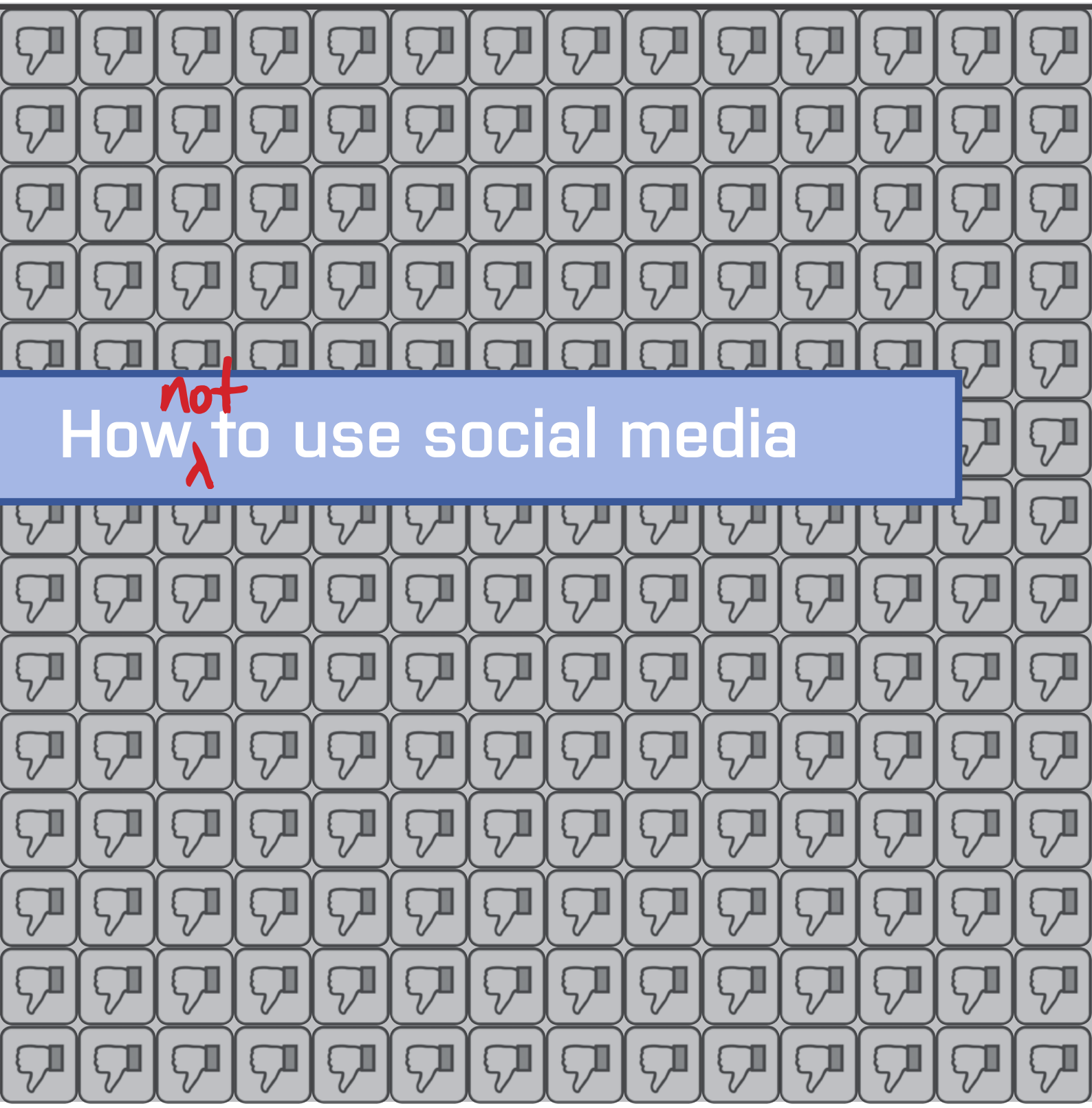
B2B Whitepaper

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How not to use social media

How not to use social media

In association with: ORACLE SOCIAL

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INTRODUCTION

Thankfully, the B2B voices decrying social media as an irrelevant passing fad have grown so quiet as to be largely non-existent these days. The initial battle was won, and brands from pretty much every vertical under the sun can point to successes within the social sphere.

The fact that so many organisations now recognise the benefits of 'being social' is fantastic, and represents a real advancement in the way B2B organisations view the role of marketing. But this widespread adoption of social has led to a problem in itself. Namely: lots of businesses using social media really badly.

You don't have to scroll too far down your Twitter stream to spot them; crimes such as over hashtagging, overt selling and relentless social stalking aren't easily hidden. The fact is: the time for brands being able to get away with social faux pas has pretty much gone. Social media is no longer the new kid on the block and there are relatively few excuses for getting the basics wrong these days.

So, it is with this in mind that we set about producing a light-hearted guide offering advice about the things to be avoided if you have any interest in presenting a professional, competent image across all social media platforms.

It should probably be highlighted here that the definitive rules of social media and digital engagement are still being written. Those that claim to have mastered every element of digital marketing are fooling themselves. But, that said, falling into sloppy practice still isn't ideal.

Don't follow these worst practice tips if you're keen to ensure your brand doesn't look silly on social.



BY ALEX ASPINALL
HEAD OF CONTENT
AT B2B MARKETING

"Social media is no longer the new kid on the block and there are relatively few excuses for getting the basics wrong these days"

HOW NOT TO USE TWITTER

Twitter is one of the most active social spaces for B2B marketers, so it's important you don't mess it up. Make sure you don't:

"The overuse of hashtags: at best it makes you look like you don't know what you're doing, and at worst it makes you look #desperate"

Bombard your followers
Far too many social media marketers are using Twitter (and other platforms) merely as a method of broadcast. With relatively few exceptions your hard-earned followers are not on Twitter waiting for you to publish your weekly whitepaper. At times it feels like Twitter is taking over from email when it comes to batch and blast link bait. Twitter has so much more to offer; don't just see it as an easy win when you need to get clicks.

#Be #a #hashtag #abuser
The overuse of hashtags: at best it makes you look like you don't know what you're doing, and at worst it makes you look #desperate. Hashtags can be an incredibly valuable means of grouping related content and reducing noise, and they are one of Twitter's most-copied concepts. But if you're including more than one or two (max) in your tweets you're missing the point.

#MakeYourHashtagsSoLongThatPeopleCantReallyIncludeThemInTheirTweets
Further to the hashtags point above, it's amazing how many tweets you see that include prohibitively long hashtags. Twitter is focused on the exchange of concise messages. You only have 140 characters to play with so if your hashtags are taking up fifty characters you're stealing valuable real estate from potential responders. Keep it short and sweet.

Allow auto-generated posts
Tweets such as 'I just liked a video on Youtube,' or 'I think that...[Facebook link],' or – the worst – 'I just ousted AN Other as mayor of Mayor of Dunkin Do-nuts' are not welcome. No one wants to read these tweets. They are ghosts left over from the early days of social media. If you liked a video but can't be bothered to share it on Twitter, why tell me? If I wanted to read Facebook, I'd be there rather than here. And as for the 'I am mayor of xxxx,' I'm not sure where to start with that.

Forget to be a human
Twitter offers brands the opportunity to engage one-to-one with potential customers, existing clients and pretty much everyone else too, so it's important to retain a sense of being human on the platform. Even the most corporate-looking brand can afford to loosen its tie at the Twitter table. You don't have to Rick Roll everyone or post daily cat gifs, but you should be able to use the more informal space Twitter provides to give a sense of the people behind the brand. A good rule of thumb is; if you can't imagine saying it to someone in real life don't write it on Twitter (or anywhere else for that matter).

Twitter is growing increasingly noisy. This means gaining meaningful traction is becoming more difficult. If you want your messages to have any chance of generating the returns you're hoping for, you have to make sure you get the basics right.

HOW NOT TO USE LINKEDIN

The professional social network keeps things a little more business-like, so for some LinkedIn requires a slightly different approach. Don't start:

Connecting with people you don't know
Regardless of how much you want to be business acquaintances with the person in question, and no matter how much it would benefit your business or further your career if you knew them, the fact is you don't. So, act accordingly. There are ways and means of getting in front of people; but don't ask to connect with them out of the blue. It's weird. *The same is true here for LinkedIn's lamentable 'Endorsements' functionality; steer clear.

Abusing the Group
LinkedIn's Groups are one of its success stories. They are home to thousands of thought-provoking discussions, and can be of great use, both to those looking to inspire and those looking for answers. But be warned; these 'Groups' are populated by passionate self-policing social media enthusiasts, so attempts to cheaply steer people away from the Group environment on to your (irrelevant) landing page are often met with hostility.

Being a ghost
It's true for every social media platform, but it's perhaps most true of LinkedIn: if you don't have a well-completed profile you may as well not bother. You don't have to include every scrap of your professional history, how many times a day you do the tea run and every milestone your brand has reached, but it's better to include the basics, rather than have a blank page. It's your shop window, so why leave the mannequins standing there half-dressed?

Selling
As with most social media platforms, LinkedIn is not particularly conducive to selling. Despite the professional focus of the platform, relatively few users are logging on in order to specifically buy your stuff. It's a space conducive to collaboration and influencing more than a means to earn a quick buck.

Becoming a stalker
Everyone uses LinkedIn to check out what the person they are meeting for a coffee looks like, or to gain a bit of insight regarding a potential employee, employer or client. But there is another breed of user operating on LinkedIn: the stalker. These people trawl the site, clicking from profile to profile in search of... I don't know what. Remember, people can see who has been viewing their profile, so it doesn't pay to snoop around unnecessarily.

Pretending you're on Facebook
LinkedIn has managed to carve out a niche for itself among the other major social media players on the strength of its professional focus. It certainly wouldn't be doing as well as it has if it was battling directly with the friend-focused Facebook or the immediacy of Twitter. Its strength is that people use it for business. It's worth bearing this in mind because 'banter' and flippancy can be taken the wrong way on LinkedIn. It's probably best to keep most of your LOLs on Facebook.

"Despite the professional focus of the platform, relatively few users are logging on in order to specifically buy your stuff"

HOW NOT TO USE FACEBOOK

Filled with potential booby traps, Facebook is not the most natural home for all B2B brands. Here are five things Facebook failers tend to do:

Delete the negativity
Loss of brand control is one of the digital era's most ubiquitous traits, and it terrifies some people. It scares them so much that as soon as they see anything negative about their brand, they delete it. And it is a terrible mistake. Facebook is arguably the most informal social space of all, so it's likely you will encounter some negative/flippant sentiment at some point. If you want to look out of touch and incapable of operating in the digital world: delete.

Under-commit
Only a fool would regard social as a free (or even cheap) option. In order to gain anything from Facebook or, any other social platform, continual commitment is needed for effective population, moderation, analysis and exploitation of the space. If you're not checking in regularly and creating an engaging, worthwhile presence, no one is going to be interested. Nothing looks worse than an abandoned Facebook page.

Expect overnight success
It's fair to say Facebook isn't the most natural fit for B2B brands. Indeed for some it probably won't really ever work. Even for those brands that are better positioned to utilise Facebook as a marketing platform, it won't be easy. If you look at some of the brands that are using the platform well they all display a commitment to the platform. When they started, they began with the same 'like' count as you: zero.

Totes be BFFs
Though we've all been embracing the liberation social media has afforded our potentially stuffy old B2B brands, let's not get too carried away. Yes, you can present a more informal image but it would be a mistake to take it too far. We should be seeking to strike a balance between giving a sense of the humans behind the logo and remembering we are still representing a brand and all that it embodies. You're not really chatting to your mates.

Forget the pictures
It's important to utilise each social media platform in the correct ways. There are subtle differences between them all and it pays to remember this. For example, Facebook (in line with the wider web) has gradually morphed from a platform focusing on short text-based 'updates' into one offering a very visual experience. Your Facebook news feed is probably heavily image-led these days. Images generally receive greater interaction levels than purely text-based posts. Remember this when posting business content.

"Even for those brands that are better positioned to utilise Facebook as a marketing platform, it won't be easy"

HOW NOT TO USE GOOGLE+

Google's ventures into the social realm have been met with derision in some quarters. But the wise marketers know you ignore it at your peril. Less wise marketers tend to do some of these things:

"Circles can seem like a hassle at first but they are the key to engagement"

Write it off as a joke
We've all heard the ghost town jokes. And we're aware Google has, thus far, failed to get its head around the finer points of delivering a social service that the world naturally wants to adopt. But there is so much riding on the social web that anyone still believing Google will allow its social platform to go the way of Buzz and Wave are, simply, wrong. And it's worth adopting G+, if only for that reason.

Ignore unique features
Google+ offers a host of functionality that does not exist on other platforms. Chief among them is the way it delivers tangible social search. Aside from the '+1' recommendations logged in users see on their SERPs, the real benefit for content-producing brands is the 'rel=author' tagging. Simply put, implementing 'rel=author' will significantly improve your search performance, and you should probably do it now.

Ignore Circles
The laziest marketers tend to view social media as a broadcast channel. Their feeds are full of self-promotional links and, they generally garner relatively little from social, and question its relevance as a result. If you're keen to avoid becoming part of this group, you have to engage. And on G+ engaging involves setting aside a bit of time and building your circles. Circles can seem like a hassle at first but they are the key to engagement, and even offer useful segmentation options.

Fear the unknown
Though many commentators actually believe Google+ is superior to its more successful rivals in terms of both functionality and design – it certainly lacks the clumsiness of an exploration of Facebook – many marketers are scared of embracing the unknown. Change can be hard to deal with, especially when you have limited hours in the working day, but putting in a little effort to really understand what's on offer with G+ could well earn dividends in the long run.

Expect overnight success
Several of the points above, with the exception of the rel=author one, are occasionally met with cries of 'but I still don't believe it's worth it' from naysayers. G+ is not an overnight solution to your social ROI struggles, and it will mean a bit more time spent 'doing social'. But its adoption is very likely to deliver in the long run, and ignoring it for any of the reasons cited here is not a risk you should be happy to take with your brand's fortunes.

HOW NOT TO BLOG

Blogging is not an exact science, but there are a few things you can try and avoid doing if you want to succeed:

Just doing it (for the sake of it)
Blogging is often seen as a quick win, requiring relatively little effort and investment. But this isn't a description you'd expect many successful bloggers to recognise. Blogs require commitment. You'll need to regularly update your blog, and remain committed to pushing it wherever possible. And then there's coming up with the ideas and finding time to write the posts. If you're not in it for the long haul, it's probably best not to bother.

Assuming you're a writer
Lots of people, and – believe it or not – this includes a great deal of marketers, think they are good writers when, in fact, they aren't. Writing to a decent standard is not a skill everyone possesses, so it's worth getting a couple of people to check your copy before sharing it with the world. Everyone needs an editor.

Ignoring your audience
The most basic function of a blog is for it to be read. This is a fact so obvious that it often ends up being overlooked. If the blog you write is not likely to be of interest to your target audience you may as well save yourself the effort, and head to the pub instead of labouring out 400 words of pointless waffle. You need to write things you know about, that show your brand as being relevant and knowledgeable, but, most importantly, you need to write things people actually want to read. And it can be easier said than done.

Ignoring comments
If people take the time to comment on something you've written, that's great; it shows you're creating content that matters to the people your aiming it at. You should make an effort to respond to as many relevant comments as possible, in order to keep the conversation alive. And this is especially true if people leave comments challenging what you've written. There's nothing healthier than a good old debate, and it looks very bad if you ignore or delete negative responses.

Hiding your light
It's the same with any content, really, but it applies particularly with your blogs: make sure you share. You could have put together the best blog ever penned, it might be linked in all the right places and offer real insight but if no one knows it's there, it's likely to go unread. Share your blogs on social media, via email, on your website and everywhere else your potential readers might be hiding.

"Writing to a decent standard is not a skill everyone possesses, so it's worth getting a couple of people to check your copy before sharing it with the world"

HOW NOT CALCULATE SOCIAL ROI

Everyone knows the importance of social media. But few know how to measure its impact. To be fair, there are plenty of potential pitfalls:

"Amassing a huge following comes with no guarantee that you're going to make lots of money from it"

Concentrating on followers
Social is great for providing easily digestible stats reflecting the success of your social media efforts. The main one is your 'follower' count. It stands to reason that the more followers you have, the better you're doing. Apart from the fact that a massive following, comprised of irrelevant accounts that are never going to buy anything is pretty useless. In fact, there is probably no less board-friendly metric than follower-count; without context it is meaningless.

Making assumptions
There are a lot of false conclusions that can be garnered from social media analysis. For example, peoples' propensity to retweet something or discuss it on Twitter is not equal to the likelihood of them visiting a webpage or buying what the page is trying to sell. Similarly, amassing a huge following comes with no guarantee that you're going to make lots of money from it. Be very careful with the conclusions you draw, and don't base business decisions purely on social insight.

Disregarding business objectives
Marketers are often accused (and sometimes guilty of) overlooking wider business concerns when carrying out their campaigns. And when it comes to social, this problem is particularly pronounced. The danger comes from the fact social interactions are quite divorced from the strategy and pound signs discussed around the board table. Social activity should be freer than certain other communications but if it isn't feeding in to wider business objectives, you're doing something wrong.

Forgetting about integration
There is an idea, probably stemming from its relative infancy as a core member of the modern marketing mix, that social is some distinct realm separate from the rest of a brand's communications; separate, indeed, from the rest of the world. This is not a good way to think about social. Social is as real as a piece of DM. And thinking of it as anything other than an always-on element of your integrated comms solution could prove a fatal error.

Not knowing what to measure
More forward-thinking organisations will understand that not every benefit of social media activity can be diluted down into ratios or pound values. If yours isn't one of them, it's going to be difficult. But for the businesses open enough to put social at the heart of the organisation, worrying about the exact value of every tweet you send perhaps isn't actually the most important preoccupation.

About B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as *B2B Marketing* magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats. Its key products are:

- Online community
- Magazine
- Awards
- Research
- Reports
- Training
- Events
- Membership

For more information on any of these products or services go to b2bmarketing.net or call +44 (0) 20 7438 1370

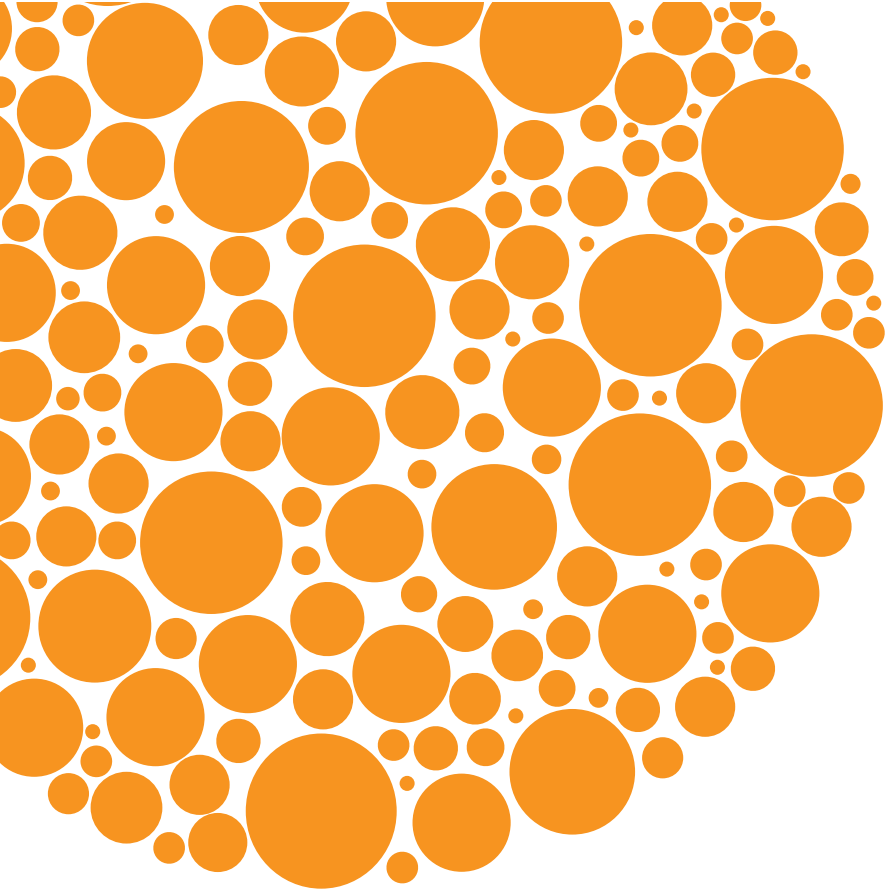
About Oracle

Oracle Social Relationship Management (SRM) is the industry's first unified, end-to-end social management solution. Integrated with Oracle Eloqua, Oracle SRM empowers you to seamlessly listen, create and publish content, engage customers, and analyse interactions across multiple social channels in real-time.

This social listening, marketing and analytics platform delivers a more comprehensive understanding of and robust interaction with your customers. In collaboration with your sales, service, and human resources, Oracle SRM lets you leverage social media platforms to improve your customers' experience.

Oracle SRM includes the following solutions: Social Engagement & Monitoring, Social Marketing and Oracle Social Network.

For more information about these solutions go to oracle.com/social





B2B Marketing
Colonial Buildings
59/61 Hatton Garden
London
EC1N 8LS

Tel. +44 (0) 20 7438 1370
Fax +44 (0) 20 7438 1377

info@b2bmarketing.net
b2bmarketing.net