

WHITE PAPER

8 Tips for Building a Social Business

A Hootsuite White Paper

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Becoming a social business involves integrating social media across departments, teams, and business functions. But evolving from early adoption to social media maturity is not a simple process. We take a look at the broader picture of becoming a social business and offer practical tips based on examples from our enterprise customers, leading brands, and analyst reports.

According to a global survey by McKinsey, 90% of executives report measurable business benefits from their organisation's social media activities[1].

While executive buy-in for broad social media adoption continues to grow, the actual work of implementing social media across departments and teams requires large organisational shifts.

At Hootsuite, we've educated over 60,000 social media professionals and launched comprehensive onboarding for enterprises around the globe. One key trend that we've noticed over the years is that as different organisations adopt social technologies they typically pass through three distinct stages of social media maturity.

The first stage of maturity is Social Advocacy. At this stage, social media is in the hands of individuals within an organisation. These individuals often champion social initiatives and have emerged as experts in the organisation.

But a Social Advocate can only do so much. Adoption begins to spread and soon the organisation enters the next stage of social maturity, which we call the Social Teams stage. In this stage, there are typically multiple teams using social media, each of them working to achieve their own departmental goals with little or no collaboration between other departments or business units. Expectations for seeing a concrete ROI from social activities also are raised at this stage.

The last stage is called Social Organisation and occurs when a company has an organisation-wide governance model and has implemented a single social media policy and strategy across the organisation. At this final stage of maturity, the organisation has brought rogue social media programmes under control and is ready to scale. With a solid foundation of policies, platforms, and processes, the organisation works on maximising the business value of social media.

The reward for organisation-wide adoption

While becoming a social organisation is a valuable goal, it's important to remember that rushing to the next stage of maturity doesn't necessarily equal better business results. For some organisations, especially large consumer brands, weaving social media into all aspects of the business can help to stay ahead of slower competitors.

Other organisations—such as an industrial shipping company or a computer chip manufacturer—might have less pressure to adopt social from their customers. As a result, they can tackle their social transformation over a longer period.

Based on our exposure to many different organisations, we've come to realise that not every organisation needs to reach the highest level of social maturity. For example, some organisations remain at the Social Team stage permanently as the size and scale of their needs simply don't justify the expansion and necessary provision of resources.

It's up to your executive team to decide just how far to integrate social media into your organisation's existing processes and departments. To get started, here are 8 tips to give you a sense of the work ahead.

Tip 1: Evaluate and align

Last year, Altimeter Group conducted a quantitative study of 698 executives 2 . They found that the most important indicator of whether social was producing a financial return wasn't necessarily related to their social media maturity stage. Instead, they discovered that organisations could still "maximise value at each stage of maturity" as long as each social activity was aligned with a clear set of business objectives.

Andy Markowitz, the Director of Global Digital Strategy at GE and one of the executives interviewed in the report mentioned above, suggested that organisations need to view social media as a tool to solve business problems.

> "I don't like the word 'social' because all marketing is social. We are using technology to solve a business problem. I prefer to think of it as digital and holistic."
>
> *Andy Markowitz,*
> *Director of Global Digital Strategy, GE*

Even with small scale social media initiatives, it's essential to align them to clear business objectives. These objectives can be expanded beyond marketing-focused goals such as lead generation targets.

For example, Customer Service teams can use social channels to hit customer retention metrics or HR can use social to increase employee engagement and reduce turnover costs.

Tip 2: Organise and consolidate social media activity

Once your organisation has decided on the business challenge that social media could potentially help solve, the next step is to organise and consolidate all social media activity. This allows you to empower employees, expanding the impact of social beyond a small team or group of strategists.

One practice that we've seen work very well is establishing a social steering committee and/or dedicated team, which we call a Centre of Excellence (COE). The purpose of the committee is to build a set of social media policies and processes. Apart from governance, the committee team also allows experts and stakeholders to share best practices, coordinate messaging, and track progress on their metrics.

The City of New York (CNY) set the goal of becoming the world's leading digital city. To extend their digital reach, they embedded an expert in each of its agencies allowing autonomous control over departmental messaging. By establishing a Centre of Excellence, their practitioners and teams could confidently talk to customers directly. This enabled widespread content production and localised expertise. Empowered autonomy of this kind becomes particularly relevant on a global scale where a centralised approach may not respect or understand cultural differences at the micro level.

Similarly, Hearst Publishing and Time Inc. has digital leadership that identify top performing social properties and share stories of success crafted by the teams that run them. Initiatives such as building a Centre of Excellence help to remind decentralised teams that there is a common goal.

Tip 3: Monitor customer conversations

Amazon founder, Jeff Bezos once described brands as, "what people say about you when you're not in the room." With a social relationship platform, your organisation can not only be in the room but also take an active role in the conversation.

To start, monitor conversations using brand and keyword mentions. Your teams can use URL shorteners such as Ow.ly to track click-throughs and then sort conversations by region.

After tuning into conversations about your brand, expand outwards. For example, Hilton Hotels takes an entirely non-sales oriented approach to their social listening. The brand has a dedicated account called @HiltonSuggests, which acts as a quasi concierge service for global travellers. From restaurant suggestions in São Paulo to the best times of day to visit the The Temple of Karnak in Egypt, Hilton's team of talented travel experts are there when travellers need a little direction.

"The conversation is happening about your brand whether you're a part of it or not."

Seth Godin

Another excellent way to track genuine customer conversations is to gather and analyse discussions on your Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter ads. Often, social media teams will simply delete or block users that leave negative comments on social ads but this data can be very useful in analysing audience sentiment and refining product positioning.

Data gathered from social ads is particularly relevant for conversion optimisation as it contains common sales objections, misinformation, and market perceptions about your brand that can be addressed in future content, landing pages, or digital media. These conversations will often be frank (and brutally honest) but show different attitudes and perceptions in the market about your organisation.

Tip 4: From customers to community

Bringing customers into the centre of your organisation's brand story can have enormous reach. It's essential to look beyond the usual gathering places such as a Facebook Page or LinkedIn group. In recent years, we've seen that our enterprise customers have a lot of success with platforms such as Quora or Get Satisfaction, as they already have existing communities of unpaid social advocates.

A good example of a community-focused and deeply social brand is GoPro. The company has doubled down on a very simple strategy: make the customer the absolute centre to the brand story.

It's worked, of course. The Wall St. Daily reports that GoPro doubled its net income in 2013 from $24.6 to $52.6 million with a marketing budget increase of only $41,000.

In retrospect, it seems logical that GoPro would choose to make customers the heros. After all, they make a personal sports camera. But social communities aren't built overnight. They require significant human resources and the path to initial sales can be slow.

A key part of GoPro's social media efforts involves finding and featuring videos created with GoPro cameras, giving every customer on the planet a fair chance to get their moment in the brand's massive YouTube spotlight. They also listen broadly across social networks for brand mentions and respond to thousands of YouTube comments and shares, building their community diligently every day.

As Econsultancy notes, GoPro is the fifth biggest brand on YouTube. Only 2% of the top 5,000 YouTube channels are from brands, making GoPro's social strategy one to learn and borrow from.

Tip 5: Work together

In Altimeter Group's latest State of Digital Transformation report they found that 56% oforganizations find cross-department collaboration difficult.[3] With social relationship platforms such as Hootsuite Enterprise, your organization can support secure internal conversation.

The New York Public Library @NYPL uses Hootsuite to coordinate a decentralised team of experts. Rather than impose a centralised Social Team to respond to inquiries, @NYPL tapped into the existing, extraordinarily deep knowledge base of librarians by training and empowering them to use social.

"56% of organisations find cross-department collaboration difficult."

Altimeter Group

As the largest online public library in the world, @NYPL receives a high volume of inbound requests. Using Hootsuite, the @NYPL experts are able to assign inquiries to the appropriate area of expertise, all through one single web-based dashboard. They can also collaborate departmentally on a response, share or edit as necessary, and then schedule the response to go out at a time their audience is most likely to receive and read it.

This audience-focused tactic has worked. Social media referrals to the library's website coming from Twitter increased more than 350 percent in one year.

Tip 6: Secure and protect your brand

Every year, the media likes to broadcast a new line of social media mistakes from intern slip-ups, to hacked accounts with embarrassing Tweets, or inexplicable behaviour from disgruntled employees.

A few recent PR mishaps include a charity (we'll keep their name anonymous as without proper security these mishaps can happen to any organisation) in the UK sending a very offensive tweet to a celebrity. They claimed their Twitter account was hacked. Another recent example came from a large airline company. The company accidently promoted a Tweet containing a customer complaint.

The most common reasons for PR and security mishaps are Tweets mistakenly sent from personal instead of corporate accounts, account hacking, and simple human error

Hootsuite developed a secure profiles feature specifically in response to instances like these. The feature puts a solid measure of prevention in place, eliminating human error. For example, users receive an extra prompt when publishing to important branded accounts, preventing errant posts intended for personal accounts.

Hootsuite also offers multiple levels of account access, limiting which team members can directly participate in outbound social conversation. Team members are also easily added and removed as organisations expand or contract. Removal is instantaneous in the event that a team member isn't exiting on good terms.

In addition to preventing against human error or disgruntled employee behaviour, Hootsuite Enterprise can perform continual security scans to protect against account hacking, rogue account creation, malware, and other security threats.

Tip 7: Measure ROI

In recent years, the growth of easily available social media data has exploded. But while social data has organisation-wide value—from refining product positioning to offering new real-time competitive intelligence to supporting HR recruitment efforts—most analytics reports are restricted to marketing metrics.

By focusing on social's direct contribution to creating revenue and cutting costs, reporting can be linked back to organisational and departmental goals. With better tracking technology and consolidated reporting tools, analysts can now track the path from social message to conversion. This makes it possible to attach a dollar value to individual social messages and track campaign performance against key performance indicators.

Organisations with sophisticated social media teams are now conducting broad global listening and feeding this data back into their internal reporting. For example, Hootsuite Enterprise offers deep social listening, allowing your organisation to act on social data beyond internal analytics or corporate social media accounts. It continually monitors more than 100+ million data sources and sets up automated notifications for spikes in sentiment, mentions, and global trends.

Once your organisation gathers social data, your teams can consolidate it. For example, social data can be integrated into Google Analytics and Facebook Insights, helping track end-to-end conversions. Analysts can then drill into the complete customer journey, track offline and online conversions, or analyse geographic disparities.

Tip 8: Amplify and create employee advocates

A lot of time and budget is spent on trying to reach social media influencers, get clicks, and seed initial shares. Yet, many large organisations ignore the power of employee amplification.

The Edelman Trust Barometer reveals that 50 percent of the international public consider employees either extremely credible or very credible, just one percentage point less than an academic expert.

Hewlett Packard has leveraged the vast knowledge base of its employees by encouraging them to share thoughts about computing and other topics on personal accounts. These thought leaders aren't necessarily executives or project leaders, but people from all areas of the enterprise.

Employees also have reach which can be multiplied. The average Twitter user has 61 followers, showing that in large organisations your employees offer extensive social reach. Pew Research Centre 4 estimates that the average American adult has 200 Facebook friends.

"50 percent of the international public consider employees either extremely credible or very credible."

Edelman Trust Barometer

According to Scott Monty, Ford's first social strategist, leveraging employees goes beyond opening up yet another channel for communicating to customers. When he charted Ford's evolution into a social organisation, he built employee amplification in the foundation of his strategy 5.

In his vision statement, Scott Monty wrote that the role of employees would be to "humanise the company by connecting constituents with Ford employees and with each other when possible, providing value in the process." As Ford has shown, employees offer a point of genuine human connection for customers.

Take the next step

This guide has outlined a basic framework with some concrete ways to plot your organisation's social transformation.

The next step is to better understand how your organisation's social media needs map to the different social relationship platforms in the marketplace. We've created a buyer's guide to help you confidently choose a social relationship platform based on the long-term needs of your organisation.

Read our buyer's guide by visiting:
blog.hootsuite.com/guide-evaluate-social-platforms/

Endnotes

1. McKinsey. "McKinsey Global Survey Results." March 01, 2013.
2. Altimeter Group. "The Evolution of Social Business Six Stages of Social Media Transformation." March 06, 2013.
3. Altimeter Group. "The 2014 State of Digital Transformation." July 06, 2014.
4. Pew Research Center. "6 New Facts About Facebook." February 03, 2014.
5. Altimeter Group. "The Evolution of Social Business Six Stages of Social Media Transformation." March 06, 2013.

About Hootsuite Enterprise

Partner with Hootsuite to accelerate your social transformation



Hootsuite Enterprise empowers organisations to execute business strategies for the social media era. As the world's most widely used social relationship platform, Hootsuite Enterprise enables global businesses to scale social media activities across multiple teams, departments, and business units. Our versatile platform supports a thriving ecosystem of technology integrations, allowing businesses to extend social media into existing systems and programs.

We help organisations create deeper relationships with customers and draw meaningful insights from social media data. Innovating since day one, we continue to help businesses pioneer the social media landscape and accelerate their success through education and professional services.

Request a custom demo today by visiting enterprise.hootsuite.com

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