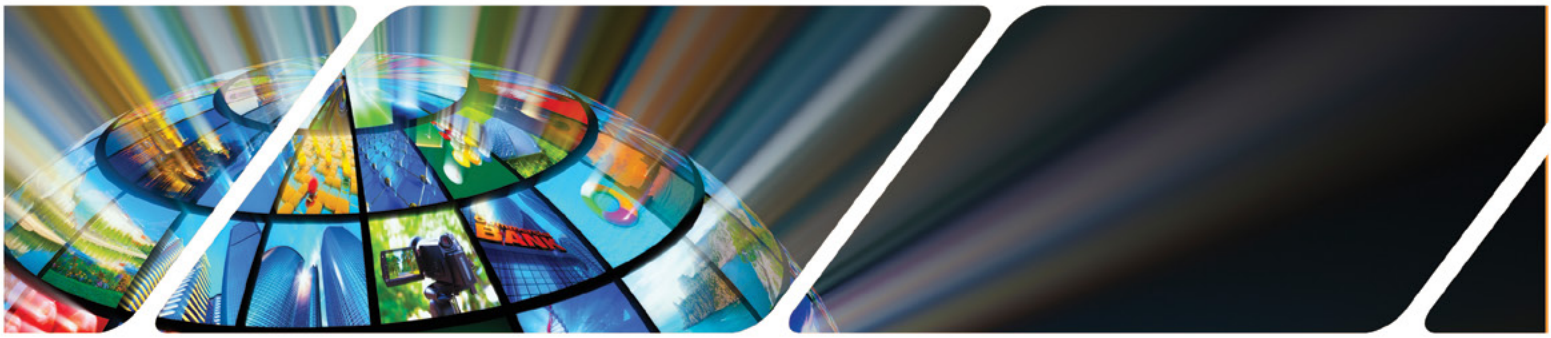
The Social Business Effect
Results After Training:
September 2012



SayItSocial

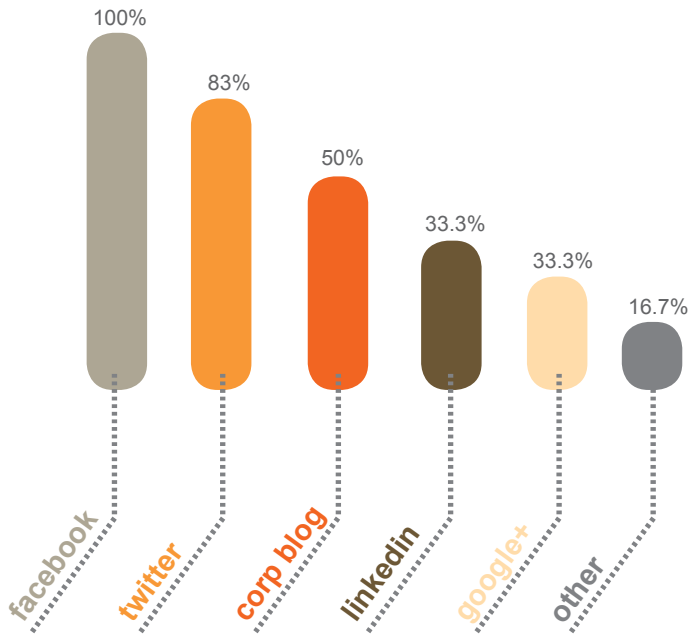
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The majority has been using social media for business for more than 2 years, but none are at the '6 weeks' mark yet, in terms of fitness & working out! One even lamented that social "networking" had become something more akin to social "not-working" & wished their people would spend more time on business planning & building leads! We believe this is a pervasive "issue" & the following information will address the matter.

THE SOCIAL BUSINESS EFFECT RESULTS AFTER TRAINING:

Building your Digital Brand competency & reaping its value is a little like starting a fitness plan & working out: At first, all of that equipment & figuring out how to use it seems daunting & the biggest effect you notice is how tired you are: you go home after each session & flop on the bed, played out.
But, in a few weeks, you notice you aren't as tired anymore. In 6 weeks, you notice new curves & you are stronger; at 12 weeks, you exude competence & act like a pro, you're invigorated by workouts & can enjoy new muscle development & your new contours. There's a definite payoff in energy, strength, physique, the number of calories you burn, and generally in how you present yourself to others, how they respond to you & how you look and feel.

This was the overall general impression we got from several of our clients— a mix of enterprise level, and SMEs—who responded to a survey, to help us understand how they were doing, post-training, & help us understand how they were utilizing all of that new-found social strategy knowledge & understanding.[1]



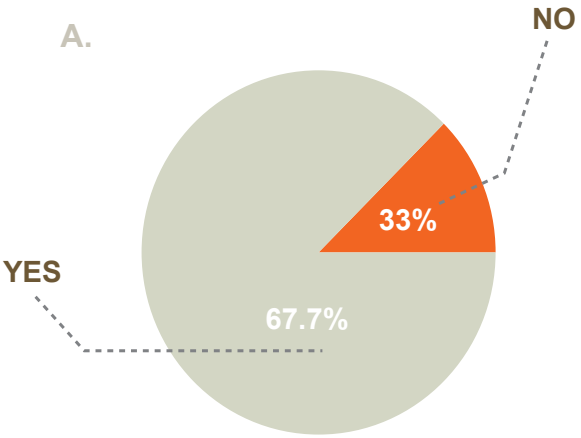
WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS DO YOU USE?

HAS SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGED THE WAY YOU DO BUSINESS?

Especially telling was that all were facing the same problems, expressed similar thinking, & demonstrated getting stuck in the same spots over the same issues, despite the fact that some were national enterprises, often considered automatic experts by virtue of their size, alone (sort of the ole 'bigger brain, more intelligent' point of view!).

Although the results of this survey are not a scientifically representative sample (too small & not random), we believe it gives us some sense of what clients might be facing as they incorporate social business tools & platforms into their business communications channels & processes AND what they are facing, after being 'trained'! *See charts A & B. Chart A general answers Chart B specific answers to the question, "Has Social Media Changed the Way You Do Business?".*

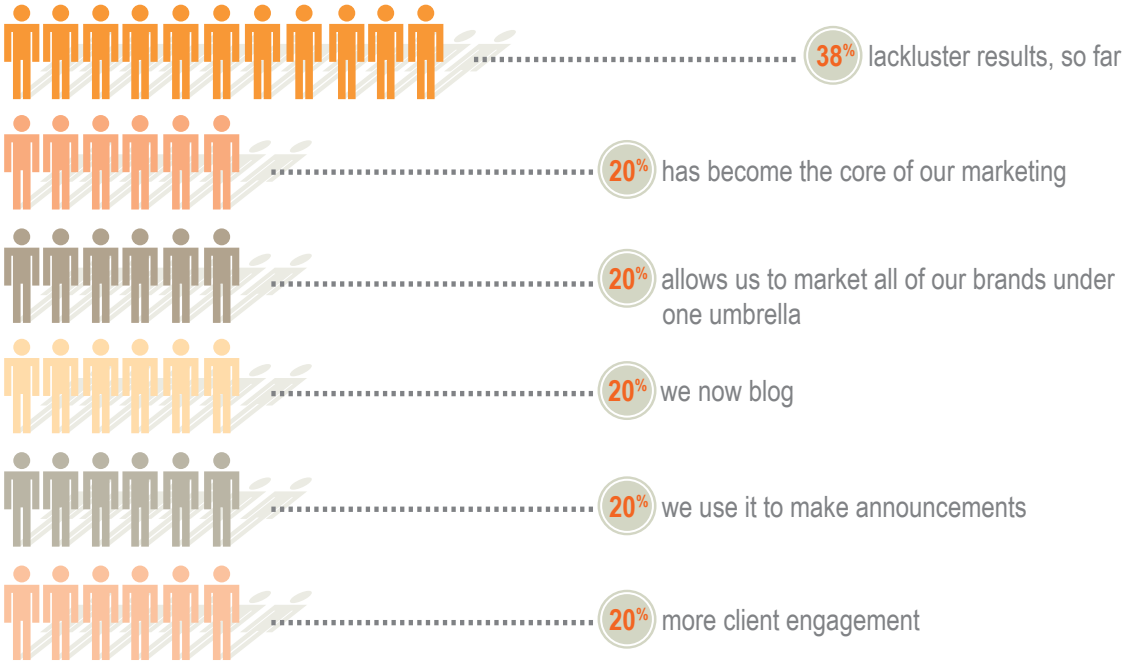
A.



So, what we propose to do is provide post-training training, to help hone the thinking that will build the digital social muscle that strengthens & brings vitality to your business. It is an organic process that includes an infrastructure & dynamics. We will address both. In fact, forming the infrastructure requires consideration & thought, but, well formed, will almost automatically channel the dynamics we want: A healthy, thriving business!

The main point is that you have to THINK about your business & what you're trying to do. We can't perform the miracles: You do! We can train you about what to look for. We can train you on how to implement it. But, at this stage, if social strategy is not working for you, then you need to re-think, re-analyze what you're trying to accomplish & how you're employing it to achieve your goals.

B.



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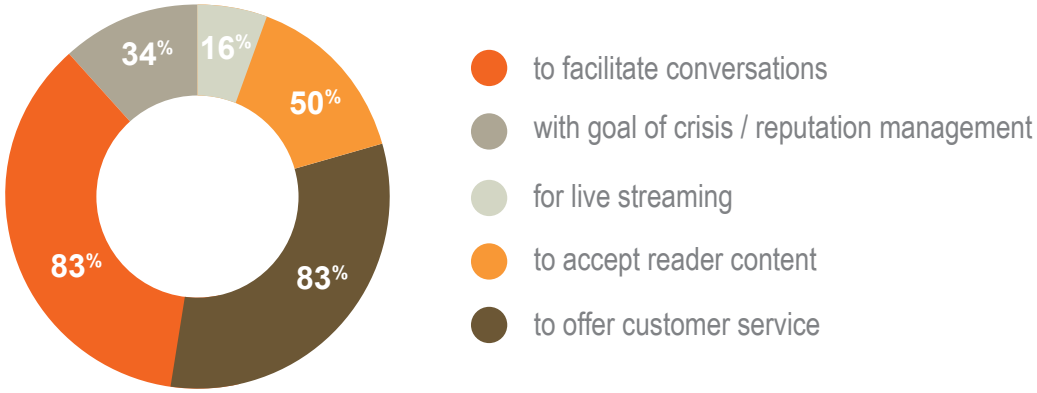
HOW DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL OF ENGAGEMENT?

To get you started in the right direction, we share this most excellent post on KPIs (key performance indicators) by Google's co-founding marketing guru, Avinash Kaushik[2], who goes into (sometimes comic) detail about how we should think about what we should be measuring & forces our minds to observe what we're really seeing when we look at 'typical' dashboard measures & analytics.



POST-TRAINING TRAINING SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY:

THE DOWN & DIRTY: ARE YOU SEEING RESULTS?

In the real world, behaviors & expectations often give way to a circuitous, irrational path.

The measurement & ROI responses to our survey were eye opening. We know what we taught. You know what you 'learned'. (Everyone left training, full of excitement with the possibilities.) How that 'knowledge' got translated led to an entirely different destination.

As Avinash was cited as saying:
You know the drill: "Measure. Find insights. Take action." (Or die trying.)
Ascend to corporate heaven.

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THESE WERE SOME OF MEASUREMENT & ROI QUESTIONS WE ASKED IN THE SURVEY.

1. After social media training, how did you change your online approach?
    a. What changes are a result of this?

2. How has social media training affected your bottom line?

3. How do you measure social media's effect on your bottom line?

OUR FAVORITE REAL-SURVEY ANSWERS

Q2 How has social media training affected your bottom line? ANSWER: 50% responded "not applicable".

Q3 How do you measure your social media return on investment? ANSWER: Fairly well.

Q2 N/A — One respondent lamented that they were just about to give up social networking (in the one industry that has all but severed ties with traditional marketing & now utilizes social media almost exclusively) because it had become more akin to "not"-working than networking! … N/A … What's going on!
Okay, you can see the actual results below.
By contrast, what would have been reasonably acceptable responses or ones we would have hoped for?
The following are not actual results, just better ones!

POST-TRAINING TRAINING: REASONABLY ACCEPTABLE RESPONSES

Q1. AFTER SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING, HOW DID YOU CHANGE YOUR ONLINE APPROACH?

ANSWER1. Instead of just continuing to make random posts on Facebook & Twitter, we decided to analyze the contributor content of each of our collaborative social channels & look at what each channel was 'producing' for us in terms of knowledge, sales, referrals. We also analyzed the content of our content (posts, tweets), to see which were generating the most response & which were leading to leads & sales, whether (experimentally) directly from the social media channel or back to (and through) our website. Because sales in our business are initially, primarily based on visual & factual information and because our lead demographic is primarily female in the 28- to 54-year-old range, we decided to begin posting photos on Pinterest, linked to our YouTube Channel. We decided to begin using Twitter in combination with LinkedIn to drive traffic directly to specific video content on YouTube & rely on Facebook solely to promote our sales force & news about our sales force. We featured our social business links on Facebook (because it is so widely used) & on the landing page of our website. Oh, & we started a traditional message board/forum on our website, because prospective customers often have the same or similar questions and a corporate forum allows both us & our customers to track questions/issues most easily via threads.

So, succinctly, we added Pinterest to our social channel mix, started linking Twitter with LinkedIn to drive traffic to specific content on our YouTube Channel, began using Facebook only to maintain our sales force presence/identity & added a corporate forum, to make the dissemination of FAQs info easier.

ANSWER2. We didn't have the people power to do the assessment & analysis that needed to be done. We knew we had to do things differently, but didn't have the time to consider all of the issues & go through whole process, so we asked SayItSocial to come in & do it for us. We are in the middle of the initial analysis now.

ANSWER3. We decided not to rush through optimizing our social media results. We really want to develop the expertise, internally, ourselves, so we decided to continue with SayItSocial's online training, to develop an in-house social business expert.

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Q1.A. WHAT CHANGES HAVE YOU OBSERVED AS A RESULT OF THIS?

ANSWER1. We find that LinkedIn brings in a lot of interest from outside of our geographic region from people, for example, who are going to be moving into this area &, surprisingly, from investors who had never considered Wilmington. Pinterest has been somewhat successful in driving traffic to our YouTube channel & we have had several sales because of this. Because of the nature of our business, Pinterest has been more successful than Facebook in sending us leads & giving us sales. We are thinking of investing in an SEO campaign, to get our identity out regionally &, because recent industry surveys report that people from New York & New Jersey are moving into this area when they retire, we will target part of the SEO campaign to reach those people.

ANSWER2. We haven't done a lot yet. On SayItSocial's recommendation, we did limit the content of our Tweets to mostly business, we actually asked a number of specific people to Follow us, & we have seen an uptick in re-Tweets, we think on account of this.

ANSWER3. We're not really measuring yet.

Q2. HOW HAS SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING AFFECTED YOUR BOTTOM LINE?

ANSWER1. This is all pretty new to us, but, we're definitely seeing about 20% more traffic on YouTube, since we started using more channels to direct people there for very specific content. Pinterest represented 6% of our sales during the past 6 months & the Twitter/ LinkedIn referral system has resulted in a 50% increase in referrals which have had a 14.3% conversion rate to sales. We haven't looked at the numbers compared to adjusted sales for the season, but we think, on the face of it, this is very significant for us & attributable to how we've changed our use of social media & not just to current market conditions.

ANSWER2. We are just starting to make changes, but we can say that establishing relationships with key people & asking them to Follow us has resulted in at least two sales & has helped generate a lot more interest in our tweets. We get re-tweeted now. I must say that we reciprocate by sending information & prospective clients to our new key tweeters & we now feel more part of a network where people are starting to recognize us.

ANSWER3. N/A

Q3. HOW DO YOU MEASURE SOCIAL MEDIA'S EFFECT ON YOUR BOTTOM LINE?

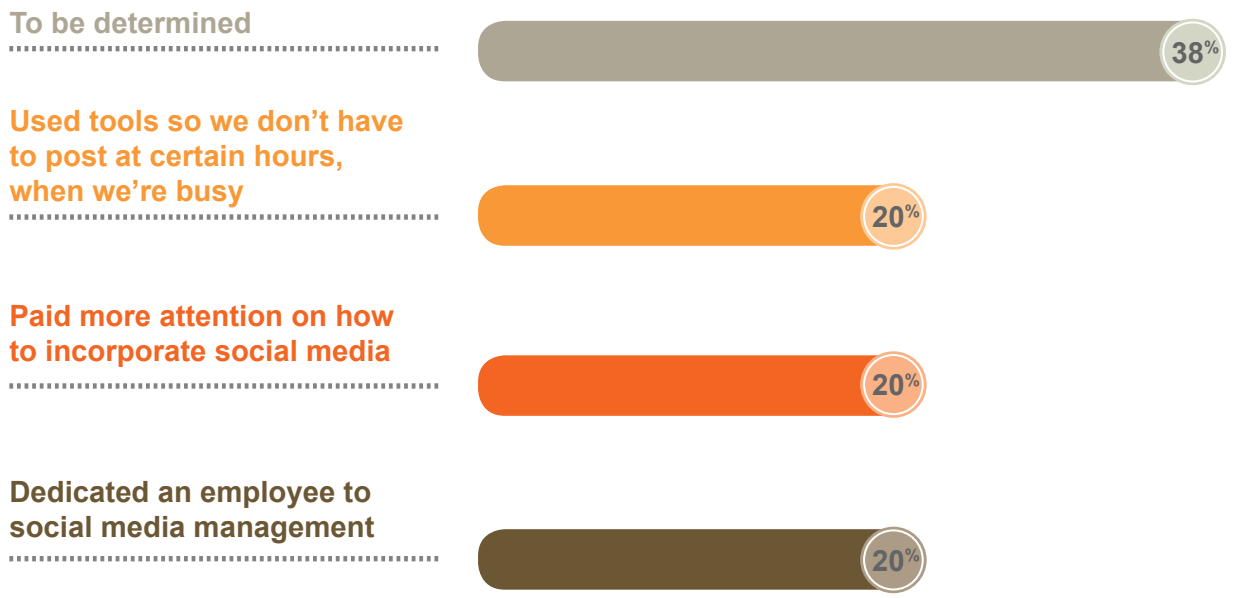
ANSWER1. Of course, we look at this year's sales compared to prior periods. We benchmark changes in our digital marketing approach & compare them to prior sales, adjusted seasonally, & against performance in the industry. We look for depth of reach (number & degrees of re-tweets, # of referrals through Twitter/LinkedIn to YouTube that come back to conversions in our office through our website). To the best of our ability, we followup with contact when anyone shows an interest or we post/tweet information, when we see specific interest developing over certain properties or themes, & measure the quality of the leads generated through all of the channels. We are more interested in quality than quantity. Analysis of content is allowing us to provide more effective, targeted followup, so we are seeing more targeted interest & higher quality leads, which means that we are achieving higher sales for the effort that is put in.

ANSWER2. Right now, I would say our 'bottom line' is measured in terms of growing brand awareness of our name & the products we sell. We are focused on making ourselves noted & noteworthy & have targeted our efforts to build our reputation. So far, we are succeeding because we are now being re-tweeted significantly (recently 1 tweet generated 74 re-tweets!) & this has meant more name recognition & traffic to our site, which have led directly to more social business-generated sales, which are growing!

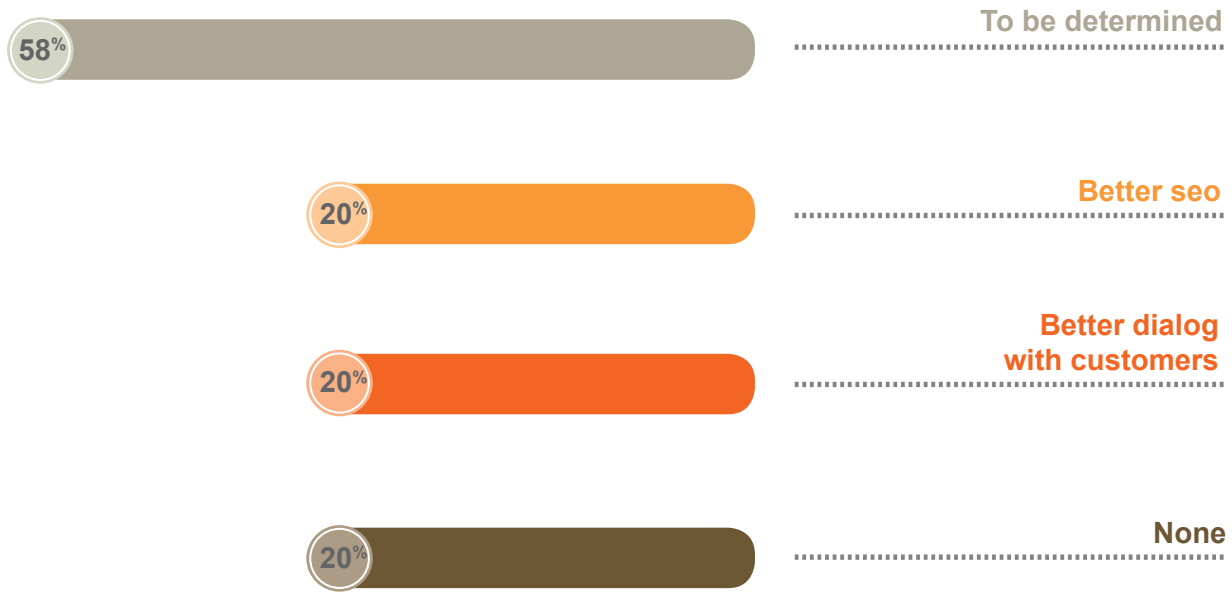
ANSWER3. Because using social media is new for us & because we are still learning, I would say mostly we are measuring it in terms of quality & number of conversations with customers & prospective customers.

NOW, HERE ARE THE ACTUAL ANSWERS WE RECEIVED.

AFTER TRAINING, HOW DID YOU CHANGE YOUR ONLINE APPROACH?



WHAT CHANGES ARE A RESULT OF THIS?



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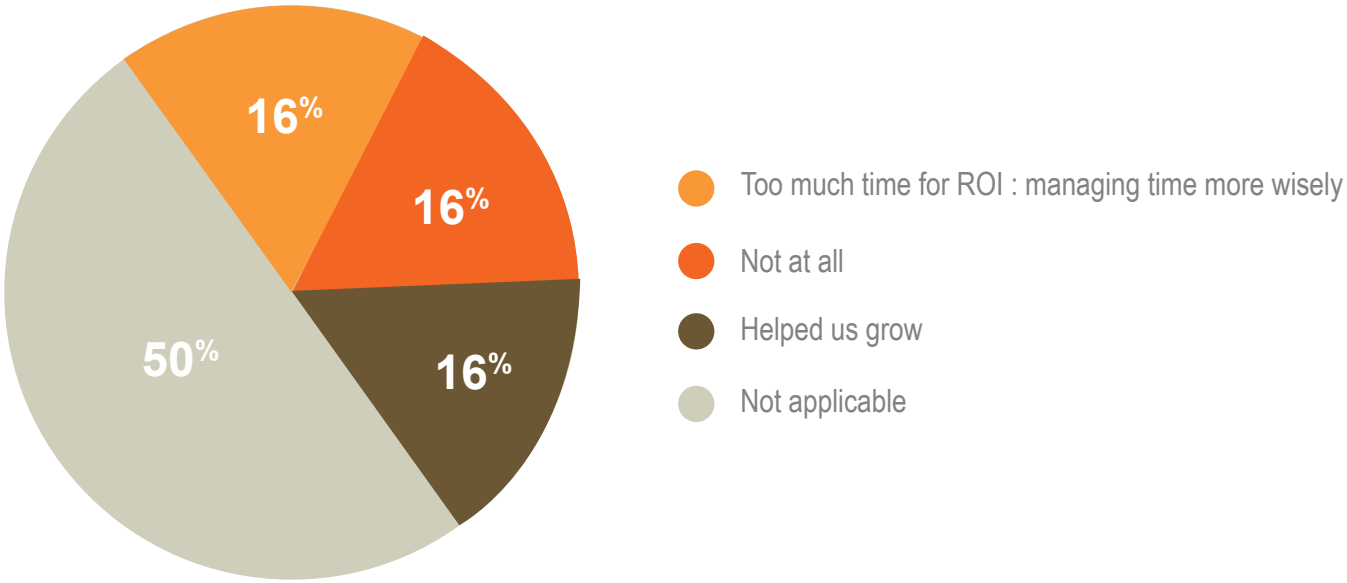
HOW HAS SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING AFFECTED YOUR BOTTOM LINE?

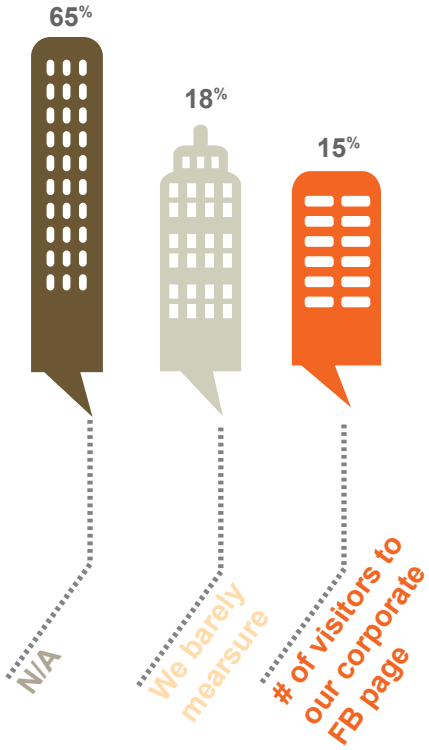


HOW DO YOU MEASURE SOCIAL MEDIA'S EFFECT ON YOUR BOTTOM LINE?

Now, what can we deduce about the disparity between what might be reasonably expectable responses & the actual responses we got?

There are different levels of knowing. It is one thing to get the picture & another to be able to apply knowledge. Learning how to use digital brand strategizing to increase your business profit is a process. Early training leads to novice levels of performance. More training leads to more expert levels of performance.

How you invest in the growth of your business is often the key determinant of your financial success. Expectations must be in line with what you invest.



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EXTREME NOVICES: ALPHABET KNOWLEDGE

By analogy, there is the alphabet answer: You teach someone the alphabet, show them that they can form words by using letters, and then tell them to go read. Not too productive: At the end, they know the alphabet, they get the basic concept about creating words, but they're not going to be in a position to read anything. They are knowledgeable, but extreme novices.

NOVICES: EARLY READERS

Then there is the reading answer: You have taught the alphabet, you have taught a basic vocabulary & how to sound out words, you teach depth of meaning, throw in numbers (basic mathematics), then you tell them to go read. Voila! They can read & understand stories & concepts and get a basic understanding of everything from literature & news to science & finance. With practice, their reading skills in knowledge & understanding grow.

EXPERTS BY DEGREE: RECENT GRADUATES TO PH.D.S

Then there is the knowledge answer: They have learned the alphabet, basic mathematics, & how to read. They have achieved reading competency in a diverse subject range. They have learned that words, the alphabet & numbers can be combined to express complex concepts & underlying relationships & dynamics. You teach them to observe what they see, to develop hypotheses & manipulate formulations (words+alphabet+numbers), to test & develop their understanding of factors that contribute to outcome. Then you teach them to perform these analyses in the real world, experimenting with formulations, to achieve the most elegant, positive outcomes. Voila! They have become social scientists, who spend their time directly impacting positively on your bottom line.

THE STAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY

Early social media training identifies research sources (where to find channel demographic information, marketing analysis tools for your website, etc. This leads to the Extreme Novice: Alphabet stage of social intelligence.

Intermediate social media training …This leads to the Novice: Early Reader stage of social intelligence.

Certification as a specialist in social media training … This leads to the Digital Social Expert: Recent Graduates to Ph.D. stages of social intelligence.

Most businesses are deeply committed to containing costs & demonstrate conservative leadership when
juxtaposing real expenses against nebulous gains. It's a little less frightening when you expend on real property; you know with favorable market conditions you're going to get a return or, at least, not lose any money.
Everyone knows what the 'oldest profession' is. By extension, can you guess the Number One activity on the Internet?
A HA! No.
It's not!
Today, the Number One activity on the Internet is engagement in social media:[3] Most people are spending their time sharing photos, video, commentary, news about their lives, & product information on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest… or killing orcs in World of Warcraft.[4] And, as access becomes more widespread, they're dumping their laptops & doing it on it on their phones. Advertising budgets & marketing gurus are flocking toward this shift. This means that to stay current, corporations & businesses of all descriptions & sizes must invest in social infrastructure, tools, & expertise. To ensure your company's viability & profitability, you have to make corporate social training a core process that's built in to all levels of your corporate infrastructure.

DIFFERENTIATING: DETERMINING WHICH SOCIAL BUSINESS CHANNELS WILL PRODUCE SPECIFIC RESULTS YOU'RE TRYING TO ACHIEVE

"I would prefer our agents spend more time with business planning & less time on social media.
I am afraid it's become a lot of Social "not" working instead of networking."

There may be a fine line between using social media channels for business building & simply socializing or passing the time of day.

Differentiating: Determining which Social Channels will Produce Specific Results You're Trying to Achieve

In all of the hype about using Facebook, Google +, Twitter, Pinterest & the other social channels, it is important to remember two things:

1. To effectively build your business, you will probably need to use different social channels for different purposes, and
2. Your corporate community managers need to be trained in corporate policies & guidelines, to effectively communicate your brand message & deliver your corporate voice.

It is important to remind your employees that social media is a form of business collaboration of record that is admissible as evidence & that it is important to maintain a professional tone & demeanor in your reactions & responses.

It is not generally appropriate to "teehee" or "lmao" or, except under very special conditions, not usually helpful to post "here are photos of us on vacation" on your business site.

While you want to identify & develop employee followings on Facebook, you should have specific goals which will dictate specific content for posting. If you are a real estate brokerage, trying to develop leads, you might use Facebook to drive traffic to your other sites, for example, post photos of a new listing with links of the video house tour on your YouTube account.

Two forgotten old-school social channels—corporate forums & message boards—continue to be particularly useful for certain businesses, such as real estate firms & banking. In fact, Entrepreneur.com article recently stated that 90% of all online conversations about banks & their products occur on forums & message boards.[5] The linking of threads on specific topics was easier for clients & banking officials to follow & preferred over isolated tweets or Facebook posts.

We argue for an integrated approach in the use of social collaboration tools with your website. This requires an overall strategy & design, directing your customers & prospective customers to specific take-off points to find specific information:

- Preparing to place your house on the market, on our forums
- This, just listed, on YouTube
- Landscaping that adds value, on Pinterest
- Conversations & contest entries on Facebook

SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY: "NOT" WORKING VS. NETWORKING: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA & PLAY

The Difference Between Socializing & Social Media?

DIGITAL SOCIAL TOOLS ARE LISTENING TOOLS USED TO CREATE GOODWILL & LIFELONG CUSTOMERS.

The Post Industrial Revolution[6] at Work: PLAY!
Although to you, corporate social tools to promote conversations & communicate with your customers, some customers will use social media to socialize.

This might be okay. You cannot underestimate the value of light-heartedness & play in the pursuit of positive business goals. You have to know & understand your target demographic, which sounds boring, EXCEPT that games & contests are driving business across mobile & all social digital platforms & HAVE BECOME A NORM, even for the over-50 set. The Borenstein Group[7] has even created a mobile game training app for employees—Turtle Soup: Survival of the Smartest—that uses Google, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other strategic marketing advice to generate employee business awareness, drive new leads, and improve brand visibility.

We see social “not-working” as a management issue: If the use of social strategy is not improving your bottom line, then you need to review your overall approach in soliciting & landing new business & maintaining the business you’ve got.

We see social “not-working” as a training issue: If your employees are not using social media effectively or are not being productive, then they need to be trained in how to stay on target & respond with your content in your corporate voice.

This is not a blame-the-employer response. No matter what your size, we strongly promote the development of corporate social media policies & guidelines. You can find social media governance policies for all types of businesses—from governments to healthcare providers & universities—Click Here. Your corporate social policies & guidelines are grounded in your corporate philosophy & shape the corporate voice that is expressed by your internal social media “expert” employees. (SayItSocial Policies)

As we stated earlier, which social channels you use & the content that you post is driven by your corporate strategy & strategic goals. It is not nebulous. Once you have your strategies outlined, the content that is required becomes instantly obvious & falls into place. And, of course, ongoing analysis of digital social strategy allows you to identify embedded or developing issues as they arise & address them practically & programmatically, without crisis & haste.

Generally, you will be using social business to

- develop & promote your corporate & brand identities
- respond to basic service questions & requests for clarification & information
- identify developing issues with products or services
- drive resolution of complaints
- announce new products & services
- position your business, brand, products & services

Every action, response, or reaction of you or your corporate community managers should be in service to these goals.

It is important to have a social monitoring hierarchy, a team, social command center, & social media response triage in place. Designated team members need to be talking to customers & dealing with issues as they arise; someone at a management level, analyzing the data, proactively initiating internal changes & command, & monitoring follow-through on customer process & satisfaction.

This may seem obvious, but it is surprising how few mid-sized & even large companies have social media guidelines & a corporate social media analytical infrastructure & dedicated social business employee “experts” in place.

Proactive or Reactive? Proactive’s Best
Proactive asks for suggestions & reports issues that are occurring in real-time. Reactive waits for a complaint, then responds.
As a customer, which response inspires more trust, when viewed in a company’s posts or on its website service page?

“Several customers have had questions about this recently. Click here to find out what you should do (or know), if you have this question.”

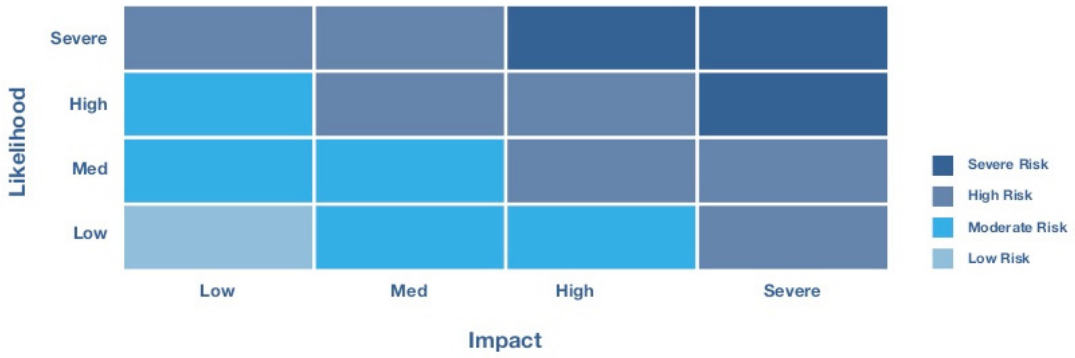
OR

“We have noted your contact information. We will get in touch soon.”

Handling issues through social channels lets other customers see that you care and are actively doing something about whatever issues are brought to your attention.

We have already talked about the development of your corporate voice. One important capsule of training is teaching your corporate social “experts” how to be sensitive to the nuance of written language that indicates heightened levels of upset or dissatisfaction. The language of escalation—profanity, threatening—is usually obvious & easy to identify. More subtle may be sarcasm, desperation or other cultural or emotional tones in written language. Ultimately, some level of risk protocol needs to be established, or social media risk matrix as noted below from *Altimeter Group*. [Source: Guarding The Social Gates]

Figure 5: Example of a Social Media Risk Matrix



Source: "Guarding the Social Gates: The Imperative for Social Media Risk Management," Altimeter Group (Aug. 9, 2012)

ALTIMETER

SOME BASIC GUIDELINES:

• All social media action & reaction/response should be driven by corporate goals, policies & guidelines, including contests, games, play & the inclusion of personal data, information & media or visuals
• Listen to emotion without emotion
• Inject a light-hearted, positive, optimistic tone
• Be patient
• Clarify
• Reiterate
• Own the problem
• Put the customer first; the problem second
• Triage
• Follow up & Follow Through

Said another way:

• Take control of the customer interaction by using techniques to defuse emotions, to achieve a positive outcome
• Show empathy
• Indicate you're glad the customer brought up the matter
• Provide clean, concise explanations
• Go out of your way to be helpful
• Be honest about what you can or cannot do
• Make sure you provide accurate information
• If you can't help, refer the issue to someone who can
• Immediately follow up with the referral, to discern outcome
• Follow up with customer within 24-48 hours, to ensure customer satisfaction

And, another way:

• Acknowledge
• Reiterate
• Provide a satisfactory workable solution or delineate the expectable process with expectable outcomes
• Recap

There is no "downtime" in corporate digital social strategy: You are watching, monitoring, responding, mining, or producing & posting new content. This can be done in a playful, joyful way, but all activity is dedicated to serving customers & potential customers, in service to corporate goals to generate profitable outcomes for you & your customers. If it's not, it's time to reassess.

And, at the end, it's always important to ask, "Has everything been handled to your satisfaction?"

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Report Input

This report includes input from a group of past and present clients of SayItSocial. These clients remain anonymous throughout the report. SayItSocial was given permission by each client to use and make public any information received from them, as long as their brand name remained anonymous.

Acknowledgements:

This report was made possible from the contribution and assistance from: Katherine Gaskins, Lauren Formalarie, Ty Downing, Crystal Glass-Downing.t

End Notes

1 This survey was conducted using the answers of past and present clients of SayItSocial and their opinions are stated within the survey results. SayItSocial also clearly states our own opinions throughout.

2 In Avinash Kaushik's article, written on the Occam's Razor blog, titled You Are What You Measure, So Choose Your KPIs (Incentives) Wisely!, he discusses how we decide what our Key Performance Indicators are. Article link: http://www.kaushik.net/avinash/measure-choose-smarter-kpis-incentives/

3 "The number one activity on the Internet is engagement in social media" – this statement is an opinion of SayItSocial and cannot be backed by statistics. However, it has been shown and stated in numerous reports and articles found through research.

4 World of Warcraft is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game by Blizzard Entertainment. It is the fourth released game set in the fantasy Warcraft universe, which was first introduced by Warcraft: Orcs & Humans in 1994. http://us.battle.net/wow/en/

5 Within the article, Why Forums May Be the Most Powerful Social Media Channel for Brands, published May 07, 2012 by Jason Falls, it was stated: My company's research on social media and the banking industry revealed that an astonishing number -- 90 percent -- of all online conversations about banks and their products occurred on forums and message boards. http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/223493

6 The Post Industrial Revolution is not a recorded event in history, but it is referring to the radical change that social media has brought to the world.

7 In May 2012, it was announced that the Borenstein Group, a Brandin, Marketing and PR firm had released Turtle Or Soup, the first "Boss-Approved" gaming app designed to help employees explore the importance of using Twitter, LinkedIn, Google & Facebook as tools for marketing success. http://www.borensteingroup.com/borenstein-group-launches-turtle-or-soup-first-boss-approved-gaming-app

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About Us

SayItSocial has long history in Internet marketing, with a strong background in integrated advertising, search engine marketing, technology and social business training. Our goal is to assist companies both medium and enterprise understand how to use digital branding tools and data in making more effective decisions that result in attracting and retaining customers.

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