



Social Media Best Practice and Case Studies 2011

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Introduction

Hello,

Welcome to our second series of corporate social media case studies and best practice examples.

The first briefing we did – over a year ago now – brought together corporate case studies from leaders like Dell, Starbucks Ford and IBM. It was extremely popular, so we have decided to put together another version.

This year, the briefing has case studies from Air France, Citi, Coca-Cola, Disney, Hertz and Sprint, along with:

- **A look of corporate social media use across the world**
- **An investigation into what big companies hope to get out of social media**
- **Details on how social media has altered the relationship between companies, employees and consumers**
- **Consensus on best practice – ten tips you should bear in mind when organising your own social media strategy**

Hopefully reading over the following document will give you not only a broad overview on how big companies are leveraging the power of social media in 2011, but some deeper insights and specifics from some of the most successful practitioners out there.

If you find the briefing useful, then it might be worth pointing out that we have other free briefings available at www.usefulsocialmedia.com/briefings. We're also in the midst of launching our new, longer form business report. It's covering the bete noire of this space - social media impact assessment. Featuring bigger and better case studies, survey results from hundred of practitioners and in-depth analysis, it will become a core document for social media executives looking to measure the success of their social media strategy.

Finally, it would be remiss of me to leave you without mentioning our conferences. We've got four coming up in the second half of 2011 - on b2b social media, how social media should be incorporated into customer service, and how game dynamics and gamification can enhance marketing. The last conference is our second annual European Corporate Social Media Summit. You can find out more at www.usefulsocialmedia.com/conferences.

Anyway, I hope you find the following briefing of use, and I'll hope to continue our relationship with you at our conferences, with our reports, and in our social networking groups.



Kind regards,

Nick Johnson

Nick Johnson
Founder
Useful Social Media

Join the conversation!

i) Corporate use of social media across the world in 2011

Defining 'social media use

At the start of 2010, the question on everyone's lips was 'How many companies are using social media?' Some asked because they were embarking on a new social media strategy, others because they wanted to know the lie of the land in new markets, and still more because they needed to prove to their marketing departments that indeed 'everyone is doing it.'

However, looking back over the past year, it appears the question has changed focus. There are a multitude of studies, surveys and articles about companies from all regions of the world on social media take up. However, most now deal with how a company *uses* social media, not with the simpler issue of whether they are using it at all. This is telling in itself and demonstrates the level to which social media has now permeated the marketing and business way of life.

It must be noted that at present there is no metric for judging when a company is 'using social media' in a formal sense. Is it when the first company Twitter account has been set up? Or when a senior social media strategist has been appointed? Is it when guidelines or a policy document have been produced for staff? Or perhaps it's at the point where the customer service team realise they are responding to more queries via Twitter than over the phone.

One must also consider the difference between social media being used by a corporation externally as opposed to internally. For example, one firm may have an official corporate communications strategy which is customer facing and clearly visible. Another company however may be using social media as part of an internal strategy to improve employee communications, or to simply monitor reputation and sentiment.

An inward-facing corporate social media strategy is still 'using social media' but in a different way.

Social media take up across the world

Just as there are differences as to how developed social media is within different companies, there are differences in the take up of social media in different countries and regions of the world.

Let us first look at the UK. Many reports tell us that UK companies are lagging behind their US counterparts. According to a 2011 LinkedIn poll of 102 UK marketing directors¹ half of British businesses have not implemented formal social media strategies. 34% of respondents reported their approach to social media to be basic, whilst 17% cited theirs as non-existent. Only a paltry 14% deem their strategy pioneering.

Another study into the social media activities of the FTSE100², show that although there has been a steady increase social media use by leading companies, there is still a long way to go. For example, although 45% of the companies now have an official Twitter account, (up almost 50% in a year), nearly half of these are simply unused holding accounts with no activity.

¹ Poll conducted by London B2B PR and social media agency, TopLine Communications

² Conducted by interactive communications agency The Group

Look now to the United States, where ‘four out of five US businesses with 100 or more employees will use social media marketing in 2011’³. It is clear that adoption on the other side of the Atlantic is significantly more advanced. 88% of US companies expect their social media budget to increase over 2011⁴, and 100% of US-based respondents to the same survey indicated that social media is becoming a more important part of their marketing strategy.

On a broader global scale, the situation is different again.

One of the most recent studies on global use of social media is the ‘Global Fortune 100 Companies Social Media Check Up 2011’ by Burson Marsteller. The study assessed activities on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, corporate and local blogs, and social networks around the globe. It found a 6% increase in companies worldwide participating on at least one social media platform from the previous year.

Interestingly, this increase was driven primarily by the Asian market where the participation figure increased to 67% in 2010 from 50% in 2009. Companies from Asia-Pacific were however more likely to utilize corporate blogs than other platforms, which would seem to indicate a more basic approach than that of many US-based companies. However, one can say with confidence that having initially been wary of social media for reasons that link to culture, companies from the Asia Pacific region are now catching up.

This is in contrast to the number of European and U.S. companies using social media which had remained virtually flat at 89% (+1%) and 84% (-2%) respectively. Only 20% of the major international companies polled were found to be utilizing all four platforms to engage with stakeholders. Most were using only Twitter or Facebook.

When assessing the number of companies using social media we must be aware of the caveats of each study we look at. As we have discussed, ‘using’ social media in a business can mean many things. The Burson Marsteller report defined ‘Active’ accounts as those with at least one post in the past 3 months. Not everyone would call this ‘using social media’.

2010 was an incredibly important year for social media. There is no doubt that the number of companies globally adopting it is increasing. The question now seems to be not ‘who’ is using social media but ‘how’ they are using it, and what benefits they are deriving from their efforts.

³ eMarketer

⁴ Johnson, N: The State of Corporate Social Media 2011

ii) What are companies using social media for? And why are they bothering?

During 2010, the corporate perception of social media changed. It evolved from being not only a vital marketing and communications channel, but a tool to be leveraged in many areas of business – from product development to employee engagement, from customer service to eCommerce.

The specific aims of companies currently using social media are:

1) To do better marketing

Social media is often seen as a marketing dream – one can reach vast numbers of people at a rapid pace and at relatively low cost. Although it does require investment in terms of human resources and time, the financial burden is comparatively low when compared to traditional marketing.

2) To increase trust in a company or brand

Surveys from 2010 tell us that consumer trust in corporates is falling and that customers feel alienated from the brands that they use and engage. These brands are therefore using social media to **build relationships** and reconnect on a more personal level with their customers and bridge the gap. Social networks like Facebook create online communities for brands and help to cultivate a fan base. This sense of connection translates directly to sales as figures show customers are more likely to buy from a company they are connected to online.

3) To identify an audience

The third reason companies use social media is to identify and then **target specific audiences**. A brand can research the habits, likes and dislikes of their customer and use this information to their advantage. In this way, social media engagement is increasingly replacing market research and focus groups. A company is able to focus on which demographic is interested in their brand and then better tailor products to their customers' needs. 63% of US companies expect to be using social media for product development by the end of 2011⁵.

4) Enhance customer service

The fourth most common reason companies are using social media is as a communication portal managing **customer care and feedback**. This touches on the same point as building relationships – companies are now inviting customers to contact them (and air feedback, questions and concerns) via Twitter or Facebook. Rather than pick up the telephone consumers are realising the power of social media as a method of gaining a company's attention. Some companies are employing permanent teams just to monitor traffic on Twitter or Facebook. An efficiently handled customer query can be publicly acknowledged. Of course, this works in reverse when a customer is unhappy. Negative comments are now far more visible.

⁵ Johnson, N: The State of Corporate Social Media 2011

5) To improve internal communications

In 2010 we also saw social media increasingly being used as an **internal communications tool**. Reaching staff instantly through a company networking site, using it for training, philanthropy, or as the replacement of the newsletter and as a recruitment tool have all proved beneficial in different companies.

iii) How social media has altered the relationships between companies, employees and consumers

*The main ways in which social media has manifested an effect on companies, consumers and employees is in terms of **trust, control and transparency**.*

The nature of social media has meant that **boundaries and methods of public communication have changed**. In the online world, whatever is written, posted, blogged or tweeted reaches large audiences almost instantaneously. It can be a minefield of inappropriate content, angry customers and potential PR nightmares for those who get it wrong. However, it can also be a powerful marketing and communications tool with the potential to drive sales and increase brand value. For the employee, the company and the consumer it is important that social media is handled with care and understood in order to make it beneficial.

Companies and Employees

Companies enlisting employees to use social media as a marketing or communication tool afford them a **considerably higher amount of trust** than in the past. Employees have been **empowered** by interacting with consumers on behalf of the brand, they handle feedback and act at the voice representing the company in a **very public domain**.

This trust between employee and corporate goes hand in hand with increased **training and guidelines** on corporate social media policy and best practice. These guidelines are designed to set clear boundaries of what is acceptable and appropriate content. There is after all a high risk of serious mistakes being made. Whereas in the past only specific individuals would have needed training for social media, today **every employee** has the potential to be a brand ambassador, in or out of the office.

Companies and Consumers

In terms of the changed relationship between companies and consumers, social media has caused a **dramatic shift in power and control towards the consumer**. Social media is very open and unstructured, it is instant, public and reaches massive audiences in a viral way. Reputations can be built and destroyed in very little time and with this knowledge in hand consumers have started to use social media as an effective method of making themselves heard.

For the relationships of all three groups; corporates, consumers and employees, social media has created an environment of greater transparency. It encourages much closer, more personal relationships, allows greater freedom of expression but has also forced employees and companies to be far more open.

On the flip side, as metrics improve companies can target specific demographics and track the movements of consumers with a view to selling more products through offering promotions and the provision of channels for e-commerce.

Consensus on best practice - things to keep in mind

As time progresses and companies become more comfortable and experienced in the world of social media, some best practice themes and tips have emerged:

- **Be consistent**
If running a blog or tweeting, don't let your entries become sporadic. A steady stream of updates and information is what is needed to keep readers wanting more and give the impression that the site or feed is a hub of activity – and that your company's engagement is genuine
- **Be relevant**
Tie in strategy and content with brand values you're your target audience demographic. Creative innovation is good, random unconnected campaigns are not.
- **Don't just copy what someone else is doing**
The social media strategy of a bank would be entirely different to that of a large soft drinks company. Audiences and objectives differ from company to company. One size does not fit all.
- **Make the content 'share worthy'**
Don't rehash what could be found elsewhere (e.g. on your company's website) and be aware of quality, content and motivation. Put yourself in the shoes of the reader – would you, as a fan, be interested to read what has been communicated?
- **Set clear goals**
As with any strategy, it is essential to know your objectives right from the outset. All those involved should be aware of these objectives and the role that they as individuals play in achieving them.
- **Be open to comment – and responsive**
The more a company adopts a proactive social media strategy, the more conversation and comment will be ignited. Once you set up a social media presence, you open Pandora's box. You must be responsive – or you will look worse than never having a presence in the first place. As well as appreciating complimentary interaction, be prepared to become much more open to criticism and acknowledging mistakes
- **Monitor**
Use the growing number of analytics and ROI tools available to you to track past activity and plan future communications accordingly. This also applies to the importance of knowing the habits and locations of your target audience online and using this to focus on them and drive traffic towards your website
- **Train – and trust – employees, but set clear guidelines**
Equip them with the knowledge they need to handle social media interaction effectively. Showing confidence in employees will empower them with a voice and increase engagement and momentum in any social media program. But before you start to give employees freedom to engage, you must set clear guidelines as to what is and is not desirable – without allowing the rules to stop authentic communication.



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- **Be conversational and have a personality**
The tone should be helpful and professional but avoid sounding too corporate and formal. It should also avoid being overly intrusive, but let the character of the company come through
- **Create a sense of community**
Online forums and networking sites link people who like the same thing. Capitalise on this.

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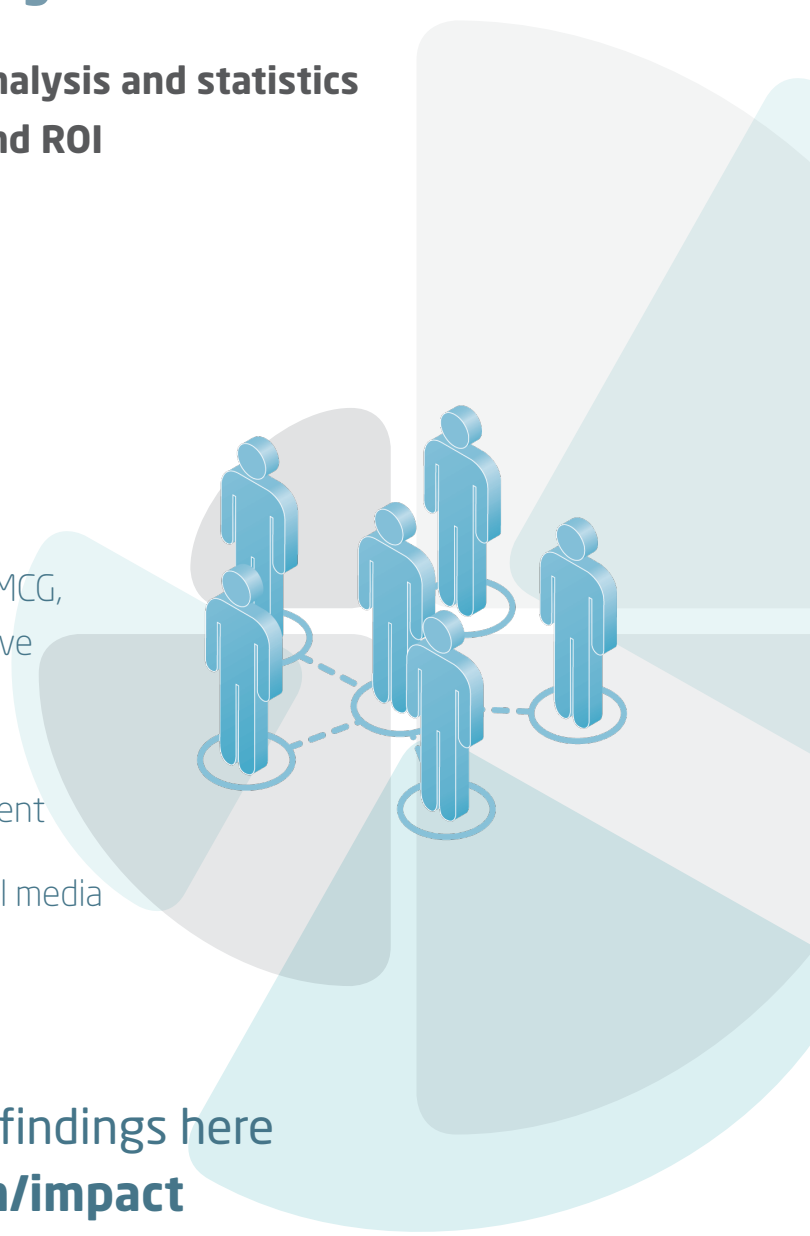
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CASE STUDIES



Air France



Citi



Coca-Cola



Disney



Hertz



Sprint (Virgin Mobile USA)



Air France

Air France principally use three social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter and its own social network 'Bluenity'.

The aviation giant uses social media for communication and interaction with their target audience of travelers. The objective is to capitalize on the shared experience of travel in order to increase new bookings. Air France see social media as a more personal way to communicate than call centres and newsletters and method to show its brand pride to the public.

Air France have hired Lighthouse Digital to handle their digital campaign for 2010/11 with a particular focus on increasing awareness of the company's websites and reservation services, and ultimately to increase revenue generating activity online.

Bluenity was launched in November 2008 as Air France's very own social networking site. At the point of launch there were only two competitors with similar offerings (British Airways with Metrotwin and Lufthansa with their GenFyLounge site). The new version of the site is multi lingual (French, English, Dutch), highly interactive and cleverly uses consumer discussion as an advertising platform. Air France focus on the theory of customers enjoying the 'Shared Experience' of travel. The site is divided between five main segments: Trips, Profiles, Mailbox, Community and Travel tips. Customers are encouraged to share tips on hotels, restaurants, do's and don'ts etc.

The strategy is that the emotional connection and sense of community will lead to more bookings and advertising for the airline. As time has passed however, there is new thought that the airline would have been better off simply plugging in to other existing travel communities such as TripAdvisor and Dopplr. Although the aim of setting up a brand new network was to make a major distinction in the airline customers choose to travel with, and to harness customer loyalty, this could in fact be seen as a limiting factor. In only being able to share trips that include one of Air France-KLM's flights, Bluenity is crippled from the point of view of consumers. Air France may well find they need to adapt and open up the site in the future.

Air France has also made good use of its Facebook page, making it a customer relationship tool, a call center and problem solver. The company has 333,329 Facebook fans, which generates high levels of consumer conversation. The wall mechanic provides behind the scene videos, airplane model information, competitions, unique offers and again a focus and opportunity on their online reservation services

In 2010 Air France introduced their new mobile website – mobile.airfrance.com and a variety of free apps. They wanted to 'capitalize on technological innovation to become the market leader for mobile and social networking applications'. The tools allow customers to change tickets at no extra charge, adjust seats, check-in and check-in baggage. Boarding passes are displayed on the iPhone meaning no paper needed and there are further plans such as rapid response to customer questions coming soon.

Air France has also provided the industry with a lesson in how *not* to use social media. During the 2010 ash cloud saga in Iceland, they went almost silent in terms of keeping their customers up to date. This caused a massive backlash of frustration. However, sister brand KLM continuously communicated via social media and as a result managed to maintain positive relationships with their consumers. Interesting in itself, and also illustrative of the difficulty of establishing a unified social media approach – even within effectively the same company.



Citi

With a new Senior Vice President of social media appointed at Citi in August 2010, the push to use digital and online to show the human side of a financial corporate has been given a fresh impetus.

The basis of the Citi social media strategy is to listen and engage with customers. They use a multi-faceted approach, integrating online marketing and communication techniques into all external marketing, as well as attempting to augment the personality of the brand via a text and video conversation platform between customer and employee.

The 'NewCiti blog' launched in February 2010. It has a light tone, and informs readers of Citi products and offers. It provides a unique opportunity for direct conversations with senior officers at the financial giant. The tag line 'Citi is Changing and You Can Help' and the blog proactively invites visitors to engage with all levels of management. This encourages dialogue and improves the perceived level of transparency for Citi.

Citi has an interesting tale to tell where Twitter is concerned. At @AskCiti, the company has 100 customer service agents dedicated to corporate Twitter activities. The company previously had tight approval regulations for comment, but the system was recently revised making the process faster. There is still however a substantial Twitter guidelines manual given to employees but approval now only needs to be sought for irregular questions, PR or legal threats. This demonstrates the increasing flexibility and trust afforded to employees at the firm. Twitter now very much serves as a destination for customers needing to resolve account issues and for those seeking more information about products and services. Software is being investigated that facilitates live person chat (expected to be rolled out in April 2011).

The Citi YouTube channel capitalises on the outreach to customers by the Twitter account and the new blog. By interviewing Citi employees and the work they are doing in the communities in which they work it reinforces the 'New Citi' ethos of a human bank with a caring side.



Coca-Cola

The focus of Coca-Cola's social media strategy is around building relationships with customers and exploring the positive association that people have with the product.

The global drinks giant wanted to connect with fans through smaller, more targeted efforts than the mass media campaigns of the past. After creating a new office of 'digital communications and social media' in 2009, the company changed their approach entirely. Coca-Cola has moved away from creating their own microsites for campaigns in favour of using existing communities such as Facebook and YouTube. The idea is to take brand activity to where people are, rather than making them visit a proprietorial website.

Coca-Cola have also recently released a succinct internal social media policy of only three pages. It gives guidelines to employees on the rules of engagement, with a particular focus on accountability and appropriate behaviour.

Great importance has been placed on taking part in the thousands of conversations that go on about the Coca-Cola Company. They want to be seeing these conversations, learning from them and getting involved.

The strategy is now based on a model of four R's

- Reviewing – listening filtering
- Responding – creating appropriate dialogue
- Recording – videos and blog posts
- Redirecting – linking onwards

The company blog 'Coca-Cola conversations' allows visitors to discuss information on a wide variety of topics. As it says on the site, it needs dialogue to work.

In 2010 two major campaigns reflected the Coca-Cola desire to leverage the emotional ties people have to their product. The idea was to strengthen the brand's link to happiness in the eyes of their customers.

First, the company used You Tube to publicise a video for the 'Coca-Cola Happiness Machine' campaign. The video, which has now had 3,525,055 hits, shows a vending machine giving out objects such as food, games and Coca-Cola for free.

The other campaign, Expedition 206, chose three 'Happiness Ambassadors' to go to 206 countries where Coca-Cola is sold around the world. In each country they were to seek out 'happiness' and document their findings. This campaign deliberately used a combination of all forms of social media: online photo galleries; video clips; blogs; Flickr; and other social networking sites.

Although measuring success is not especially easy for this campaign, in early 2011 Coca-Cola have announced that they have been pleased with the results. The aim – to stimulate further engagement with the brand through social media – was broadly successful. The company gained a great deal of experience in social media best practice and importantly can now move forward to develop the concept and make use of their new followers and friends.



Disney

Disney's social media strategy is extremely complex. It has to be if they aim to reach all the different target audiences and stakeholders groups of this massive global corporation.

Disney has a huge Facebook following, spread over 200 different brand, property and character pages. Despite only launching their Facebook presence in August 2009, Disney celebrated 100 million 'likes' in December 2010, with millions more added per week. To mark the major marketing milestone, Disney celebrated the news over the 109th birthday of the company and released a video on YouTube about their Facebook success, which ran interesting facts about the company in relation to social media.

In a move that marks a shift away from aiming solely to create brand awareness, Disney also recently created the 'Tickets Together' Facebook app. The app, which sold tickets for Toy Story 3, creates a new f-commerce sales channel through social media. If successful, Disney plans to connect fans with more of their favorite film franchises in this way.

Disney recently purchased Playdom, the online social gaming company. The aim is to use an increased social gaming presence to increase awareness among typical gamers (and atypical Disney consumers), men.

Just as Playdom might increase Disney's contact with the demographic they find hardest to reach, the 'Disney Social Media Moms' campaign reaches those who are already actively blogging and enthusiastic about the company. It offers a weekend conference as a prize to learn about new Disney ventures.

In November 2010 Disney partnered with Gowalla to help people explore the flagship Disneyworld and Disneyworld parks. The location-based service capitalised on the magic of Disney as a concept and turned it into an exploration experience.

Disney also cleverly incorporated user-generated content as part of their campaign 'Let the memories begin'. The campaign aimed to remind people of the happy memories of trips to Disney parks. People were invited to send in their own photos and videos, which were then displayed on Facebook and YouTube. The aim – that by reliving their experiences and proactively engaging with the brand – a return visit to the parks would be more likely.



Hertz

The car rental company Hertz uses social media to offer promotions, handle customer care and enhance brand awareness.

One recent initiative Hertz has established is 'Connect By Hertz', a pay as you go car sharing service which is promoted with an extensive and diversified social media campaign.

First, the company uses Twitter to promote time limited discounts and create a buzz around the initiative.

Via the Tweeted incentive, visitors are routed to Facebook and onto the 'Connect By Hertz' page, where that visitor is encouraged 'like' the page. The reward for this 'like' is to be considered for even better deals in the future. The Facebook page then links forward to the Connect by Hertz website and a You Tube video which explains how the concept of car sharing works. The possibility of more promotions makes the consumer then watch the online presence of the brand more carefully. Whilst waiting for these deals, they see the company advertise other news and information. This tactic of leading customers from one social media portal to the next by incentive is intended to be as fluid and natural a progression as possible.

Hertz are also utilizing the power of location-based social media. Their partnership with HopStop, a provider of city transit guides, is a method of publicizing the brand to new customers in seven cities in which both companies operate (London, Paris, New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and Washington). HopStop has built access to hourly car rentals into its navigation application, and ConnectbyHertz.com is providing its customers with HopStop-powered door-to-door directions to pick up and drop off their car. This platform allows Hertz to reach existing customers using the sharing service, and new ones who use Hop Stop.



Sprint (previously Virgin Mobile USA)

Sprint primarily use social media to promote mobile phone handsets, handle customer feedback and improve internal communications. They use the latest social media tactics to attract their young customer demographic.

Sprint has a highly developed social media team and strategy. It is a good example of a company using social media both externally and internally. After a merger in 2009, which saw the company lose focus and caused internal communication to suffer, a two pronged social media strategy has helped the company to improve.

Internally, cohesion was sought through social media programmes, which encouraged employee engagement and trust. For example, Sprint Space is the company social network platform where employees post comments, problem solve and add content. It has proved popular as it brings together 40,000 individuals to a common location – whether they work in head office or retail stores throughout the USA.

More recently, Sprint also introduced their ‘Social Media Ninja’ programme. This twice-monthly training program educates staff about Sprint’s social media policies and tells people about the latest product information. The company analyses social media data to measure their impact on reputation and sales. The firm credits social media for their rising corporate reputation scores and enhanced levels of communication between employees.

Externally and in relation to Virgin Mobile USA, Sprint has found that social media is a beneficial portal for customer care. Problems can now be tracked by consumers on Facebook. The tactic is to resolve issues and then deliberately ‘over communicate’ to regain credibility. In alignment with the overall strategy to maintain the personal feel of the brand, the Facebook page displays photographs of the members of the customer care team. The company then uses this social media platform to generate more custom. The page links to the Virgin Mobile ‘Kickbacks’ programme, where rewards are given for referring friends to Virgin Mobile.

The company is also responsive to social media issues over Twitter.

Virgin Mobile also recently used social media as a portal for Virgin Mobile Live, a collection of exclusive music and film content. It streams music on Facebook 24/7 and aims to promote all the company’s sponsored events – like Lady Gaga’s Monster’s Ball tour.

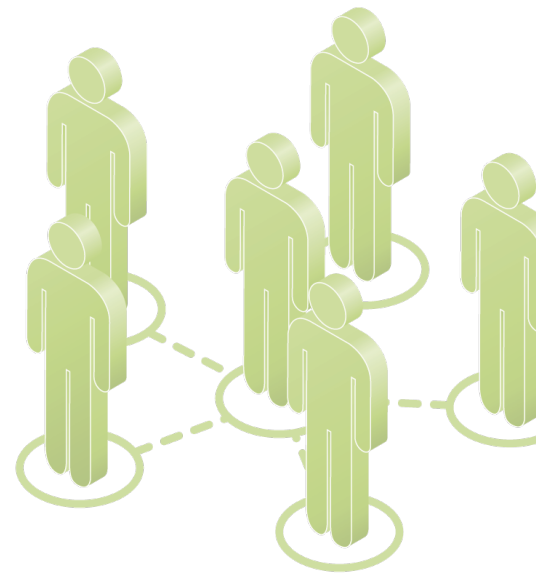


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