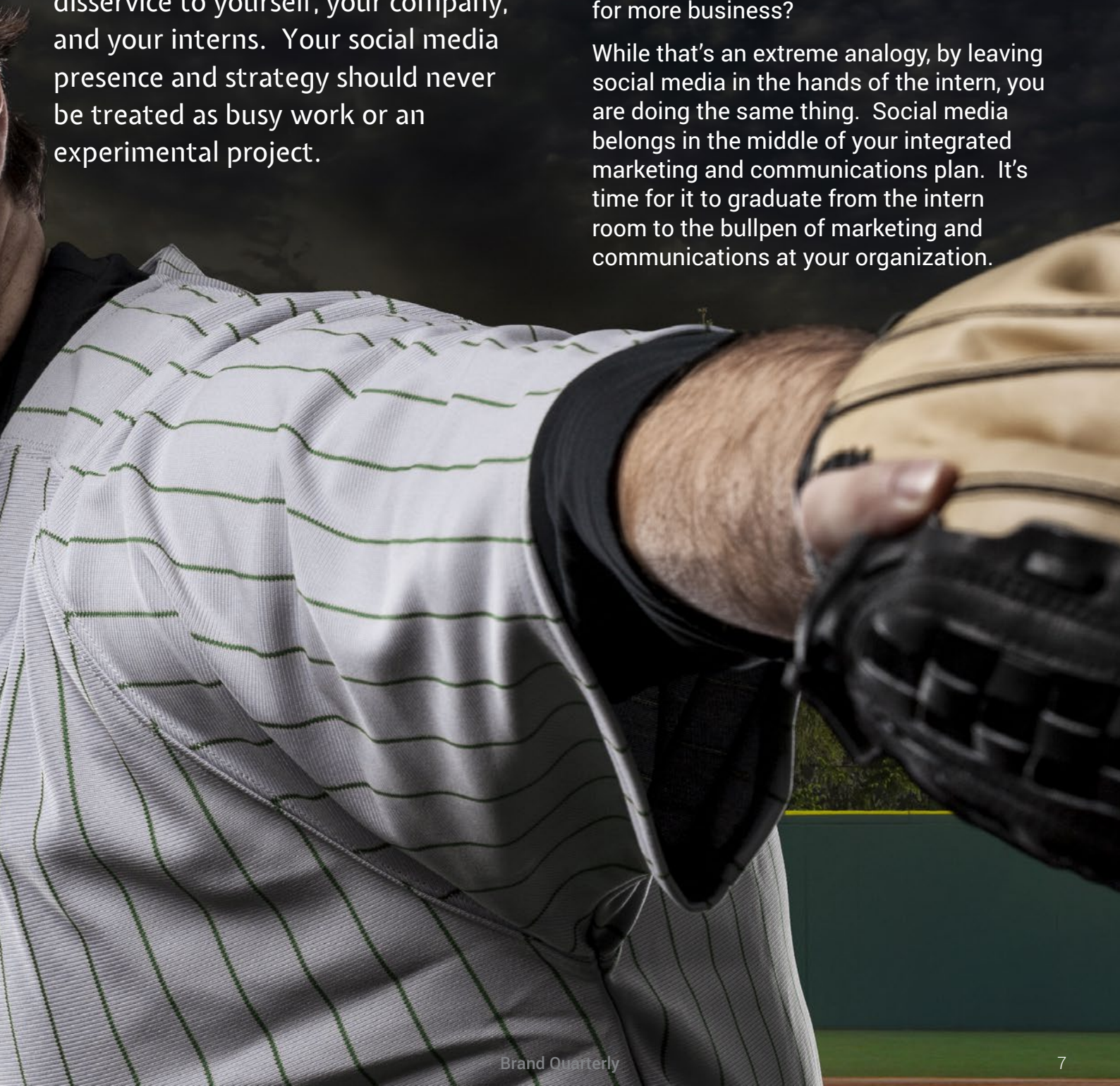
# Promoting Social Media To The Integrated Communications Bullpen

*Gini Dietrich*

Where does social media fall in the hierarchy of your organization? If you're still treating it as something you hand off to the interns to keep them busy, you're doing a great disservice to yourself, your company, and your interns. Your social media presence and strategy should never be treated as busy work or an experimental project.

Social media is, in many cases, the first connection with your organization, yet many organizations leave it in the hands of a young and inexperienced professional without any oversight or supervision. Think about it this way: would you send an intern to golf with your largest customer and ask for more business?

While that's an extreme analogy, by leaving social media in the hands of the intern, you are doing the same thing. Social media belongs in the middle of your integrated marketing and communications plan. It's time for it to graduate from the intern room to the bullpen of marketing and communications at your organization.



## Breaking Down Silos

Did you know that social media is viewed as the second most effective digital marketing tactic for customer retention purposes, behind only to email? (TNW News). From customer service, to public relations, all the way up to your C-Suite, social media belongs to everyone.

- The PR team should use it for reputation management, brand awareness, and to manage an issue before it becomes a crisis.
- The marketing team should use it for customer acquisition.
- The sales team should use it to network with new prospects. A study released by KiteDesk proves the effectiveness of social media for sales professionals. In fact, salespeople who have an excellent understanding of social media were over six times more likely to exceed their sales quota than peers with rudimentary or nonexistent social media skills.
- The executive team should use it for thought leadership and credibility. However, at the time of the 2015 Social CEO Report, there were only 50 Fortune 500 CEOs with a presence on Twitter. According to American Family Insurance CEO Jack Salzwedel, social media is “a part of the job” for CEOs.

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## From customer service, to public relations, all the way up to your C-Suite, social media belongs to everyone

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Of course, as with anything integral to your company's reputation and management, there needs to be a process for handling social media. You cannot silo your company's

social media presence (to the intern room, for example), and expect it to work. In fact, this is the recipe for a communications disaster.

## No Longer An Afterthought

Social media needs to be a touchpoint at every step of the way.

- How does your social media strategy align with your business goals?
- How will you manage a communication crisis?
- What's your brand voice and how will that shine through as you interact with your customers online?
- What's your escalation plan?
- How are inquiries coming through social media routed to customer service, and vice versa?
- When are you doing social media compliance training for new employees?

When creating an integrated communications plan, you need to ask the same questions about your social media strategy:

- **What does success look like?**  
How are you going to be measuring the return-on-investment?
- **Where are your customers on social media?**  
What are they talking about? How are they using social media to engage with their favorite brands?
- **Who is going to be managing the strategy and execution?**  
How are the roles defined within your teams? Who holds the keys to your social media accounts?
- **How is your internal team communicating with one another?**  
What's your process for checking in and escalation if there is an issue?



- **Why should people care about what you're saying on social media?**

Are you creating thoughtful and useful content? How are you interacting with your customers and influencers online?

Social media is not here to replace any of your other communication efforts and strategies. In fact, it's a tool and technique to complement every point of outreach to your customers. When used properly, it can leverage advertising, inbound interactions, and even live events, such as tradeshows and conferences.

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## Social media is not here to replace any of your other communication efforts and strategies

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### Never Stop Learning

You've broken down silos, you're prepped with all of the answers to the questions above, and your company is ready to make a splash on social media.

You have a killer editorial calendar, you've created great informative content, and you're ready to hit send. Go forth and engage!

This is it. This is your social media plan from now until the end of time. You never have to change a thing...

You didn't actually think it was going to be that simple, did you?

When your sales are fluctuating, your email open rates are falling, and your ads don't perform well, do you just say, "Oh well, we have to stick to the plan"? Of course not. You evaluate, see what lessons can be extracted from the missteps, and pivot with a new strategy. Social media is the same.

To be successful, you need to experiment - as long as you're true to your company brand and voice. You're not seeing traction with your content? Your engagement efforts make you feel like you're running in place? Evaluate, pivot, and re-engage.

### But What About The Interns?

Your company's interns are there to learn about your industry, and that does include social media. Having an integrated marketing plan means the tasks you assign to your interns will include social media touch points. In fact, you can even have your interns evaluate various social media platforms, create proposals for a potential social media campaign, and even come up with suggestions for how your current social media strategy can be improved.

When social joins the integrated plan in the communications bullpen, you're setting everyone up for success.



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## Gini Dietrich

*Founder, CEO | Arment Dietrich*

Gini Dietrich is the founder and CEO of Arment Dietrich, an integrated marketing communications firm. She is the author of *Spin Sucks*, co-author of *Marketing in the Round*, and co-host of *Inside PR*. She also is the lead blogger at *Spin Sucks* and is the founder of *Spin Sucks Pro*.



[www.spinsucks.com](http://www.spinsucks.com)

# Focus On The Content Why, Not The What

*Joe Pulizzi*

In the documentary *The Story of Content: Rise of the New Marketing* (26:54 mark), River Pools & Spas Co-Owner Marcus Sheridan shares the following about their turnaround from near bankruptcy to becoming the global leader in fiberglass pool education:

"The moment we stopped saying, 'We're pool builders' and started saying 'We are the best teachers in the world about fiberglass pools and we just happen to install them as well,' ...that was one of the most prosperous days of our lives."



Before this, River Pools was like every other pool company - they installed pools. What became the difference in River's success was moving the product from primary to secondary in the mission.



## What Do You Sell?

Most likely, what you sell is primary to your company's mission, which is then passed down to your content marketing mission and strategy, through to your social media strategy, blogs and white papers. Do you know what this creates? Self-serving content.

Self-serving content does little for your audience and is a waste of time and resources for your brand.

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### **Self-serving content does little for your audience and is a waste of time and resources for your brand**

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Let's consider a large enterprise like 3M. Over the next five years, the majority of 3M sales will come from new products. If 3M were to focus their content mission around their specific products and services, it would not only be impossible (3M provides thousands of products), it's always changing because the products change.

3M's mission is all about helping people live a better life through advancements in science. This becomes a noble mission and purpose on which to base the direction of the content... focused around the needs of the audience with a specific content tilt (around science).

## More Than Ourselves

This explains why most marketers are so terrible at content creation. The "why" for most marketers is driving demand and selling more widgets.

Kirk Cheyfitz, CEO of Story Worldwide, says that *"like a decent human being, brands need to be about more than themselves."*

It seems too simple, but yet almost all brands get this wrong. We focus on what

our organizational goal is, and then we create content we believe drives that goal. This works in advertising, so why wouldn't it work in content marketing?

Sadly, it doesn't.

Sure, the organizational goal is important (sales, savings, or customer loyalty), but to hit that goal, we have to focus on the needs and wants of the audience. How can we be useful and impactful to the audience outside of the products and services we sell? Are we creating value outside of what we sell? Answering that question hits at the very heart of what content marketing is and can be.

For your content and messaging to work, the primary goal has to be focused entirely on the audience, with the business goal being secondary. Or, maybe better said, you can't reach your business goal without first serving the needs of the audience. Once we deliver consistent value to our audience, and they begin to know, like and trust us, then we can extract value from that relationship.

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### **For your content and messaging to work, the primary goal has to be focused entirely on the audience**

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Most brands simply don't do this, and that matters. It matters because the effectiveness rate, according to Content Marketing Institute / MarketingProfs research, hovers at around 30%. We need to do better.

Do you want a better lead generation program? Then focus all your energy on building ongoing subscribers to your content, and THEN create leads from your subscriber base. We've worked with hundreds of B2B companies in the past six years, and literally no one does this.

Let's take CMI for example. Our mission is to advance the practice of content marketing

so that enterprise marketers can be more successful in their job-getting buy-in for the practice, showing return for the investment, organizing around the approach so they are successful.

That's the primary focus. How do we "show" return for our efforts? CMI focuses on building an audience of subscribers to the content itself. Once we build an ongoing relationship with them (around the needs of the audience), and they begin to know, like and trust us, then (and only then) do we present products in front of them that help our bottom line.

Solve the audience need - build a relationship through content for that audience need (through subscription) - then present products that are in line with that audience need (like our event, Content Marketing World).

Marriott believes that if they can solve their audience's travel problems consistently, that audience will be more likely to stay at a Marriott. Indium believes that if they can solve their audience's needs around industrial soldering equipment, they'll be more likely to buy their soldering equipment.

## Your Why Affects Your What

When people talk about their content marketing, they talk about the WHAT... their blogs, podcasts, videos, events, and social posts. But the WHAT doesn't matter if the WHY is lacking.

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## The WHAT doesn't matter if the WHY is lacking

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Nobody cares about your products or services. If your why is based on selling more shoes, consulting services, or routers, your WHAT will have no soul. Your content will be wanting.

The "why" you exist is not your product. Your "why" is the problem your product solves.

## The Next Steps

Changing your WHY is a cultural shift, which always takes time. It's desperately challenging. BUT IT MUST BE DONE.

Start slowly - but begin now. Implementing a visual content audit could be a solid first step. Just place samples of your content in front of your executive team and have them engage with it. Is the content in line with your deeper mission, or does your content exist for the sole purpose of pitching your product?

You may discover that some of your WHAT should cease to exist until you can get your WHY straightened out. Good luck!



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## Joe Pulizzi

*Founder | Content Marketing Institute*

Joe Pulizzi is the founder of Content Marketing Institute, the leading education and training organization for content marketing, which includes the largest in-person content marketing event in the world, Content Marketing World. Joe is the winner of the 2014 John Caldwell Lifetime Achievement Award from the Content Council. Joe's fourth book Content Inc. was just released. His third book, Epic Content Marketing was named one of "Five Must Read Business Books of 2013" by Fortune Magazine. You can find Joe on Twitter @JoePulizzi. If you ever see Joe in person, he'll be wearing orange.



[www.contentmarketinginstitute.com](http://www.contentmarketinginstitute.com)



## 3 Unconventional Ways To Measure B2B Social Media Results

*Bernie Borges*

The two most prevalent reasons B2B organizations have been slower to adopt social media practices in comparison to B2C companies are, a lack of ability to measure results, and the mindset that social media *“doesn’t apply in our niche industry.”*

Social media is still a teenager on the global business stage, especially in B2B. In fact, for many B2B organizations, the teenager characterization is being generous.

The fact is that social media is like a telephone in two ways. First, it’s a communication tool. Second, it’s here to stay whether you’re a B2B, B2C or something in between.

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**Social media is still a teenager on the global business stage, especially in B2B**

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Consider how much trepidation occurred in the early days of the telephone. Can you imagine executives sitting around in a meeting saying something like *“We will never give every employee a telephone because we can’t control their conversations”*? I bet that was said more than once.

As silly as that sounds today, it’s exactly what many B2B executives have said about social media over the past ten years. In fact, there are still businesses that block employee access to social media from their company-owned computers. Someone should tell their executives that their employees have smartphones with access to the world in their palm.

I’m not the first to write about how to measure B2B social media results. But, you might find my perspective different than other articles in an online search on this topic.

Below, I offer three top ways to measure B2B social media results. If these three results are achieved, they trickle down to many other measurable results.

## Social Business Not Social Media

Start by eliminating the phrase social media and replace it with social business. Most businesses don’t think of themselves as media companies, even though it’s popular among content marketing advocates to think that way. If you manufacture industrial products with long, complex sale cycles, the last way your executives think of themselves is as a media company.

An organization that thinks like a social business understands the social channels exist much the same as the telephone. They exist to communicate, to engage, to listen,





to learn, to serve, to inform and to a certain extent to sell. The main point is they exist to support the operation of the business. Social channels represent an opportunity to engage customers and to integrate them into your business. Measuring strategic business outcomes through social starts with a mindset shift away from social media - to social business.

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## **Social channels represent an opportunity to engage customers and to integrate them into your business**

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In the 2015 *State of Social Business*, Ed Terpening, Industry Analyst at Altimeter Group, points out that organizations are moving beyond social for the sake of marketing and are focused on *integrating social across the business with emphasis on employee and customer advocacy*. The report also points out that 82% of businesses (surveyed) are either fully integrated or in the process of integrating social with their digital strategy. What this means is that businesses are acknowledging that social is part of the fabric of day to day business operations.

My conclusive point on this first B2B ROI attribute is that *being* a social business is requisite. Stop thinking about social media. Start thinking like a social business.

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## **Stop thinking about social media. Start thinking like a social business**

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## **Employee Recruiting And Retention**

One of the greatest challenges all B2B companies face is recruiting and retaining employees. Corporate recruiters know that the best talent is gainfully employed. Progressive B2B companies are training their recruiters to use social to identify and woo prospective employees to consider their career opportunities.

Consider Cisco's Socialvenger program. This program serves to train Cisco recruiters how to use social media to fill their pipeline with qualified candidates. The program gamifies the process. Recruiters select a superhero avatar as they learn how to use social media in their recruiting process. Socialvengers has accelerated the learning curve for corporate recruiters at Cisco, while contributing to their recruiting efficacy.

Employee turnover is costly in any industry. It's especially costly in B2B due to the specialization of many companies. Retention is very high on the priority list for B2B execs.

Implementing employee advocacy programs is one way to strengthen the bond between the employer and the employee. Consider AveryDennison's Get Social program. Here's how James Moat, Digital Director, Global Digital Corporate Communications describes the Get Social program:

*"We identified our employees as a prodigious opportunity to help drive awareness of our brand and launched an employee ambassador program, which we named Get Social. But it was more than mobilizing employees as advocates - and it's more than social media channels too. We wanted to start a movement to embed social media into our very culture..."*

AveryDennison employs more than 26,000 people. Clearly, they operate as a social business as illustrated by their Get Social program. They even call it a movement. That sounds pretty strategic to me. Don't you agree?

## Sales Process Improvement

This article wouldn't be complete without a strong mention of how social media can be harnessed to sell products and services in B2B. I admit, I'm not a fan of the phrase *social selling*. I understand the intent of the phrase. Rather, my advice to you as a B2B professional is to be a *social business practitioner* to improve your sales process, resulting in improved sales results.

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### Be a social business practitioner to improve your sales process, resulting in improved sales results

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Take Dell for example. Bryan Jones, Vice President of North America Commercial and Global 500 Marketing, has been on a mission to train Dell Commercial sales staff to harness social channels to engage with prospects and customers to strengthen relationships and identify new sales opportunities.

Last year, Bryan commissioned a research report through Carnegie Mellon University. The resulting report titled 'Digital Transformation – Social Selling Research, Insights and Best Practices,' contains key findings on the impact of social in B2B sales. These include that *75% of B2B buyers are influenced by information found on social*

*channels; 67% of the buyer's journey is now done digitally, and 97% of the time cold calling is ineffective.*

Dell's Social Media and Community University (SMaC U) has trained more than 16,000 of its employees on how to use social media in the course of day to day business. Amy Heiss, Director of SMaC U at Dell, describes it this way: *"We empower team members and executives to use social media to amplify Dell's brand messages and to connect with our customers."*

Amy has witnessed many examples of Dell sales professionals improving their results by effectively integrating social engagement practices into their sales process.

## Conclusion

If social media is analogous to the telephone, then it behooves B2B companies to embrace the potential it provides to communicate and engage with employees, prospective customers, current customers, suppliers, and partners. The way to measure results is to measure the impact of specific programs like those mentioned in this article. AveryDennison, Cisco, and Dell are harnessing social media strategically to achieve measurable business results.

I would argue that AveryDennison, Cisco, and Dell are examples of B2B social business in action.



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## Bernie Borges

CEO | Find and Convert

Bernie Borges is CEO of Find and Convert, a digital consultancy serving B2B clients, and Executive Producer of the Social Business Engine digital media property. Borges is author of Marketing 2.0, a frequent speaker at marketing conferences and a former AMA Face to Face Workshop Faculty member. Borges is an IBM Futurist, Dell Social Influencer and has been recognized by industry peers, including Likeable Local's 150 Marketers to Follow, Cision's Top 50 Content Marketers on Twitter, Online Marketing Institute's Top 15 Digital Marketing Educators, and is a regular contributor to Relevance, Social Media Today and Social Media Strategies Summit.

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A close-up photograph of a man wearing a light-colored fedora hat and a dark jacket. He is looking through a magnifying glass held over his right eye. The background is a dark, textured stone wall. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the man's features and the texture of the wall.

## The Rise Of Visual Content, And Why It Matters To You

*Amber Naslund*

It is impossible to open a social network these days and not see the stream of images, videos, and graphics that dominate the experience.

In fact, according to a survey by Harvard University, Snapchat is the fastest growing platform among Millennials, with Instagram close behind. And while Facebook still reigns king as the most widespread social network, with 81% of survey respondents owning an account, there's no denying that video and imagery have dominated Facebook updates in the last year or two.

So what does this mean for brands? How can companies and marketers capitalize on the opportunities presented by the increasingly visual Web?



## The Value Of Image Monitoring

In 2014, 1.8 billion photos were shared every day on social media. Do the math: that's over 1 million images a minute.

For businesses of all kinds, this is a good thing: brands now have the ability to incorporate visual content into the list of ways they can better understand their customers, engage around topics of interest and affinity, and know how their brand is being portrayed across social media channels.

Are the most popular images the ones we want associated with our brand? How is our content performing vs the competition, and what of our best-performing content should we consider amplifying with paid media? Is our own content performing best, or is content created by our community capturing more attention and interaction?

Beyond reputation management, visual content can also provide examples of how products are being used and adopted in the market. For example; popular "hack" images and videos could give rise to new and expanded opportunities, or even expose risks or concerns that a company might want to address immediately. For businesses who have prominent (and frequently imitated) brands or logos, monitoring for copyright infringement or fraud might be important in making sure counterfeit products don't enter the market.

Customer service can also include visual content in their input streams - enabling them to respond to complaints, compliments, and questions that are shared alongside images and videos of products and experiences. Financial institutions might also be able to find instances of fraudulently shared banking and personal information - like a credit card image - while a clothing retailer might be able to help anticipate demand and adjust supply chain based on the virality of images from their Spring previews.

But doing all this means that our existing "listening" technologies must advance beyond keyword and text-based searches, and delve into the world of finding relevant pictures and videos in the vast and ever-growing sea of visual content.

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## Our existing "listening" technologies must advance beyond keyword and text-based searches

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### Technologies To Watch

The challenge for brands to date is that listening and monitoring - cornerstones of modern digital brand management - have been limited to text analytics alone. Unless images were accompanied by text / a caption, there was virtually no way of finding them (and not all technologies were even able to capture that text to start with, depending on their data input and capture capabilities).

Today, solutions that blend the power of text analytics with powerful image-matching and recognition algorithms are emerging. They can identify objects - like a shoe, or a golf club, or a hamburger - within an image, and find a distinctive logo or graphic within a photo no matter its size, orientation, or color. If you're a soft drink company, for example, and want to find professional golfers enjoying your beverage on the course, that's pretty powerful indeed.

Just last year, Sysomos added GazeMetric to our platform for exactly this reason. Combining deep learning technologies - a type of abstract machine learning wherein the technology can effectively "remember" what it sees - with text analytics and powerful image-matching algorithms, Gaze brings these capabilities to life.

And that's just the start. Today we can do amazing things with static-image recognition. Later this year we'll extend these capabilities to videos as well.

## How This Might Work

Let's look at a real-life example to illustrate how this might work:

A beer manufacturer had been largely targeting their advertising and marketing to a leisure crowd, with ad spots featuring people enjoying their beers on a beach / vacation.

Once they added image monitoring to their capabilities, something very interesting came to light: a huge portion of the images that people shared (ones featuring their brand of beer) were not on beaches or vacation, but rather right at home during their backyard barbecues with friends.

Leveraging what they learned, the company shifted some of their advertising visuals and messaging to better reflect the real-life enjoyment of their product, increasing the effectiveness of their advertising dollars amongst their target audience.

## Where Do We Go From Here?

The visual content space is certainly not perfect yet, and image recognition technologies are really just starting to evolve.

But with continued advancements in artificial intelligence, in machine and deep learning capabilities, and in available data sets - think Internet of Things and wearable data - we will soon be able to move further, faster.

The truth is: we're only at the start of a critically important innovation in advanced analytics; one guaranteed to change the way companies "listen" to their customers.

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## We're only at the start of a critically important innovation in advanced analytics

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There's no denying the power of visual content and storytelling; it's critical to brands already. But the more we support the ability to analyze this type of content, the better we can help marketers and consumers alike harness photos and videos to drive an immersive, personalized experience.

Over the next five years, it will be amazing to watch our industry evolve from simply listening to seeing, hearing, and immersing ourselves in the customer experience through the power of visual content.



## Amber Naslund

*Senior Vice President, Marketing | Sysomos*

Amber is the SVP Marketing for Sysomos, a global leader in social intelligence. She's a dynamic communications strategist with deep experience with and passion for the emergence of social business. As an entrepreneur and executive, she has advised Fortune 500 companies - like L'Oreal, American Express, AMD, Dell, Avaya, CDW, Kraft Foods and Coca-Cola - as well as their executives on social business strategy and new workforce culture. Amber is also the co-author of the best-selling social business book *The Now Revolution*. She delivers dozens of keynote speeches on corporate culture, social business, and communication at industry conferences and private events every year.

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# Participation Marketing: Mobilizing Your Employees To Tell The Brand Story

*Michael Brito*

Brand storytelling is more than just branded content, native advertising, creative campaigns on Facebook or tear-jerker Super Bowl commercials.

It should also involve mobilizing employees to participate and feed a brand's content engine. And it's not just employees tweeting or sharing company news in social media. It's about surfacing the amazing stories about the brand, its products/ services, culture and workforce; then using employees as media to tell the rest of the world about it.

We all love to hear good stories. It's what connects us to our humanity. It links us to our past, helps us relate to others in the present and provides a glimpse into our future. Storytellers learned early on that people like to hear stories with a beginning, middle and end. We are drawn to stories that have characters that look like us, act like us or have similar characteristics that we can relate to.

We desire to be drawn into every story that matters; and enjoy when that story builds up to a riveting climax, followed by a conclusion that we are happy or satisfied with. Most of us enjoy being emotionally moved by a story, like in any good romance film.

You probably know “that guy” who commands the attention of everyone during a dinner party when he’s telling a story or sharing an experience. He’s always with an entourage of people laughing and agreeing with just about everything he says. This might explain why when someone is telling you a good story, you may not even realize it. You are too fascinated with the actual story itself, perhaps envisioning yourself as the lead character. That’s the power of a well-told story.

From a brand’s perspective, storytelling allows a company to be “human” and being human is about having a real, honest connection with people, being transparent, responsive and above all accessible.

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## **From a brand’s perspective, storytelling allows a company to be “human”**

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Data from the Boston Consulting Group tells us that when it comes to trust and credibility, “people they know”, “consumer opinions online”, and “colleagues and friends” rank the highest when people are seeking information about a company and its products. Every year, the Edelman Trust Barometer has similar findings, also stating that “employees of a company” and “technical experts” are highly trusted.

Additionally, research by the Society for New Communications Research from a few years ago found that the most frequent use of social media among business professionals was interacting with their peers online. 65% of users participate to engage with a professional community of colleagues and peers via social media, and 82% exchange information with technical experts.

The last piece of research stems from Altimeter’s 2015 State of Social Business

Report. Their research revealed that developing employee advocacy programs has grown as a top external objective by social strategists since 2013 by 191%, jumping from 13% to 45%.

By considering all of this research - either individually or collectively - the only real and logical conclusion is that developing an employee program should be a strategic initiative for you going forward. Doing so gives your brand the opportunity to demonstrate thought leadership, influence others through the buying cycle and feed the content engine with relevant and trusted information. It also provides an opportunity to have a select group of employees become brand journalists and tell stories through a more human lens; while the rest can amplify those stories all over the Internet.

The philosophy of employee brand storytelling is simple. It’s about combining the core tenets of journalism with storytelling, then using a motivated workforce to activate; thereby creating conversational value to all stakeholders, both customers and the media. Some simply call this employee advocacy.

Whether you agree with it or not, the idea of employee brand storytelling is easy to comprehend - the execution isn’t.

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## **The idea of employee brand storytelling is easy to comprehend - the execution isn’t**

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The following approach was developed to give you a blueprint on “how to design” an effective employee advocacy program; and ensure that it’s strategic and considers the mechanics and structure of both small businesses and large, complex organizations. This approach has evolved over the last 24 months based on real learning and real application. Not theory.

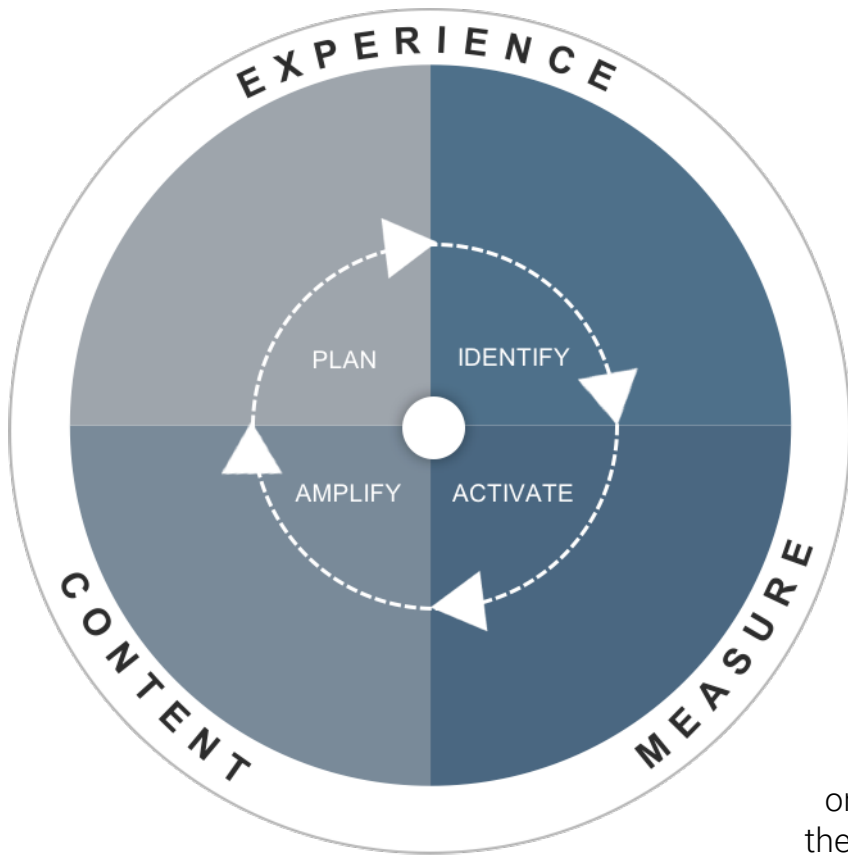


Image source and copyright: Michael Brito

## Define The Guiding Principles, Starting With The Employee Experience

It's critical that you deliver an amazing employee experience for your program. Making that experience memorable; and more importantly, convenient for your employees to share content needs to be top of mind, always. Otherwise, adoption and participation will suffer.

The content itself must not only focus on storytelling but also be relevant to the brand, product or business priority. It should resonate with what your employees care about and align with their passions and interests. It should also match, within context, what your customers are talking about. Performing an audience analysis will surface those key topics of conversation and language.

To determine the success of your program, there must be a framework establishing what KPIs will be used to measure real business impact. It's not just about relationships but tangible business outcomes like sales, leads, clicks to a website and yes, engagement.

- **Plan and define** the operational elements of the program i.e. goals and objectives, selection criteria, stakeholder collaboration, technology selection.
- **Identify, train and segment** employees based on specific job roles and/or varying levels of participation.
- **Activate employees** with strategic calls to action ensuring content aligns with overall business and brand goals, and enable them to participate quickly and easy through smart technology deployment.
- **Amplify employee-generated** conversations to other participants; and also through various PESO (paid, earned, shared, owned) activations.

## Collaborate, Plan And Document An Operational Plan

Prior to the implementation of your program, it's critical to answer the following questions and document the contents within a plan of record (POR). You may end up using the plan to ask for budget dollars from internal stakeholders or to "sell in" the program for executive approval. It may also be used as a reference point for others to review:

- **Goals And Objectives:** What does your brand want to achieve? What business/marketing outcomes are expected?
- **Program Logistics:** Who owns the program and what dependencies are needed to ensure a successful launch or pilot program i.e. budget, program management?
- **Employee Selection Criteria:** How are employees selected to participate? What's the plan to scale participation, language? Where do they participate – owned channels, branded channels, 3rd party communities?
- **Training:** Is there training prepared for employees at different proficiency levels? What's the plan to scale training globally? What about employees in different regions, languages?
- **Technology:** What technology platform will be used to scale the program i.e. content management, employee segmentation, language translation, rewards/badging, mobile integration, ease of use functionality?

- **Marketing:** What's the name for the program (internally and externally)? Will it be branded externally?

## Find And Recruit Employees; Design Training For Specific Employee Segments

There are several options to segment employees for training, content and overall management of the program. The good news for you is that this segmentation exercise, which should be done at the beginning, can be used on the back end of whatever technology platform selected for content, rewards/leaderboard, measurement, etc.

## The Employee Content Engine

According to Altimeter Group's recent report by Ed Terpening called, "Social Media Employee Advocacy: Tapping into the power of an engaged social workforce" 53% of marketers surveyed said that content is the biggest challenge when designing employee advocacy programs. For this reason, it is critical that



Image source and copyright: Michael Brito

you go through a narrative exercise and build an editorial approach, specifically for your employees. Consider the following model, which has been slightly adapted from a brand storytelling framework. It's an identical approach in principle and execution.

Data will give you the insights you need to find white space in the market. You can extract patterns of behavior, conversation analysis and audience insights that will help deliver the core positioning of your employee content.

The "winnable moment" is that North Star that makes you unique from everyone else and allows your brand - through your employees - to own that piece of the conversation.

The employee content and editorial framework is a way to categorize your content and allows your employees to tell their stories through three different lenses, whereby:

- 1. Your employees are the hero of the story:** stories all about your employees, the value they bring to the market, products/services; sometimes can be perceived as egotistical if not balanced with other stories.
- 2. Your employees are characters in a broader story:** stories about your customer, the value your customers receive from solving technology challenges or business problems in partnership with your employees; should not be self-serving and stories must show humility and lead with customers first.

- 3. Your employees comment on a 3rd party story:** stories about your employees' point of view about a topic in the market, the market itself or a topic that resonates with an audience and is also relevant to the brand; must add value to the market, educate and provide thought leadership.

## Amplify Employee-Generated Storytelling Through Converged Media Integration

What's the point of activating employees to participate and "tell the brand story" if only a very small percentage of customers and/or the media actually see it? Data from the Edelman reminds us that people need to see your brand message 3 - 5 times before they start to believe.

This is why integrating employee stories across paid, earned, shared and owned media is critical to the success of your overall brand objectives. Whether or not you agree, employee content is more trusted than branded content; and there is absolutely nothing wrong with using the power and budget of your branded channels to activate those employee-driven stories. For some struggling brands, participation marketing could very well mean life or death.



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## Michael Brito

*SVP, Head of US Digital Marketing | LEWIS Pulse*

I am a social strategist, author, adjunct professor, and avid 49ers and Lakers fan with almost 20 years experience helping organizations solve marketing challenges. In all my experience working, teaching and writing about digital marketing and social business, I've learned that consumers are real people with real passions, not just target markets or segments. In order to turn followers into actual friends, I believe brands need to listen more than they talk, and social media provides an easy and powerful way to connect with them, personally.



# The Consumer's POV On Influencer Marketing

*Mark Fidelman*

The world of marketing has become a volatile place over the past several years. Consumers are no longer interested in typical avenues of product promotion and tune out advertisements faster than a 13-year-old listening to a parent's lecture.

This is, in part, what has driven content production to flood every information channel of the Internet and enact a chorus of commotion making the digital noise more difficult than ever to break through. Content provides value and consumers want useful information to improve their lives.





People don't want product peddlers pushing messages down their throats anymore. They have had enough. And thanks to today's technological capabilities, they have the power to drop out, research the products they desire, consume the materials they want, and do so when they want to do it. For the first time in history, brands and marketers are truly at the mercy of consumers.

Those with the purchasing power now turn to peers, experts, and thought-leaders for sage advice on everything from career enhancement opportunities to the best toothpaste to buy. With all of these folks residing on one social channel or another, the collective power of social media has brought forth the age of influencer marketing.

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## **The collective power of social media has brought forth the age of influencer marketing**

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Influencer marketing, while its current incarnation has never been seen before, is nothing new as celebrities have been viewed as "influencers" since the dawn of public life. But with individuals amassing thousands, hundreds of thousands, or even millions of followers on their personal pages, "influencer" has become a more broadly defined term. This method of advertisement leverages these social powerhouses to promote a brand, product, or service to their highly engaged following. The results have proved to be astonishing, and thusly, everyone is looking to cash in.

It's clear how the industry feels about influencer marketing, but what about the customers themselves?

## **The Consumer's Point Of View**

Daniel Newman, CEO of BroadSuite and influencer in his own right, recently stated that *"As reported rates of trust in traditional advertising continue to sink to levels well below 50%, brands are going to continue to invest in channels that increase trust."*

Largely speaking, these channels are through social media and the influencers that inhabit the space; real influencers that is - not those who have purchased their followings. For those that are the real-deal, they have established trust and credibility with their followings, through sharing valuable information and only endorse messages they truly believe in; and their audience knows this.

As far as the consumer is concerned, the influencers they follow are not at the helm of any other authority; their authentic voice has made them an extension of the audience. These people have become like friends to their social supporters because they trust the information they provide is reliable, interesting, and credible.

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**As far as the consumer is concerned, the influencers they follow are not at the helm of any other authority**

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Since 92% of consumers turn to people they know for guidance, 81% of which is online, influencers have become an unparalleled resource for a multitude of people. And consumers aren't dumb. They know that their favorite influencers are often compensated to promote products, business, and so forth. The difference is that they don't mind as much because they're keenly aware that many influencers only endorse brands that resonate with them and that they genuinely believe in. The deals they take are on their



terms, and if they cannot confidently support the partnership, it simply won't happen.

Influencers often feel it is their obligation to provide their network with the most relevant and useful information, that will help their audience lead a more fulfilling existence. If they fail to do this, people will walk away from them just like so many brands before them; authenticity and transparency are key in the digital age.

In the audience's eyes, these are real people, not some faceless corporation. There is a genuine connection, and beyond valuable information, there is a very clear reason why that attachment exists.

## Just Like Me

In terms of content consumption, digital media is quickly becoming the preferred source as both younger generations and adults are turning away from the television and towards mobile devices. While there are several reasons this transition is occurring, one of the main factors was pointed out in a DEFY Media study, which analyzed the 13–34 year-old demographic to understand what fuels their content consumption as well as what causes them to “stop, watch, and share.”

What it all boils down to is control. The survey revealed that 69% of respondents stated that digital content provides media that they want to watch as opposed to the 56% that still prefer television. Additionally, 67% said that digital serves up content that is relatable over the 41% of television devotees. And that right there is the key to influencer marketing; content that people want to consume from a source that is relatable.

While celebrities are still considered to be influencers, there is a certain disconnect when it comes to these larger-than-life figures when compared to social superstars. In August of 2014, *Variety* published a study on YouTuber influence over younger generations.

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## The key to influencer marketing; content that people want to consume from a source that is relatable

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The study found that the appeal of YouTube celebrities outranks that of the more traditional variety.

Among those surveyed, 32% of 13–17 year-olds stated that they are more likely to view YouTube personalities as role models. While that number was slightly lower for millennials ages 18–24, 56% did state that they “feel closer” to their favorite YouTube personalities and 46% stated “they like the same things as I do.” For 13–17 year-olds, that number leaps to 61%.

As far as sales go, 63% of respondents from all ages said they would try a company or product recommended by a YouTuber while only 48% would take the same suggestion from a TV or movie star.

But relatability and admiration aren't the only factors at play here. When participants were asked if they think they could become YouTube celebrities, more than 50% of the people from all age groups said “yes.” This speaks volumes to the fact that people not only trust influencers at their word, but view them as real people; consumers just like them. Socially influential individuals are just part of the larger audience who are also seeking out great and authentic brands, products, and services like the rest of us.

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## People not only trust influencers at their word, but view them as real people; consumers just like them

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The bottom line is, as far as the audience is concerned, influencers are just people; people who have built their followings through only giving advice and recommendations to their audience that they themselves would take. Consumers are the ones who have given these folks the platform to stand on, and if led astray, that platform will be

demolished. Influencer marketing is such a powerful modality because influencers are real, have a real and resonant voice, and promote messages of legitimacy. Audiences and influencers are one in the same. In a socially connected world, today's follower is tomorrow's influencer.



## Mark Fidelman

CEO | *Fanatics Media*

Named a 2013 Huffington Post Top 50 Most Social CEO, Mark applies both his Fortune 500 and start-up expertise in revenue generation, marketing, and business strategy to produce the highest possible ROI at the lowest cost basis. Mark is a recognized expert in creating sales and marketing machines leveraging his experience with Freemium and Open Source business models. He has worked in the software and technology space for over 20 years with organizations such as A.T. Kearney, EDS, CT Space, and Autodesk. Mark authors the SOCIALIZED AND MOBILIZED Column on Forbes.com. Mark's SOCIALIZED! Book is available on Amazon and B&N.

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# Social Media Dominance And The New Social Business

*Sandy Carter*

Today, organizations use social channels like Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and now even Snapchat, to share messages and engage with customers in a more intimate and personal way than is possible through traditional marketing channels. Because the world of digital media evolves so quickly, social media marketing rules can be as fleeting as the tweets and snaps that fill our screens each day.

This means that to keep from falling behind, organizations need to continually challenge their marketing processes and adapt their strategies.



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**Social media marketing rules  
can be as fleeting as the  
tweets and snaps that  
fill our screens each day**

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## Measure And Visualize To Stay Ahead Of The Curve

The way in which organizations engage with their followers has become more important than their number of followers. It's more valuable to have a small number of loyal followers who engage with and share your social content than a large number of followers who rarely engage at all. It's about quality over quantity.

In fact, brands should be willing to "gift" their brand by having an influencer "take over" their channel to accelerate their engagement. In a takeover, a brand might use a guest blogger or allow a celebrity influencer to drive engagement on their channel.

It's a very different marketing strategy, in that it leverages the ecosystem to drive engagement and reach a totally new audience. To stay on message and maintain consistency, marketers should ensure that the "influencer" embodies the values of the brand and plans activities that align with the company's goals.

Additionally, to build and retain a loyal following, organizations should use measurement tools to ensure that they are on top of their social media game. Social intelligence platforms can help organizations sift through social data and see what matters - analyzing data, detecting moments or trends that need action, and helping organizations listen to their social media conversation in a smarter way.

In fact, at this year's South by Southwest conference and festival, IBM used a social intelligence platform powered by IBM Cloud to leverage engagement as the key metric. In the past, we looked at volume of output. Now, we have added another layer of measurement - reposts and retweets. This helps us see which posts actually resonate with our followers - enough that they'd want to share our content with their own networks.

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## Social intelligence platforms can help organizations sift through social data and see what matters

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Taking measurement a step further, we've started looking at users' Klout scores to determine the level of influence our voices have in the social conversation. By using new tactics and tools to dig a little deeper, we have uncovered smarter ways to measure our success, and we use that information to continually improve our social engagement.

And finally, we know that visualizing the impact of social goes a long way in the new millennial world. This year, at Jason Calacanis' LAUNCH festival in San Francisco - the largest startup festival in the world - we engaged the audience through a wearable piece of technology - a pin - that was linked to the event hashtag and connected to Watson via IBM Cloud. The pin changed colors every minute to showcase the sentiment of tweets from the various discussions and pitches happening at the festival. The audience literally saw (not just talked about) the value of using cognitive computing to visualize social media sentiment in real-time. Creative uses of real-time visualization can take your social media plan to the next level.

## Social Platforms Change Into Search Engines

Social search functions first gained traction on Twitter via the hashtag, which is now used across nearly every social channel. The hashtag makes it easy to track trends, search for conversations or users and, more generally, categorize content. Coupled with consumers' tendency to rely on social media to learn about new products and companies, the search function in social media platforms is quickly becoming a search

engine in its own right - with potential to serve up educational and marketing content for businesses. In essence, companies should embrace this new mode of consumer research when building their social business strategies.

While SEO is not going anywhere, identifying social media as a search channel can have great benefits. Embedding short links directly into social posts through platforms like Bitly gives organizations the opportunity to direct users to other company collateral - making it easy to track and manage a users' journey, collect data on clicks and shares and turn that information into actionable insights. Comprised of more than 25 billion data-infused links and a massive user base around the world that's supported by IBM Cloud, Bitly can be a game-changer in an organization's global social media marketing strategy.

## Tapping Into Social Niches

As social media continues to evolve, we're beginning to see a turn toward community-driven focus areas. In other words, as the sophistication and use of social platforms increases for organizations (corporate and personal alike), users are moving away from broad, generic communities and embracing smaller, niche networks.

For instance, GitHub is a private, social community for developers that's home to some of the latest tools and news for their industry. GitHub can be accessed in different

ways - some of which include GitHub.com, the IBM Bluemix cloud platform, and GitHub Enterprise through Bluemix Local or Dedicated. However users are finding it, it is now home to more than 12 million developers and is a social network in its own right.

Developers aren't the only ones with huge niche social networks. FinTech companies, especially those that leverage blockchain or digital currencies, have their own forums across social platforms. And Reddit is home to thousands of communities known as subreddits, formed around topics that range from gaming to cybersecurity.

As organizations try to make a splash within niche communities, it's imperative that they streamline their marketing plans and keep them on target. For example, if you're selling to women, you probably want to leverage Pinterest. For content marketing pros, Twitter is a safe bet. Knowing the platform, the topic of interest and the demographic are key in not wasting resources and efforts on the wrong social platform.

In all, organizations need to pivot and be socially adept, or they will lose ground on what's easily becoming the primary avenue for community engagement. Being a social business is now the norm, so be a social presence that people want to follow and share. It's amazing what customer advocacy and social media engagement can do for your bottom line.



## Sandy Carter

*General Manager, Developer Ecosystem and Startups | IBM*

Sandy Carter is IBM's general manager for the developer ecosystem and startups. She is responsible for IBM's worldwide relationship with developers, and she helps startups build their businesses on the IBM Cloud. Follow Sandy @sandy\_carter.



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**Moderately funny doesn't  
get you a lot. A video  
has to be very funny for  
someone to share it**

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# The 7 Elements Of Virality

What Branded Videos Need, To Be Shared Over And Over... And Over Again.

*Joel Ackerman*

Virality should rarely be the primary goal of a branded video. And virality can never be guaranteed. But it can mean free advertising, press, and hype leading to insane amounts of awareness and, when executed with exceptional skill, increased sales.

As a video creator that has generated over 150 million branded views, I've identified the seven key elements of virality brands can include to increase sharing potential.

## 1. Spectacle

Spectacle is something visually impressive about a video, preferably something the audience has never seen before. It can be as simple as stunning cinematography, but it has to be more than good production values. Most commercials on TV look professional enough, but most also lack true visual spectacle. If it's going to add virality, the spectacle has to be spectacular enough to share. Old Spice's primary visual spectacle in "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like" was creating an innovative one-shot that spanned multiple locations; while Sony Bravia used one million bouncy balls captured in slow-mo as they danced down the streets of San Francisco.



## 2. Universality

Four of the most successful viral ads ever (Old Spice, Poo-Pourri, Dollar Shave Club, and HelloFlo) marketed hygiene products. Hygiene is a universal issue, which makes hygiene products relevant to everyone (or almost everyone, like all men or all women). But when your brand or product is niche in its market or appeal, video ads can make the subject matter relevant to everyone have a better chance of being shared. “Cause marketing” is an example of brands trying to expand their audience, by expanding their relevance. Always makes pads and liners, but their #LikeAGirl campaign was about sexism, which is a much bigger issue, and one that men AND women care about.



## 3. Reality

News, pranks and stunts all fall into this category. The basis for their success is that they are real. If you thought that the people pranked in prank videos were actors instead of real people, it wouldn't be nearly as funny. Stunts, like Red Bull's Space Jump, that are real, are way more interesting than stunts done with visual effects. Even ones that were staged, scripted and cast can go viral if they are successfully made to appear as though they were real, like Jimmy Kimmel's "Worst Twerk Fail Ever – Girl Catches Fire" prank or #WorldsToughestJob by CardStore.

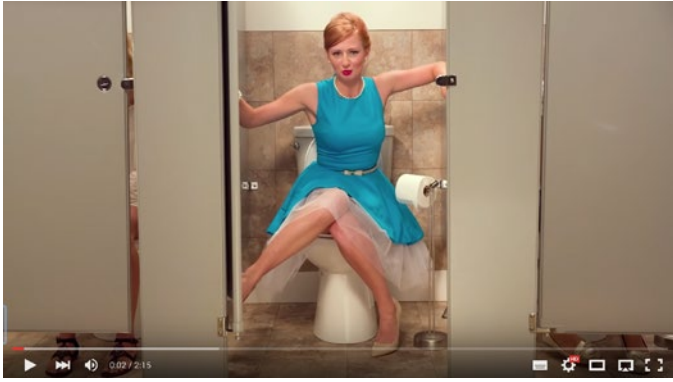


## 4. Controversy

Videos that stir the pot are more likely to stir discussion, and things that stir discussion are more likely to be shared by individuals and online news outlets alike. While something very controversial isn't helpful, and probably won't be shared, brands that aren't willing to risk upsetting a few people (and a few people will always be upset), will never reap the rewards of a moderate controversy. This is one reason small brands can still make huge waves online - because big brands are too afraid to take even little risks. Brands that deal with uncomfortable or taboo issues or subjects are finding the power that a minor controversy can have online.

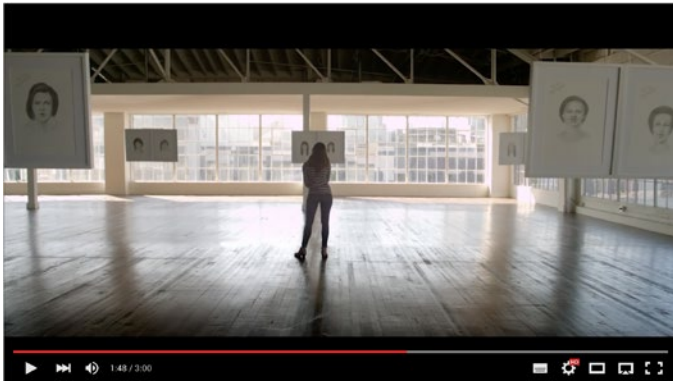
## 5. Humor

Comedy's not like controversy; moderately funny doesn't get you a lot. A video has to be very funny for someone to share it. But if it is truly funny (and hopefully has some other elements of virality to help it along), it can be tremendously viral and have a big impact. "Girls Don't Poop," the ad I wrote and directed for Poo-Pourri tripled annual revenues. But beware: what one finds funny, another may not find funny at all. This is why you find broad comedy in most successful viral videos employing humor as the primary viral element. My agency consistently produces good comedic spots, but even we have had some relative flops.



## 6. Emotion

Videos that tug the heartstrings can achieve virality more than funny videos, perhaps because people tend to agree more on what's touching than on what's funny. Emotional videos have been successfully done by brands selling products as mundane as breakfast cereal. Budweiser's "Brotherhood" commercial where the Clydesdale chases after its original owner after the parade, and Dove's "Real Beauty Sketches" video are both examples of emotionally powerful, and thus highly shareable, ads.



## 7. Bandwagon

Bandwagon means riding the coattails of another successful franchise. The use of parody and celebrity fall into this category because the video's success relies on the popularity of something other than the video or brand itself. Volkswagen's "The Force" ad, with the kid dressed as Darth Vader, is an example. Bandwagon videos can be easy to conceive but can be difficult to execute for legal or financial reasons.

Like elements in the periodic table, rarely are any of these elements used independently from all the others. For instance, stunts are often both reality and spectacle; most successful videos using humor also have an element of universality; and many using emotion also employ non-actors, giving it a feeling of reality.

Additionally, the mere inclusion of any or even all of these elements doesn't guarantee any degree of virality. Rather, it is the creative, skillful and novel use of these elements that inspire people to share them. So rather than just running with the first concept that includes a bunch of these elements, brands should work with skillful content creators to craft a video that craftily uses these elements of virality.



## Joel Ackerman

*Chief Creative Genius | Ackermania Creative*

Joel Ackerman is one of the top generators of views for branded videos on the planet. His videos, which combine entertainment with marketing, have been viewed over 150 million times. He is the award-winning writer and director of two of the most successful YouTube campaigns of all time (Poo-Pourri and Orabrush). Joel's videos have helped companies go from zero sales to millions in sales, and double or triple annual revenues. Ackermania has production units in Los Angeles, London, and Salt Lake City, Utah.



[www.AckermaniaCreative.com](http://www.AckermaniaCreative.com)



# Socialising Your Brand's Visual Essence

*Andrew Vesey*

You've selected your social platforms, set up a social team, devised a killer social editorial calendar and slapped your logo (at the recommended dimensions, of course) where it needs to be, to mark your territory. You're all set for social media success...

...kind of ...not really...



Yes, all of the above things are important, but let's face it – in a medium as diverse and ever evolving as social media, following the basic formula is only going to get you started. To achieve success, you need to step up your game.

There are a number of ways to do this – employee and customer advocacy, influencers, social intelligence platforms – but I'll stick with something a bit more down my alley. Evolving and expanding how your brand is (quite literally) viewed through social media.

Sounds fancy huh? Well, as with most things, it's easy to do once you have an understanding.

There are thousands of articles out there regarding the best practices in applying your visual identity to your social channels. I'll leave you to google them if you need a refresher, and add this advice – either choose to be consistent across ALL platforms, or be consistent with your variations and personality expression across ALL platforms. You don't present your base branding in wildly different manners in different magazines, newspapers or TV channels – so why would it make sense to do it for social channels. You want personality? Great! Just be consistent with it – show different aspects of the same branding.

With that out of the way, I want you to stop thinking about what you can do for your brand's identity on social, and start asking what others can do for it. That's right – I'm talking about giving up a little bit of control, and letting your precious advocates show you, and the world, how they perceive your brand.

It sounds scary (well, it does to me anyway), but the truth is harnessing others' visual interpretations of your brand can open up a multitude of possibilities for engagement, community building, and brand evolution.

All of this leading to improved brand perception, greater brand following and loyalty, and in the end, more sales and an improved bottom line.

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## **Harnessing others' visual interpretations of your brand can open up a multitude of possibilities**

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How do you go about this? Well, it all comes down to your fans. And by fans, I don't mean your social media followers in general – I'm talking about your true fans. Some people will follow you out of interest; others will do it because they 'believe'. These are your true fans and the ones that will help you to reflect the most authentic and empowering brand visuals possible.

"But we've spent X amount of money and other resources on our brand visuals - why would we ever want to turn them over to a group of people, fans or not, that have no idea of the process we went through to get where we are now?"

Good question.

Simple answer:

You want to do it because these are the people who truly believe in your brand. These are the people that will do more, buy more, and spread the word more. They're the type of people you want to attract. So, what better way to do that than using the visuals you know speak directly to them.

Think of it this way. You're not giving up your branding and putting it in their hands; you're just asking them to give you a helping hand.

How can they help? Here are a couple of avenues you can take.

## Social Focus Groups

Are you developing new brand imagery for your social channels (or any medium for that matter)? Not sure on which media formats will work best? Do you have the right shapes / colours to get your messaging through effectively? Ask your fans - they're a focus group just waiting to happen, and they'd love to help shape your brand.

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### **Ask your fans - they're a focus group just waiting to happen, and they'd love to help shape your brand**

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You can share concepts, get feedback on 'finalised' designs, or even keep things as simple as shapes and colours - take a look at any highly successful Kickstarter campaign, and this is almost always evident. Or try an 'unofficial' focus group, by sharing content, seemingly unrelated to your brand and branding, and asking for informal feedback (or just monitor engagement for each post).

Whatever you need to know, your social focus group can give you valuable feedback.

And, if you keep your focus group open to all, you have the opportunity to compare what resonates with your true fans alongside visuals that only connect with casual supporters. I don't think I need to tell you which of the two you should take action on.

## Brand Evangelism

Whether they're part of your social following or reside inside your company, advocating and enabling your fans to share how they visualise your brand is a golden opportunity.

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## **Advocating and enabling your fans to share how they visualise your brand is a golden opportunity**

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By now, you already know content shared by an influencer (or any actual person) is trusted to a much higher degree than anything a 'faceless' brand puts out there. Couple this with the fact that your fans are all mini influencers in their own circles, and you can see where I'm going with this.

But let's take it one step further – if content shared by an influencer is more impactful, then logic speaks to the fact that if it is (at least considered to be) created by that influencer, rather than the brand, it will hold even more weight.

So give them the tools, the guidance – and the encouragement, to share with the world why they believe in your brand, and how it looks through their eyes. In essence, they're creating Brand 'Fan Art' – and fan art is the driving force behind many engaged communities.

Make your approved brand identity materials easy to access, provide some basic rules for their use (without being too bossy, of course), and above all else, give thanks and recognition to those fans who deserve it – the ones who go the extra mile, or manage to present your brand in a unique yet authentic way. A simple 'Like', thank you message, or re-share will go a long way, and will even encourage others to get involved and show you their vision as well.

As you monitor all of this wonderful evangelistic content for your brand, you will also start to build an in-depth picture of how your true fans view your brand, compared to your own vision of it.

Use it – let your followers help lead your brand in the direction they feel it should go,

and in turn, their followers will come to the party too. Just check out any of LEGO's social channels and you'll see a brand that has been doing this (and doing it well) for a long time.

A word of warning though: while not 'visual' itself, the recent #BoatyMcBoatface incident suffered by the Natural Environment Research Council (what else would you call a £200m ship?), demonstrates the dangers of giving over too much creative power, or

casting your net too wide in the search for engagement and co-creation. Then again – it has given them a lot of publicity (I guess that's good...)

So, let go just a little. Feed your fans with positive energy and new ways to get involved. Soak in their impressions, emotions and visualisations. And take advantage of the true 'art' of social media branding.



## Andrew Vesey

*Chief BrandMan, Founder | Vesey Creative & Brand Quarterly*

Andrew is an experienced brand and marketing professional with over 15 years in the industry - a majority of those have been as the Chief BrandMan at Vesey Creative, which he co-founded in 2003. In 2011, driven by his passion for branding, business and education, Andrew made the move into publishing by launching Brand Quarterly - this very magazine - and in 2014 Brand Quarterly Online. When not writing or developing partnerships and new initiatives for Brand Quarterly, Andrew works with a select number of clients - spanning the globe, from New Zealand through to the United Kingdom and the United States - developing, refreshing and implementing brands for both products and companies.

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A man with grey hair, wearing a green superhero suit and black goggles, is smiling and holding a large, bright green sponge. The background is a plain, light grey color.

## Making The Shift To Social Customer Service

*Martin Hill-Wilson*

As a long term supporter of social customer service, I've mixed feelings after almost a decade of brand involvement.

It never scaled as we initially thought. After an initial tranche of brands who led the way and did a great job, there was silence. Too many brands remained scared of getting involved with their customers on social.



They hoped that ignoring them would somehow reduce demand. Facebook admins refused to let customers comment. Trouble is they went somewhere else and still made their point known. Obviously, that conflicted with what branding wanted to establish in the customers' mind, so maybe the answer was to try and influence outcomes by getting involved.

Even when brands reluctantly turned up, their initial instinct was to shunt customers off social into private channels as soon as possible. Thus losing the self-service opportunity that publically answered questions provided.

Finally, too many Marketing and Customer Service teams remained territorial around ownership and what 'good' looked like. This resulted in maybe the greatest missed opportunity of them all. Social is no respecter of organisational silos. Social customers talk about stuff that is of interest to marketing, sales, customer service, product development and continuous improvement for starters. But unless you can transcend those internal blinkers, you are only going to harvest a fraction of the value that social offers.

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## Social is no respecter of organisational silos

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Frustratingly, much of the downside I've just painted can be easily resolved. It starts with a strategic recognition that social customer service works for the brand when clarity of purpose and scope of opportunity is clearly defined. Here are some of the more common reasons why you would want to be active and excellent in social customer service:

- We need to take our existing social customer service capability to the next level as customers and competitors evolve
- We need to align the approach to social customer service between Marketing, Corporate Communications and Customer Service teams
- We need to satisfy executive concern that the organisation can reduce the inherent risk from social engagement
- We need greater internal responsiveness to fixing customer issues that appear on social
- We need to capture greater value from social engagement in terms of word of mouth and customer insight

On the upside, I've always loved the catalytic impact that public discourse with customers has on a brand's willingness to up their game. Even the most lethargic can understand that it makes no sense to keep promoting your failures to a socially tuned-in marketplace.

As a result, the best social customer service teams I've been associated with have shown a keen sense of why managing your social footprint matters. They recognise it is the dividing line between social engagement and more traditional forms of 1:1 customer service. That's why brands need to act differently when delivering customer service over social.

It starts by recognising that it's foolish to launch into social customer service without a plumbed in improvement capability. This means once individual customer issues are fixed, you have to invest the time and resources for root cause analysis and improvement. Otherwise, nothing changes - and customers notice deaf brands.

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## It's foolish to launch into social customer service without a plumbed in improvement capability

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Sometimes this requires cross-functional collaboration. Sometimes it is encouraging expedited decisions from PR and corporate comms. Maybe it's a well-rehearsed escalation workflow, able to distinguish an increasingly vocal, irate customer from the gathering clouds of a full-blown social media crisis. Other times when things are really broken, the service design team might need to be called in. Whatever it is, the intent is to get smarter next time by removing the problem or minimising its impact.

Acting differently also applies to the customer facing team. Advisors must communicate differently. As I'm fond of saying when evangelising social customer service to an audience, *'no-one can hear you scream in the IVR'*. However on social, others notice well before the screaming stage and will often add comment to whatever footprint is left for others to be influenced by.

Everyone wants this to have a positive impact on other customers. *"They cared, they listened, I can trust them to do the right thing"*. The kind of word of mouth that content marketing would die for! It's why the catchphrase 'service is the new marketing' is so popular.

But getting this right is no fluke.

It demands a much more disciplined form of communication skills from advisors. Communicating one:many is amplified. The consequences of getting it right or wrong are therefore greater. Brand reputation is enhanced or diminished through the skill of an individual's communication and whatever behind the scenes support they rely on to expedite issues.

So an extra focus on getting your recruitment, induction and ongoing development right is important. Staffed by the best of the best, social teams need to be positioned as an aspirational role within the greater customer service team.

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## **Social teams need to be positioned as an aspirational role within the greater customer service team**

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Team management also needs to move up a few notches. A coaching orientated style of team leading is required to support what needs to be an empowered team culture. If a command and control management style remains strong within the rest of customer services, it is important to shelter the social customer service team from that and allow them to evolve their own style and standards. Even though trusting the team to do the right thing is a challenge to any legacy conformance based culture.

Besides getting talent and culture right, there is more to be done. Choose your technology platform carefully. It needs to deliver everything from listening, to routing, to real-time dashboards. Knowledge management and CRM need plugging in as well. And in a world of omnichannel communication, social needs to fit into a much broader service strategy.

As previously hinted, get your playbook sorted out so that it defines escalation and crisis management. Rehearse the plan often.

Keep auditing where your customers are on social. Each year it will look different, and you will need to decide whether new platforms warrant your involvement. Keep up to date with the major ones. Both Facebook and Twitter are competing to become the most customer service friendly solution.

If and when Facebook Messenger takes off, social will revert to a 1:1 exchange. By my definition, that means it's no longer social. But it may cause social to go mainstream once it looks safer for brands to participate privately.

Making a shift to social customer service can seem a daunting task unless you plan to succeed. Hopefully, some of the suggestions here will help you on that journey to becoming excellent.




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## **Martin Hill-Wilson**

*Founder | Brainfood*

Martin is a customer engagement and digital business strategist. Also an author and international keynote speaker. Working under his own brand, Brainfood Consulting, he delivers a range of master classes that help brands evolve their social and digital capabilities. Current topics include omnichannel design, automation and self-service, customer experience management for contact centres, social customer service excellence. All targeted to deliver service innovation. Martin is also a founding member of Beyond Silos – a group of specialist practitioners offering design and delivery service for embedding customer hubs – next generation customer engagement.

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# People Buy Emotions Not Things

*Bryan Kramer*

Just for a moment, think about the last big purchase you made. Was it a car? A house? That boat you had been dreaming about? Or possibly something as simple as a purse?

At first glance, it may seem that our purchasing decisions have much more to do with the careful analysis of needs than anything else.

After all, everyone needs transportation or a home - right?

But when you take the time to evaluate it further, another story emerges. Maybe you elected to purchase a Volvo over a Ford because of their reputation for safety. You selected a Hermes over a Coach handbag because of the assumed status factor of carrying one.

So when consumers are faced with endless choices through social media engagements and recommendations, how do they make their decisions? What could influence someone to select one brand of vehicle over another - even though both have the same basic function of getting us where we want to go?

The simple answer is emotion.

## Feelings - The Why Behind What We Buy

This idea of emotions ruling consumer behavior is certainly not new. In fact, it was a major hypothesis of author Martin Lindstrom in his 2008 bestseller, *Buyology: Truth And Lies About Why We Buy*.

Lindstrom based his analysis on research in the field of 'Neuromarketing,' that he performed on 2,000 global volunteers over the course of three years. During his study, participants were exposed to a wide variety of advertising and branding materials with the hopes of targeting what stimuli actually connected with the respondents.

What he found was the products and ads that most appeal to consumers are ones that utilize a sensory aspect. For example, think the bright primary colors of a McDonalds or the distinctive smell of PlayDoh.

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### Products and ads that most appeal to consumers are ones that utilize a sensory aspect

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## The Power Of Community

Lindstrom also recognized that this powerful marketing approach is strengthened when brands combined the sensory element with rituals that creates a sense of community. This is because brand rituals generate a self-reinforcing cycle of brand loyalty thanks to three powerful forces: routine, a sense of belonging, and trust.

Perhaps the most notable component of this practice is the idea that our sense of community is heightened by the act of sharing products and purchases with others. Therefore, it's common to see advertisements with parents teaching their children the proper way to eat their Cheerios, and social media

campaigns encouraging fans to Instagram themselves sharing a Coca-Cola, tagging friends they want to share prizes with, or uploading a video of how they eat a Cadbury Cream Egg.

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### Our sense of community is heightened by the act of sharing products and purchases with others

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It's all about appealing to our inner need to belong and to be part of a group. So if you love to dunk your Oreos in milk or add a slice of lime to your Corona - then consider yourself a part of a tribe made up of millions around the world who do that as well.

## Appealing To Impulses

So, now that we understand how brands can manipulate our emotions in building brand loyalty - how else can marketers have an effect on our consumer behavior?

Sometimes it's as simple as putting a product in the right spot in store, or a well targeted sponsored post, to entice us at the right time.

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### Sometimes it's as simple as putting a product in the right spot in store, or a well targeted sponsored post

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We've all made at least one impulse buy, right? That time you ran to your local Target to grab some eggs, only to pick up several other items by the time that you made it to the checkout. A new scarf. The CD that everyone is talking about. Maybe even a deeply discounted Apple Watch.



So why does this happened over and over again? Is it poor compulsion control? Or is it due to how shopping makes us feel?

According to a recent *Psychology Today* study, the answer is actually a bit of both. Some individuals have a documented personality trait that makes them predisposed to buying things on impulse. But more often than not, it's because impulse buys are driven by a desire to experience happiness and the purchase is seen as a way to elevate their mood.

Simply put, those who tend to impulse buy, experience more anxiety and difficulty maintaining their feelings, which could make the act of controlling the urge to spend difficult. So, giving in to the idea of buying a simple item to "make them feel better" - even for a moment - is the driving force behind their decisions.

Marketers count on this and strategically place products throughout stores while providing supporting branding and online promotion that showcases the item as an "affordable luxury" to be enjoyed. Which, in turn, causes the consumer to rationalize the purchase.

## Recognizing The Tipping Point

You may be familiar with what is commonly known as the Tipping Point, made popular in recent years by New York Times writer

Malcolm Gladwell. This is the crucial moment where an idea, social norm or trend becomes universally accepted and, therefore, spreads like wildfire through social media, mass media and the community at large.

In terms of brand marketing, shaping this event has everything to do with creating a need, while identifying emotional appeals to tap into our desire to be a part of a group. For this to occur, Gladwell identifies three kinds of individuals that must come together at the right moment:

- **Connectors:** people who are actively involved in many different segments of society and have the innate ability to bring people together
- **Mavens:** people driven to help others make informed decisions based on their area of knowledge and expertise
- **Salespeople:** charismatic people who have the ability to move others towards an intended goal

Brands looking to create their own tipping point know that they must work closely with these personality types. Once identified, brands can work with these distinct personalities by appealing to their underlying sense of pride and accomplishment that comes with influencing others.



## Bryan Kramer

CEO | *PureMatter*

Bryan Kramer is one of the world's foremost leaders in the art and science of sharing, and credited with shaping the #H2H human business movement in marketing and social. He's also a TED Talk speaker, bestselling author and strategist who consults Fortune 500 clients such as IBM, Cisco and Pitney Bowes on humanizing business through social media. A Forbes "Top 25 Social Influencer to Follow", one of Business Insider's "100 Most Influential Tech People On Twitter", and a Huffington Post "Top 50 Social CEO on Twitter Globally", his latest book, *Shareology*, made USA Today's Top 150 Book List the week of its release, as well as #1 on Amazon in four categories including Business & Planning.

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# Reclaiming Humanity In Business

*Scott Monty*

When I was young, I could walk into my hometown bank or post office with my parents and the director, teller or clerk would know them by name. They might even ask how I was doing in school or on my baseball team. Going back a few generations, the general store was a center of town life where citizens would go for supplies. But more than being simply a retail shop, it was a place to see fellow residents, swap stories and even hear some gossip over the pickle barrel. When you walked away from those experiences, you felt like a person and not a number.

Outside of a small business, when is the last time you had a brand experience like that? These days, we're left to feel like we're a statistic or a cog in a system. Two forms of ID and an encrypted password later, we're left feeling dehumanized.

We were told that the great promise of social media was that it had the potential to bring back the humanity in business. In its earliest days, we heralded the opportunity to have conversations with customers, to get feedback from them directly, and to create 1:1 (or at least 1:few) interactions.

And yet...  
Where do we stand with that progress?





Every time a new social platform opens up, it falls prey to marketers. Now, I don't begrudge a company from making money, and there are few options for social networks that don't include some kind of advertising, but it somehow feels like Groundhog Day. The Internet has been around for two decades, and yet we see the same kinds of advertising that were prevalent when television was introduced. There has to be a better way.

Remember the flash-in-the-pan hit Ello last year? They cast themselves as a Facebook alternative and proudly declared their distinct lack of advertising:

*"Advertisers buy your data so they can show you more ads. You are the product that's bought and sold. We believe there is a better way. We believe a social network can be a tool for empowerment. Not a tool to deceive, coerce, and manipulate — but a place to connect, create, and celebrate life."*

While it didn't result in a huge influx of users from Facebook, it did create an industry-wide conversation about the relevance of advertising on social platforms.

Aside from platforms, advertisers themselves are under pressure with a huge increase in the use of ad blocking technology. The interruptive and annoying user experience is angering consumers, and increasingly, they're installing software to prevent advertising from taking over their browsing experience. This is especially true on mobile, where there's even less real estate, and there are concerns about data usage by ad units.

The point of all of this is that while advertising is still a necessary part of the content ecosystem, we need to find a better way to meet the expectations of consumers. The decades old, twice-broken model of advertising is outdated, and we need to wake up to the fact that people are on social sites to interact, not to be advertised to. Perhaps it means a more hands-on style with a focus on community rather than advertising. There's value in creating connections and leveraging relationships, especially when we have products and services that people genuinely care about or want to tell others about.

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## People are on social sites to interact, not to be advertised to

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With the incredible amount of data that we have on consumers, we stand at a threshold of personalized content that can be better than it's ever been before. But we need to take the time and effort to create it. If we want to create an emotional connection with consumers and leave a lasting impact, mass marketing is no longer the way forward. We need to show the humanity behind the brand and demonstrate an interest in connecting with consumers the way they want to engage.

Then maybe we'll be able to reclaim the pickle barrel conversations.



### Scott Monty

CEO & Founder | *Scott Monty Strategies*

Scott Monty is an internationally recognized leader in digital communications, digital transformation, social media and marketing. He speaks to groups and advises brands and agencies to help them embrace the fundamentals of human communication in the digital age. Scott spent six years as an executive at Ford Motor Company, and has a decade of experience in communications and marketing agencies. He is on the board of the American Marketing Association, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Crowd Companies and Clever Girls. He writes the widely acclaimed newsletter *The Full Monty* and co-hosts the podcast *I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere*.

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# Feel A Little Invisible? Need To Stand Out?

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# The Secret And Symbiotic Relationship Between Branded Content And Social Media

*Melanie Deziel*

Broadly speaking, native advertising is said to be any advertising that matches its environment. On a social network, this often comes in the form of a brand-promoted post appearing alongside organic posts from users that person follows.

On a publisher's site where the norm is written content, videos, infographics or other multimedia, native advertising takes on those formats, allowing advertisers to create branded content to tell stories and deliver information with the same tools.





In their *Native Advertising Playbook*, the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) places these two types of native advertising in separate categories: Promoted Tweets and Facebook Sponsored Stories fall into “In-Feed Units,” which appear nestled between organic posts in a list of some sort. At the same time, what most of us mean when we say “native advertising” - that is, branded content created in partnership with an advertiser and living on a publisher’s site - is not seen as an “ad unit” at all. Or it’s relegated to the sixth bucket, amorphously and self-awarably named “Custom / Cannot Be Contained.”

It’s easy to see how people might see branded social posts and branded on-site publishing as entirely independent: just two of the many ways that advertisers and publishers can work together to create more organic branded experiences for readers. But in practice, social promotion and on-site branded content are quite intricately linked.

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## **In practice, social promotion and on-site branded content are quite intricately linked**

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In August of 2015, a survey of more than 400 top publisher sites by analytics company Parse.ly showed Facebook as an even larger referral of traffic to news sites than Google, bringing in 43% of page views compared to Google’s 38%.

As a result of this shift toward a social-dominant stream of incoming web traffic, editorial norms now often include dedicated staff who abide by a defined organic social posting strategy and also have the power to deploy paid promotional strategies across social platforms. Internal financial documents leaked in 2015 indicated that BuzzFeed, a publisher known for its social-

first and social-friendly editorial content, may be spending multiple millions per year to drive traffic from social networks.

Because branded content is based on the editorial model - in that it aims to replicate the processes, aesthetics, and function of its host publication - it should come as little surprise that its performance would be just as heavily anchored in social promotion and distribution.

And yet, little is said about the role that social promotion plays in the native advertising offerings at most publishers, or how dependent that content is on social media for its performance. But the ways in which social media is integrated into branded content programs is as varied as the content itself.

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## **The ways in which social media is integrated into branded content programs is as varied as the content itself**

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*Organic social posts* are put out to the follower base of the host publisher’s social media accounts, linking back to the branded content page, without advertising dollars aiding in promotion or targeting. Sometimes, these posts are put out by *editorial social accounts*, the same ones used for the publisher’s own content, such as @Buzzfeed on Twitter. Other times, these posts go out from *dedicated social accounts*, which exist solely for the purpose of sharing branded content separately from editorial social accounts, such as @TBrandStudio.

And while organic posts aren’t supported by advertiser funds, that doesn’t mean that they come free of charge. Many publishers layer in a *posting fee* for such posts - particularly those from editorial social accounts, which have much larger engagement - by charging



based on the number of posts or the anticipated reach based on follower counts. These posts can also be used as *added value incentives* that come only at certain investment levels, to encourage advertisers to spend more on the content package.

*Paid social posts* are more prevalent, in part because they're more clearly linked to revenue for publishers. As with organic posts, these paid posts linking to branded content can come from either editorial social accounts or dedicated social accounts. However, the key difference is that these posts have advertiser funds earmarked for promoting them to a larger and more targeted audience than the base of followers those social accounts may have organically. When that happens, the posts appear similar to organic posts but are generally labeled as "Promoted" or "Sponsored" to help identify them.

Regardless of whether the posts come from editorial or dedicated social accounts, advertisers have an additional option for amplifying them, at least on Twitter: *Whitelisting*. With written permission, the advertiser can use their own funds to promote the tweet that was sent out by the publisher. So a tweet sent out by @HuffingtonPost or @HuffPostPartner might appear in your feed as "Promoted By Purina" or "Promoted By Ford," further leveraging the name and credibility of the publisher to drive additional exposure and traffic to the branded content piece that the tweet links to.

But how much traffic these posts drive back to branded content pages and how much revenue they are producing for publishers remains a mystery.

That information is co-owned by the advertisers, who have little incentive to share how much of the traffic to their content piece was paid for or how much they paid for it.

But data from BI Intelligence has projected that in-feed social native ads will continue to account for the majority of native ad revenue through 2018, by which point the industry is expected to reach or exceed \$21B annually in North America alone.

And if that number is any indication, the conversation about social media's role in native ad performance will increase, whether we "Like" it or not.




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**The conversation about social media's role in native ad performance will increase, whether we "Like" it or not**

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**Melanie Deziel**

*Branded Content Strategist, Founder | Mdeziel Media*

Melanie Deziel is an award-winning branded content strategy consultant, founder of Mdeziel Media, and curator of The Overlap League, the native ad industry newsletter. She is a board member of the Native Advertising Institute, and travels the country educating marketing, sales and editorial teams on branded content strategy. Melanie is the former Director of Creative Strategy for Time Inc. and was the first editor of branded content at The New York Times, where she wrote in-depth pieces sponsored by advertisers, including the "Women Inmates" piece (Netflix) and the "Grit & Grace" feature (Cole Haan), which won the 2014 and 2015 OMMA Awards for Best Native Ad Execution.

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# Personal Branding: Why Leaders Should Take It Seriously

*Mel Carson*

I recently ran a workshop called the Personal Brand Lab at a digital marketing conference - SMX West - in San Jose. While the SEO and Social Media workshops were jam-packed with attendees, just four people had signed up, and we had one no-show. Reflecting on this poor turn out with the organizers of the event, we deduced that the reason was employers would rather pay for their employees to hone their skills to help the company, rather than help themselves develop their personal brands.





This set of circumstances inspired me to write this because I know from incoming enquiries and my website analytics, that professionals understand the need and want to improve their personal brands - and in doing so, have their expertise and wisdom become more discoverable, shareable and memorable.

It's many of the leaders that don't quite get it yet, and here are some reasons why they should:

## Employees Are Your Best Advocates

While influencer marketing is becoming more and more of a successful channel for brands, what leaders are forgetting is that those influencers have exceptional personal brands.

According to Nielsen, just 15% of what a brand says is believed by consumers, whereas 90% of us will trust the word of a friend, family member or peer. Encouraging employee advocacy through their personal brands can increase exposure and trust in whatever you have to say or sell, and having a positive social media policy will go a long way to achieving that.

When I talk to business leaders about this, I explain that they should encourage their employees to become influencers within their niche, and they get it. As a leader you can't be everywhere and all things to all people. Encourage your teams to become mini-evangelists and it will pay dividends.

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**Encourage your teams to become mini-evangelists and it will pay dividends**

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## LinkedIn Is A Powerhouse

LinkedIn should no longer be feared as the place where your employees go to seek a new job. Yes, it's still used for recruitment, but it's also a gold mine of knowledge and engagement where your employees can learn from each other and express themselves, through publishing content and updates that reflect well on your company at the same time.

According to LinkedIn, their audience visits from over 200 countries, and 70% of their 414 million users are outside of the US. Pretty big numbers if everyone is talking about work. Add these numbers to Facebook or Twitter's user base, and you have a huge opportunity - not only to reach a critical mass of people with ideas and news about your company, but also to encourage feedback and sentiment through individuals within your organization, as well as through your regular social listening channels.

## Authenticity Is Paramount

If I had a dollar for every executive who wants to be seen as a thought-leader in their industry, or recent graduate who wants to be an instant expert in their field, I'd be able to challenge Donald Trump for the Presidency. OK not quite - but if there is one thing I've learned in helping people with their personal brands, it's that being true to yourself, your professional experience and your abilities is crucial to growing your brand. The key to success is through authenticity, a proven track record and the ability to have empathy and listen to your audience, as well as broadcast your message.

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**Being true to yourself, your professional experience and your abilities is crucial to growing your brand**

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Too often I see vacuous attempts at personal branding that smack of PR people behind a curtain trying to fashion an image for their charges that falls flat through worthless hyperbole and hot air.

People are people, and they want to see (and they want to feel) personality. That's why I encourage professionals to think about their social ratio. Mine is 60/40. Sixty percent of what I talk about on social networks is of a professional nature – AKA work stuff – and forty percent is of a personal nature. It's my opinion that people would rather see a glimpse of personality and life beyond work than just hearing about your job or industry opinions in a silo.

As the line between our work and our personal lives becomes increasingly blurred thanks to the increase in the use of digital media, devices, flexible working policies and the gig economy, so the absence of much personality or character starts to stick out as boring and out of touch.

## The Future Of Personal Branding

With the arrival of virtual reality on a more affordable scale with companies like Facebook and Microsoft creating technology for the living room, imagine a world where you could be in more than one place at once.

Virtual assistant technology like Apple's Siri, Microsoft's Cortana, and Amazon Echo's Alexa know more and more about our personal AND professional needs and preferences. With this, I can see a world where a platform can know so much about us - what we know, what we want, how we think and how we work - that there could be a time when we show up to meetings or answer emails as a virtual representation of ourselves.

Now I know that possibility is a little way out there, but if it is a possibility, now is the time to start crafting the personal brand we want machines to learn from, so when the time comes that digital representation of ourselves is as accurate and authentic as it can be.

No longer a nice-to-have, Personal branding is essential to any professional trying to make their way in the world. Company leaders need to embrace the magnificent opportunity digital and social media presents them, their employees and their businesses to become more discoverable, shareable and memorable. People are any company's best asset. Now's the time to encourage them to up their game.



### Mel Carson

*Founder & Principal Strategist | Delightful Communications*

Mel is founder of Seattle-based consultancy, Delightful Communications, which helps businesses and individuals understand and successfully apply strategies that focus on Content Marketing, Social Media, Digital PR and Personal Branding. Before Delightful, Mel spent seven years as Digital Marketing Evangelist at Microsoft where he supported and educated customers through the Microsoft Advertising Blog, evangelizing through social media, writing and by speaking about digital marketing at conferences, trade shows and other events all over the world. He's author of the critically acclaimed *Pioneers of Digital and Introduction to Personal Branding*, and played the "Young Joe Cocker" in the rock legend.

[www.delightfulcommunications.com](http://www.delightfulcommunications.com)



# Listening is important. But it's only part of the solution.

## Turn Insight Into Action

Really understanding your customers is more important than ever. They demand to be heard — and they want to see action. Whether it's a negative post gone viral or a fleeting sales opportunity, reacting quickly is critical to keeping relationships alive. Knowing before things happen is even better.

That's what Sysomos delivers: powerful customer insights. We narrow the distance between businesses and customers, scaling one-on-one connections to millions. With more than a decade of research on unstructured data, we are creating a new kind of customer intel; one that helps you predict what's around the corner — and we're just getting started.

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# *Open Mic:* Social Media

**It's 'Open Mic' night!**

In this session, our 13 expert voices are sharing their insights on 'Social Media' - covering: the evolution of social platforms, social business, employee advocacy, competitive analysis and marketing field testing, through to PR, 'dark social', and more, all right here...



## Jonah Berger

@j1berger

Professor | Author of NYT Bestseller  
'Contagious: Why Things Catch On'

[www.jonahberger.com](http://www.jonahberger.com)

### **The Key To Viral? Offline...**

Social media is great. Technologies like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn have made it faster and easier to communicate with large numbers of people very quickly.

But as I talk about in 'Contagious: Why Things Catch On', only 7% of word of mouth happens online. That's right. 7%. Most word of mouth is actually offline: Face to face interactions around the dinner table, the water cooler, or while watching sports.

So, when thinking about generating word of mouth and get something to catch on, don't just think about social media. Think about offline as well. How can you get people talking and sharing, online and off, so that word spreads about your product or idea?

Further, rather than thinking just about technology, you need to understand the psychology. Why people talk and share in the first place. You can have 10 million friends or followers, but if no one shares your stuff, it doesn't matter. We need to understand why people share and use those insights to craft contagious content.

{ -- Open Mic -- }



## Lance Concannon

@concannon

Director Of Marketing, Europe  
At Sysomos

[www.sysomos.com](http://www.sysomos.com)

### **Social - A Boon For Competitive Analysis**

Social media provides a goldmine of competitor insight for companies prepared to do their research. First, you can look closely at what the brands are saying on their owned social media channels; who are they talking to, what are they saying about their brand, how do they sell their products? You can do this as an ad-hoc research exercise or, with a tool like Sysomos Expion. Simply plug your competitor's social profiles into your dashboards to track their activity on an ongoing basis so you can always keep tabs on them.

You can also use social media to understand what your competitors' customers are saying about them. While many companies scrutinise their own brand conversations in social, many don't track competitor conversations, which is a missed opportunity. Who wouldn't want to know what consumers love or hate about their biggest competitors? Using the right tools, it's very easy to search for conversations in Twitter and Facebook, and then to analyse that data to draw out actionable insight.

Social media provides a free, constantly updated source of insight into what your competitors are doing and how their customers are feeling, so why ignore it?

{ -- Open Mic -- }





## Ann Tran

@AnnTran\_

Luxury Travel & Marketing Strategist | Speaker | #InfluencerChat Co-founder

[www.ann-tran.com](http://www.ann-tran.com)

### **Embrace The Shift To Live Experiences**

The biggest shift in social media is from virtual interactions to live video streaming. Apps such as Blab are leading the way for this shift. People can participate in conferences, webinar chats, and discussions from their home, with other people anywhere in the world. This ability, which usually requires little or no special equipment, could disrupt event attendance, traditional sales channels, and even ticket sales. As live video streaming takes hold, it will benefit those who want to showcase their personalities and be completely authentic - something that is difficult to do when only through text and photos.

Virtual reality - another level up from live streaming - is still in its infancy, but what has been produced so far is creating quite a gold rush, according to the New York Times.

Recently, Elisabeth Murdoch launched a mobile video company called Vertical Networks. Live video streaming will start making its way into our current social media channels, whether we are ready or not! I predict that we'll see more brands hiring influencers to live-stream fashion shows, events, conferences, and other such events. I recommend that everyone start honing their speaking and presentation skills. Smile - you're on camera!

{ -- Open Mic -- }



## Jeff Barrett

@barrettall

CEO, Status Creative | Keynote Speaker | Forbes Top 50 In Social Media.

[www.statuscreative.com](http://www.statuscreative.com)

### **Take A Page From The Journalist's Notepad**

Social media leveled the playing field for marketers. There are now a thousand ways to reach an audience - and a million others looking to do the same. And they have the same access you do. So how do you stand out, break apart? Leverage. You have to create leverage.

Build social capital. Having a large network opens doors, allows you to provide value where other can't, creates confidence with prospective clients and makes you unique in the marketplace. And in 2016, it requires planning and dedication to be heard. There's a lot of noise.

The best way to get noticed is to consistently create value. If it's one thing a journalist does well, they know how to connect the dots.

In this new economy, being able to connect the most dots is the shortest distance from Point A (building relationships) to Point B (delivering success).

If you're going to be a dot connector, have a long memory. Journalists may go months or even years between calling on a source, but they make sure to keep in touch just in case. Do the same. A small thing you do for someone can and will turn into a big break when they circle back later.

{ -- Open Mic -- }



## Melonie Dodaro

@MelonieDodaro

International #1 Bestselling Author Of  
'The LinkedIn Code' | Keynote Speaker

[www.topdogsocialmedia.com](http://www.topdogsocialmedia.com)

### **Social Profiles - Windows To Your Brand**

What does someone do when they want to learn more about you?

They Google your name.

And what shows up?

At the top of the Google search results, you will find your social profiles, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc. So your profiles ultimately become your first online impression. What kind of impression are you currently making?

Incomplete, unbranded or unprofessional social media sites are certainly not making the impression you want. Ensure that each site has a custom branded image to fit the dimensions of that site. Also ensure that your profile is fully complete.

After that, people will start to look at the type of content you share online. Here's my rule of thumb... if you don't want your grandmother, mother, father, husband, wife, future partner, clients, prospects, children or anyone else to see it... don't post it.

{ -- Open Mic -- }



## Shep Hyken

@Hyken

Customer Service Expert | Keynote Speaker | Best Selling Author

[www.hyken.com](http://www.hyken.com)

### **Don't Be Scared Of Customers Complaining On Social Media**

When a customer complains via a social channel like Twitter, Facebook or on one of the many review sites (Trip Advisor, Yelp, etc.), it's an opportunity.

First, you can turn the customer around from foe to friend. Second, they are telling you how to get better. So first, embrace the complaint. Then deal with it. The worst thing to do is ignore it. Even if the rant has gone viral, respond as quickly as possible. Acknowledge the problem, apologize and suggest connecting with the customer offline or via direct message to resolve the issue.

The public viewing audience likes to see companies step up and handle customer complaints. Once the customer is taken care of, go back online and publically thank the customer for the opportunity to resolve the problem. And if you are lucky, the customer will come back on and acknowledge that you've turned their "Moment of Misery™" into a "Moment of Magic®."

{ -- Open Mic -- }



## Pam Moore

@pammktgnut

CEO / Partner / Co-founder, Marketing Nutz | Keynote Speaker | Author

[www.pammarketingnut.com](http://www.pammarketingnut.com)

### **Field Testing Is Simple With Social**

Social presents tremendous opportunities for brands of all sizes to test their marketing campaigns. Smart marketers can dip their toes in the water before wasting money on campaigns that may not work.

Some easy ideas for testing campaigns with social media include testing visuals, content headlines and themes, different mediums and call to actions. These can easily be tested with a simple Facebook update, Twitter post or even a live stream.

{ -- Open Mic -- }



## Andy Crestodina

@crestodina

Co-Founder / Strategic Director, Orbit Media Studios | Speaker | Author

[www.orbitmedia.com](http://www.orbitmedia.com)

### **Smart SEOs Understand Social**

Web pages rank for two reasons: they are relevant to a topic (keyword usage) and they have authority from other websites (links). It's not difficult to research keywords, but winning links is a hard art form to master.

Ultimately, it's based on having relationships with content creators. In other words, networking. And these days, networking means social media. So smart SEOs do what PR people have been doing all along: using social media to research, connect with and collaborate with content with content creators.

{ -- Open Mic -- }



## Andrew Jennings

@MrAJennings

Associate Director, Digital At Ketchum

[www.ketchum.com](http://www.ketchum.com)

### **PR And Social - A Perfect Match**

PR, as we know, stands for Public Relations; but a very smart person once told me that it should actually stand for Problem Resolvers.

Social Media is a great way to resolve even more problems for brands, businesses, client and internal comms people alike. It's no longer just thinking in one way; it's all about the mix of communications and strategies to reach your audience in the moment.

The average person checks their phone 85 times a day to communicate, complain, find out where/when/how they can make their lives easier, faster and more convenient. PR practitioners need to consider this when planning their approach to resolving the problems that brands – and customers – face day-to-day.

Research is a great starting point for social media. Scanning keywords, brand profiles, and competitor activity is a great way to garner insight and understanding of verticals and customer sentiment. Following publishers, brands, influencers and innovators that are great at social is a good way to stay inspired and come up with new formats and ways to communicate in the field of social media.

Including a social specialist in your approach is something that can really make a campaign and communication fly. If you are creating assets to communicate to journalists, why wouldn't you consider talking to your consumer through your owned channels too?

Social is the perfect complement to PR.

{ -- Open Mic -- }



## Neal Schaffer

@NealSchaffer

Author | Founder, Social Media Center of Excellence And Social Tools Summit

[www.maximizeyoursocial.com](http://www.maximizeyoursocial.com)

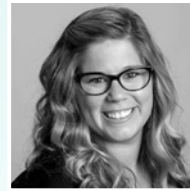
### ***Know Your Employee Advocacy KPI's***

Similar to the ROI of social media in general, the ROI of an employee advocacy program really comes down to the objective that each company might have for their own program.

Some companies are tactically focused on implementing social selling as part of their employee advocacy program, and thus their ROI measurement will be primarily based on leads generated, pipeline deals touched, and sales closed. For other companies employee advocacy might be part of a general employee engagement initiative, in which case the metrics of ROI will be very different from those of a social selling flavor.

To understand employee advocacy ROI, first take a step back, and ask why the program was created, and from there how its success should be measured can be determined.

{ -- Open Mic -- }



## Elly Deutch

@EllyDeutch

McDonald's Global Social Campaign & Advocacy Manager | Speaker

[www.ellydeutch.com](http://www.ellydeutch.com)

### ***Find Your Biggest Brand Advocates - Inside The Company***

To be successful in social media, you need to be trusted. So, who trusts you more than your employees that work for your brand day in and day out? While you may not realize their power, your employees are likely the best brand advocates that you have.

These individuals are passionate about your business, its values, and their everyday focus is on helping your business succeed. They are authentic, educated, and will put themselves in other customers' shoes to help create a stronger understanding about whatever it is that you're selling. In fact, companies with engaged employees outperform those without by up to 22%.

Activating your own employees can be one of the best strategies you can put into place, so why not learn how to engage them to become an advocate for your business? Foster trust, build authentic relationships and work with the greatest resource you already have to activate a global employee advocacy program.

{ -- Open Mic -- }



## Cynthia Johnson

@CynthiaLIVE

Entrepreneur | Business Adviser |  
Columnist | Speaker

[www.cynthialive.com](http://www.cynthialive.com)

### ***Beware (And Aware Of) Dark Social***

Dark social is a term used to describe social media that appears in analytics as “direct traffic” instead of “social traffic.”

As we continue to increase our use of mobile applications and mobile sharing, it is important that we become aware of dark social. Brands should know which situations create “dark social” and how to avoid them.

There are several situations that create dark social. When a person is using a native mobile app, such as Facebook or Instagram, the app has to fire up a browser within the app causing the traffic to appear as direct. If someone shares a URL via email or chat (like Slack), the referral source will not be passed. Secure browsing is another one. If you are on a site using HTTPS and you click a non-secure HTTP link, the referrer will not be passed. Lastly, there are instances where Google will not share the referral source via organic search results.

Brands need to be aware and avoid attribution issues. Use link builders and link shorteners to track dark social traffic. In some cases, more than 50% of traffic can be coming from dark social - and that is an attribution problem you don't want.

{ -- *Open Mic* -- }



## Tom Martin

@TomMartin

Author | Social Selling, B2B Sales Lead  
Gen And Marketing Keynote Speaker

[www.TheInvisibleSale.com](http://www.TheInvisibleSale.com)

### ***Your People Are More Valuable Than Your Tools***

After performing hundreds of Social Reconnaissance missions, I've learned that it's more about the “who” than the “what.”

That is to say; we've used numerous tools over the years from enterprise level listening tools to simple Google searches and in the end, the most informed, accurate and insightful Guerrilla Insights Reports consistently came from analysts that could connect the dots to create plausible and actionable narratives.

Much like the CIA often contends that human intel (feet on the street) is essential to good spy-craft, I have found that no computer or algorithm can replace a highly intuitive, creative and dedicated social analyst. While high-powered social listening and analysis tools, placed in the hands of a talented social analyst, can certainly speed up the intelligence gathering process, they are still just a tool, whose effectiveness is directly related to the talent of the person behind the keyboard.

For companies looking to exploit the power of the social web and digital data, finding and investing in intuitive analysts is the single most important step they can take to paint more effective, real-time pictures of their target audience and sales prospects.

{ -- *Mic Closed* -- }



# More Popular Articles On BrandQuarterly.com

## Is Social Dead? The Future Of Marketing

*Fabrice Etienne*

If we look back on the recent trends in marketing, one thing is clear – we've reached a major crossroad in our use of digital tools to engage customers. Social, the marketing department's once shiny new toy is starting to lose its sheen. Leading us to the question: "is this the death of social?"...



## What To Expect In The Maturation Of Social Media

*Bob Gilbreath*

By now we have come to accept that social media is the most powerful form of communication in our present time. Real-time activation, deep personal data, mobile engagement, and over a billion people within reach mean that marketers must master these platforms or switch careers. Whether you are a marketer that remembers MySpace or one that is teaching the boss...



## Amplify Your Social Selling Strategy And Increase ROI

*Melonie Dodaro*

Social selling... or as I like to refer to it "relationship building" has become a necessary tool for sales professionals, but to do it right is a bit of an art form. Never before has there been a time where your prospects have had such access to information. Information that will shape their perception of your business, your competitors' businesses, and ultimately...



## Employee Advocacy Gives CEOs A Second Chance To Do Social Right

*Neal Schaffer*

Although the world is spending more time on social media, there is one demographic that continues to avoid it like the plague: Chief Executive Officers.

It was recently reported that only 8.3% of Fortune 500 CEOs had a Twitter account. This is the same Twitter that just...





**“Effective social media representation doesn’t have to cost a fortune, but it does require investment and commitment”**

Matt Gentile  
IMG Digital Group

**BRAND QUARTERLY**

## Effective Social Media Management Requires Commitment

*Matt Gentile*

Even though we recently celebrated the 14th anniversary of Facebook’s launch, there is still a great deal of trepidation and a general lack of basic knowledge about what social media can do for business. After an 11-year career managing PR and social media on behalf of the world’s largest real estate...



**“Once a message hits a social network any notion of control is immediately lost”**

**BRAND QUARTERLY**

Stephen Waddington  
Ketchum

## Are You Ready For Brand Vandals?

*Stephen Waddington*

Internet-fuelled media is a game-changer for brand communications. You’re no longer in control – in fact, you never have been. Are you ready? I doubt it.

The biggest change in brand communication in the last 60 years is that it can no longer be one-way. It should never have been, but brands have tried to manage the flow of...



**“Social is a mindset”**  
#SocialBusiness

**BRAND QUARTERLY**

Mark Babbitt  
Author: A World Gone Social

## 5 Ways Your Traditional Business Can Thrive In The Social Age

*Mark Babbitt*

The Social Age has hit the corporate world hard and fast. In just a few years, we’ve seen a tremendous shift in how businesses – and the executives who run them – communicate, create, serve and lead.

So how do traditional businesses keep up?...



**“Understanding the risks of social media delivery is a critical element”**  
#SocialManagement

**BRAND QUARTERLY**

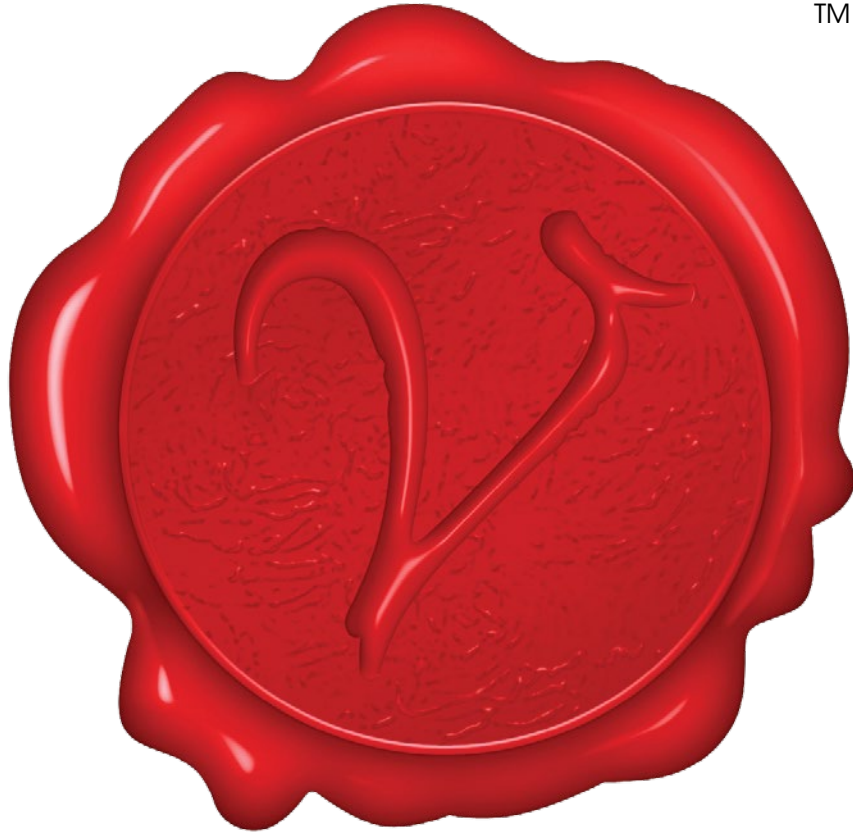
Michelle Leavesley  
CrowdControlHQ

## Are You Managing Your Social Media Or Is It Managing You?

*Michelle Leavesley*

A number of studies conducted last year reported that many businesses decided they ‘must try harder’ when managing their social media. In fact, 69% of the businesses surveyed identified that efficiencies could be achieved by mastering management issues. In addition, the Journal of Digital & Social Media Marketing has been working hard to find and publish articles that help...

TM



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