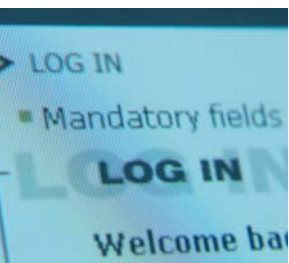




Conference KeyNotes

KEY ISSUES | BENCHMARKS | ACTION PLANS



Putting Social Media to Work for Your Organization

The 2009 Social Media Seminars

As a community of business leaders, The Conference Board convenes senior executives to share cutting-edge ideas and best practices. These Conference KeyNotes summarize the discussions held by approximately 105 senior executives that attended *The 2009 Social Media Seminars: Putting Social Media to Work for Your Organization* in New York in October 2009. The views expressed are those of the presenters and participants of the conference.

Key Issues Page 2

- Solving business problems with social media
- Using social media as a recruitment tool
- Internal social networks are essential for a competitive edge
- Planning is everything

Benchmarks Page 6

- Facebook is most popular personal social media application
- Most companies just beginning to use social media
- Business unit head and CMO are most likely to approve social media use
- Disagreement on governance is biggest barrier
- Most companies consider their metrics inadequate

Action Plans Page 7

What Conference Participants Plan to Do Differently

- Governance
- Exploring social media options
- Social media for recruitment



KEY ISSUES

Companies have evolved from listening online, to participating online, to full cross-media integration and activation of their brands – this means working with Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, and other social media tools to solve business problems and build brands. Organizations who do not embrace social media, both internally and externally, risk being left behind.

Solving Business Problems with Social Media

Social media are the beginning of a revolution in how business operates. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter bring “pull marketing” to life because they reach large numbers of people very efficiently. They are also the ultimate marketing tool, since you can hyper target messages to parties who are “followers” or “fans.”

- Social media isn’t about technology, it’s about people. Businesses need to embrace this new consumer psychology, which is based on social networks, and go where their customers are.
- A “social” customer represents a lifetime of value. Endorsements are no longer just about a single person; now they’re about that person plus all his/her friends. People rely on and trust their social networks – even people who are simply acquaintances – for everything from movie and book recommendations to business leads, sales prospecting, and internet navigation. Word-of-mouth referrals, customer support, and idea generation from the community can lead to marketing cost savings and increased sales.
- In the Web 2.0 era, you want the material on your corporate website to be “slippery” (i.e., people share your content) instead of “sticky” (i.e., people stay on your site). You need to say something interesting, and then integrate that content on Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and video posts. One company started a blog about the “new economy” during the economic downturn and used a viral tweet to drive thousands of people to its website via the blog.

Facebook

- Corporations don’t make decisions, people do – and Facebook is the ultimate relationship manager. It facilitates “weak-tie” relationships, allowing people to interconnect with people they never would have otherwise, such as friends of friends, elementary school friends, and business contacts.
- There are four pillars of Facebook (FB) marketing: FB applications, FB pages, FB advertisements, and engagement ads. Companies can hyper target FB ads by using the Facebook Ad tool, where you click only on fields you wish to target. For example, if you’re giving a concert of Buddhist music in a Brooklyn nightclub, you can send the message specifically to residents in the New York metro area who are under 30 and Buddhist. You can also use this tool to determine the size of your FB audience by clicking fields to see the resulting number. The actual ad purchase is optional.
- While some companies block access to FB, certain point-persons within the firm should be permitted access for marketing purposes. There are services available that allow companies to access to Facebook behind firewalls for business purposes.

Twitter

- Because of its viral nature, Twitter has become a valuable tool for customer service, recruitment, crisis management, event promotion, corporate social responsibility promotion, product promotion and sales, thought leadership, innovation, cost savings, and problem solving.

- Word of mouth travels fast, so most of Twitter's value comes from re-tweets. For example:
 - one quarter of a media company's conference attendees learned about the event through tweets;
 - a major computer manufacturer/distributor made \$3 million in Twitter-related sales;
 - a researcher secured a grant from a Twitter connection; and
 - companies have reduced call center volume (e.g., when customers tweet a complaint or ask about a product, another user will often answer the question).
- Twitter is a great early-warning system. Companies can spot a problem within minutes. For example, within 15 minutes of posting a software upgrade, the company saw five tweets saying the software interfered with Firefox. Because the company was monitoring the tweets, it was able to fix the problem immediately, and then send reply tweets thanking the users for pointing out the problem and letting them know it had been resolved. The issue was fixed long before a review could have given the company bad publicity.
- There are several kinds of tweet profiles, so companies need to decide which will serve them best. A corporate tweet has the company's name in the handle (e.g., ComcastCares). Then there are tweets from a corporate representative, which are more personal (FedExRobin); and finally, personal tweets that are done on behalf of the company (a person's first and last name). This latter profile type can be tricky because if the person leaves the company, the organization can't continue the feed since the tweeter's name is attached.
- It is impossible to respond to everyone who tweets about your company, product, or service. Only respond to the most influential ones. Looking at a tweeter's profile will let you know whether the tweet came from an industry stakeholder with thousands of followers or someone with an ax to grind and a handful of followers.

Blogs

- Corporate blogs can boost a company's search engine rankings and provide a way for people to communicate with the organization. Instead of giving overtaxed employees an additional writing burden, companies can invite a series of corporate "ambassadors" – industry experts or customers – to guest blog for a defined period of time.
- Elements of an effective blog include strong headlines, bulleted lists, links, a personal point of view (i.e., first person instead of corporate third person), and topics relevant to the reader. Popular blog topics include interviews with notable players within the company, how-to information, advice, and future trends.
- Strong headlines will lure the reader in; once you write the headline, it will be much easier to write the post. Attention-catching headlines include: "Ten Secrets to _____," "Who Wants to _____?" and "Little Known Ways to _____."

Videos

- Video doesn't need to be viral to be successful. It just needs to be seen by the right people. For example, a video demonstrating a new product that is embedded in an article may only be seen by 400 people, but could lead to that item being sold on QVC or distributed to celebrities in an Oscar ceremony gift bag.
- Companies must decide upfront what success looks like. Should the video lead to viewers purchasing something, clicking through to your website, voting or some other action, or should its purpose be to just garner a certain number of hits? Regardless of the video's goal, its first 10 seconds need to be the most compelling so viewers will want to continue watching.
- Companies can see who's paying attention to their videos posted on YouTube by clicking on the "stats and data" tab beneath the video – it provides information on which countries have the most viewers and how fast viewership is growing. They can also buy search terms in YouTube to increase the odds of the video being seen.

Virtual worlds

- Virtual worlds are a cost-effective way for global groups to hold gatherings or simulate an experience. Companies can create their own version of a massive multiplayer online role-playing game to get people involved. Or they can contact Linden Labs, the creators of the virtual world Second Life, to set up an environment behind their firewalls to prevent participants from accidentally teleporting into “unprofessional” locations.
- Virtual worlds can be a better fit than conference calls for some companies because employees can “bump into” coworkers, and social clues become more evident. For example, if a participant leaves a meeting early, it’s obvious to others since his/her avatar does too.
- Some companies are using virtual worlds to onboard new hires scattered across the country or to conduct job simulations. For example, health care companies are training nurse practitioners to deal with patients; government agencies are simulating border-crossing issues; engineers are learning how to work at an oil refinery; and emergency response units are practicing responding to traffic accidents.
- Because of the economic downturn, one large computer company held its annual technical academy meeting in Second Life instead of the original destination of Disney World. Participants’ avatars teleported to a brainstorming pod and gathered around a “wall” to post “yellow stickies” containing ideas, just like they would have in a real-life meeting room. The computer company concluded the event in a virtual “picnic area” where avatars stood with “drinks” in hand, talking.
- Virtual worlds come with challenges. There is a steep learning curve that can make some people hesitant to participate. Be sure your organization has an IT infrastructure capable of handling and maintaining such an undertaking.

Using Social Media as a Recruitment Tool

When looking to fill positions, instead of going where the talent has been, companies need to follow the talent, which means using social media to reach potential hires. Web 2.0 platforms allow employers to reach a large number of people in an economical way and connect with the millennial generation.

- Traditional online job boards are rapidly becoming antiquated, as job seekers find employment via other platforms. For example, people can join FB groups such as “I am a nurse” or “I am a lawyer” to connect with others in the field. Numerous employers are also filling positions using LinkedIn and alumni groups on social networking sites.
- Employers today want to “hire the person, not the position.” A growing number of companies are posting videos on YouTube or elsewhere that feature interesting employees or provide a picture of what it’s like to work for the company. If viewers think that they would be a good fit, then they contact the company about employment opportunities.

Internal Social Networks Are Essential for a Competitive Edge

Social media platforms that employees use externally are being replicated internally by organizations. Proprietary social media boosts employee engagement, provides knowledge transfer, and connects a global workforce.

- Companies already know basic information about employees, such as their birthdays and alma maters, but material revealed through internal blogs or other social network material can enhance careers. Employees can gain project approval, invitations to join global teams, coveted overseas transfers, or a reputation as a content expert.

- A global workforce can collaborate regardless of time zone by holding “idea jams,” during which employees post ideas and comment on them at any time, day or night. One large computer company received thousands of ideas during a 72-hour idea jam, and was able to boil it down to 10 implementable ideas.
- Social media helps companies capture tacit knowledge. Once somebody posts information, it’s available to everyone and can be aggregated, tagged, and implemented in internal search engines so employees can search for coworkers or specific pieces of information. People need to differentiate between formal and informal knowledge.
- The “beer-drinking” cultures (United States, United Kingdom, Germany) are more likely to adopt an internal social network than the “wine-drinking” cultures (France, Spain, Italy). Within companies that do have a high adoption rate, certain departments, such as actuarial, are less likely to buy in.

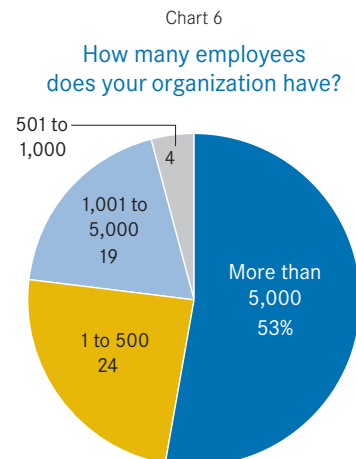
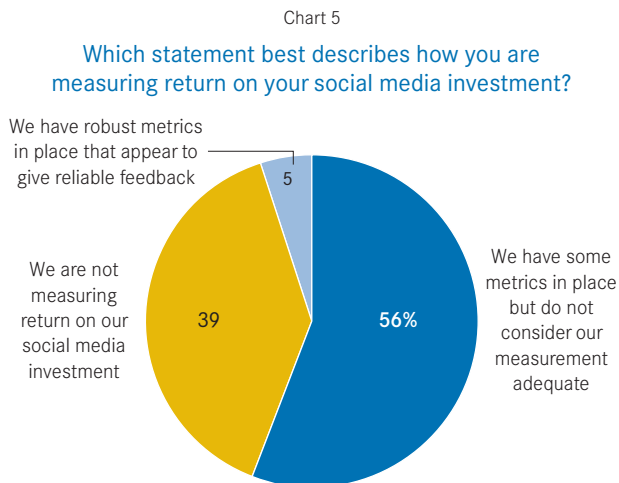
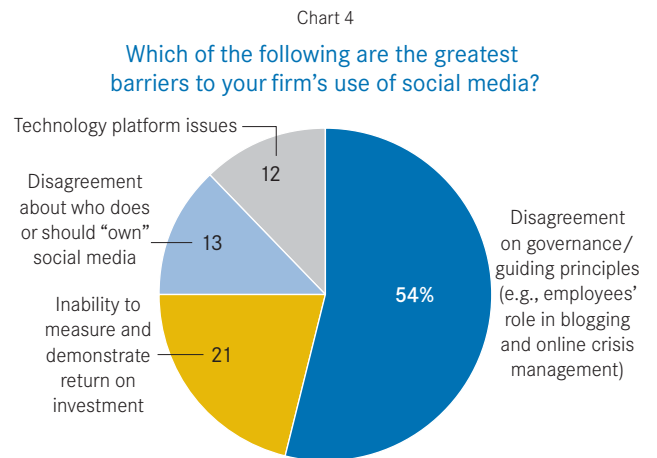
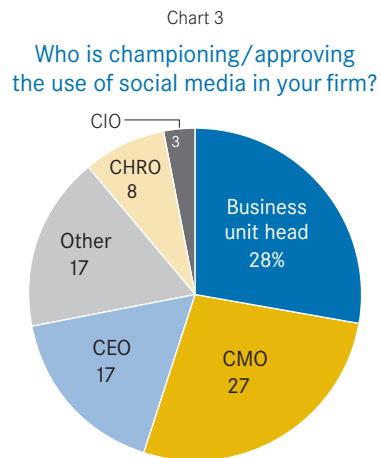
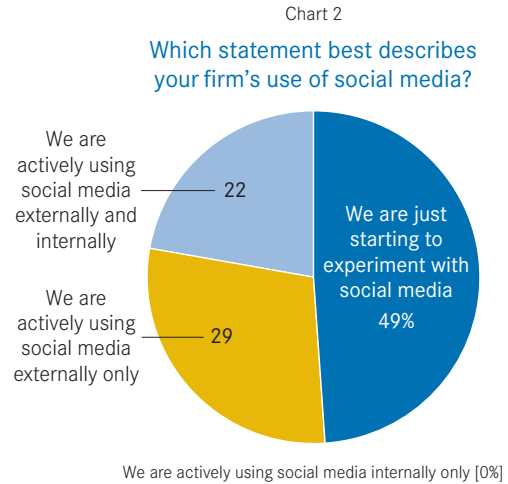
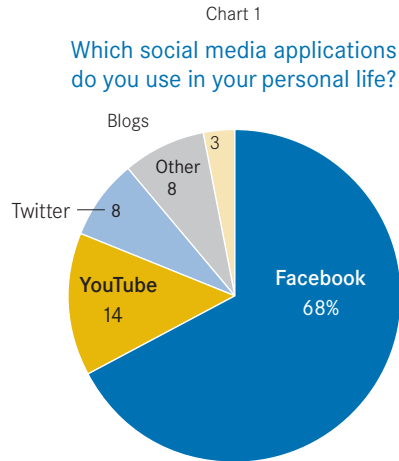
Planning Is Everything

Just because social media is growing in popularity does not mean companies should get involved without planning beforehand. Companies must spend time deciding what they want to get out of participating, and then join in.

- Form a cross-functional social media advisory team to determine objectives for a social media program, metrics, and a policy for both internal and external participation. The committee can start by asking: Who is our target? Do we know where our target resides on the social web? What are our objectives? Who is the point person for this initiative? Once these questions have been answered, companies should publish their official handles and page names, even if they’re not ready to officially post, to prevent someone else from taking them.
- Once business objectives are defined, determine what should be measured and how to define success. New products? New customers? Sales? Increased awareness? Data is useless if you can’t turn it into a business insight.
- Companies underestimate the time and resources required to delve into the meaning behind the data, and may need to hire additional people to complete the task. Data can be collected through automated systems; real people are needed to interpret the data and its implications.
- A formal social media policy for both internal and external participation is essential to reducing liability. The policy should include guidelines on tweets, corporate blogs, and what employees can say about the company and its products and services on their private FB or Twitter accounts; it also should outline who has permission to blog or tweet on behalf of the company. The State of Utah has a publicly available social media policy that can be used as an example (www.utahta.wikispaces.net).
- Creating and formally approving a written policy can be a lengthy process, so companies should enact temporary standards until the formal policy is ready. Educate everyone on the tenets of the guidelines. This can be done via video, game, or links on the intranet landing page.
- Consider how to handle employees who have left the company and taken business contacts and clients with them through their personal Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter accounts.

BENCHMARKS

Conference participants were polled on the following questions:



ACTION PLANS

What actions will participants take after the conference? A post-conference “action survey” highlighted a range of objectives.

Governance

- Form a cross-functional social media advisory committee (include associate relations, IT, marketing, corporate communications, customer service, and store operations) to map out short-term and long-term social media strategies, social media objectives, and roles and responsibilities.
- Develop and formalize a corporate social media policy; include guidelines to address negative comments and dealer involvement.
- Define our target audience for social media and figure out what they research on the web.
- Establish a vision/goal for our external corporate website.
- Diagram process of adoption stages.
- Identify and recommend best practices in social media analytics.
- Investigate social monitoring tools.
- Start tracking web comments on my brand and play with technology.
- Check out payparade.com, a measure of a customer’s social value, to see how influential our customers are in the social media.

Exploring social media options

- Extend discussions on expansion of an internal social media plan.
- Review software/infrastructure solutions for a better intranet/internal communications. Use key ideas of search, targeting, and content aggregation.
- Leverage intranet to increase internal engagement with social media.
- Upload comments and documentation from conference to social media wiki.
- Discuss importance of removing barriers to communicate freely within the firewall.
- Spend more time exploring LinkedIn as an asset to my organization.
- Learn more about Second Life as a business tool.
- Become more engaged on Twitter.
- Create Facebook page for new venture at work in an environment that has not yet embraced social media.
- Look into advertising options within Facebook.
- Check my personal privacy settings on Facebook.
- Check out www.socialsquak.com, a new social media site designed to post announcements; it replaces the dying local paper as the place to learn about your local community.
- Create a training video on how to use the SharePoint collaboration site we’ve recently launched for the field sales team that covers basics and guidelines for posts and discussions. May also include link to a good YouTube video on how to use SharePoint.
- Engage organizational learning and development team to create on-demand training programs for associates.
- Check out reverse mentoring.

ACTION PLANS (continued)

Social media for recruitment

- Check into LinkedIn product offerings and Simply Hired.
- Check in to putting “share” links on job postings that come from PeopleSoft.
- Upgrade our corporate Facebook presence for recruiting purposes, and separate Facebook pages for therapists and nurses.



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www.conference-board.org/worldwide/india.cfm

Additional Social Media Resources from The Conference Board

Research Reports

Social Networking: How Companies Are Using Web 2.0 to Communicate with Employees
Executive Action 315, November 2009

What Others Think of You Matters: Manage and Boost Your Corporate Reputation Using Social Media
Executive Action 251, November 2007

Councils

Asia-Pacific Communication and Marketing Council

Council on Corporate Brand Management

Council on Corporate Communications Strategy

Council on Corporate Communication Strategy II

Council of Marketing Executives

Council of Marketing Executives II

Council on Marketing Research

The Council on Marketing Research II

Customer Experience Council

Digital Strategy Council

European Council on Corporate Communications

Polish Council of Marketing Executives

The Conference Board Council Program

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