

Real People – Not Real Publicity – Produce Buzz, Sales

Recently I read a piece in *Ad Age* that said all of Coca-Cola’s social media buzz efforts didn’t help sales ... zip, zero, nada.

O.K., not quite that bad. It rang up a fantastic 0.01% short-term sales effect.



Source – 123rf

That isn’t enough to even move the needle!

Someone else in the organization came to social media publicity’s defense and said that’s not exactly true, it just did something “*different.*”

Different is nice but the boss (and shareholders) really like sales to keep the wheels of commerce moving.

To ensure that publicists wouldn’t get up in arms and defensive (read attack), we went to the worldwide authority – Wikipedia – to make certain we really understood buzz.

It is defined as:

“A term used in WOM (word of mouth) marketing, the interaction of consumers and users of a product or service which serves to amplify the original marketing message. Positive “buzz is the goal of viral marketing, public relations and even advertising.”

That’s what PR professionals and publicists try (or should be trying) to do--drive sales.

It should drive sales or Coke wouldn’t invest so much in winning and keeping over 61.5M Facebook fans, at least as many Twitter followers and don’t forget their YouTube videos, Pinterest, blogs and any social media activity.

The company’s senior manager of marketing strategy and insights announced the results at an advertising conference in NYC, so you may say the disclosure is a little biased.

Still, he gave himself plenty of wiggle room, saying more study is needed.

Buzz/WOM (word of mouth) works because people talk to people recommending something/someone who are putting their reputation on the line.

Then it's easier to trust organizations, brands and services that are discussed because you know and respect the individual.

Buzz measurement gives you a better idea of how many people are reached/connected with, rather than just counting raw publicity and social media numbers.

Publicists will say that helping and producing sales isn't what their social media efforts are about.

If they don't deliver a measurable return and that's sales, goodwill, like/respect, then what does it achieve?

Coke's social media and website ads produce results and good short-term/long-term results, according to the speaker but not the publicity

Social media publicity efforts – being liked, tweeted, discussed in a site or blog is all about the customer.

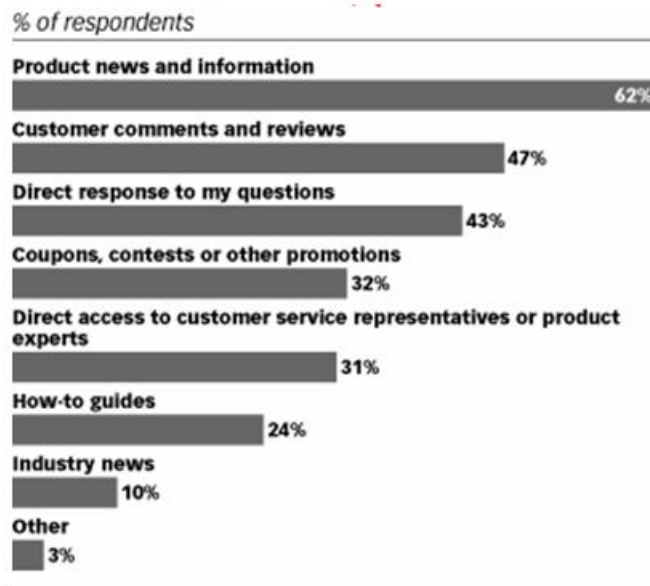
After all, you're reaching out to them all the time, right? And you're working to develop a strong 1:1 bond for the company and the brand.

Good, no great!

We both know what the consumer wants:

- Product news, information
- Customer comments, reviews
- How-to guides

Types of Information that Are Most Important When Connecting with Brands via Social Media



Source – Oracle

Resources – Consumers today often bypass search engines and go directly to the company and brand sources they find credible, reliable. They want information, news, answers and assistance. If it takes two-three days to obtain, they are only a few clicks away from someone better, more responsive.

And they want direct answers to their questions and support.

That's the level of social media interaction notables like Zappos, Nordstrom, Salesforce, Southwest Airlines and Dell provide every day.

Not just pushing information out but listening and providing answers and an intelligent response.



Source - [YouWall](#)

Stephen Rappaport wrote a great book in 2011 called *Listen First!*.

Since then, according to Rappaport, we've seen the rise and stall of media listening.

Most publicists simply aren't trained in listening.

Instead, they're trained in writing, media relations, crisis management and increasingly all manners of social media usage.

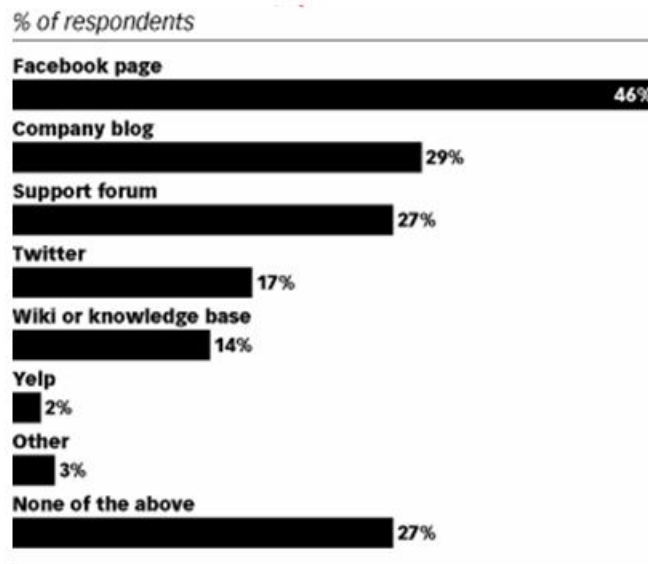
It's all fun and keeps them busy.

But it's all totally inadequate in helping deliver a solid customer/business outcome.

Customers/followers want to use social media to learn more about the companies, products and services they purchase and use regularly.

They want coupons, special/unique offers, hints/help on how to do more with, get more from your products/services

Social Media Channels Through Which Internet Users Worldwide Expect Companies to Offer Information and Customer Service



Source – Oracle

Social Media Info – People around the globe are increasingly taking advantage of the full spectrum of social media to gather information and input on the purchases they are going to make, even before the company has a chance to make them an offer.

In addition, whether it's to deliver a compliment, request assistance or air a complaint, social media is increasingly their preferred starting point, even over the use of 800 customer support numbers.

However, a recent Harris Interactive study found that companies are slow to respond on social media (the place publicists say they shine), leaving concerns unanswered.

Some have even gone so far as to delete questions or problems.

You really mean you're so proud of your outreach efforts that you can't respond to, assist and/or get assistance for the customer?

Oh, we know, customer problems/complaints belong to customer service, not PR.

Really?

The fact is you hurt your brand by not responding.

When the company's image/reputation is tarnished, isn't *that* your concern?

Thanks largely to the Internet and Web, companies don't have a "my area, your area" when it comes to customers.

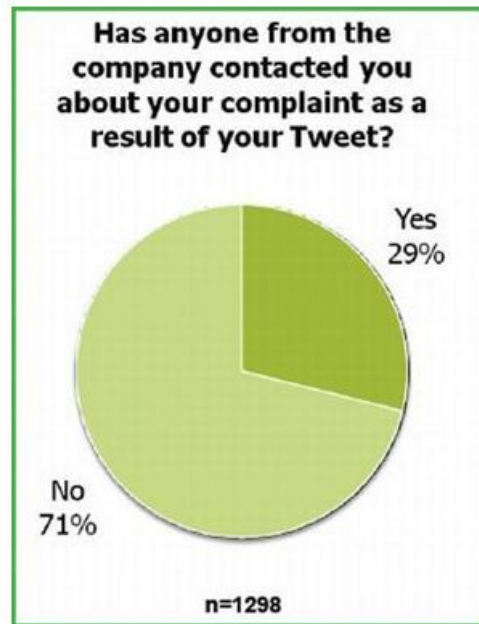
Everyone who works at firms like Zappos, Nordstrom and Southwest – not just the customer service or PR folks - understand that customer support is their responsibility.

Even if they don't have the answer or the solution, they respond to the customer and get them to the individual(s) who can provide the answer or assistance that is needed to keep them satisfied with the company and the product/service.

Acquity Group found that 90 percent of the firms they surveyed are active on Twitter *but* only 29 percent actively engaged with customers using the platform.

Seventy percent of Facebook questions were ignored.

Hello???



Source – Maritz Research

Silence – When consumers have a question or issue/problem, they reach out to the company for answers, assistance. The problem is most of the queries go unanswered.

Social media community communications and management should follow one unbreakable rule ... respond to everyone or don't bother jumping online.

Social media efforts can't succeed today with a sellers' – outbound communications only -- mentality.

Instead, Coke and successful firms must be buyer-focused, not just in a few words but in everything that is done.

Analysts at Gartner developed a progress roadmap for sound social business media efforts/activities.

Unfortunately, they found that most firms are stuck in – and satisfied with - the initial and developing stage.

The Five Stages of Social Media Adoption



Stages of Adoption – PR and communications people are the first to initiate social media activities with outreaches of every size/shape to influence consumers. The focus is always on outbound activities and very little on the consumer feedback. Often Queries go unanswered. The siloed effort significantly reduces the effectiveness of an open social media activity.

They estimated that it could take three to five years for many of the firms to get to the advanced enterprise-wide phase.

They warned that siloed social media activities would keep many from ever enjoying all that social media has to offer.

PR and communications should be the most aggressive proponents of letting loose of social media and making it an enterprise-wide customer program.

The key isn't that PR and communications people should control social media.

Web and social media publicity can build awareness, interest and understanding.

Web and social media advertising can sell the company, product, service.

Web and social media publicity can build and strengthen the company/customer relationship.



Source - [Inceptionwallpaper](#)

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That's what helps keep production lines – including Coke's - rolling.

That's what moves the sales and profit needle.

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