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Ignore the Hype. Believe the Facts.

You're afraid of social media, aren't you? It's okay to admit it. It's a little terrifying to us, and we do this for a living.

A lot of businesspeople, especially C-level executives, VPs, and directors, are afraid of it because they've never used it. That lack of understanding breeds more contempt than familiarity because they don't understand that it can be used for business and certainly not how it can be used for business. And then there are the common fears that creep in. "People might say something bad about my company" is a popular one. (Hint: It's not that they might. If your product or service is such that people might say something bad about it, they already are. But by not participating in social media, you're not aware of it.)

But social media is not-so-slowly creeping into the business world. Despite some business leaders' attempts to hide from it, and lots of business owners and managers shying away from it, social media has arrived. Forward-thinking companies are not only starting to use Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and blogging as a way to reach customers, those companies are surging past the competition to do so.

The ones who aren't using social media? They're choosing from myriad reasons why they're afraid of it.

Australian social media professional Jeff Bullas identified 28 of those reasons, and wrote about them on his blog:¹

1. It is detrimental to employee productivity.
2. It could damage the company's reputation.
3. Security risk.
4. Fear of the unknown.
5. We already have information overload.
6. Don't know enough about it.
7. So much of what's discussed online is shallow and we have real work to do.
8. We don't have the time or resources to contribute and moderate.
9. Our customers don't use it.
10. Traditional media is still bigger, we will use Social Media when it is more mainstream.
11. It doesn't fit into current structures.
12. No guaranteed results.
13. The tools to measure and analyze Social Media aren't mature enough yet.
14. We are in B2B and who wants to hear about our boring product on a blog or Twitter.
15. We will lose control of our brand and image.
16. Upper management won't provide support.
17. Waiting on ROI (return on investment) with facts and figures.
18. We are afraid of making a mistake.
19. Lack of experience.
20. Ignorance.

21. Unwilling to be transparent.
22. Confusion.
23. No money.
24. No expertise.
25. Lack of leadership.
26. Terrified of feedback and truth.
27. The “newness” of it, going to wait.
28. High degree of skepticism.

If you're not using social media, how many of those reasons did you find yourself nodding at? If your company is using it, how many of these objections did you have to overcome to convince your boss to let you use it?

This book is called *No Bullshit Social Media* for a reason. We're not screwing around, feeding you a line, or trying to teach you how to use something you're not yet convinced will entirely work.

We're going to give you information about why social media marketing is important to your business. We're not going to couch this book in marketing speak or use business school jargon. This is the no bullshit book.

We want you to understand four things:

1. Social media is the wave of the future. It's not going away.
2. The companies that will succeed over the next 10 years are the ones that embrace social media marketing.
3. The companies that will fail over the next 10 years probably won't embrace social media marketing—most likely because of the fear we hope to eliminate.
4. Social media marketing can be real. It can be actionable. And it can be measured.

Social Media and the Hype Cycle

No single subject has exploded into society and the business world the way social media marketing has.

In 2004, there were no books in your favorite bookstore that even used the term *social media*. Only James Surowiecki's *The Wisdom of Crowds* even considered this soon-to-be-emerging niche of marketing.

Fast forward to 2008: You couldn't swing a dead laptop without hitting a handful of "social media consultants." Few people in the mid- to late-2000s could accurately describe social media properly, much less prescribe marketing strategies and tactics for it. It was a newborn environment, full of experimentation and exploration. There were no rules or best practices. Businesses were curious, but only a little bit. Small businesses were willing to try it because they needed any advantage they could get. But the larger businesses were unwilling to try it, usually for one of the previous 28 reasons.

With information explosions comes the inevitable hype cycle, first described by Jackie Fenn of Gartner Research in January of 1995. After the market is set on fire, with talk about this hot new thing, the "trough of disillusionment" hits: People remember the "dot-bomb" era, and wonder if the "next big thing" is just a fad. (*Hint:* Facebook, the world's biggest social network, is valued at over \$50 billion; it's not going away anytime soon.)

But the companies that embraced it in the 2007–2009 time frame learned how to use the tools, and reached a plateau of productivity. These companies learned how to actually process the information (or product, style, methodology, etc.) and use it in a practical, sensible manner. These companies discovered it was real, actionable, and measurable.

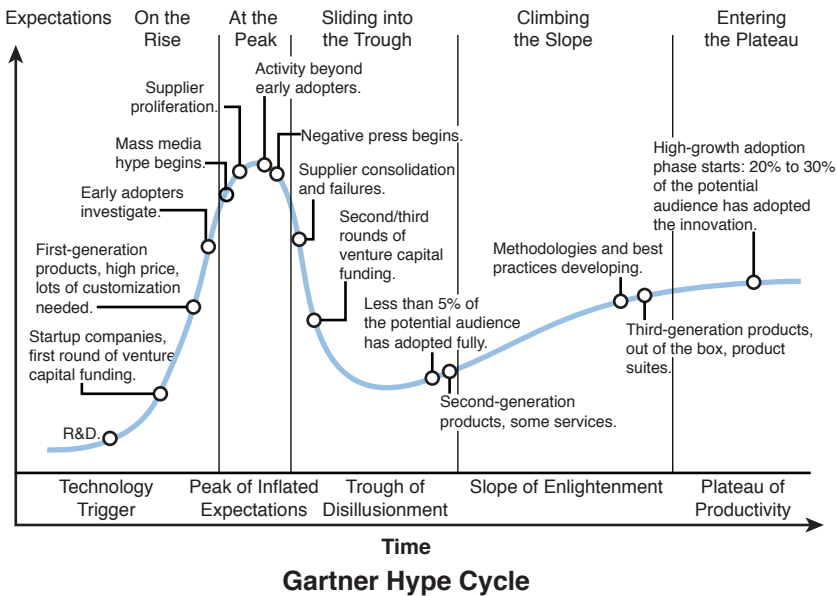


Figure 1.1 Gartner's Hype Cycle demonstrates the cycle of peak interest, followed by a dip in interest—the trough of disillusionment—followed next by the plateau of productivity.

We think the first domino in the chain of events that brought social media into being as a communications channel, not just underground forums on nerd websites, was the publishing of *The Cluetrain Manifesto*,² the twenty-first century's 95 Theses nailed to Corporate America's door, declaring, "Markets are conversations." The proclamation in the 1999 work by Rick Levine, Christopher Locke, Doc Searls, and David Weinberger insisted that companies must join the customers in these conversations in order to survive. Consumers were sick and tired of being talked at. They wanted to be talked with.

Social media reached its peak of expectations in 2009 and early 2010. Facebook exploded into the hundreds of millions of members and early corporate social media adopters such as Dell began sharing sales data from social programs. Companies and their marketing managers worked themselves into a frenzy, trying to grab social media's reins and hang on for the ride.

Many of those marketers who were frothing at the bit dove into Facebook to sell their wares, blasted links to their websites on Twitter many times a day, and set their unwitting PR teams on blog comments to promote, promote, promote. They did it old school, with old school results: They got spanked.

Their return on investment was either nothing—or a public relations nightmare when bloggers called them out for spamming their comments with one-way, blast marketing messages.

Unfortunately, reality and the trough of disillusionment hit those marketers hard. Turns out, *Cluetrain* was right. The marketplace has changed. Customers are in control, not the marketers.

You can't treat social media like TV, newspapers, or billboards. More is not better.

Maybe you see the trough of disillusionment not as the next step in the hype cycle of social media, but rather as the first indication that the fad is over.

You would be wrong.

Businesses that will succeed in their marketing efforts in the coming years have turned the corner—not their heads—toward the slope of enlightenment and are moving toward the plateau of productivity. While the "hype" is quieting, it is not because social media is a fad that is going away. It is because people using it are starting to see it for what it really is and can do and are using it that way. People who ignore social media because they think the fad is over are just treading water while their competition swims by them.

The businesses that will succeed are no longer saying, "I want a blog!" or "We need a Facebook page!" Instead, they're saying, "I want to engage my customers using social media strategically."

Just by purchasing this book, you've identified yourself as someone who is ready to look at social media as a real marketing tool with real potential to improve sales and profits.

Would it surprise you to learn that social media marketing, as we know it today, isn't just some surprising development spawned by tech startups and Gen Yers reeling after the dot-com bust of 2000? Would it shock you to know that the era of consumer-centric marketing began in the minds of traditional marketers in parallel with the information and technology explosion of the last decade?

Philip Kotler, author of more than a dozen books on marketing, discussed several interesting precursors to social media marketing in his 1999 book, *Kotler on Marketing: How to Create, Win, and Dominate Markets*.³

In a decade-old comparison of successful business practices, he shows a clear transition from "be product centered" to "be market and customer centered." He says:

"Old marketing thinking is, fortunately, now giving way to newer ways of thinking. Smart marketing companies are improving their customer knowledge, customer connection technologies, and understanding of customer economics. They are inviting customers to co-design the product. They are ready to make flexible marketing offerings. They are using more targeted media and integrating their marketing communications to deliver a consistent message through every customer contact. They are utilizing more technologies such as video-conferencing, sales automation, software, Internet web pages, and Intranets and Extranets. They are reachable seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day at their 1-800 customer telephone number or by e-mail. They are better able to identify the more profitable customers and to set up different levels of service. They see their distribution channels as being partners, not adversaries. In sum, they have found ways to deliver superior value to their customers."

In 1999, Kotler also predicted that by 2005, every product, even business-to-business offerings, would be available over the Internet and that retailers would have to find, "imaginative ways to exceed customer expectations."

This is what social media marketing is: Exceeding customer expectations, often but not always, in the online world, through human connection and relationship building.

Social media, then, is simply defined by the channels we use to achieve that. Blogs, social networks, podcasts, question-and-answer forums, email, and more are simply the strings between the tin cans that we use to communicate with our customers. The channel is social because the technology makes it easier.

Certainly, much of our focus is on the Internet and online tools to achieve this communication. But a bulletin board (the corkboard type with thumbtacks, not the online forum type) is also a social medium if your intent is to use it as such. Just post a question on the bulletin board for those passing by; provide a pen, note cards, and an envelope for folks to respond; then post those responses with your comments next to the question sheet tomorrow and you have social media.

Even a conversation with a group of people over lunch is a social medium. The key is understanding how to use a medium that is primarily social for marketing purposes.

The Problem with What Social Media Purists Preach

It's really kind of sad that social media marketing advice evolved the way it did. Social media enthusiasts in the mid-2000s interpreted and preached the principles of the *Cluetrain* with a vengeance.

Their themes included “talk with your customers, not at them,” “engage your audience,” and the ever-popular (and really annoying) “join the conversation!”

This last talking point even became the title of social media pioneer and agency entrepreneur Joseph Jaffe's book.

*Join the Conversation*⁴ did an excellent job of pounding the purist drum and pointing businesses down the road of changing their traditional ways to connect or reconnect with a dissatisfied consumer. But for all the talk of collaboration and community, the book only offered real-world case studies of companies that made marketing missteps, but never really talked about whether or not “conversational marketing” actually works.

Unfortunately, Jaffe's gaffe was the loudest song being sung by social media evangelists in the late 2000s. They would talk about the touchy-feely part—we call it the Kumbaya Effect—but they conveniently overlooked the other half of the equation: the bottom line.

To be fair, this was when social media marketing was just getting started, and the evangelist needed to spend a lot of time teaching businesspeople how to just listen to the new, connected customer. He or she didn't have time to focus on harder topics such as how to measure conversations or the ROI of social media.

The social media purists even had us convinced. In October 2008, Jason wrote a blog post on SocialMediaExplorer.com called “*What Is the ROI for Social Media?*” that still garners a fair amount of traffic and discussion. He wrote:

“The problem with trying to determine ROI for social media is you are trying to put numeric quantities around human interactions and conversations, which are not quantifiable.”

(This is the business equivalent of your kids finding photos of you wearing your favorite clothes 20 years ago.)

Thankfully, Jason’s opinions have evolved in the years since. His focus is now on social media measurement and monitoring for his clients, cutting out the purist’s bullshit and getting down to the business at hand.

Social business and technology analyst Jeremiah Owyang of The Altimeter Group confirmed that you can, in fact, measure social media and its return on investment:

“Human interactions can certainly be measured. You can measure time spent together, eye contact, words exchanged, sentiment, tone and body language. Now with the digital mediums like social, you can find attributes that also relate to those: time on site, words exchanged, sentiment and tone... but not body language.

“To truly measure ROI, the interactions and engagements in the social space have to be measured in one of the two following ways: 1) Specific actions have direct trackable activities that lead to generating a lead or transaction. This could be a unique URL, cookie or even registration code. Or 2) Track it post-purchase by asking questions right after or running a survey to all customers later.”

Owyang often cites his boss, Charlene Li, and her case study of defining the ROI of corporate blogging for General Motors and the GM Fastlane Blog.⁵ When Li was with Forrester Research, she helped devise a measurement system that included translating the number of unique blog readers to the cost of reaching the same number of people via a regular advertising channel. She then determined the time and financial costs of blogging to produce an “ROI of Blogging.”

But Asking About ROI Is Asking the Wrong Question

So measuring social media and its value to a business has been—and is being—done. But this notion of a return on investment (ROI) is bothersome. We don’t want you to think of social media marketing in terms of ROI. And no, we’re not contradicting ourselves. We want you to think in terms of what social media marketing *can do for your business*. Those are two distinct ideas.

Asking “what’s the ROI of social media” is pretty foolish. You should actually ignore the question...at first.

“What’s the ROI?” is a cop-out question asked by people who don’t understand all of what social media marketing can do for their business. It is also a financial metric, so asking that question implies that all you can get out of social media is money.

Social media consultant and author Scott Stratten once said during a speech, “The next time someone asks you about the ROI of Twitter, substitute Twitter with the word ‘talking.’”

“What’s the ROI of ‘talking?’” he asked. “How much money do you make with this new ‘talking’ business? I don’t understand why you’re ‘talking’ to customers all the time.”

Another social media author and public relations expert, David Meerman Scott, once shouted during a podcast interview, “What’s the ROI of your secretary?!” His point was that you don’t measure the ROI of the person who answers the phones at the front desk.

Although the three true business metrics—revenue, cost savings, and customer satisfaction—can certainly be affected by strong social media marketing, so can other areas of your business and marketing efforts. What if you want to enhance the awareness of your product? Do you measure that in dollars? No. Thus, ROI is often the wrong measure to apply.

Even if you are going to use social media marketing for a money-driven purpose, asking the ROI question first is out of order. You’re asking what the ROI of your social media marketing efforts is *before you ever get started*.

The smart approach to gauging your potential success in social media is first knowing what social media can do for your business. You then set goals within those expectations for your efforts. You can gauge an ROI, but only if your goal is financial success and you’ve implemented some activity toward those goals.

Now, this is not to say that social media should not be measured. It absolutely should. That’s how you’ll know it’s working. You should be measuring all of your marketing efforts, whether it’s a print ad, a TV commercial, a trade show, or a direct mail piece. But we’re willing to bet no one asked about the ROI of those things before you bought them. (We’re also willing to bet that a lot of people aren’t measuring them afterward either.)

If you ask the ROI of social media question before you ever get started, you’re setting yourself up for failure because you don’t know what you’re trying to measure.

The honest answer to the ROI question for your business before you start a social media marketing effort is, “I’m not sure. I can’t make any predictions or promises. I know what I’ve done for other companies, but every situation is different, and we won’t know how you’ll do until we try it.”

This brings us back to why you might ask the ROI question in the first place. People who do ask typically ask out of fear. If they can be assured that they'll succeed, they'll try it. Otherwise, it's "What's the ROI? How much money will we make? Can you guarantee our success?"

Those who ask these questions don't understand social media marketing isn't just about sales; it can also be about customer service and satisfaction, reputation protection, loyalty and advocacy building, research and development, and more.

And we're not going to play along with the social media hippies and tree huggers and say ROI should stand for something warm and fuzzy, like "return on interaction" or "return on innovation" or "return on conversation because we're really bad with acronyms." ROI is ROI and always will be.

What you might get out of social media marketing is specific results. Just like other areas of marketing and communications, they might be good...or they might be bad. But asking what they're going to be at the beginning of your journey is like asking the final score before the game starts.

Knowing what you can get out of social media marketing makes it much easier to determine your goals, set expected levels of accomplishment, and ultimately measure what you're getting out of it all. Again, we're *not* talking exclusively about measuring your return on investment (ROI). Yes, you will invest money in your social media marketing efforts, just like you would public relations, letterhead, or even the graphic design of your company brochures. Yes, you should expect to see a return on the money you spend, but you should focus the ROI metric on your whole marketing efforts. Trying to drill down an ROI on one piece is, as we've illustrated, sometimes illogical. (That letterhead ROI is tricky, isn't it?)

But, to paraphrase a common theme from social media measurement expert Katie Paine, "You're not always investing in a financial transaction, so you're not always going to get a financial result." There are times when your results will be intangible but still important and useful.

For example, if you're facing some negative news about a product recall, your goal should be to protect your brand's reputation. Your measure of success won't be an increase in sales or profits, but rather an increase in positive reputation indicators, a reduction of negative search results on Google, an improvement in positive search results, or a reduction of angry phone calls to customer service. Still, if you're using social media to drive sales, facilitate research and development, or even enhance customer service, you *can* track financial results that come from audience members you've cultivated through social activities, or even retention rates among the same crowd. These measures can certainly produce dollar figures on a spreadsheet that will make the "dollars-first" executives take note.

Seven Things Social Media Marketing Can Do for Your Business

It's vacation time. You load your family in the minivan, pull out of the driveway, and say, "Okay! Where are we going on vacation?" As you pull away from the house, you realize you didn't buy gas, book plane tickets, pack, study the map to know your route, make reservations at a hotel, or arrange for someone to feed the dog. Worst of all, you left without even knowing what your destination was.

That's what happens when you don't create goals for a business venture. Even something as simple as signing up for a single social network to do a few tests shouldn't be left to chance.

To understand what you're going to get out of anything, you first have to have goals just to measure whether your efforts are successful. If you don't, you're racing down the highway toward your unknown destination: You're lost, but you're making great time.

Starting with Chapter 5, "Make Some Noise: Social Media Marketing Aids in Branding and Awareness," we're going to dive deeply into the six things social media marketing does for your business:

- Enhance branding and awareness
- Protect brand reputation
- Build community
- Enhance customer service
- Facilitate research and development
- Drive leads and sales

In our experience, these six areas cover just about everything you can expect your business to accomplish using social media marketing. And the three core business metrics—increasing sales, decreasing costs, and improving customer satisfaction—are built in to many of them, implicitly and sometimes explicitly.

The strategic approach to social media marketing is to review these six areas, identify which are a good fit for your organizational goals, then map your goals, objectives, and, eventually, measures of success from there.

1. Enhance Branding and Awareness

The image of your product in the market. Its perception to others (and not you).

It is important to look at your brand from the eyes of your customers, partners, and vendors (your stakeholders), not your own. Because you eat, sleep, and breathe your

brand, you're going to have an extreme, one-sided perception of it. Negatives will be excused away; positives may be lauded louder than they should.

The marketplace's perception of your brand is far more accurate and indicative of your company's value. Social media marketing can build a more positive brand and increase the public's awareness of you.

Social media marketing can:

- Increase awareness of your brand.
- Increase the reach of your brand messaging.
- Increase online conversations about your brand.
- Increase consumer preference for your brand over competitors.
- Increase your brand's Q-Score, or online appeal and familiarity.
- Increase your brand's online conversational market share—the percentage of industry conversations mentioning you versus your competitors.

2. Protect Brand Reputation

Upholding a positive perception of the brand.

Though considered a subset of branding and awareness, protecting brand reputation is important enough to set aside as its own topic. Sometimes, you need to respond to a crisis, and no amount of marketing speak is going to save you. It is important for a company to listen to online conversations to mitigate any negative (and amplify any positive) claims or conversations. But doing so also protects the reputation of the brand in the eyes of the search engines.

Google doesn't rank your company first in keyword searches because you deserve it—or because you do good and wonderful things. It prioritizes search results it considers the most relevant based on the keywords entered in the search box and what kind of information is being discussed lately. That means, if a lot of people are angry about your company, their complaints are what will be found on Google.

If you want to be the top result for certain keywords, you have to earn it by optimizing your site and its content for search. Social media marketing can

- Increase positive online mentions and sentiment of the brand
- Decrease negative online mentions and sentiment of the brand
- Mitigate all negative online mentions of the brand

- Rank in the top-five search results on Google, Yahoo!, and Bing for targeted keywords

3. Enhance Public Relations

Building and maintaining relationships with various audiences, or publics, which reflect positively upon the company, organization, or person.

Social media is closely aligned with public relations because the platforms that make up its world are populated by the public. As companies develop strategies and tactics to communicate with their audiences, they look for mediums the audiences watch, read, or listen to. Social media platforms have become one of those mediums.

As a result, social media marketing has evolved as a convenient extension of public relations, incorporating elements of media relations, crisis communications, event planning, community relations, internal communications, and more. In fact, almost every facet of a traditional public relations program has some sort of translation into the online and social media world.

Social media marketing can

- Build and maintain relationships directly with customers and stakeholder groups
- Publicize organization initiatives through blogger and influencer outreach
- Improve the communications success of community or internal initiatives
- Facilitate critical crisis communications in often a more expedient fashion than traditional media
- Empower greater public participation than traditional approaches by removing a media filter between a company and its public

4. Build Community

Growing an audience of consumers (of product or content) to serve as an advocacy or word-of-mouth marketing channel.

This is sometimes considered the golden cow of the social media world. Building community ultimately makes a social media marketer's job easy. Community means loyal customers, raving fans, and product evangelists.

With loyal fans and advocates rushing to defend your company when it is criticized, or amplifying your new ideas and messages to the market, strong brand communities and their advocates move a brand into gold-standard territory. Think of Apple iPhone users, Moleskine notebook fans, or the Maker's Mark Ambassadors Club.

Whether cultivating that community through a robust, branded social network or just informally connecting enthusiasts with your company in loosely tied conversations, brands are doing it.

Social media marketing can

- Increase your number of fans, followers, friends, or readers
- Grow your opt-in email marketing list
- Increase the number of your affinity or loyalty club members
- Increase fan-generated advocacy and promotion of your brand initiatives
- Increase fan-generated defense of your brand in negative conversations

5. Enhance Customer Service

Facilitating customer needs through proactive and reactive communications (on- and offline).

Enhancing customer service is the most popular way of using social media marketing, perhaps because it is the easiest of the six functions to fulfill. When all you have to do is ask “how can I help” to someone complaining on Twitter, customer service through social media can not only reduce the call center costs, but can also even boost word-of-mouth marketing.

Social media marketing can drive customer service in a few ways. Note the overlap with reputation protection. This is important because a lot of customer complaints can produce similar reputation results as a product crisis.

Social media marketing can

- Increase your customers' satisfaction levels
- Reduce your call center costs
- Increase positive online mentions and sentiment of your brand
- Decrease negative mentions and sentiment of your brand

6. Facilitate Research and Development

Idea generation, improvement creation, and market research.

Some companies have benefited greatly by getting ideas, complaints, and suggestions from their customers. This collaboration, sometimes called “open source” collaboration, enables the product development department to get new ideas and the marketing department to see what their customers need. Dell’s IdeaStorm, a product and feature suggestion and voting site, is the most popular example of social media marketing as research and development (R&D).

If building community is the golden cow of social media marketing, facilitating research and development within that community is nirvana. By tapping into the vested interest and intelligence of your customers, fans, and even detractors, you can harvest ideas that lead to new products, product features, and even profits.

Social media marketing can

- Generate new product ideas for your company
- Improve your product features
- Improve your service lines
- Generate market research for your company
- Generate sales for your company from R&D activities

7. Drive Leads and Sales

Sales of products or services or leads which produce them.

Yes, social media marketing can drive leads and even sales. And no, it’s not just some mystical, magical by-product of “joining the conversation.” You can prescribe goals and objectives around sales using social media. And you can measure them accordingly.

Social media marketing can

- Generate leads and sales from blog visitors
- Generate leads and sales from social channel interactions (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Increase conversion rates
- Increase repeat and referral business

When You Add “Marketing,” It’s About Business

The formative years of social media marketing are behind us. This is not an exploratory time anymore. Social media professionals are helping businesses grow through emerging technologies. When you add the word *marketing* to *social media*, it’s about business. Draw that line to the bottom line, or go home.

A few years ago, the social media purists got the marketplace all hyped up about just that: hype. Let’s gather in a circle and sing, “Kumbaya,” with our beloved customers. Let’s “join the conversation” and “talk with, not at” them. Let’s “engage” and become a “social business.”

It sounds nice, in a very holding-hands-in-a-circle kind of way, but that can’t be all we do. We have to make money, or else we cease to have a profitable business.

Still, the tree huggers and hippies of the online world got half of the equation right. We do have to join the conversation. The new consumer requires us to engage and talk with, not at them. We can probably forego the “Kumbaya” circle, but turning traditional marketing around to focus on the consumer and not the brand is imperative for successful online marketing today.

So let us take that direction and do what we do best: Make social media about business.

Social media marketing becomes realistic, actionable, and measurable when you approach it strategically. That is, implement one or more of the six things social media marketing can do for your business and do the following:

- Set goals your company wants to focus on
- Create measurable objectives within each that accomplish your goals
- Produce strategies or concepts to execute that accomplish your objectives
- Create tactics or tasks that accomplish your strategies or concepts
- Build measurement systems to evaluate the implementation of your plan

None of these five items are new to anyone who has taken a business or marketing course where strategic communication planning was covered. As Jason often says, “This ain’t rocket surgery.”

What seems to be difficult for most businesses is not thinking strategically, but rather remembering to do so. Today’s pace of business is frenetic at best. We’ve forgotten to focus, to ignore the shiny, new object and get stuff done. With the ever-changing world of technology and social media tools, it’s easy to—LOOK! A SQUIRREL!—be distracted by the new tool or strategy.

It's hard to plan, launch a course of action, and stay the course while integrating market changes as they arise.

By grounding your social media marketing in a strategic approach—setting goals, measurable objectives, producing strategies, creating tactics or tasks, and measuring it all—you have a plan. Installing a measurement system for control and evaluation helps you execute the plan. And executing the plan is as easy as working backward: Accomplish the tasks or tactics that execute the strategies or concepts. Those meet the objectives, which then accomplish the goals.

What happens when you approach social media marketing strategically? You see past the hype and understand that social media marketing can be real. It can be actionable. It can be measured. You acknowledge and even embrace the Kumbaya philosophies of joining the conversation, building relationships, and talking with, not at, customers.

But you don't stop there.

You view social media marketing through the eyes of your business and your customers. You see where you can provide value and where value can then return to your business.

And when all that happens, you lose your fear.

Again, it's not hard to plan. It's hard to remember, or make time, to plan. And execution is sometimes challenging, but it shouldn't be hard.

This is, after all, just communicating.

Endnotes

1. Reprinted with permission. <http://www.jeffbullas.com/2009/08/08/28-reasons-why-the-ceo-is-afraid-of-social-media/>.
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