



# *Marketing in 2009*

*12 marketing professionals reveal their execution imperatives*

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## INTRODUCTION by Valeria Maltoni



We ended the year with an exhortation - **2009 is the year of execution.** We began the year with a mantra - **make everything simpler.**

You may feel overwhelmed by all the promises of this brand new year. How to keep them all? The answer is right in front of you: simplify. Complexity slows you down.

Do more *of* less. Focus on what you know is important. Resist the temptation to fill your schedule to the brim. Instead, sip the sweet moments of chance and rest.

*Carry yourself gracefully and professionally.*

And you will find that your voice carries farther.

There is strength in restraint and there is a time for every purpose - in business and in life. Choose wisely. I prefer to be kind to being right.

*Find meaning by giving meaning.*

Many are probably feeling indigestion from all the social networking and marketing. Think more attraction and purpose, less vying for positions or seeking definitions.

Social media may not be an organization *per se*, however is it akin to an organism where both the projects

and the people need to be fulfilled. We get the kind of network we deserve, after all.

*Launch and learn.*

Get your ideas done. Choose fewer of them and really go at it. Set standards and find a pace for yourself - then hold yourself to them.

Don't fear mistakes, welcome them. They will help you become more resilient and flexible - in some cases even kinder. Nothing like the fresh breeze of reality to energize our purpose. Adapt your plan to circumstances and keep going.

Action speaks louder than words. Make it positive. Teach. Lead. Learn. Love.

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I asked 12 professionals who are walking the talk to give us some coordinates for marketing in 2009. More than prediction, their advice indicates direction.

This will be a trying year. I encourage you to keep working it.

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## DEFINING SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS FOR THE REAL WORLD by Olivier Blanchard



Most business leaders still have no idea that social media platforms can be powerful business development tools, and the few who do are scratching their heads trying to figure out how to incorporate them into their existing marketing mix.

The biggest challenge facing Social Media evangelists today is thus twofold: on the one hand, they need to make a case for the tangible and measurable value of this cultural

phenomenon, and on the other hand, the methodology that defines that value must be created.

For all the talk of measuring “engagement” and “brand valuation,” the value of any tool (social media or otherwise) to a classically trained MBA boils down to a simple question: “How does this impact my P&L?” In other words, “how will this impact my business? Please answer in terms of dollars.”

Fact: Until you can demonstrate that Social Media tools can yield some type of measurable impact on the health of a business, you won’t be getting much traction.

**Defining the value for business applications. Connecting the dots between engagement and the P&L.**

*“Basic metrics you can initially use to match up to before, during and after sales deltas are frequency, reach and yield.”  
- Olivier Blanchard*

Okay, we know that a well executed social media strategy can yield a certain amount of customer engagement. Now what? Should we just measure engagement by monitoring unique visitors to a microsite or blog? Should we look at the number and frequency of comments? Sure, but that is just the beginning.

In order for engagement to be truly measurable in terms of *effectiveness*, you have to be able to tie that engagement to an impact on sales. (Yes, the almighty sale is still king in the world of business. Tie anything to sales, and you will get even the most old-fashioned CEO’s attention.) Measuring Social Media’s impact on sales isn’t what I would call simple, but it isn’t brain surgery either. Basic metrics you can initially use to match up to before, during and after sales deltas are Frequency, Reach and Yield (FRY).

### Frequency and Feedback

Frequency can be measured in two ways:

1. Frequency of touches. How often are you touching customers in a certain group via social media tools vs. traditional marketing tools? You will often find that social media significantly increases touch frequency.
2. Frequency of transactions. How often a certain set of customers actually buys something.

The assumption is that 1 and 2 are linked. More

## DEFINING SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS FOR THE REAL WORLD (cont'd)

touches tend to turn into more transactions. If your company's products and marketing are in line with the market's needs, then you can link social media to an increased touch frequency and a subsequent increase in transaction frequency.

Example: Before company XYZ started its Social Media engagement program, customers in Group A transacted an average of 3 times per month. Six months into it, these same customers are now transacting an average of 7 times per month. The dollar value of the Delta is \$x. (See? Easy.)

If an increase in touches doesn't turn into a proportional increase in transactions, then you know that something is broken. Perhaps your product has an image issue. Perhaps your price point is too high. Perhaps your messaging is ineffective.

Whatever the case may be, Social Media's secondary value suddenly kicks in: Real time feedback from your customers. Not only have you just been alerted to the fact that your product management team has problems to fix, you can also recruit the help of your customers via social media tools to find out exactly what the problem is – from their point of view.

This type of real-time, unfiltered feedback is invaluable for companies looking to identify and correct problems quickly.

### **Reach: Insights on Breadth and Depth**

“Reach” on its own has absolutely zero value. In order to make sense of reach, you have to split it between breadth and depth.

Breadth metrics essentially focus on “net new” customers. How you measure this is simple: Company XYZ had 1,000 active customers before launching its social media program, and its net growth was pretty much 0% QoQ (quarter over quarter).

Six months into it, Company XYZ has lost 50 active customers but gained 500 net new customers for a new total of 1,450 customers. If the average monthly order per customer is \$100, you have now increased your monthly revenue by \$500,000 (or \$450,000, depending on how you want to look at it). Compound that number with the frequency metric we already discussed, and you can seriously impact your revenue model. This is a simplistic example, but you get the drift.

Depth is a little different as it doesn't measure the number of customers, but rather the depth of product engagement a single customer has. Example: Company XYZ sells three products: One red, one blue, and one yellow. A particular group of customers only buys the red product.

As a result of information, insight and peer recommen-

## DEFINING SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS FOR THE REAL WORLD (cont'd)

dations obtained via Social Media channels, this group of customers suddenly starts buying blue and yellow products in addition to the red products they were already partial to. You can now show that Social Media tools have had a specific measurable impact on Company XYZ's P&L from a depth of product engagement standpoint.

### **Yield: Brand valuation can be measured in dollars**

The final of the three basic metrics that help connect the dots between Social Media and business performance is "yield." Simply put, "yield" is the average dollar amount per transaction. Example: For Group A, the average transaction yield \$100 in revenue. But a company might notice that after six months of Social Media engagement, that group's average transaction might have actually increased to \$150. Why? Great question. Perhaps the change is a byproduct of the depth motion we just discussed.

Through their interaction with the brand via Social Media, this group of customers discovered that they could get more value by buying additional products from Company XYZ (Depth +Yield combined). Or perhaps they decided to start buying more of the same product. In other cases, the breadth strategy might have attracted a whole new set of customers with more buying power, and that new group's yield is thus naturally higher (breadth + yield combined).

From a brand management standpoint, yield measures the perceived value of products within a brand: Increases in yield = increase in perceived value. (Rising brand value.) Decreases in yield = decrease in perceived value (brand erosion). A well-executed Social media strategy should increase yield. If you see your yield actually decrease as a result of your new Social Media strategy, stop what you are doing immediately and call a reputed Social Media practitioner to identify the problem.

### **Connecting the Dots: The Before and After Test**

The most basic illustration of Social Media's effectiveness along a finite timeline, like any change-driven project, is the "before and after" snapshot. To that end, you will have to establish cause-and-effect parameters before launching your Social Media programs so that no one can dispute them later.

This may take some measure of consensus, but you'll be glad you didn't skip this step six months down the road when you are presenting your results to the stakeholders. Tracking fluctuations and trends through the FRY methodology we discussed here will help connect the dots between a Social Media strategy and real world (hard dollar) results for the company involved.

To those of us in the Social Media field, this may seem like an awfully dry and limited way to define the value of Social Media, but trust me when I say this: most

## DEFINING SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS FOR THE REAL WORLD (cont'd)

business executives who don't fully understand the value of Social Media will not invest in customer engagement, conversations, or customer communities. (Cool concepts, but not a priority unless you can turn all three into cold hard cash.) They will, however, invest in all of these things if you can link them to increases in revenue, market share and/or margins.

Ideally, assuming that you know how to execute an effective engagement/Social Media strategy, the metric we discussed here today will show notable increases, validating not only the channel's effectiveness, but your strategy and execution as well.

Over time, you will be able to make precise course adjustments, set specific goals and expectations, measure performance (against traditional marketing tools, even), and hopefully transition even the most traditional businesses from good old push strategies to more relevant and effective pull strategies.

Welcome to a whole new era of marketing, business development and B2C relationships.

**Olivier Blanchard**, *The Brand Builder*

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## MEASURED, OPEN AND MOBILE by Matt Dickman

*Imperatives for social Web success*



2009 will be a transition year for social media. Companies know they need to engage in the space, they have (hopefully) started listening, but they are still standing on the pier waiting to jump into the water. 2009 is the year that companies take the knowledge and insights they have gained and start executing strategically. Companies that dedicate the budget and resources to their initiatives will have the greatest success.

For me, there are three imperatives for executing programs in 2009. These are not new, but each plays upon the other. If done right, they can take mediocre plays and turn them into amazing marketing programs.

Every marketing program should begin with measurement in mind. If you think something cannot be measured, you're not trying hard enough. Through my 12+ years in digital marketing I have seen this trend once before. Around 1999, the web was completely new for companies. It was seen as experimental at the time and measurement was rarely discussed. Many companies still don't measure to this day and it is the same with social media. The space has been experimental to this point. Some big brands have stepped in, case studies have been published; the world of media has been turned on its head. But we still hesitate to measure.

***"There are three imperatives for executing programs in 2009 - start with measurement, create content for the open Web and for mobility."***  
- Matt Dickman

The technology to measure digital marketing programs is there, it is often free, but it does take time and skill. Nearly anything can be measured within the digital realm. However, a crucial paradigm shift needs to take place. Marketers have been using measurement "standards" for years. We are comfortable with impressions, circulation, and page views. We are learning how to monetize based on those numbers.

Social media throws us a curve ball. Measurement that worked yesterday does not seem to work any more. Now we have engagement, readership, reTweets and saves. Each has value and each is unique to your organization. It's time to create your own measures and assign their value. Evolve this over time and you'll see actual results that matter in your business model.

2009 is the year that the definition of mobile is redefined within organizations. This is not the year of mobile marketing as it has been foretold over the past 5-6 years. It's not the year of SMS or mobile advertising. This is the year when branded applications supported by high-speed mobile data and geolocation bring value to the lives of customers. This is a mobile branded utility. By mobile I am talking about mobile devices, but I also include widgets and plug-ins.

## MEASURED, OPEN AND MOBILE (cont'd)

Portability is being redefined as devices catch up to wireless speeds and experiences translate from desktop to finger tip. Geolocation is the holy grail of mobility. Through GPS, companies can know where the user is and add value. Address locators, recommendations, assistance, etc. are all possible when location is known. Hyper localization is finally a reality with the advance of the mobile web. I can get three star restaurants within one block of my exact location right now. That is power for the end user and can be harnessed by companies who are aware of the opportunity.

Open content is the second imperative that I see for executing in 2009. Open content means creating content that is easily reused, recycled, remixed and redefined. The goal with content should be to have the customer own it. Once they own it, they distribute it and create exponential value for other customers. You're seeing this in crowdsourcing executions centered on customer service and product design. Companies should take a hard look at the content that they have created online and reevaluate everything under the value lens. Ask the question "does this add value"; value to the customer, value to the organization. If it does not, it's cluttering the Internet and your brand.

So how do they intersect? Content needs to be open in order to be spread by moving across device and software platforms. Content also needs to be measured in a way that shows how it evolved over time, who actu-

ally evolved it and how that impacted the organization. Mobile platforms need to be extensible enough to support myriad content types and measurement needs to be clearly defined in the last bastion of analytical ambiguity. Measurement needs to overlap everything and demonstrate clear value to each and every organization. Only then will consumer value and corporate value be win-win.

**Matt DICKMAN**, *Fleishman-Hillard*

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## SOCIAL MARKETING IN 2009 by Mike Fruchter

Marketing on the social web is essentially word of mouth advertising. The companies that understand this and know how to listen, react and participate in the conversation are the ones who are going to be successful with their marketing initiatives in 2009, and beyond.

Companies such as Dell, Comcast and even Ford have realized this, and are effectively using social media to benefit their brands. These companies understand that the traditional marketing methods of one-way, one-sided communication simply do not work when applied to social media.

The foundation and core of what social media is, consists of the five C's. Conversation, community, commenting, collaboration and contribution. These are the five fundamentals that companies and marketers must understand to be able to successfully market on the social web.

**Social media marketing is the next logical step in a spiraling downward economy.**

The economy is in the worst shape it has ever been in, at least to those of us who were born after 1965. With that being said, look around. The housing market has gone belly up, the unemployment rate continues to skyrocket with no end in sight. Companies are cutting costs, and marketing budgets

are the first to be axed. Companies are looking for alternatives for better and more cost effective advertising. The costly traditional and increasingly ineffective means of old school advertising are becoming obsolete.

The cost barrier for entry is relatively low for marketing in social media. It will not be an option for companies, but now a requirement to stake their claim in social media. In 2009 we will see a substantial amount of companies getting involved with social media marketing initiatives compared to the past year.

**Simply having a static website is not going to cut it anymore in 2009.**

This may have worked years ago, and in some industries it still does. The companies that "get it" are creating communities around their products. Nurturing and responding to conversation around their products and building brand awareness in the process.

These companies are starting to tear the brick walls down and showing people that they are indeed human. Real people are telling real stories about the prod-

ucts.

This is facilitated with what I call the social add-ons

*"The foundation and core of what social media is, consists of the five C's. Conversation, community, commenting, collaboration and contribution."*

*- Mike Fruchter*

## SOCIAL MARKETING IN 2009 (cont'd)

of a website. User generated content, implementing a real blog with a voice behind it, consumer forums, and most importantly going where their consumer base is, Facebook, Twitter and so forth.

The motives are and always have to be transparent to the user. It's all about establishing and earning trust. Brand credibility will also build in the process. The companies that understand their consumer's behaviors online are ultimately the ones who will thrive in 2009 and they are the ones who will establish and maintain a competitive advantage.

**The tools are only facilitators of the message. This will become quite clear in 2009 if it has not already.**

The companies and marketers who understand this concept are the ones who will see the most benefit. While a lot of corporations have already established a presence on Twitter and other social networks, they have not taken the time to correctly learn how to use these tools.

Instead they are using these tools essentially as a one-way communication method. This is comparable to email spam that nobody wants, and it will go ignored. The tools need to be armed with the driving force behind them - people, not robots.

Social media marketing is about two-way communica-

tion. Using these tools effectively means participating in the discussions, leading them, and reacting when necessary, and always showing your human side in the process. If your sole purpose is using these tools for list building with no real participation, you might as well quit now. List building has absolutely no value in social media. The tools should be used to foster and build meaningful relationships no matter if it's for personal or professional gain.

**2009 will see a surge of small businesses getting involved with social marketing.**

2009 will see a dramatic increase in the number of small businesses getting involved with social media marketing. By nature of being small, these companies do not have the luxuries of large advertising budgets. They are forced to be innovative with their marketing initiatives and on the frugal end as well.

Small businesses are the springboards for grassroots marketing. Because they are small, it's often the president of the company or some in-house web guru who spends a significant amount of time online looking for and learning new avenues of engagement. They also quickly realize what works and what does not, and will readjust their strategies significantly faster than most of the larger corporations.

Small businesses also have the time to invest in social media, rather than outsourcing it to a PR company with

## SOCIAL MARKETING IN 2009 (cont'd)

the hopes that it will work, and saving a huge amount of money in the process. This is the year of do or die for a lot of small businesses, because unlike the larger corporations, who are trying to stay afloat in the current economy, they don't have the luxury of slashing marketing budgets, and will not be able to weather the storm. Sadly the only alternative is to go out of business.

This is why I predict that there will be a surge like none before of small businesses getting involved with social marketing in 2009. There is no other alternative.

### **Those who get it will start to realize and understand the VOI (Value of investment).**

Social media is about conversation. How do you put a price tag on conversation? Measuring return on investment in social media is not a perfect science, in terms of dollar amounts. If you are using social media with the sole purpose of making money, chances are you will fail.

Currency in social media is valued in the content that is created along with the relationships. Both of these elements are needed, not one or the other. The VOI is measuring value of the conversations. How many comments were left? How much buzz is happening on Twitter? How many back-links were generated in search engines? What blogs are talking about us?

Value is always measured for the long term. Did we build brand awareness? Create and build customer loyalty? These are the things companies will start to understand better. ROI is still an important metric, but it needs to be factored in accordingly with the value factors.

**Mike FRUCHTER**, *My Thoughts on Social Media*

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## **SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE ENTERPRISE** by Francois Gossieaux

*Tactical (ephemeral) applications today, strategic (transformational) impact tomorrow*



Considering that most people overestimate the short term impact of new innovations and underestimate the long term impact of those innovations it is fair to assume that in the next 12 months the adoption of social media in business will be limited to innovators and early adopters and that the impact of social media on business processes will be more tactical than transformational.

That said, the platform of participation provided by the broad adoption of social media will fundamentally transform most business processes as we know them over the long run.

### **Why is that?**

For starters, many company executives don't understand the fundamental forces that are changing their business. Sure, they realize that their cost of sales is increasing dangerously, that it is increasingly harder to engage with customers and prospects, that loyalty seems to have vanished, and that switching costs and barriers to entry do not carry the same weight as before. But what they don't understand is that with social media as a platform for participation, people can behave the way they were hardwired to behave in the first place – humanly, tribally.

These executives think of their business as “controllable” processes that need to be optimized. And they evaluate their business in terms of assets and liabilities. Which leaves little room to truly understand the impact of the exploding mass of newly empowered individuals who are now free to hang out and share information with peers, help one another in finding the best products and services, and bad-mouth organizations and people who depart from the social norms that have made us the hypersocial (and hyper-successful) species we are.

This freedom to associate, speak and share is what is fundamentally transforming the game of business – not just the rules; but also the players, the scope of the game, the tactics and the added values.

*“With social media as a platform for participation, people can behave the way they were hardwired to behave in the first place – humanly, tribally.”*  
- Francois Gossieaux

### **Barriers to Adoption**

In their attempts to better understand the changes afoot, many companies will launch research initiatives to analyze what is happening and try to identify controllable fixes. While some initiatives may lead to the increased deployment of social media across business processes, they will not lead to broad-based adoption of social media in the short term. In fact we will probably see more of what is happening now – research initiatives leading to tactical social media pilot programs

## SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE ENTERPRISE (cont'd)

that never get past the pilot stage.

Other factors that stand in the way of broad adoption of social media in businesses include:

- Internal legal obstacles – Many legal departments fear the increased liability exposure when employees engage with customers online and the potential labor law challenges when hourly wage workers engage with one another outside of work hours.
- Perceived scalability issues of social media programs (especially for larger companies). When you have a multibillion dollar company, with hundreds of thousands of customers and prospects, moving the needle means demanding returns from your social media programs for which there are few well documented best practices.
- A limit to people's attention. Many companies insist on building their own communities. Take the small business space, for instance, where there must be at least a dozen ambitious online communities. Does a small business owner possibly have enough attention to belong to all of them? Of course not, many will fail.
- A myopic view of social media. Many see social media as merely a new toolset instead of the enabler that allowed socialness to become part of business processes. Take marketers, for example. They think of social media marketing as doing marketing using social

media tools, instead of thinking about it as enabling the social in marketing.

### Transformation on the Horizon

While in the short term we will see lots of YouTube-based campaigns, countless tactical (and gimmicky) marketing programs, and very few real customer “movements,” in the long run, as the number of success stories pile up, social media will drive major business transformations.

As transformational case studies appear, as some already have, they will force competitors in their industry to follow suit. I'll assert, too, that we can expect a hockey stick-like adoption curve as those that do it right will derive game-changing results, not just level-setting results – enabling them to steal marketshare and profitability points from their main competitors, who'll then race to play catch-up.

Moving forward, the enterprise as we know it today could be very different because of social media and we should expect to see not just the rise of Marketing 2.0, but also CMO 2.0, Customer Support 2.0, and Business 2.0.

**Francois GOSSIEAUX**, *Emergence Marketing*

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## DEVELOPING INTERNAL BRAND LOYALTY by Beth Harte

*The preliminary step to implementing social media*



No doubt 2009 will mark the year that social media is seriously explored by companies and their marketing executives. Given the recession, decreased marketing budgets and loss of staff it makes sense to want to investigate, evaluate, and perhaps even implement social media. The challenge companies will face is to not utilize social media tools with a traditional marketing mindset, because social media is so much more than one-way promotional content; as well, social media does not replace marketing—it enhances marketing efforts as an additional indirect communication channel.

When it comes to implementing social media, marketing executives are often limited by legal counsel and an aversion to risk when it comes to directly, openly and transparently speaking to customers and prospects.

How then can a marketing executive harness the power of social media?

### **Create Internal Accountability**

Consider implementing a social media program internally as a preliminary first step. For better or worse, companies no longer control the customer's or prospect's brand experience. They do, however, have the ability to make sure that the customer's brand experience is the best it could be. And

*“Social media enhances marketing efforts as an additional indirect communication channel.”*  
- Beth Harte

every department needs to be held accountable for that experience. How so?

- Human Resources hires the people that develop, design/test, deliver/build, publicize, sell, collect payment and support the product/service
- Marketing develops the product/service
- Engineering/R&D designs/tests the product/service
- Marketing Communications/Public Relations publicizes the product/service
- Sales sells the product/service
- Finance/Accounting collects payment for the product/service
- Operations/Manufacturing delivers/builds the product/service
- Customer Service/Technical Support provides support for purchased products/services

In as simple and intuitive as the above list might seem, marketing executives need to understand that brand and brand experience might be a foreign concept to some employees. Even if employees are familiar with the brand or what brand experience means, they may not embrace that they are directly responsible for the outcomes of their actions either internally with other

## DEVELOPING INTERNAL BRAND LOYALTY (cont'd)

departments or customers/prospects.

Getting the executive team, employees and other stakeholders to embrace social media will be a daunting task if they don't first understand that each and every interaction with prospects and customers is an opportunity to provide value by creating a positive brand experience, which, of course, affects revenues. Brand champions need to—first & foremost—come from the inside-out and bottom-up.

### **Build Internal Evangelists**

Before becoming a champion for external social media initiatives, consider becoming, if you're not already, a brand educator, communicator and implementer first. Doing so just might create the brand pride necessary to get employees to understand, embrace and champion external social media initiatives. And assumptions cannot be made that all employees are knowledgeable or enthusiastic about the brand.

Initial steps to creating internal brand evangelists might include:

- Determine the level of brand knowledge across the company (all departments)
- Analyze the communication practices between departments
- Acknowledge existing brand champions and allow

them to mentor co-workers

- Use social media tools like wikis, blogs, departmental educational videos, and internal social networks for communication and collaboration

The challenge marketing executives will face is to break down the walls between departments so that all employees understand the challenges that each department faces in delivering a remarkable brand experience. Conversation is the key to breaking down those walls and building up brand evangelists.

**Beth HARTE**, *Harte Marketing & Communications*  
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## BUILDING CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE AND PREFERENCE BY UPPING OUR SOCIAL IQs *by Lois Kelly*



The reason to focus on social media in 2009 has nothing to do with “media” or tools or things like a blog, and everything to do with increasing customer confidence and preference by upping our social IQs.

Executives, I realize, hate the word “social” because it seems soft and unmeasurable. Yet research study after research study has found that companies with greater social intelligence have stronger bonds with employees and customers, and that translates into revenue.

Emotionally satisfied - or “engaged” -- customers and employees contribute far more to the bottom line than those who are rationally satisfied, according to numerous social neuroscience and behavioral economics studies.

A J.D. Power & Associates study found that friendlier, more social employees earned 13% more revenue for their organizations. Author John McKean’s research found that a whopping 70 percent of a customer’s decision to buy is based on how they are treated as people. Not the product. Not the price. But factors far more social.

To help our companies navigate some of the most challenging market conditions ever, I suggest we help them

come to their social senses in ways that make good business sense.

Let’s learn from the masters and adapt Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis’ framework for measuring an executive’s social intelligence (“Social Intelligence and the Biology of Leadership”) for marketing. Their frame is in bold, my marketing 2009 ideas follow.

### **1. Empathy: do you understand what motivates other people?**

*Social media monitoring:* if a company does nothing else in 2009, it should put a social media monitoring system in place to tune into what’s being talked about online about their company, products, people, competitors, category. Tune into not just what’s being said but how it’s being said. Context and feelings often matter more than the words. What makes people crazy about your industry and what do they love? Those insights into motivations are invaluable in understanding customer preference, the most important measure and leading indicator for marketing success.

### **2. Organizational awareness: do you appreciate the culture and values of the group?**

*Customer communities:* While customer visits are irreplaceable they don’t always let you get

*“Companies with greater social intelligence have stronger bonds with employees and customers, and that translates into revenue.”  
- Lois Kelly*

## BUILDING CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE AND PREFERENCE BY UPPING OUR SOCIAL IQs (cont'd)

inside the heads and hearts of customers. Done right, hosting online communities for customers around a topic or issue that they're interested in can help you more deeply understand their values. The community, of course, must be for the customers, providing a place where they can connect with others with similar interests, find helpful resources, tap into fresh content, get and give help. The value of communities to marketers is not necessarily a new "channel" where the highest number of registered users marks success. Rather, it's more of what you can learn about customers from their interactions with other people like them. (Same goes for employee social networks.)

### **3. Influence: do you persuade others by engaging them in discussion and appealing to their self-interests?**

*Beyond blog basics:* So many companies ask me, "Should our company have a blog?" Before tackling that, I'd suggest that you first get to know the bloggers in your field and industry. Read them, offer thoughtful comments on their posts, write a Twitter tweet about a post you think is especially interesting. Getting involved in discussions in this way is the way to earn influence.

### **4. Developing others: do you provide feedback that people find helpful for their professional development?**

*Marketing that educates vs. promotes:* Sometimes we forget that people buy products or services not just to help their companies, but also to help themselves get ahead professionally. A question to ask ourselves: do our marketing programs provide helpful insights and advice to customers? Are we giving away knowledge that will help customers advance their careers by doing business with us? Are we making it easy for customers to find the person in our company to go to in order to find advice – or just have an informal conversation? Helpfulness builds relationships, and all business is about relationships.

### **5. Inspiration: do you articulate a compelling vision, build group pride, and foster a positive emotional tone?**

*Purpose that connects emotionally, delivers financially:* when employees and customers believe in a company's purpose or cause they emotionally connect with the company, becoming your best marketing word of mouth reps. In a tough economic climate it's especially important to ask "Why is our company especially relevant today? Why do we matter?" If you know the answer, use that purpose as the centerpiece of your 2009 marketing. If you're not sure, find it. From working with companies of all sizes and industries, I know most have it and can uncover it in a day by asking the right questions. The energy and programs that result are liberating and highly-effective. Still doubtful? Check

## BUILDING CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE AND PREFERENCE BY UPPING OUR SOCIAL IQs (cont'd)

out the data in the great book, “Firms of Endearment: How World-Class Companies Profit from Passion and Purpose,” by three Wharton professors.

### **6. Teamwork: do you solicit input from everyone on the team?**

*Collaborate!* Social media/Web 2.0 has removed the technical obstacles to collaboration and participation. In 2009 look at wikis as a way to work on projects.

Hold idea storms and online raves internally and with customers to solve problems and find innovative ideas in all the unusual places. Invite customers into the product development process early on through private communities.

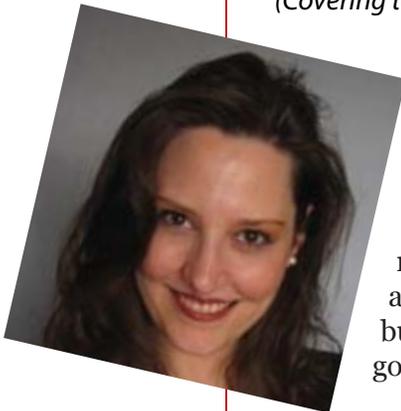
Most importantly, recognize and thank people for their help. That’s just good social manners, and being social has always been good for business.

**Lois Kelly**, *Beeline Labs*

<http://blog.foghound.com>

## SOCIAL MEDIA IMPERATIVES IN 2009 by Christina Kerley

(Covering the basics and beyond)



As we embark on 2009 I'm not looking to peer too far into future predictions. After all, we've not only ushered in a new year but a new set of economic challenges which have businesses intently focused on the here and now. Due to the shockwaves that have taken a heavy toll on global markets, we've lost both budgets and confidence—and with them, a good bit of our focus.

So in moving my clients ahead, I'm first recommending that they take a step back; it's otherwise difficult to gain perspective. And a clear eye is critical in these turbulent times. But I'm also recommending the same of marketers.

Because when we take a step back to view the “big picture” we understand the very nature of our role as marketers is to adapt to changing environments so as to facilitate the needed transitions for our companies and clients. Yet change is a somewhat nebulous term because it takes many forms: be it change to an economic climate, competitive landscape, customer segment or technologies that shift the placement of power from companies to consumers.

*“Change ensures our own livelihoods - new opportunities and trends to capitalize upon, unique products and profit centers that merit development, robust innovation to leverage.”*  
- Christina Kerley

And if we take a few more steps back... we realize that change doesn't only present us with challenges, it ensures our very livelihoods. Fact is, if it weren't for change we wouldn't be afforded new opportunities and trends to capitalize upon, unique products and profit centers that merit development, robust innovations to leverage in our marketing mix or emerging customer segments within which to build more market share.

Thus, change is more friend than foe (though at times like these the process can feel very unfriendly). So, what do the current changes mean for marketers and social media in 2009? As with all marketing efforts this year, the imperatives strike a balance of getting back to the basics and leaping beyond them, with actions such as:

- Succeeding at the “new” requires lessons learned from the old. Many of our objectives center on increasing WOM (Word of Mouth) among target markets. This is not new thinking because “buzz” has always been the most effective way to build brand and market share. After all, people trust the advice from other people far more than third-party advertisements.

What is new, however, is that the tools and technologies of social media facilitate the sharing of opinions, referrals, preferences and recommendations far more easily and across large networks. Yet, ironically, the

## SOCIAL MEDIA IMPERATIVES IN 2009 (cont'd)

best chance a company has at building high levels of WOM rests not on new tools, but in age-old marketing practices.

In other words, marketers will gain the most ground, and favorable WOM, through a shrewd focus on the fundamentals. So the imperative here is for marketers is to excel at their core duties of: (1) developing and maintaining unique brands that are high in value (so as to delight and encourage positive WOM) + (2) devising clever ways to spread awareness about brands (so that more people can learn, try and recommend those products to others) + (3) monitoring market response to their offerings--and the offerings that compete with them for market share--so as to improve offerings, or create entirely new ones (or both).

- **Thinking programs over tools.** With so many tools—including blogs, Wikis, microblogs, podcasts, online videos and more—it's hard not to get caught up in the infrastructure (or “technology”) of social media. But that's exactly what marketers should not do. As with all marketing efforts, programs are a byproduct of strategy, value and differentiation. It's only after qualifying on these counts that a particular tool (or set of tools) should be identified.

Said another way, companies aren't “creating blogs” they're opening new avenues of conversations with customers. Marketers aren't implementing a “blog-

ger outreach program,” they're directly engaging with their most outspoken and visible customers. And they're not “using twitter to send daily updates” but providing content that gives value to a target audience that competitors are not.

For example, while some marketers may use Twitter as an extension of customer service like cable companies have done, others may use the tool to poll viewers for opinions on breaking stories as in the case of some broadcast news corporations. But in both of these examples, the marketing strategy of improving customer service or engaging viewers guides the use and rationale for using the tool. The imperative then, is to develop programs that are unique to your company and customers, and then identify the tool (or tools) that will enable meeting your goals.

- **Creating seamless campaigns by integrating efforts.** Companies rely on a mix of internal staff, external agencies and third-party consultants to implement and manage their various marketing initiatives. This makes sense due to a range of domain expertise needed to implement customer-facing programs across different media.

What doesn't make sense, however, is when the efforts aren't integrated—because customers don't distinguish between a company's broadcast TV campaign and their online presence... yet you'd be amazed how many companies fail to upload their

## SOCIAL MEDIA IMPERATIVES IN 2009 (cont'd)

own multi-million dollar ads to a free YouTube page. The imperative for marketers is integration between all of their efforts. And while this holds true in any economy, it's especially sound in one where budgets are under immense scrutiny.

- **Speaking the same language as your customers.** To hold an effective conversation, it's pivotal that the parties involved are speaking the same language. As silly as this may sound, marketers—with the exception of focus groups, surveys and Customer Advisory Boards—spend most of their time cut-off from their customers. After all, they are working at the office while their customers are spread across regions. And that leads to messaging rife with buzzwords or misguided assumptions about what their markets' value.

But the good news—and perhaps the most redeeming benefit of Web 2.0—is that social media gives marketers a surefire way to avoid using language that is confusing, over-hyped, overused or meaningless to the recipient. Because now, through reading the blogs, comments and conversations generated by their target segments, marketers can see how customers actually speak and learn what's important to them. Thus the imperative here is to apportion more time in 2009 listening to customers and refining how you speak in your exchanges with them.

All told, social media—just like the economic terrain we

currently find ourselves in—will test the brains, brawn and malleability of marketers in 2009. Yet it provides a tremendous platform for competitive advantage when others are cutting back. So take a step back, take a few deep breaths and start focusing on what can be done (vs. what can't).

And then get to it, change is afoot and there's a lot of work to be done.

**Christina KERLEY**, *CK Epiphany Marketing*

<http://www.ck-blog.com>



## THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY WILL BECOME THE INFORMATION MAINSTREET by Jennifer Laycock

The really savvy small businesses are going to use Social Media to recreate the main street USA business atmosphere of our grandparents' generation.

I grew up in a small Midwestern town where my grandfather launched the first insurance agency. Because his office was right down the street from my home and because his claims number rang at his house, I spent much of my childhood watching him run his business and interact with his clients. It was a little like growing up in a Jimmy Stewart movie. Everyone knew him and he knew everyone. Idealistic memories aside, I watched how my grandfather related to his customers and how he got to know them as people, valued their individual needs and even anticipated what those needs were going to be. His business grew entirely on word of mouth from satisfied...no...thrilled customers. When he finally retired, it took two new agents to take over his business.

My grandfather's way of doing business is what excites me most about social media. We live in an age where we don't have to buy our products from the big box retailer in the strip mall down the street. Initially

*“Social media interaction allows us to have...well, interaction with our customers. It lets us see them as people instead of statistics and it lets us hear their voices.”*

*- Jennifer Laycock*

we got excited because the web let us price hunt, these days a large subset of people gets excited because the web lets you hunt for a business that shares your values and speaks your language.

Social media interaction allows the work at home mom who sells hand crafted diapers on Etsy to build the same type of customer relationship's my grandfather did, only in this case the customer might be 4000 miles away. Social media interaction allows a company as large as Southwest to honestly listen to the voices of their loyal customers and make major business decisions based on the feedback. Social media interaction allows us to have...well, interaction with our customers. It lets us see them as people instead of statistics and it lets us hear their voices. It makes every interaction more real and more valuable. It gives us the chance to become someone they trust their business to rather than someone they simply make a purchase from.

This is what I see as the future of social media for the small business crowd. It's not about whether you focus on Twitter or Facebook or LinkedIn or Digg or Flickr or...anything else. It's about having the attitude and the access to create an environment of communication with your customers. It's about recapturing the way we used to do business by embracing the technology that makes the world a little smaller.

**Jennifer LAYCOCK**, *Search Engine Guide*  
<http://www.searchengineguide.com>

## EXECUTION IN 2009 by Amber Naslund



Social media folks love to talk about participation. Speaking authentically. Being transparent and open and honest and ready to interact on a human basis with the customers and people who want to know you. And I absolutely agree with all of those things.

But this is a bit of carts before horses. Like new product innovation or process improvement or any other weighty business endeavor, social media requires a solid foundation upon which to build.

Execution in social media - both in 2009 and beyond - is going to be all about laying the groundwork internally. And make no mistake that it requires time, resources (of the capital and human variety), and old fashioned hard work to make it happen. (Note: if that statement scares you off, you're not ready.) Participation is actually near the end of a carefully laid out blueprint that puts planning and preparation first.

### Insight and Understanding

Many companies can articulate what they \*want\* their brand to be. Fewer, however, are able to outline what the observers and users of their brand think. Honestly. Setting up listening posts and making the effort to talk to customers about their brand impressions cannot be substituted.

*“Goals absolutely must be based on business objectives”*  
- Amber Naslund

Businesses also need self-reflection about \*why\* social media is of interest to them. Are their motivations based in truly creating relationships with their customers and clients, even including hearing the hard stuff sometimes? Or is it the next shiny thing that someone told them they had to do because “everyone is”? The need and potential for social media in a business framework is as unique as the businesses themselves, and successful execution depends upon companies knowing exactly what they're in this for in the first place.

### Expectations

Every company starting social media ought to ask itself right out of the gate “What are we afraid of?” Perhaps it's negative comments on your blog, or public bashing of your brand. Disgruntled ex-employees. Resurfacing of old closet skeletons like a lawsuit or bad press. There are answers to dealing with these issues, but not before they're acknowledged.

One of the single biggest downsides to social media is getting closer to your detractors, but it's a tremendous opportunity to respond authentically, too (and skip the corporate speak). Nothing builds trust like honesty.

Goal-setting is a critical step, too. Obvious? Perhaps. But goals absolutely must be *based on business objectives*, and probably will reflect a balance of qualitative and quantitative results. But executing just isn't pos-

## EXECUTION IN 2009 (cont'd)

sible until you know what you're aiming for in the first place. This means getting stakeholders across departments in a room or on a conference call and discussing it. Together.

### **Culture and Infrastructure**

Operationally, companies are going to be tasked with answering some important questions about capacity, scalability, and mindset when it comes to social media execution. No two businesses face the same sets of challenges or internal obstacles, so the approach to execution has got to be unique to the business.

Some questions to ask:

- Do our employees see the same potential in social media as we do? Are there skeptics? Have we talked to them?
- How well do we communicate internally now? Are our internal processes robust enough to handle a new influx of information?
- Are we prepared to empower our employees to be voices for the company? Do we trust them, or are we going to try and "manage" them?
- What if we stumble? Are we shored up to weather a storm? What risks are we prepared for?
- What if we succeed? Are we ready to meet higher expectations for our brand, including the way we communicate and serve our customers?

- When we learn all this cool stuff about our customers and what they want from us, what, exactly, are we going to DO with that information?

A company's success in social media is going to be directly related to how well they've prepared for participation. Execution is as much about drafting a solid blueprint as it is about finally swinging the hammer.

**Amber Naslund**, *Altitude Branding*

<http://altitudebranding.com/>

## MARKETING PRESCRIPTIONS FOR 2009: VITAMIN E by Connie Reece



**1. Explode your firewalls.** It's time to shake things up. Do whatever it takes to convince the IT and legal departments to allow employees to access social networks on the job. Worried your employees will waste time? Then get rid of your water cooler, and don't allow staff to use the telephone or email. Those are all time wasters too.

Not allowing your employees access to sites like Facebook and YouTube puts your company at a disadvantage. Follow IBM's example with their social computing guidelines.

Do you dismiss social networks because you can't measure the ROI? Then you haven't done your homework. Measurement gurus can answer the question of direct ROI far better than I can. My challenge to business is to consider the indirect ROI. How do you measure the value of paying greens fees or professional association memberships for your top executives?

**2. Educate your employees.** My consulting philosophy is rooted in the "teach them to fish" school of thought, and I tell prospective clients when making a proposal that my goal is to work myself out of a job. In other words, my value is not just in conceiving and executing a market-

ing strategy but in sharing with a client's employees what I've learned over several years of experimenting with social media.

"Social media consultants" are now a dime a dozen. But your dime can be wasted if those consultants are not able to train people in how to use social media tools. Last summer our company started offering hands-on workshops. If you want to learn, we'll actually sit down at the computer with you and walk you through setting up a blog or creating profiles on LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook. It's not rocket science; it simply takes time to learn. To shorten the learning curve, find the right person or team to provide training.

A proper social media education, however, is about more than learning new tools. As consultants, we can share with a company our experiences, case studies and best practices. The most important lesson we can impart, however, is the necessity to think "humans." Blogs and social networks are ways to connect with human beings. People skills are critical to success.

**3. Explore, experiment, empower.** Now that you've blown through the firewall and your employees are up to speed with how to use social media and social networks, give them the freedom to explore and experiment. Empower your employees to be company evangelists.

*"A proper social media education is more than just learning new tools. The most important lesson we can impart is the necessity to think 'humans'."*

*- Connie Reece*

## MARKETING PRESCRIPTIONS FOR 2009: VITAMIN E (cont'd)

Getting started with social media does not require launching a \$50,000 campaign. Start small, even if it's something as simple as posting that first YouTube video. Create content that your clients or customers--or prospective ones--can interact with; and when they do, respond to them, not as marketers blaring a message, but as people.

One final thought: do not discount what I call strategic serendipity. That's not an oxymoron. Amazing things can result when unpredictable and unanticipated connections happen as a result of social networking.

**Connie REECE**, *Every Dot Connects*

<http://www.everydotconnects.com>

## SOCIAL MEDIA DIRECTIONS 2009 by Mike Wagner



Social media isn't causing problems, but it is revealing them. And the problems aren't new; they've been around for a while.

Authors like Charles Handy and Peter Block have recognized traditional organizations don't work in a world constantly up in the air. Peter Senge has spent at lifetime wondering how to create corporate cultures that can learn. And marketing pioneers like Peppers and Rogers have long recognized that technology is not

leading to a new way of doing business but rather to an old way of doing business based on social need and human touch.

Social media advocates and professionals --- you are in that long line of complainers, subversives, thinkers and change agents. So recognize where social media applications fits in the larger context and gear up for 2009. And as you do, here are a few steps you might want to take along the way.

### **First, recognize you are part of a larger conversation and equip yourself to hold your own.**

I recommend you start with Peter Block's "The Answer to How Is Yes." Block will show you why corporate cultures that worship "how-to" pragmatism instinctively reject social media. The messy, unpredictable, all too

*"Social media isn't causing problems, but it is revealing them. And the problems aren't new; they've been around for a while."*

*- Mike Wagner*

human vision of social media runs counter to pragmatic business instincts. The idealism of social media (markets are conversations) and the intimacy social media values (relationships of depth are important) are foreign to most.

Get a worthy conversation going inside your organization to match your social media aspirations for your organization.

### **Two, look for natural allies within your organization.**

Social media advocates, you're not alone. There are others in most companies that long for a more human workplace, business culture and presence in the market.

Explore customer service, human resources and even sales for allies. You might find some. The de-humanizing effects of pragmatism have victimized each of these business functions. Customer service morphed into call times over solving customer problems. Sales is told to get the sale forget about building trust. And HR has been relegated to protecting the firm's legal exposure while hiring, firing and managing benefits. Each knows there is a human side to their work being neglected.

### **Three, realize that resistance to the use of so-**

## SOCIAL MEDIA DIRECTIONS 2009 (cont'd)

### **cial media will at times be beyond reason.**

Social media professionals will be told to get better metrics, and you will. You'll be told we need to see tangible ROI, and you will do your best to connect the dots there too. While you are at it you will make a case for the cost/benefit of social media in our current economic downturn. And then, to your surprise, you STILL will find weak or little support for doing what needs to be done to succeed with social media.

Resistance to utilizing social media is beyond reason at times. Sometimes executives and decision makers simply don't want to all that comes with opening up the company to implications of social media presence.

I have a client who quotes a former colleague as saying, "spreadsheets are fun, people are icky." True. Social media is ... well, social. It involves people and can be icky. That's why coworkers and clients will fight you on using social media.

My advice, treat resistance like this as part of the free entertainment of life. Learn to smile, have a beer and fight the good fight on the next business day.

### **Fourth, treat social media initiatives as living laboratories for learning.**

Ask yourself these three questions as often as you can.

What am I learning about my company? My experience

is that you will learn as much about your organization and industry as you do about customers via social media.

What am I learning about change? Most social media pros I know are very gifted pattern recognizers. They spot changes in the patterns early and often. Nurture that skill. Journal it. Capturing what you see will serve you well in the future.

What am I learning about service? If we are careful social media can reduce to its own form of unhealthy pragmatism. Connecting with people for nothing more than what you want from them is an easy path to take. The power of social media is lost when we forget to choose service over self-interest. As counter-intuitive as that might seem, it's true.

**Mike WAGNER**, *White Rabbit Group*

<http://www.ownyourbrand.com>

## PREDICTIONS FOR 2009 by Alan Wolk



**RECESSION:** The recession will affect everything. People have been shaken to the core, and there's a renewed respect for thrift and an often overly self-conscious rejection of anything even vaguely reeking of excess.

**WORD OF MOUTH:** This will make social media even more important as people reject the language of marketing and focus on peer evaluations, especially in regard to value.

**THE SECRET OF SUCCESS:** Few companies will actually understand that the secret to success in social media is not a really cool app or Facebook page: it's a product or service that people actually like and use.

That's something I can't stress enough. Tony Hsieh could have 2,000 employees on Twitter: if Zappos didn't really deliver great customer service and leave people feeling good about the actual sales experience, there would be no benefit to their Twittering.

**SOCIAL MEDIA SPECIALISTS:** Ad agencies will begin to look for social media specialists and point to it as one of their offerings. But since few ad agencies are savvy about social media (especially the big ones) they will be choosing their specialists blindly.

***"The secret of success in social media is a product or service that people actually like and use."  
- Alan Wolk***

Look for them to raid the ranks of Forrester analysts to assume those roles, as ad agencies (both digital and traditional) are familiar with Forrester and respect its research capabilities.

**THOUGHT LEADERSHIP:** The mantle of thought leadership in social media will pass from those with technology backgrounds to those with marketing and/or planning backgrounds as programs become less theoretical and more concrete and as clients become more comfortable with the actual technology and want to learn how to use it.

Concurrent to this will be a decline in the influence of tech-oriented social media pundits (aka "A-Listers") as new social media users with more varied interests increase their ranks.

**METRICS:** The struggle to find universally accepted metrics will continue as clients will demand to see some tangible ROI from their social media efforts.

**FIELD OF DREAMS:** The idea of using traditional media to drive people to social media sites will remain a huge stumbling block for most marketers and ad agencies. They will resist the seemingly common sense notion of using an entire print ad or TV spot to promote a rapidly growing Facebook page (versus leaving it as a throwaway line at the bottom of the print ad.)

## PREDICTIONS FOR 2009 (cont'd)

The reason for this fit of illogic is financial: print ads and TV spots cost more than Facebook pages, ergo, why would you use the more expensive unit to promote the less expensive one?

**FACEBOOK:** Facebook will enjoy continued growth, especially among people over 30. They will use it in different ways, but the one commonality is that they will all almost exclusively use it as a way to connect with people they actually know in real life (or knew in real life when they were in high school twenty years earlier.)

**TWITTER:** A similar explosion will happen on Twitter as more and more newcomers join. Here we will see two primary uses: as an asynchronous IM device to communicate with real life friends and as a news feed from broadcast only accounts like CNN and the *New York Times*.

The whole notion of following strangers will seem creepily voyeuristic to newcomers, who will likely lock their Twitter accounts in response to multiple follows from complete strangers or adopt the custom of blocking all strangers as potential spammers. The newcomers will also find the current “Cult of the A-Listers” culture to be alien, as said “A-Listers” have nothing to offer them.

This, of course, is provided that Twitter is still around: I am not so sure that it won't be folded into Facebook either willingly, or unwillingly, as Facebook launches a

Twitter-like Status Update app. (NB: I have no reason to believe this will happen other than the fact that if I were Marc Zuckerberg, that's what I'd be working on.)

**JOURNALISM:** The decline of journalism will continue to be an issue as newspapers struggle to find a way to stay in business. One possibility I see is for established newspapers to combine forces with television news stations, as in “the CBS Evening News, brought to you in conjunction with The New York Times.” This would, of course, require the relaxation of various and sundry antitrust regulations, but it would help solve the financial crisis many newspapers now find themselves in.

So that's it in a nutshell. We'll know soon enough how true these will prove to be. But as my Uncle Earl used to say “I may not always be right, but I'm never wrong.”

**Alan Wolk, Toad Stool Consultants**

<http://www.thetoadstool.com>



## FIND US ON TWITTER

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