The Four C’s of Social Media Marketing
MOVING FROM MONOLOGUE TO DIALOGUE

REALIZE THE FULL POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Social media offers more opportunities and more pitfalls than any other online marketing communication channel. Done well, social marketing programs combine the scale of broadcast advertising with the personalized service of a sales representative. Done poorly, social media marketing is a costly, manual effort with no clear business purpose.

Since the first Internet click-through ad, online marketers have chased the holy grail of personalized communication. Browser cookies, keyword advertising, recommendation engines and marketing automation are just a few of the advances made along this quest of individual targeting. In this context, social media marketing appears to be a wish fulfilled. However, the significant challenge of realizing and measuring social media ROI calls to mind the age-old adage: “Be careful what you wish for, because you just might get it.”

Social media can transform how you market your business.

In today’s social media marketing gold rush, it’s easy to get caught up in the technology and lose sight of your business goals. Social media can transform how you market your business, but you should not abandon sound, tried-and-true marketing principles in the process. This e-book will help you realize the full potential of social media marketing, without getting bogged down or discouraged by its challenges.
The Social Media Marketing Challenge

CULTIVATE A SPONTANEOUS DIALOGUE

Social media marketing lies uncomfortably between advertising and sales. Treat it like advertising and your blogs, tweets and company Facebook pages will come across as corporate and sterile; treat it like sales and you lose the natural scale of marketing in expensive, aimless online conversation. The conversation around your brand must be personal, but you can't do all the talking yourself. Cultivating a spontaneous, expanding, and independent online dialogue that is meaningful to your business is the central social media marketing challenge.

Having conversations about your brand spread by word of mouth is an achievable, measurable business result of social media marketing.

Moving from monologue to dialogue requires a fundamental shift in thinking for most marketers. Staying on-message is easy in a monologue, but monologue marketing has its limitations. For example, viewers change channels during TV commercials, and billboards are easy to ignore. As a dialogue, social media demands the attention of your audience in a way that advertising never will.

This focused audience attention creates huge new opportunities and challenges for the social media marketer.

Overcoming the social media marketing challenge requires a shift from the monologue marketing principles of target audience, message and broadcast media. Successful dialogue marketers must do something that is counter-intuitive to monologue marketers: stop talking and start listening.

Hear that? Those are your customers, and they're talking. This is the magic of social media. These conversations are happening, and you can participate. Listen first, participate meaningfully, listen again, and repeat. Mastering social media marketing means facilitating honest dialogues that drive word-of-mouth marketing. This most elusive goal of traditional advertising, having conversations about your brand spread by word of mouth, is an achievable, measurable business result with social media marketing.
The Social Media Marketing Holy Grail: Word of Mouth

JUMP START WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING

What personalized communication is to online advertising, word-of-mouth buzz is to social media marketing. Successful word-of-mouth marketing goes far beyond personalization: it is interpersonal, credible and viral. As a social media marketing manager, jump-starting word-of-mouth marketing is your one and only goal.

Once you drive positive, spontaneous, word-of-mouth conversations that are meaningful to your business, you will never be concerned about social media marketing ROI. Your social media marketing programs will naturally drive revenue and increase customer satisfaction at a fraction of the cost of advertising or sales.

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So, how do you get there?

The bad news is that there is no magic bullet. Mastering social dialogue doesn’t happen automatically when you set up a Twitter or Facebook account. Cultivating social media conversations that drive word-of-mouth marketing can be complex and difficult.

The good news is that much of your traditional marketing toolkit still applies to the new world of dialogue marketing. Combine sound marketing fundamentals with the right technologies, and you can master new ways of engaging and measuring your customer base.

UNDERSTAND THE FOUR C’S OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Communities
Conversations
Channels
Campaigns

Social media marketing is an evolution, not a revolution. As a marketing communication channel, social media has two new significant qualities:

- The scale of broadcast advertising combined with the dialogue of a sales call
- The facilitation of conversations to enable word of mouth among your target audience

Broadcast advertising is not new. Sales calls are not new. Word-of-mouth marketing is not new. What is new is that social networking technology allows us to integrate all three. We don’t need to relearn everything we know about marketing to master social media. We do need new marketing principles that synthesize the old to overcome the social media marketing challenge.
SHIFT FROM MONOLOGUE TO DIALOGUE FOR EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Every marketer learns early that a marketing communications campaign is composed of three essential components: a target audience, a message, and a media channel. This simple, time-tested model is so fundamental it applies equally well to TV, radio, billboards, banner ads, email marketing, and outbound telemarketing. However, it is a model of monologue marketing that simply doesn't work for dialogue marketing.

Social media marketing requires a dialogue campaign model. Advertising channels must be replaced by social media channels. Messages become conversations. Target audiences whose members know each other and talk to each other are active communities.

Social networking technology allows us to integrate the reach of broadcast technology, sales calls, and word-of-mouth marketing.

The 4 C’s of Social Media Marketing

- COMMUNITIES
- CONVERSATIONS
- CHANNELS
- CAMPAIGNS

Communities, conversations, channels and campaigns that drive word-of-mouth buzz are the 4C’s of social media marketing. Understanding them and their interrelationships is the key to social media marketing success.
Social Communities: The First C

REAL PEOPLE MAKE UP REAL COMMUNITIES

The most important element of any social media marketing campaign is people: real people, not Twitter handles, Facebook pages, or Linkedin profiles. Unlike other digital marketing disciplines, like banner advertising or email marketing, social media marketing is actually social. A social marketing program must encourage socializing among communities of people, or it isn’t social marketing.

Social communities differ from advertising audiences in that the marketer is able to establish the existence and nature of their community relationships.

It’s important to remember that while we as marketers want to communicate through social media to a target community, we as individuals use social channels to communicate to our fellow community members. Social media is no more a marketing channel to us as individuals than our mobile phones or front doors, and woe to the feckless marketer who calls uninvited. Your LinkedIn Group may not have a barking dog at the front door, but those Group Moderators can be pretty stringent about who comes calling uninvited—and rightly so.

Social communities are comprised of overlapping social networks: family, friends, classmates, clubs, colleagues, customers and casual acquaintances. Marketers planning social media campaigns can still apply traditional segmentation techniques to understand their target communities. In qualifying a target community and its members, it’s important to examine demographics, like gender and age, in conjunction with psychographics like brand sentiment. However, social communities differ from advertising audiences in that the marketer is able to establish the nature of their community relationships, creating new measures with new marketing meaning, such as number and type of connections, engagement in social conversations and social influence.

USE SOCIAL COMMUNITY ANALYTICS TO UNDERSTAND INTERESTS & RELATIONSHIPS

Social media analytics provide essential insights for designing, implementing and assessing the ROI of social media marketing campaigns. Driving word-of-mouth buzz relies heavily on the common interests, interconnectedness and overall size of your target community. The most brilliant tweet, blog post or video will not go viral if your target community isn’t interested, doesn’t share it, or simply isn’t big enough. Understanding interests and relationships through social community analytics will help you choose more interesting topics and engage with the most influential individuals to spark the conversations that your target community will value and spread.
Building your target community database is similar to building an email or direct mail list with one important exception: your intent is to facilitate conversation that builds a viral dialogue throughout the community, rather than broadcasting a single message to a list. But building that database is just the first step; you must also build your target community.

Remember, every community is comprised of actual people who aren’t just names in a database to be measured as a click-through rate. Your social media marketing campaigns should facilitate the community members to strengthen their relationships, attract and invite new members, and share in the conversation. Your community metrics, therefore, should track your progress in terms of growth and engagement.

EXAMPLE:  

Seeding Valuable Content to Cultivate Referrals

A law firm specializing in business law is looking to expand its business by driving more word-of-mouth referrals. After monitoring blogs and other social media channels, the firm realizes that there are a few key bloggers discussing issues that the firm could address. The firm designates a spokesperson to do targeted blogger outreach, and this spokesperson partners with influential bloggers to provide valuable content for the bloggers to distribute to their readers. Having noticed that blog readers often ask the same basic questions, the spokesperson writes a series of comprehensive FAQs, guest blog posts and white papers to answer those questions. This spokesperson also becomes active with advice around these topics in the appropriate LinkedIn groups, as well as in other related internet forums. By listening to the right community and finding the appropriate entrances to introduce conversations around the topics most important to that community, this law firm is able to establish itself as a topic expert and meaningfully grow its referral business.
Social Conversations: The Second C

CONTENT MUST BECOME THE TOPIC OF A CONVERSATION TO BE SOCIAL

Some may be surprised that “content” is noticeably missing from the Four C’s of Social Media Marketing. This is no oversight; content marketing without conversation is simply long-format advertising. Your e-book or video must be shared, commented on, and ultimately recommended to be social. To cross the chasm from content marketing to social media marketing, your content must become the topic of a conversation.

Facilitating social conversations starts and ends with listening. To find your target communities and understand what interests them, you must first listen to what’s being said and who’s saying it. After you join the conversation, you must listen to know if you are being heard, to understand how you are received, and to measure the business impact of your social media campaigns.

Reciprocity is the currency of social networking. To realize ROI in social media marketing, you have to believe in social karma.

There are billions of social media conversations occurring throughout millions of social media communities each day. Finding the right topics of conversations and the right target communities for your business is a big hurdle for social marketers. You are finding the proverbial needle in a haystack, and it simply cannot be done well without the right tools or skills.

Social media monitoring requires sophisticated social search technology and analytics combined with a firm understanding of the Four C’s. Social media monitoring and analytics technology turns raw data into actionable insight, while the Four C’s provide the understanding to turn insight into real business results.

Many “social media conversations” are not conversations at all. They are parallel monologues masquerading as conversations, with millions of people talking over one another. To facilitate real conversations you must share information and ideas that are of genuine interest to your target community. You cannot schedule a series of self-serving tweets based on the day of the week and expect to spark a dialogue. Moreover, you cannot control the flow of the conversation; you have to let others speak in order to have honest discourse.

TO ACHIEVE YOUR BUSINESS GOALS, HELP YOUR AUDIENCE ACHIEVE THEIR PERSONAL GOALS

Reciprocity is the currency of social networking. It’s reciprocity that drives social conversations and strengthens social relationships. In this system of give and take, your role is to give before you receive. You must facilitate online conversations that help your target community members achieve...
their personal goals, and they in turn will naturally help you achieve your business goals.

Ideally, personal community interests align closely to your business interests, as when a band announces upcoming tour dates to its Facebook fans. But these goals can also be distantly related, such as a diaper manufacturer’s community blog for new parents. In either case, business goals can only be achieved in the service of the personal community goals, not at their expense. To realize ROI in social media marketing, you have to believe in social karma.

EXAMPLE: **Analyze Engagement Metrics in the Context of the Channel**

The manufacturers of a virtually indestructible iPhone case produce a video in which an iPhone in their case is dropped out of a helicopter. They monitor various social media channels to find any conversations about this video, and in doing so, the social media manager discovers that a high percentage of chatter is coming out of Japan. This is particularly interesting news, as the cases aren’t sold in Japan yet. The company decides to cultivate a Japanese community interested in their technology, and identifies some influential tech bloggers to test out their cases. The company then lets these bloggers run their own contests with their readers, with the new pre-market iPhone case as a prize. In one case, a blogger has his readers send in videos of themselves destroying their old iPhone cases in creative ways. By the time the company goes to market in Japan, they already have some great buzz thanks to a new, ardent community of fans waiting to hold up a megaphone to let their friends know that these iPhone cases are finally available to the Japanese market.
Social Channels: The Third C

CHOOSE THE RIGHT CHANNEL FOR YOUR CONVERSATION

Social media channels are many and varied, but they all have one thing in common: sharing. Social conversations emerge by sharing information, and the value of that shared information builds social communities through reciprocity. Choosing the right social media channels for the ideal conversation within your target community amounts to understanding what you wish to share and the best places to share it. Brilliant business insights for sales professionals might best be shared on a company blog and LinkedIn. Humorous video that energizes a stodgy consumer brand might best be shared on YouTube. Images of beautiful designer jewelry might best be shared on Pinterest.

The effective social media marketing manager is like an air traffic controller, managing many complex conversation trajectories with the help of sophisticated social radar, analysis and communications technology.

Social media engagement varies widely by channel, because the nature of information sharing varies widely by channel. Whereas it may take seconds to retweet on Twitter, it can take minutes to read and recommend a blog post. Therefore, engagement metrics must be analyzed in the context of the social media channel. It may also be necessary to capture cross-channel engagement metrics to understand a social conversation fully; a blog post, for example, might spark conversation through tweets, shares and RSS redistribution. As the level of distribution an engagement will vary by each channel, it’s important to establish your KPIs accordingly.

Like listening, efficiently facilitating social conversations across different social media channels requires different skills and technologies. Each social channel comes with a unique social etiquette, language, and networking technology for establishing social communities and enabling social conversations. A social media marketing manager may need to engage in hundreds of conversations each day, carefully selected from thousands or even millions of community members. The average human being cannot hope to manage this level of complexity without software tools that pinpoint engagement opportunities and streamline the engagement process. The effective social media marketing manager is like an air traffic controller, managing many complex conversation trajectories with the help of sophisticated social radar, analysis and communications technology. The right tools ensure that the right people take the right paths at the right time.
**EXAMPLE:**

**City Employees Use Twitter to Streamline Large Event Logistics**

A British municipality uses a social media monitoring tool to listen to its constituency during the 2012 London Olympics, in order to determine how it might enable the populace to have a more enjoyable experience. By monitoring Twitter, these city employees are able to understand immediately where folks are facing challenges: there are long delays, a lack of parking, and long lines on the bus routes for people trying to go see the Olympic torch come through. While city staff work to dispatch more buses to the trouble spots and come up with more parking locations, a dedicated staff member engages by tweeting back at their constituency to let them know when and where buses will be arriving, where parking can be had, and overall how to get to see the Olympic torch come through their city. By using Twitter as their channel, they also enable real-time sharing of their very useful information, and as an added upside, their constituents start tweeting back pictures of the torch as it goes along its journey. By choosing the right listening channel and the right monitoring tool, this local government is able to serve its constituency meaningfully, easily and efficiently, and garner a genuine feeling of local pride and goodwill in the process.
Social Media Marketing Campaigns: The Fourth C

THE CAMPAIGN BRINGS BUSINESS MEANING TO YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PROGRAMS

Social communities, conversations and channels converge holistically to form the fourth C: the social media marketing campaign. It’s not unlike an advertising campaign that requires a target audience, a message, and an advertising channel to create a broadcast communication that supports a business goal, such as brand awareness or impulse purchase. A social media marketing campaign requires a target community, a conversation, and a channel to drive word-of-mouth marketing that supports a social business goal, such as customer advocacy or viral demand generation.

It is the campaign point of view that brings business meaning to your social media programs. You may have thousands of followers on Twitter, but what are they worth if they aren’t members of your target social community and don’t share your content to create social conversations relevant to your business? Your Facebook page may be beautiful and informative, but if your target social community doesn’t use Facebook in a context that is meaningful to your business, then your social media ROI will suffer. Remember, reciprocity is your social currency, so be sure to analyze your community and your channel to ensure that you’re fostering the right conversation.

USE THE FOUR C’S TO SPARK WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING

Cast in the light of the Four C’s, social media campaign goals and performance metrics take on a familiar form. Are conversations relevant to your business spreading throughout your target community? How engaged is your target community and what is the sentiment of the conversation? Does engagement vary by channel or topic of conversation? Is your target community growing? What is community sentiment toward your brand? Just as an advertising campaign is designed, measured and optimized across target audience segments, message variations and advertising channels, a social media campaign is designed, measured and optimized across target communities, varied topics of conversation, and social media channels.

A social media campaign is designed, measured and optimized across target communities, varied topics of conversation, and social media channels.

Communities, conversations, channels, and campaigns: these are the Four C’s of social media marketing, and mastering these functional areas requires that you have the right tools and the right mindset. From there, you can achieve meaningful, measurable, social media marketing ROI.
EXAMPLE:  

Use Integrated Traditional and Social Campaigns to Spark Brand Excitement

A leading watchmaker is listening to conversations about their brand across all social channels, and notices that certain tech bloggers and sporting communities are talking about some of their models. The company is able to identify partnership opportunities with other complementary brands, and subsequently initiates a huge charity golf event with a golfing brand partner. This event has a social media contest component, is supported by targeted local radio spots and digital advertising, and leverages the email lists of both companies to build excitement. The company continues to monitor the social chatter to refine and build buzz around the event, which is a resounding success for both brands involved. The company then initiates other integrated marketing partnership campaigns across both traditional and social channels to engage and foster the conversations within both new and already-established communities.
Conclusion

Keeping in mind traditional marketing considerations of target, message and channel, social media marketers can use the Four C’s to move from monologue to dialogue:

- **COMMUNITIES**
  Your target audience is part of a larger, interconnected community of real-life people. Identifying the nature of these communities and their influencers is key to determining what kind of content will be interesting to its members.

- **CONVERSATIONS**
  Listen first to determine what sort of conversations will encourage your target community to keep talking. Without third-party buzz, your content isn’t social.

- **CHANNELS**
  Even the best content will fall flat if it lands in the wrong place. Do your research and choose your distribution channels wisely.

- **CAMPAIGNS**
  Bringing the other C’s into lockstep with an integrated message creates a successful social media marketing campaign.

With the right tools in conjunction with Four C’s, the social media marketing manager can realize successful word-of-mouth marketing and quantifiable social media ROI.