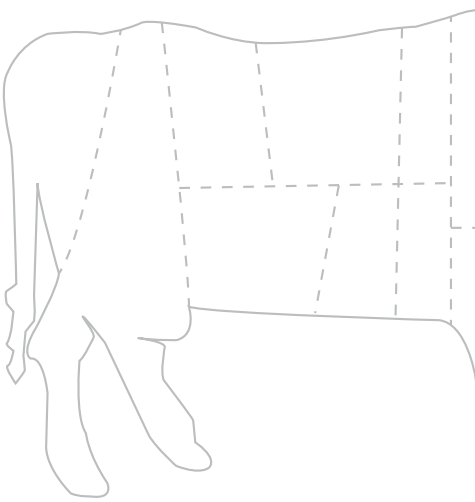
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Where's the beef?

How social media really can cut the mustard in B2B marketing



Essential answers to 7 ‘must know’ questions asked by B2B marketers today.

Most B2B marketers know by now that social media can add value to their marketing strategy. Yet many are still unsure of where to start, which platforms to use or how to measure and demonstrate the success of their social media marketing initiatives.

This white paper from Marketing Options International will answer seven burning questions being asked by B2B marketers in 2011:

1. **Can social media marketing really deliver benefits for B2B brands?**
2. **Where should I start?**
3. **How do I integrate social media into my overall marketing strategy?**
4. **What sort of objectives should I set?**
5. **How do I incorporate social media in my marketing mix?**
6. **How much budget, time and resource should I dedicate to social media?**
7. **How can I measure and demonstrate the success of my social media campaigns?**

It will provide practical guidance on incorporating social media into your overall marketing strategy. You will learn about some common tactics and techniques for successful social media marketing, and some proven methods of monitoring progress, measuring results and demonstrating ROI.

Can social media marketing really deliver benefits for B2B brands?

While social media has traditionally been viewed as more valuable for consumer brands, there is plenty of evidence that it can be beneficial for B2B businesses as well.

Here are just a few examples of what B2B brands large and small have achieved with social media.

- Networking vendor **Cisco** saved more than $100,000 by launching a new product through social media only – and attracted 90 times more attendees than real-world launches. [1]
- Industry analyst firm **Forrester Research** has built up a vibrant community of nearly 5,000 fans on Facebook and has a Twitter following of over 57,000. [2]
- The CRM product marketing team at **Oracle** receive 6,000+ page views per month on the team blog, and have a Twitter following of over 4,000. [3]
- **Aqilla**, a UK vendor of online accounting software, generated product enquiries and booked sales meetings as a direct result of promoting its presence at an industry event via Twitter. [4]

[1] Source: Social Media Examiner: How Social Media Helped Cisco Shave $100,00+ Off a Product Launch [http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/cisco-social-media-product-launch/]

[2] Source: Marketo, 5 B2B Social Media Success Stories [http://blog.marketo.com/blog/2010/05/b2b-social-media-success.html]

[3] Source: Oracle, Inside Social Marketing Blog [http://blogs.oracle.com/socialmarketing/]

[4] Source: Aqilla [http://www.aqilla.com]

Where should I start?

Always start by listening. Monitoring social networks will help you to understand where your target audience gather online, what they're talking about and the dynamics and etiquette of the platforms they use. All this will provide insight into what you need to do in order to meet your target audience's information needs and make them more aware of your brand.

There are many social media monitoring tools available to provide this insight. If you do not have the time or resource for monitoring in-house, this should be a service your agency can readily provide.

Once you have this knowledge you can decide how you are going to integrate social media into your existing marketing mix. You can also set some relevant objectives specifically for social media, in order to measure how well it is working for you, and refine your activities based on that information.

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How do I integrate social media into my marketing strategy?

Marketing strategy falls broadly into two camps: brand awareness and demand creation. Social media marketing has an important part to play in both.

Brand awareness: Social media is an ideal environment for raising awareness. Your research will have led you to the online places where your customers gather, and provided insight into what those customers need. If the information and advice that you give to those customers is appreciated, they will start to do your work for you – by sharing your content and talking positively about your brand.

Demand creation: Where content is orientated towards demand creation, integrate social media elements with the expectation that they will support the achievement of goals, rather than directly supply leads. Social networks are an immense potential traffic driver to your conference, webcast or white paper. However, this has to be done in a ‘pull’ marketing style that requires you to be in the right places and responding in the right way – to lead people in the direction you want.

When you integrate your traditional ‘push’ marketing activities with the ‘pull’ marketing potential of social media, you create a platform for thought-leadership and influence that elevates the credibility of all your propositions.

> “Social networks are an immense potential traffic driver to your conference, webcast or white paper. However, this has to be done in a ‘pull’ marketing style that requires you to be in the right places and responding in the right way – to lead people in the direction you want.”

What sort of objectives should I set?

Traditional campaign measures, like cost-per-lead, don't always work for social media, which tends to support lead generation rather than actively delivering leads.

For social media, you should set objectives that align with overall marketing goals but which take into account the specific capabilities and limitations of social media as a marketing channel.

Typical objectives could include:

- **Improved brand awareness and consideration:** Measurement can be taken directly or triangulated from metrics such as automated sentiment analysis and Net Promoter Scores.
- **Improved competitive positioning:** This can be measured in numerous ways, such as an increase in social media mentions or reach, comparison with competitor social media activity, or an improvement in share of voice relative to a known starting position.
- **Increased customer interaction:** Retweets, link-sharing and volumes of blog posts and comments all measure levels of engagement on social networks. This indicates increased market awareness from advocacy; which is very difficult to measure with traditional media.
- **Incremental ROI:** Relevant and interesting content will continue to be circulated on social media platforms long after it has been created. You can use social media to extend the longevity and reach of your campaigns, increasing the returns on your initial investment.

Defining your social media objectives will help you to decide which platforms and tactics to use in order to achieve them. It will also indicate what you need to measure, so you can ensure you – or your agency – have the appropriate monitoring and measurement tools in place.

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How do I incorporate social media in my marketing mix?

Successfully implementing social media into marketing campaigns means delivering the right content on the right social media platform, monitoring the results and responding accordingly.

Social media selection: Social media platforms can be ideal distribution mechanisms for the content that supports your lead-generation activities. The media you select will be dictated by two things: the location of your audience and the type of content you plan to create. There is no point posting a video to Facebook if your customers don't use it, but uploading it to YouTube and linking to it from Twitter or LinkedIn may result in high levels of viewing and sharing by your target audience.

Content type: When creating content for use on social platforms, the basic principles of good business communication apply: know your audience, tailor the message to the medium and be clear what you want people to do. Monitoring will help you to understand what your audience is interested in. Your job then is to create content that provides the information they need, is in a format that they will appreciate, and positions your organisation as an expert in the field. Depending on the social media objectives you have set, the calls to action may be to visit your blog or website for more information, register for an event or webcast, or share your content with others.

Monitoring and responding: On social media platforms, the effects of any marketing activity can be measured in real-time. Monitoring tools and techniques deliver near-instantaneous insight, enabling you to respond with topical content whenever the conversation pulls you for it. The combination of timing and relevance increases the value of your content, so it is more likely to be shared.

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How much budget, time and resource should I dedicate to social media?

While this is very much a ‘how long is a piece of string?’ question, there is no doubt that B2B brands are dedicating a growing proportion of their budget to social media marketing. A survey by the IT Services Marketing Association, for example, found that members had increased the social media portion of their budget from an average of 12% in FY2009 to 15% in FY2010. [5]

Part of the reason is that B2B marketers are realising their marketing spend goes further in the social space. When your customers and advocates start doing your work for you by sharing your content and talking positively about your brand in public, you are literally ‘doing more with less’.

Social media is an integral and increasingly important part of marketing strategy. We are already seeing dedicated headcount being allocated to social media within major corporates, usually in Marketing or Corporate Communications. This trend is likely to continue and grow. And where headcount is not available, most reputable integrated marketing agencies can provide strategic advice on incorporating social media into your marketing mix, as well as tactical support with campaign development, execution, monitoring and reporting.

[5] ITSMA, Services Marketing Budgets and Benchmarks: 2010 Budget Allocations and Trends [http://www.itsma.com/research/2010-budget-allocations-and-trends/]

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How can I measure and demonstrate the success of my social media campaigns?

There are many proven social media monitoring techniques, from simple mention tracking to sophisticated sentiment analysis, to measure the success of your social media marketing efforts. These techniques can be combined with your existing digital campaign analytics to provide insight into how your social media efforts are influencing and augmenting your overall marketing activity.

Typical objectives could include:

- **Financial ROI:** This is the one your senior team will want to see. As social media marketing tends not to be a lead-generating activity, financial ROI can be hard to measure. It's not impossible, however. Olivier Blanchard, author of Social Media ROI, has developed a methodology [6] for measuring the impact of your social marketing initiatives on your bottom line, which is well worth exploring. Increasingly, companies are investigating ways of incorporating SM metrics data into marketing automation solutions such as Eloqua, Marketo or Coremetrics and we see this becoming an ever more prominent topic throughout 2011.
- **Brand awareness:** While monitoring social media mentions alone will not give an idea of sentiment, it can indicate how aware your market is of your brand in relation to the competition. Results can be correlated against recent brand awareness campaigns to determine their effectiveness.
- **Product/brand perception:** By combining social media mention monitoring with sentiment analysis, you can analyse the market response to your product news or corporate announcements in real time as well as after the fact.
- **Trend reversal:** Social media activity can have a positive impact on a downward trend. You will need to clearly define the trend in question, the metrics you will use to establish the point at which it has been reversed, and the tools and timescales you will use to measure progress.
- **Demand generation:** Tracking social media-generated traffic to your destination sites (e.g. a thought leadership blog post or campaign microsite) or content (e.g. white paper, video or webcast) will show the extent to which your social media activity is creating interest and demand.
- **Lead generation:** Leads directly generated through your social media activities can be tracked by various methods, including voucher codes, clickthrough analysis or even asking prospects where they heard about your brand/product/offer.

[6] Olivier Blanchard: The Basics of Social Media ROI [http://www.slideshare.net/thebrandbuilder/olivier-blanchard-basics-of-social-media-roi]

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Summary

With the business case for social media marketing strengthening daily, there has never been a better time for B2B marketers in to master this exciting and rewarding new discipline. Following the guidance set out in this paper will help you to build awareness of your brand and demand for your products and services, as well as increasing your organisation's influence and industry standing.

About MOI

Marketing Options International have taken over 10 years' user-centric digital marketing and social media marketing experience in delivering effective and measurable customer engagement and demand creation. Our digital services range from HTML emails, website design, PPC and banner advertising through to social media consulting, social media engagement, search engine optimisation and mobile app development. We create digital marketing content that delivers real value to your target audience, through microsites, webinars, videos, iPhone/Android apps, virals, user polls, eBooks and much more.

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