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Social Media in the Marketing Mix: A guide for business-to-business marketers

Introduction

To speak simply, we live in a wired world. The popularity and success of the Web has enabled a tremendous shift in consumer behavior, creating new, more immediate and convenient systems of communication, socialization, self-expression and identities. We blog, we post, we tweet, we email, we Google it, we Wiki it, we share it, we “like” it and we click through. Technology and social media hasn’t altered the world, rather it is allowing us to become more connected.

While social media continues to redefine the way we communicate and market, it is shifting the public relations practice along with it. Marketing communications has become a multi-channeled environment and there are new tools, methods and opportunities to reach target audiences.

As defined by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), “public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other.” As technology continues to evolve and enable new modes of communication, public relations will continue to evolve with it, but the definition will remain the same.

In this rapidly evolving digital environment, one thing has remained unchanged: the success of a business is still directly connected to its ability to communicate, engage and retain customers.

Ignoring social media strategies as part of a business plan is not an option if a company or brand wants to remain successful. Across industries, social media continues to impact and reroute businesses everyday: bricks and mortar retail, newspapers, TV, books, movies, education, healthcare, among others.

With so much social media attention focused on business to consumer marketing, there is a tendency to remain fearful of social media in the B2B world, ignoring its potential and opportunity for business development. We often receive feedback from our B2B clients that they don’t fully understand the value of social media for business or that they already have a web site and don’t see the benefit of engaging in social media platforms. We hear concerns around time management, ROI and lead generation, while many clients have anxiety about where to begin and where to focus.

Social media enables opportunities beyond its platforms, and it is here to stay. It is an opportunity to engage current constituencies and develop a multi-faceted, emotional connection with your target audience, whether current or prospective.

C-Level Executives and Social Media

Sixty-four percent of CEOs do not utilize social media as a means to connect with the public or their stakeholders. This could be seen as a fatal error given that many Americans indicate they trust information most often when they receive it via word-of-mouth. More than 90% of consumers rank word-of-mouth as the top influence in their purchasing decisions. Only 14% trust advertisements. Word-of-mouth can have a significant impact on businesses and much of the conversations are taking place via social media, thus it is important for C-level executives to be involved in social media and take a leadership position within their companies in order to maximize the benefits that can come from utilizing social media.

Social media should not be written off as a fad, as some executives have indicated. Social media is here to stay, and while the popularity of specific sites may fade, there will always be something new and just as appealing.

SOCIAL MEDIA GROWTH TRENDS

Trends:

It took the Internet only four years to reach 50 million users as compared to radio, which took 38 years to reach that amount and TV which took 13 years.

There are currently 272.1 million Internet users in North America and these numbers continue to increase as the world around us becomes intertwined with the Internet and social media. One in five couples meet online, kindergarteners are learning on iPads, 1 out of 6 minutes spent online is spent on social media and if Facebook were a country it would be the third largest.

There is also a steady increase of seniors utilizing the Internet. This usage will increase as technologically inclined baby boomers become seniors. It is projected that by 2015, there will be over 26 million senior Internet users in the U.S.

Corporations and other organizations are utilizing social media on an ever-increasing basis. Consumers like to interact with companies through social media. Burson-Marsteller reports that 77% of Fortune 100 companies prefer to use Twitter, 62% prefer Facebook, 57% prefer YouTube and 36% prefer corporate blogs.

Small businesses have turned to social media as a cost effective marketing strategy. 70% of small businesses indicate that they use Facebook to market their business and 40% indicate that they use Twitter to create visibility and brand awareness for their product.

Blogging:

As of February 2011, blogging is up by 6% among 34-45 year olds. 57 million people read and follow blogs and more than 12 million adults currently maintain a blog. Bloggers are talking about brands and they post product or brand reviews; bloggers share their thoughts and opinions on various topics. It is also important to note that 90% of people trust peer recommendations over advertisements, therefore a blog is seen as a more trustworthy source than an ad at the top of a web page.

For businesses, blogging can be extremely beneficial to the company. A blog allows you to have control over your company's reputation; since customers are blogging about your products it is important to counteract any negative content with your company's blog.

Blogging comes with many other advantages:

- It allows for the establishment of a trusted and personal relationship with your clients or customers.
- It provides individualized and valuable content that can be shared across other platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook.
- It provides greater control over what people are saying about your business and a forum in which you can offer direct feedback and respond to these statements.
- Blogs have the capability to be a powerful advertising mechanism, helping businesses to gain exposure on areas of expertise, especially through increased SEO performance.
- It positions businesses and their employees as thought leaders and aids in recruiting.

Mobile:

Mobile phone penetration is upwards of 4 out of 5 people in the US and more people now have a mobile phone than have PC-based internet access. More than 70% of the world's population has a mobile phone today. It is predicted that by 2014, mobile Internet will surpass desktop Internet usage and by 2015 there will be approximately one mobile device per person.

Internet via mobile phone is becoming increasingly popular due to the fact that it provides "whenever-whenever" capabilities. The mobile phone provides users with the convenience of instantly and easily accessing the Internet in their hand rather than waiting to log on at home or at the office.

Mobile is not just youth-focused – texting behavior may skew a bit younger, but the bulk of mobile Internet usage comes from 25-44 year olds. Professionals and non-professionals across industries are using mobile networking apps to connect to Twitter, Facebook and other sites, while mobile advertising is increasing in popularity. For the B2B world, the most significant efforts have focused on optimizing websites for mobile viewing.

As mobile Internet usage continues to grow, opportunities to communicate through this medium are increasing as well. It can be expected that mobile device users will engage brands more from their phones or iPads than on the Web via a desktop or laptop computer. Mobile users who actively search for content regarding TV, videos, sports,

news, etc. are more likely to do consistent product research online. Ninety-seven percent of active mobile users indicate that they share advice about products and services based on Internet research findings. In order to be available when your consumers want and need you, you need to go where they are, which is on mobile devices.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographics have evolved with Internet use. Statistics show that 91% of the population in 2011 is using the Internet and this number is projected to be 94% by 2015. Eighty-six percent of Internet users are also social network users. The current age range with the most Internet users is 45-54 with 37.9 million users; this number is expected to increase steadily. Although individuals under the age of 34, whose lives have become intertwined with online activities, will continue to be the largest and most immersed in online content.

Another growing demographic is the senior population. As tech-savvy boomers become seniors, there will be an increase in Internet users from this population.

SITES

The top four social networking sites are:

1. facebook.com
2. Google+
3. twitter.com
4. linkedin.com

According to a survey published by Burson-Marsteller, of Fortune Global 100 Companies, 77% have a Twitter account, 61% have a Facebook Page, 57% have YouTube accounts and 36% have a company blog.

Facebook

Facebook's layout is clean and user friendly and it provides mobile applications for the iPhone, Blackberry and Android system creating easy access for its 500 million users.

Organizations and companies commonly use the Facebook page. For business-to-business marketing, the Facebook page is one of the most successful techniques used for social media optimization. Aside from the Facebook page, companies are utilizing Facebook for ad displays. There are approximately 300 individual advertisers spending \$1 million (if not more) a quarter. Some top advertisers for Q1 2011 include:

- AT&T
- Toyota
- Netflix
- Procter & Gamble
- General Mills
- Kellogg's

Numerous corporations and megabrands have embraced Facebook as a vital part of their marketing mix, which should come as no surprise. The Complete quarterly Online Shopper Intelligence Study indicated that 56% of participants say they visit retailer Facebook pages for promotion and sales information and deals.

Google+

The popular search engine's new social networking tool was launched in June 2011 with an invitation-only trial run. It is widely recognized as Facebook's most serious potential competitor. With more sophisticated privacy techniques than its counterpart, Google+ allows users to group "friends" into categories – Circles, Hangouts, Sparks, and Huddles – to selectively share information, photos and locations with certain people. It is currently available on both desktop and mobile systems.

According to *Bloomberg News*, 13% of US adults have already joined Google+, and 22% are expected to join within a year. While brands and advertising have yet to claim their stake on Google+, it will surely be an incredible new source for reaching consumers and other businesses alike as it continues to experience success.

Twitter

Twitter attracts the hyperactive, hyper-connected information junkies eager to know about news, politics, sports, finance and restaurants. Forty-three percent say they couldn't live without this network, which celebrated its 5th birthday this past March. Corporate Twitter accounts have seen a sharp increase, with many companies actively engaging and "tweeting" more than once a week.

Twitter users can share their opinions, thoughts, feelings, or advocacies via a 140-character message aka a tweet.

140 million tweets on average per day are being sent and there are an average of 460,000 new accounts created each day. Individuals spend approximately 2 hours and 12 minutes per month on Twitter, a 19% increase from 2009.

Twitter can be an optimal B2B communication channel when utilized correctly – focus is key. Quality of tweets rather than quantity is where it's at. The Twitter question asks users "What's happening?" for your business rephrase the question to ask, "What information can I share?" Tweets should be interesting and relevant to create impact for business. Twitter should be viewed as a mass communication channel but the relationship should not be one-sided. The biggest mistake to be made is to not follow anyone back or not respond to direct messages or @ messages. If you provide no responses it sends the message that you don't want interaction and that you only want to push your content on people—not good for relationship building.

LinkedIn

This professionally based website has over 44 million users in the United States, 56 million outside of the United States and is the only network with a higher percentage of men. The site is focused on job searching, making deals and doing business. News and sports as well as individual performance-based sports like golf, tennis, yoga and working out are high on users agendas, as are gambling and soap operas; classic forms of Type A stress release.

It is a social networking site for business professionals, which provides the opportunity for personal branding. Eighty percent of companies on LinkedIn use the site as a leading tool in recruiting employees. Executives from all Fortune 500 companies have accounts on LinkedIn.

The site's goal is to link business goals oriented individuals in order to build and enhance professional relationships.

YouTube

YouTube is a web video haven. Almost anything can be found on YouTube and it is the second largest search engine on the web. Owned by Google, it has been a product of search engine optimization (SEO) and stands as a tremendous example of how an effective and successful SEO process works.

Video is a powerful media channel and YouTube allows for video sharing. YouTube creates the opportunity for individuals, organizations, and businesses to implement brand exposure in marketable and effective ways.

YouTube is a primary source of entertainment for Internet users with a wide-ranging demographic of 18-54 year olds. The site has more than 3 billion video views per day and 100 million mobile views per day.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING

Opportunities for marketing are quickly shifting from TV and radio to Internet based platforms. Marketing budgets are moving towards interactive tools, which provides a more customized outlet for marketers to use, typically at a lower cost than many traditional media choices. If less is spent on traditional ads, dollars earmarked for advertising can be redirected to investments in innovation, research, customer experiences etc.

The majority of businesses are moving from trial use (creating a social media platform) to strategic use (performance of social media use routinely). A critical mistake that is made by many businesses is to attempt diving right in to using social media without having a plan. Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, or blogs are often created with no real strategy.

Statistics indicate that, in consideration of all organizations, most (about 40%) are in between trial use and strategic use of social media. Approximately 23% are using social media strategically.

The social media conversation is in its ascendancy. The competition is already there. As noted in *The Essential Guide to Social Media*, “participation is marketing.” Marketing is a dialogue, it is a two-sided relationship.

Return on investment (ROI) is difficult to measure at this point and research indicates that 70% of companies active in the social media landscape do not believe they are appropriately measuring the repercussions of using social media. This consideration leads to company reluctance in terms of social media investments.

Social Media: What does it mean at the end of the day?

Social media is still considered to be in its infancy, even though it is making almost surreal strides in real time. Social media is experiencing a period of some confusion with communication methods, monitoring and measurement, and lack of commentary control. So the question is what does it accomplish and where does it take us?

- Social media as a communication platform is a strategic medium that should be approached as such (just as any other aspect of a marketing plan).
- Use the strategies & platforms that will best reach target audiences to promote engagement to establish a presence on platforms that may aid in achieving marketing objectives.
- With social media, there’s a relatively high level of control, a relatively low level of risk, and a number of low-cost or no-cost options that can be explored.

For business-to-business, it’s a bit more difficult to understand the value of social media platforms. However, it can serve as an avenue to generate leads through requests of e-mail subscriptions, special offers, sampling, and educational content. It also serves as an opportunity to become a thought leader in your industry, increasing a company’s visibility. It creates a forum to communicate information about companies or brands that might not otherwise get communicated, that will engage potential customers, potential employees as well increase internal engagement.

From a ROI perspective, social media offers these direct benefits:

- Generates exposure for business and services
- Results in new business partnerships
- Increases networking opportunities
- Improves search engine rankings
- Generates leads and interest
- Reduces marketing expenses
- Increases traffic to website, increases subscribers to email campaigns

When engaging in social media it is important to listen first and sell second. It’s critical to engage the customer or audience, not from a marketer’s or sales person’s perspective, but with the authenticity of the customer’s perspective. Keep the brand in mind, but be helpful and demonstrate the importance of the customer – this will earn respect.

Consider the other social networking benefits:

- Increases the immediacy of communication and enables companies to directly reach their target audiences in a cost-effective manner.
- Engage people by creating buzz to keep people coming back to a blog/site.
- Ability to further understand customers and their needs in order to quickly learn what consumers are saying about products and services.
- Enables business networking/prospecting opportunities through networks such as LinkedIn where executives from all Fortune 500 companies are members.
- Allows companies to keep a current and constant pulse on the competition.
- Broadens the marketing/PR landscape for a company's communication plans among highly cluttered messaging environments.
- Engagement and interaction inspires trust in clients or potential clients.
- Constant contact/engagement results in the highly appealing nature of instantaneous responses.

It is also essential to develop a social media and PR ROI framework for your campaign:

- Set goals and objectives aligned with the overall desired business outcomes.
 - Drive branding and awareness?
 - Generate prospects/leads?
 - Inform?
 - Create buzz?
 - Consumer research?
 - Educate?
 - Recruit potential employees?
 - Support internal communications?
- Develop communication tactics
 - E-newsletters, E-blasts
 - Videos, Podcasts
 - Digital surveys
 - White papers
 - Blog announcements
- Establish measurement tools and set benchmarks to quantify campaigns. Although this step may require additional time and budget, measurement is critical in gaining knowledge and developing actionable next steps. There are a wide variety of measurement tools and in many cases a mix of tools that can be established to track output. There are other low-cost methods to gain results such as free tools, news alerts, etc.

Incorporating social media into any business strategy generates more opportunities to connect and communicate. Choosing to not engage might not result in a tangible disadvantage yet, but it is important to focus on how these new technologies might HELP business and communication objectives.

Start by formulating a purpose. Allow for social media to become a part of the daily processes. Create a strategy for when and how the social media conversation will take place. Implement a routine, but keep it spontaneous at the same time.

HOW TO UTILIZE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BUSINESS

FACEBOOK

Use Facebook to promote engagement and allow for more direct communication with target audiences. Update the established Facebook Page regularly and direct all traffic to your main website.

- Add your Facebook URL to your e-mail signature.
- Add links to Fan page, on website and e-newsletters.
- Focus on posting business activities; post relevant photos and videos.
- Make the page interactive; allow visitors to be directed to other sites, postings, or videos via web page.
- Suggest page contacts to clients/colleagues in order to help establish trust.
- Consider Facebook ads for further audience targeting.

TWITTER

Use Twitter to share quick updates and news; formulate short, sweet, and to the point updates. Include links to generate traffic elsewhere. Update frequently to keep interaction going.

- Tag other businesses or individuals by using the @ symbol (ex. @ckinsight or @johnsmith), this generates interaction.
- Establish trending topics through hashtags (#).
- Use twitpic.com to include photos in posts.
- Create lists of company's leadership on Twitter, or those users that serve as brand ambassadors for company on Twitter.
- Monitor sentiment and mentions regarding your brand or company.
- TweetDeck (tweetdeck.com) and Hootsuite (hootsuite.com) are useful tools for posting business tweets. These allow the user to sort and organize the Twitter account based on topics, keywords, and messages. It also allows you to gather click statistics for links you have shared.
- Platforms such as HootSuite allow you to monitor direct messages, multiple accounts in addition to link performance.

YOUTUBE

Use YouTube to example ability and competence within a specific field through video. It is also a great strategy to market services and products.

- Create a YouTube channel by posting videos. Once established, individuals can subscribe to it.
- Once viewers have subscribed e-mails can be sent to registered users, which allows for continued interaction and information sharing.
- Share videos across other social media platforms and accounts; embed videos on website

LINKEDIN

Create, develop and maintain business connections through LinkedIn.

- Make sure profile is substantial and 100% complete.
- Always maintain the LinkedIn page and make sure everything is up to date.
- LinkedIn offers a variety of account types. LinkedIn Premium allows for searchability – to find the right people in less time, send direct messages without an introduction, and organize key contacts/profiles into folders.

Creating business pages on LinkedIn is a powerful promotional and networking B2B tool.

- Hosting events through LinkedIn will allow businesses to promote their services and offerings by niche and region, thus homing in on relevant contacts and draw attendance to events.
- Run advanced searches to find leads for other companies whose contact you could benefit from. After running an advanced search and locating a potential match, you can send personalized messages to further the communication.
- LinkedIn groups provide news leads every day, based upon areas of interest. Groups are a powerful tool for staying current on relevant developments in a field.

BLOGS

Use a blog to support and further company thought leaders and key, strategic idea platforms. There are a myriad of blog sites with Blogger.com and Wordpress as two of the most prolific. These sites provide you with the tools to create a blog, publish thoughts and opinions, and engage with readers, post photos, and the ability to obtain mobile access.

- Connect to readers on an individual level; provide background information.
- Don't introduce a blog with less than five posts. Content needs to be interesting so that readers will come back.
- Incorporate links to other areas of a website or other resources
- Incorporate tags for SEO visibility and greater exposure.
- Make sure a link to RSS feed is easily accessible.
- Post regularly and keep content original and fresh.

TIME MANAGEMENT

How much time should you spend on social media per week? Find a balance that allows you to remain competitive while providing fresh and engaging content each week.

- Train and allocate dedicated staff members to maintain social media accounts.
- Establish a weekly editorial calendar incorporating efforts from the overall communication strategy.
- Establish criteria for measuring the success and evaluate on a monthly basis.

THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- Pew Internet projects that online use and participation could result in more effective/receptive for profit and non-profit companies and organizations. Social media and the online web will be intertwined; social media will be an undeniable aspect of online and offline activities much due to the ability to access the Internet from anywhere.
- Human connections and relationship development will rely on social media, they will be much less physical in nature, but much broader in terms of numbers of connections.
- Facebook will become an arena for online shopping. Stores will have products to be purchased right from their Facebook pages instead of having customers go to the brand or product web site (many CPG and retailers are have already started to experiment with this).
- It is expected that mobile device users will engage with content and brands more from their phones or iPads than they do on the web. Mobile will become a continuation of who we are.
- Although ROI is hard to measure currently, in the future, those who most succeed in gathering ROI statistics and information will be able to examine and anticipate the benefits or detriments of their social media investments. These individuals and companies will succeed and they will stay in the competition.
- ROI will be redefined. It will be developed past just counting the number of likes and comments and be determined by engagement and relationship quality.
- Other predictions indicate that women will dominate social media. Women make 75% percent of purchasing decisions and 85% of actual purchases. Women account for 50% of the users on social networks. Women are inherently proficient at successfully communicating and building relationships – social media will allow them to excel in their careers by becoming driving forces in business strategies via social media.
- Social media will continue to rapidly expand and change the experiences for producers and consumers alike. We won't be looking for products and services, products and services will find us via social media. Social media is not a fad; it is a basic foundational change in the way we communicate. If marketers fail to make the changes needed in order to keep up with the evolution of social media, then they will fail to stay competitively in the game.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN ACTION – Business-to-Business Case Studies

- HP utilized Twitter to facilitate a scavenger hunt at a recent conference. Twitter was used at this event to power a scavenger hunt that provided participants with the opportunity to win different products including webcams and laptops.
- Visa developed an application on Facebook titled The Visa Business Network in order to connect small business users and aid them in promoting their business to a larger audience or community. The page on Facebook includes posts displaying the Network's Featured Business as a way to generate communication about the businesses and to help broaden awareness. Businesses nominate themselves for this feature by submitting information and other requirements about their business. The Network also provides other information to businesses by asking questions about what individuals are hoping to achieve in their businesses.

• Office Max - When the retail giant launched its first large-scale social media campaigns, it maintained the same method of measurement it has always used—audience impressions—but applied it to social media.

Based in Naperville, Ill., OfficeMax Incorporated (NYSE: OMX) is a leader in both business-to-business office products solutions and retail office products. The company provides office supplies and paper, in-store print and document services through OfficeMax ImPress™, technology products and solutions, and furniture to both consumers and businesses.

Earlier this year, OfficeMax reached an agreement with internationally renowned organization expert Peter Walsh to sell his home- and business-organization solution (In Place System) in its retail stores. To promote the partnership, OfficeMax decided to try a social media campaign, rather than a traditional mainstream push. Its target was bloggers passionate about good organizational habits. The plan was to create a live webcast around Walsh and show him walking through specially created sets showcasing messy and clean offices. Walsh would then answer email questions live.

Before the event, OfficeMax sent out samples of Walsh's solution. More than 175 bloggers attended the webcast in April 2009. OfficeMax typically used impression-based metrics from traditional print and online media to measure success, and the company was eager to carry that over to the social media realm. Another challenge was how to ascertain on an aggregated level whether the posts were positive or negative.

Soon after the event, OfficeMax's PR team, led by William Bonner, began scouring the Web for blog posts, tweets and other mentions of the webcast. To streamline the process of identifying blog coverage, it relied on Vocus, an on-demand PR management solution, and Google Alerts.

Once they identified the coverage, they used a variety of tools, such as Alexa, Quantcast and Vocus, as well as data provided by the bloggers themselves, to tally audience impression numbers (essentially monthly unique visitors).

Bonner's team also manually scanned each post and assigned a positive, neutral or negative score to each one, and then uploaded that information into Vocus to get an aggregated view. Finally the team used search.twitter.com to track down all Twitter mentions of the event. They looked at the number of followers of each posted tweet to ascertain the total reach.

The event was a success. It generated more than 100 blog posts (all positive) with a combined reach of 2.6 million impressions, defined as monthly unique visitors. Bloggers also tweeted about the webcast before, during and after the showing, which generated more than 1,000 total tweets (a combined reach of 2.3 million impressions). According to Bonner, the webcast was one of the top topics (based on the hashtag #officemax) on search.twitter.com that afternoon. Traditional reporters noticed the blog coverage and wrote another 13 stories about the event, generating 1.5 million online impressions. Two bloggers even produced their own videos about the event and posted them on YouTube. Bloggers also posted product pictures on Flickr.

Business Lessons Learned Use what you know, and keep it simple. OfficeMax took its standard method of measurement (online audience impressions) and applied it to blogs and Twitter. Set up a hashtag to allow users to more easily measure Twitter conversations during a webcast. Don't underestimate sentiment analysis—positive, neutral or negative—even if it has to be catalogued manually.

“The first thing to remember [in measuring a social media campaign] is don't over think it. Just try it. Think of how you have had to measure in the past. When we have measured in the past, impressions have been pretty standard, so we have tried not to get too carried away now that the media is different.”—Bill Bonner, Senior Director, External Relations, OfficeMax

• Share Methods - Based in South Orange, N.J., ShareMethods aligns sales and marketing through on-demand collaborative document management for small and mid-sized businesses. From anywhere at any time, salespeople, sales partners and marketing can access the most up-to-date sales collateral and customer documents to help them close more deals, faster.

With the launch of an important new product just months away, ShareMethods enlisted the services of a New York City-based PR firm to help get the word out about the company's on-demand solutions for document management and sharing. The PR initiative was a significant marketing activity and investment for the company. ShareMethods wanted to know the number of articles and mentions it would receive from the launch as well as how much Web traffic and how many online leads the press activity would ultimately generate.

Getting that kind of detail, however, is difficult and something that standard Web analytics solutions do not provide.

In December, the company discovered Tealium⁵, which offers a social media measurement plug-in to standard Web analytics solutions. Through proprietary technology, Tealium can measure the referrals from press articles, blog posts, blog post comments, videos, chat forums and direct links to the client website. ShareMethods plugged Tealium into its existing Google Analytics solution and began measuring press and blog activity surrounding the launch of its newest product, ShareSpaces, an on-demand collaborative document management service that combines social networking capabilities.

Following the product announcement, ShareMethods's PR agency generated coverage in a number of online and print publications, including *Destination CRM*, *KMWorld* and *CMS Wire*, as well as some social media outlets.

Almost immediately, ShareMethods could see the traffic from these sources start to rise significantly. In the four-week period following the public launch:

- 22% of visits to the company's website came from PR and social media traffic (as much as 10 times higher than other sites using Tealium)
- 23% of page views on the site were generated by the PR and social media segment

- 57% percent of the company's PR and social media traffic came from traditional news outlets; 34% came from blogs. The remainder came from videos and other sources.

The numbers surrounding lead generation, however, were not as compelling. ShareMethods' PR activity generated only a modest number of Web leads (for example: a prospect completing an online form for a free demo or trial). ShareMethods COO, Paul Soukup, reviewed the Tealium campaign and decided that adjustments needed to be made.

Soukup asked his PR team, "Can we make adjustments to our PR strategy to improve our lead flow?" Together, they decided that ShareMethods should try more industry-specific news and blog outlets, including ones covering high-tech, networking, telecommunications, and healthcare. Soukup is eager to see the difference in bottom-line results going forward.

Business Lessons Learned Measuring PR and social media in terms of traffic and leads (and sales) is possible. Devise a PR measurement solution and strategy before embarking on a major initiative, such as a product launch. Examine Web traffic data and try to look at bottom-line results, if possible.

"For the first time were able to see what type of return we were getting for our PR investment. It was incredibly useful in determining our next steps."—Paul Soukup, COO, ShareMethods

SOCIAL MEDIA GLOSSARY

Blogs – a website that provides individuals the ability to compose entries of various content types.

Brand Tease – when consumer "friends" or "likes" a brand page, but never comes back to the page again. Brands contribute to this idea by not interacting with or engaging the customer and by failing to update/provide interesting content.

eBlast – electronic mail sent all at once to a large mailing list.

Hashtag – used to encourage interaction or provide engagement with specific groups. Simply put, it is the pound sign (#) followed by a name (ex. #cristofolikeeling). Hashtags are prevalent on Twitter.

Microblogging – a type of blogging that allows users to formulate short text updates and post them. Twitter is an example.

Online Social Networks – websites that allow individuals a forum in which they can contact, connect, and share information with friends, family, etc.

Podcast – an audio recording that can be downloaded and played via Internet access.

ROI – (Return On Investment) an evaluation of the worth and effectiveness of an investment on social media tools and techniques.

RSS feed – (Really Simple Syndication) a system that propagates frequently updated information from a site.

SEO – (Search Engine Optimization) the attempt to increase search engine hits; taking the steps to help your site become easily visible and available to people by link building through user-generated content.

Social Media – individuals interacting online, including the tools people are using to communicate, share information, distribute media, and work together in the online community.

Tags – a label attached to web content to boost search accessibility.

User-generated content – any online content or media that is produced by users rather than administrators.

White papers – argue a specific position or provide a solution to a problem; a very effective marketing tool.

Wikis – a web page or combination of web pages with the ability to be edited and updated collaboratively by anyone who has access; also a quick way to put together a website.

Sources: 2009 Interactive Advertising Bureau, MarketingProfs, Pew Internet & American Life Project, Nielsen Co, iMedia Connection Blog, Social Media Optimization, Media Life, Public Relations Society of America, PRSA, Marketing Charts, Social Media Strats, ReadWriteWeb, Web Strategy, The Next Web blog, Pingdom, Benchmark Report, Omniture, The Essential Guide to Social Media, The Social Graf, Mashable, RianSolis, Social Media ROI Success Stories, Advertising Age, CMO.com, The Relationship Economy, Bloomberg Business Week, Socialtext, Blog Traffic Exchange, WebWorkerDaily, Fresh Networks, ConverStations, The Buzz Bin, Socialbrite, Stelzner Consulting, MarketingPower, Jeffbulla's Blog, Tangelo, Social Media Examiner's 2010 Social Media Marketing Report, The B2B Guide to Social Media, Search Engine Watch, Digital Buzz Blog, SmartInsights, NewMedia TrendWatch, Burson-Marsteller, CNET News, WCN Transmedia Group, B-List Marketing, Web International, Internet Growth Statistics, Huffington Post, eMarketer, Social Media Insider, Center for Media Research, Marketo, MediaPost Publications, Social Media Today, ReadWriteWeb, Think Marketing & Design, The Next Web, Journalis.co.uk