# Simple Marketing Now Practical Advice for Success with Social Media

Based on Flooring The Consumer's social media series on Bridging New & Old

# Social Media's Collective Wisdom: Simplifying Marketing With Social Media

**Book I** 

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# **Executive Summary**

As a very practical marketer, I admire the efficiency and effectiveness of new and digital social media based marketing tools. I'm also passionate about integrating new & old marketing -- or bridging from traditional to new – to better reach and engage with customers. And I've spent a great deal of time in non-high-tech industries - from art museums, non-profit trade associations, financial institutions, to apparel, furniture, carpet and flooring – which have depended on traditional marketing. I've had the chance to bring some of the new tools to bear on old problems to generate new solutions. For those of you who want to engage with and interact with your customers, **these new social tools work**.

**Social media is here to stay**. According to the 2008 Technorati State of the Blogosphere, "Blogs are Pervasive and Part of Our Daily Lives." Social media played an important role in the 2008 U.S. presidential elections; tools like Twitter helped funnel news during global events like the Mumbai terror attacks. Search itself has become socially contextual as results become influenced by recommendations in our social groups.

Social media or social media marketing applies to freely available building blocks or tools – e.g., self-publishing blog and video platforms, Twitter, Facebook, wikis, social bookmarking, etc. – to create a multi-way communications strategy. Some organizations like Dell, IBM, the Mayo Clinic and others have successfully integrated social media into their marketing strategy. They've increased customer engagement and loyalty as a result. However, many organizations haven't yet ventured into social marketing. It is intimidating and confusing. Where to start? What matters? Social media tools aren't the same as traditional tools; they change frequently and require different approaches. How can we make sense of them and integrate them into overall marketing strategy?

This e-book – Social Media's Collective Wisdom: Simplifying Marketing With Social Media – looks to answer these questions and offer guidance.

In December 2008, I launched a social media series titled "*Bridging New & Old*" to explore how to bridge the gaps that exist between the old ways of communicating and the new ones and better engage with customers. This interview series, featuring the voices of successful practitioners, marketers and business people all immersed in social media, provides **invaluable insights**, many of which follow.

All of the insights and observations in the following pages answer the simple question: "What suggestions do you have for companies to implement so they can more effectively bridge old media with new media and connect with end users?"

This first volume of *Social Media's Collective Wisdom* features responses from the first 26 participants in this social media series of Bridging New & Old, which is ongoing. The participants are listed, with links to their sites, at the back of this e-book. I encourage you to follow these links to widen your experience as you continue exploring social media marketing. The responses from these first 26 participants fall into the following 8 guidelines:

- What Social Media Is [And Isn't]
- Start By Listening!
- Explore
- Connect with Customers
- Strategize
- Create Relevant Content
- Integrate New & Old
- The Rules of Engagement

What you will notice throughout these 8 guidelines are common threads having to do with the very nature of social media tools: although many traditional marketers may use them as broadcast tools, perhaps as part of a client acquisition campaign broadcasting as they would on TV, radio or print, better to use them to build a two-way conversation around your brand or company. **These truly are social tools and they enable a level of relationship building that traditional marketing hasn't easily supported**. As such, the audience willing to engage with you and possibly even form a community with you does not want to be talked at. Rather, this audience is looking to be talked with, listened to and involved in creating solutions.

Before proceeding, you do need to ask yourself a question: **do you really want to connect with, and engage, your customers**? Many companies don't, not really. They are comfortable with traditional marketing that broadcasts to customers, one way, in an interruptive fashion. Many traditional marketers don't want any 'talk' coming back and certainly don't want any conversation; it's too messy! If they want to know what customers are thinking, they'll hire an outside firm to do a research study. And, that's it. By shunning social media, these marketers miss out on a staggering opportunity to cement brand loyalty, find out what their customers are really thinking, and demonstrate real leadership in their markets. That's some of what social media marketing can do. But you have to be willing to talk to, listen to, communicate with and engage your customer online – and off, if need be.

So, if you do want to connect with and engage your customers, please, dive in. Absorb *Social Media's Collective Wisdom: Simplifying Marketing with Social Media*; apply these insights to what you're doing and let me know what resonates most with you. If you'd like to participate in the series, let me know, too. I will be publishing future editions.

In the meantime, I wish you simplification on the path to better engagement with customers using social media tools.

Best regards and good luck,

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# WHAT SOCIAL MEDIA IS [AND ISN'T]:

To get the most out of social media, think of it not as a campaign, but rather a long term commitment and an integral element of your customer listening and interaction strategy. More specifically:

Understand that social media isn't magic, smoke, or mirrors. For marketers it's part of a larger mindset shift toward listening and interacting with your customers, and not just pushing out advertising and collateral. [AnnHandley]

Social media is a great opportunity for brands and companies to "get a life" and learn to have some informal fun with people in the marketplace. That builds attachment more effectively than expensive and monolithic one-way branding campaigns, IMHO. [SteveWoodruff]

Change the mentality from "buy my brand" to an invitation to "come on in" to the brand. Social media can be used as a welcome mat, an open door of hospitality to become part of the brand. Stop thinking of consumers, and start thinking of participants. That approach can span both old and new media approaches by simply looking at the audience in a different way, and building a comprehensive strategy with new entry points. [SteveWoodruff]

Use social media to solve problems. This is, I think, the silver bullet. If you listen to the complaints and use social media to help fix things, you win. It shows that you take people seriously, that you connect with them personally, and that you care about them. Companies who do this will find that their word-of-mouth marketing will grow substantially. [RichNadworny]

Be prepared for a commitment. Social media isn't a campaign, it's part of a holistic communication strategy. It takes time to get it right, and that means trying some things that won't work, adjusting your approach, and moving forward over months, not weeks. The best part? Tweaking a blog strategy is a heck of a lot cheaper than running an ad that bombs or dropping a direct mail piece that's got a 1% sort-of-return rate. [AmberNaslund]

"Invest - There's an old saying that says, "You get out of it what you put into it." While this can be used for most topics, it's particularly true of social media. It's not something you can dip into now and again - it changes too fast for that. Instead, to really see the fruits of your labour, you need to invest time into it. Social media is all about building relationships - and just like relationships in real life, the best ones take time to foster." From the 4 Is of Social Media Marketing from Danny Brown [LollyBorel]

Don't get evangelized. There's a lot of hype out there coming from so-called social media evangelists. I've seen the question asked by one social media evangelist: "Can social media save (a particular) small business?" Turns out, no. That particular business went out of business. A business will not live or die based on involvement with social media. [JayEhret]

#### START BY LISTENING!

Listening comes up repeatedly throughout these pages. It is a requirement for participation in social media marketing. Marketers can no longer assume that they know what the answers are to customers' questions. Rather, they must become keen observers, listeners and facilitators with their customers always in mind. More specifically:

Listen, listen, listen. If you are listening, you'll be ahead of the curve. You may even be part of "the next big thing" before it becomes big. [LoriMagno]

Listen. Most companies are pretty bad at this anyway, but they have to start being very good at it. It will make them much better at what they do. [RichNadworny]

Listen. [DougMeacham]

#### **Listen actively:**

After you start paying attention to social media, start monitoring online conversations to see if your company/brand is being discussed. Use tools like Google Blog Search and Twitter Search to see what the chatter is. [MackCollier]

Listen. See what bloggers and Twitter and other social media users are saying about you or your products or others in your space. To start, use blogsearch.google.com and search.twitter.com to monitor the conversation. If you want more, Andy Beals suggests eight free monitoring tools <a href="here">here</a>. [AnnHandley]

First - Listen - what are people saying about your brand? If they are saying something negative about you, engage with them and try to turn this 'threat' into an opportunity! There are plenty of free tools out there to monitor conversations such as Google Alerts, Twitter Search or Tweetbeep to name a few. [LollyBorel]

Set up Google Alerts to start listening to what the market-place is saying about you. Read <u>Chris Brogan's "Grow Bigger Ears"</u> post for other ways to effectively listen. The results may further arm you as you convince decision-makers that people are already talking about you, and it is better to be part of the conversation. [**PegMulligan**]

My last suggestion is that no matter what they're doing, they need to listen. I'm still surprised when I learn that companies don't have a Google alert set up. It's not surprising at all that people don't search Twitter and the like for their brand names. [DavidPolinchock]

#### **Listen strategically:**

Understand the limitations and the benefits of the tools, or tactics, before you consider implementing. Listen and watch the rhythms of the social elements (blogs, vlogs, social networks, Twitter, etc.) you are considering before you create your social media strategy. [TobyBloomberg]

Place an activity moratorium on your staff as they enter the social media world. We use a 30 day No Comments, No Posts moratorium on our incoming people to give them a chance to listen and learn before they dive in and start posting. This gives them a chance to see how it's done and avoid some of the common newbie mistakes. [ChrisKieff]

Listen some more. What do you hear. Are people talking about your brand? If not, then why? If they are, then what are they saying? Do they love you? Do they hate you? Are they helping you to increase your customer base or lose it? There is a lot of value in those conversations. Use it to your advantage. [**DougMeacham**]

#### **EXPLORE**

Unlike many traditional marketing tools, social media tools cannot authentically be delegated to outside resources. Rather, marketers must immerse themselves so they understand firsthand how the tools work and whether and how they might be effective for their specific brands. They may certainly want outside and expert guidance, but they are the only ones who can credibly speak to their own customers. The best way to start is by exploring. More specifically:

#### **Educate Yourself:**

Start paying attention to social media. You don't have to become experts, but start making yourself familiar with the space, and why your customers are using these tools. I write for two sites that are wonderful resources for helping you get up to speed on social media, MarketingProfs.com and SearchEngineGuide.com. [MackCollier]

Research what all the fuss is about. MarketingProfs has lots of great content on Social Media from a marketer's perspective, as does its blog, the MarketingProfs Daily Fix. Most recently, <u>Jason Baer</u>, <u>Amber Naslund</u>, <u>Beth Harte</u> have all been looking at the fundamental steps, as does <u>Mack Collier</u>, consistently. **[AnnHandley**]

Read other smart folks in this space. Almost all of the marketers who blog for the MarketingProfs Daily Fix – including the four I named above -- write their own blogs. Explore them, and you're bound to find a few voices that resonate with you and your needs. [AnnHandley]

Do your homework well. Learn how other companies and people are successfully working with social media. [ArunRajagopal]

Investigate: Read articles about the social media outlet, check out other sites for ideas, follow forum comments before piping in to see what's being said and if it's appropriate for you to dialogue. Basic research can go a long way! [KristinGolliher]

#### **Experiment:**

Start small, perhaps with a blog. [LewisGreen]

Start a blog, which is one of the best ways to improve organic Search Engine Optimization (SEO) results and then choose a few outposts like LinkedIn, Facebook, or Twitter to start discussing posts with your readers. Provide content that helps your readers. [PegMulligan]

Start a blog and integrate any newsletters with it, so it's both available to existing and potential customers. Join Twitter. [MarioVellandi]

Wade in. Start using social media tools as an individual. Get a Facebook account, a Twitter account, a LinkedIn profile. Read and comment on blogs that interest you. Pretty soon you'll start to see the business possibilities inherent. I know I did. [AnnHandley]

Get out there. Wade into the pool - your feet won't fall off. Find out where your customers or audience are and join them. Are they on Facebook, Twitter - do they read informative, well-written blogs? Are they entertainment junkies? Find them - and find a way to speak to them GENUINELY. The tone you take online should not be any different than you take in meetings. Don't speak like a clown in your client meetings? Then don't speak like one online. Don't speak like weary butterfly historian in your meetings? REALLY don't do that online. [LoriMagno]

Individuals should dive right into social media before it passes them by. I think learning from the ground up is the only way to truly understand how things work in this domain. [DanSchawbel]

Start now. Establish a presence and get comfortable using social media. It's not yet imperative that you use social media, but it probably will be someday. You need to be ready. [JayEhret]

Don't make it a bigger deal than it is, or you'll never get started. Get onto the various platforms and follow a few people you already know you respect and see how they do things. [AndreaLearned]

Blogs are a great way to get started. I recommend Typepad because it's easy to use and manage. Facebook can also be a good starting point. There are numerous brands already on Facebook to use as examples. All companies should Twitter. Understand that we recommend using a professional, spending time creating your strategy, and also your guidelines. So... [YvonneDiVita]

Become independent from your web designer or IT department where web presence is concerned. Sounds harsh, but IT people are not marketing people – not in most cases. Fancy websites are great to see and might bring the designer many awards, but when your web visitors can't find his way around your site he will leave – awards or not. Simple lay-out, easy navigation and interesting content will win the heart of your web visitor. I love the blog platform Typepad, it is not a freebie like WordPress can be, but the features of Typepad are so easy to use that even the most non-digital business owner can create and manage his/her own 'blog-site'. I've got some examples on my port-folio page on the 1 Plus 1 Makes 3 blog. Traders mostly – a plumber, a bathroom shop and a water softener specialist. Hands on owners, but by using Typepad as their 'website' software all are getting more and more results from their dynamic website. Scoring higher and higher on google's search engine results without having to pay over the odds or having to wait until their web designer has finally understood what they mean. [KarinHermans]

Create a site where your users will get to know you and where they can interact with you. Ideally this would be a social network (powered by Ripple6), but a good interactive blog is an excellent start. [ChrisKieff]

#### **CONNECT WITH CUSTOMERS:**

Perhaps it's obvious, but the most critical aspect of social media marketing is embracing that people are at the heart of the medium. That's why it's referred to as 'social.' So, it truly is a matter of the people who make up a brand or company wanting to connect, engage and interact with the people who are customers. More specifically:

Make sure you want to talk with the consumer in the first place. Just having a Facebook group or Twitter account is not enough. Consistent engagement IS the bridge between old and new media. Customers, both old and new, need time to take in new messages from a trusted (or new) source. If the commitment is not there to engage fully and clearly in some form of social media, then companies should wait until they're ready. [KristinGorski]

Always look for new connections. Be flexible in bridging these connections. Listen to the customers and adapt. If customers aren't responding, think of a new conversation starter, as customer input can guide you. Don't take this customer interaction for grantednot just in a poor economy, but at any time. (Strong bonds with customers forged in stable market conditions probably will help companies better survive a poor economy...) [KristinGorski]

Connecting with customers is simply making yourself available to them by whatever means they prefer to communicate by. If they want a phone number, we've made them available. If they want a fax number, they're all on our site. If they want a website, we're easy to find. If they want their individual sales reps e-mail address, we've made all of that available on the site too. We are very accessible to our customers, which I believe makes my entire team more responsive and more effective. [AlanWoody]

Prioritize relationships because that is how you get good publicity. Relationships are critical in both old and new media and now. [DanSchawbel]

Integrate CRM [Customer Relationship Management] with social to build long term relationships - the fundamental shift between your CRM system and the social Web to build relationships is that CRM is really a process where you capture and manage customer information. The social Web allows you to act publicly on that information to benefit your customers as well and not just you. Big shift in thinking. If you want to connect with end users, begin by not seeing them as something you can use and broaden that definition to include how they can use your content to become smarter, do their job better, look good with their boss, etc. [ValeriaMaltoni]

Ask questions. If you have a newsletter, or an email contact strategy - ask your readers or customers questions. Throw up a poll and ask them how you can do better. How did you find my blog/company/service? How can you provide them with more relevant content, information and offers? Ask them what they would like to hear from you - tips 'n tricks? Special offers? "Insider information"? If they are asking for anything, you have an opportunity to connect and deepen the relationship. [LoriMagno]

#### Be Committed To, Ready To Interact & Followup With Customers:

Don't be afraid to engage a bit with those who seem to question or take issue with your perspective. Interesting conversations and connections usually emerge. [AndreaLearned]

Start responding to people who are talking about your company/brand online. If you have a blog, you can address their points there, and invite others. The key is to become a participant in the conversation that's happening online about you. [MackCollier]

Once you've started listening, follow the <u>4 Is of Social Media Marketing</u> from <u>Danny Brown!</u> "Interact - It may seem an obvious thing to say, but there are only two words in social media and one of them is social. Instead of simply broadcasting yourself, interact with the community and actively take part in social media. Read and comment on blogs, both inside and outside your niche; converse on Twitter, share helpful news with people instead of keeping it to yourself for your own benefit...." [LollyBorel]

Be prepared for criticism and ready to act upon feedback. [ArunRajagopal]

Act on what you learn. If your blog comments are telling you that your customer service is lacking, do something about that. If your forum posts are asking for specific product enhancements, consider those in your planning. (If your product or service is lousy, the most brilliant social media work in the world can't save you). Have a plan for how you'll deal with both positive and negative feedback, and skip the canned corporate speak. If you aren't using the connections you make through social media to better your business and move it forward, you're wasting your time and effort. [AmberNaslund]

Keep up the conversation and keep up your end of the bargain. Successful social media connections are a commitment. I always think of Seth Godin's belief that <u>there is no such thing as an overnight sensation</u>: success is often built over many years of wins and losses, of re-evaluations and re-tooling, and not giving up. This goes for forging new connections through social media, too. [KristinGorski]

#### **STRATEGIZE**

As with any other business discipline, it's critical to integrate social media marketing tactics into a bigger strategic context so it is embraced by your culture. Otherwise, how can you implement anything consistent, credible or successful that truly establishes and develops loyalty over time? Develop a plan, set a budget, know your market, include goals and measurements, and remember to engage your people; they are your strongest advocates and ambassadors and the ones best able to transform your customers into advocates and ambassadors. More specifically:

If you want to launch a social media strategy, make sure your goals for that strategy align with your larger communication efforts. It's great to use Twitter to provide customer service, but if your offline efforts aren't ready to handle your SM [social media] efforts, it will all collapse. SM can't exist in a vacuum, they are connection tools and you can't have 2 guys that handle your blog being 'people persons' that love connecting with your customers and helping them, when no one else in the company supports that position. Your strategy and attitude toward how you will use social media have to be a byproduct of your company's culture, not the attitudes of that one geeky guy or gal that 'gets' social media. [MackCollier]

Begin with a plan that includes goals and success measures. Don't be afraid to include success measures that are outside the box of traditional metrics. As you build that plan consider how you can use social media to support current old media/traditional strategies. For example can you extend an article in an eZine with a blog post to carry on the conversation in greater detail? [**TobyBloomberg**]

Develop a budget that includes dollar and people resources. Build your programs to take into consideration human capital to support the implementation. If you don't, not only will you be frustrated, but you will fail before you hit the publish key. [**TobyBloomberg**]

Have a plan. Lack of organization and an absence of a timetable kill many projects before they even get off the ground. How often should the company tweet? Which employee will take on this responsibility, and what content will be tweeted? Are there resources for YouTube content, and who will take care of a company's YouTube "channel"? Writing company blog posts, answering reader comments, learning about related blog communities, building authentic connections—all this takes time. [KristinGorski]

Understand social media is not a marketing channel, but an effective way to communicate with your audience. [ArunRajagopal]

"Identify - There are so many different social media tools and applications that it can often be like trying to work your way around a maze. So many different turns to take, easy to get lost with all the options available - which is why it's important to take the time to identify what will work for you. Decide what you want from social media and then use the appropriate tools." From the 4 Is of Social Media Marketing from Danny Brown [LollyBorel]

"Identity - Having an easily identifiable brand is key for anyone both online and off. Although this is usually applicable to business, personal branding offers an invaluable way of building a reputation as someone to go to for a certain niche. So your identity should

be the same across whatever platforms you use - from bio, to profile, to picture, to logo - keeping the same identity across social media platforms will help people remember you more easily." 4 Is of Social Media Marketing from Danny Brown [LollyBorel]

Do what is right for your brand. Don't have a Facebook page because it's "cool." Create it because you want to engage with your community on it. [DanSchawbel]

Determine your social media strategy and examine social media tools in context of your communication requirements, not according to what's trendy. Consider <u>Li and Bernoff's Social Technographics® profile</u> to map your intended audience's participation in various social media activities, with your overall strategy. Apply the "Possibility and Function" formula (see <u>Chris Brogan's "What the Tools Can Do Post"</u>) to choose your tools. Remember to go where your users are. [**PegMulligan**]

Like all tactics, integrate social media into the plan of the departments in which the tactics will be used. Those departments likely will be marketing, communications (internal & external), retail, customer call center, etc. [LewisGreen]

Make a plan: How do you want to handle the social media outlet? Who will be in charge? How does the platform work and are you ready for the commitment? We do this a TON in our PR department at OtterBox. Carefully laying out a plan ensures there will be no surprises and everyone knows what their responsibilities are with the social media outlet. For example, if someone asks a question on Facebook you need to determine who responds or who is in charge of blog entries and forum comments. [KristinGolliher]

Create a strategy: is this for brand recognition? sales? marketing? thought leadership? [YvonneDiVita]

How will you implement -how much time will you spend? This is part of your strategy but be very careful about this aspect - social media can be time consuming if not approached properly. [YvonneDiVita]

#### **Know Your Market:**

Determine if your target audience is involved in that specific platform. Then if they are listen to their conversations within each of the new media avenues that you want to explore. How are your customers using the platforms? The best Facebook strategy will fall flat if your community is not involved. [TobyBloomberg]

Know how your customers want to interact with you online. Don't get a Facebook page because you think you should, get one because your customers spend time there and tell you that they'd look for you there. This requires doing the meticulous work of talking to your customers ahead of time – via phone, in person, through surveys, whatever. But build your presence based on their expectations, not yours. [AmberNaslund]

Go where the reader is online; if your audience is on Facebook go there. If it's primarily artistic types and therefore on MySpace then create a thriving MySpace presence. If you cater to business types make sure you have connections on LinkedIn. [ChrisKieff]

Do what your customers will accept, not what you want them to do. If your customers do not congregate on Facebook, there's nothing you can do about it. Be where your customers are likely to be. **[JayEhret**]

Monitor own & competitive brand conversations online and participate as appropriate to the context. [MarioVellandi]

Remember that women are a primary market. Women buy or influence over 85% of the goods and services in the U.S. Be nice to them. Create campaigns that touch the women in your world - by asking for help from your current women customers. Recognize, respect, respond - those are the Three Rs in dealing with women. [YvonneDiVita]

Whether you have started using social media or not, the first thing companies must do is determine what social media channel (if any) is going to help them connect with their customers. A denture adhesive doesn't need to establish a presence on Facebook, at least not yet. Go where your customers are. [DougMeacham]

Know where your customers are and why they're there - you may think that having an ad on Facebook is a good idea, after all many of your customers are there. Before you go ahead and find a new way for them to ignore you or piss them off, do take the time to find out why they're there, what they do. Many of the customers I talked with say they signed up to share photos with their grandchildren and find old college room mates. That is a very personal reason and although personal and professional are bleeding into each other more and more, they are in the driver seat here, they decide. Digital and online media by its very nature feels more personal. People have come to expect interaction and exchange. Instead of ignoring you, like they did off line when you interrupted them last, they may tell you what they think about your ad and they may tell all their friends, too. [ValeriaMaltoni]

Understand your customer: Contrary to popular belief, social media is NOT for everyone. Are your customers even using social media outlets? If not, social media is probably not a good fit, if so then it's definitely worth checking into. [KristinGolliher]

Know your story. If a company is not clear on its message and goals, customers pick up on this instinctively. They don't have time to stick around and figure it out: companies have to make their stories clear and compelling for people from the get-go. [KristinGorski]

It has to start with a review of who they are and who their audience is. I love my mom, but it's going to be a while before she's using Twitter to communicate to customer service! [DavidPolinchock]

And then, they have to look at why they're trying these things. If it's an experiment that they really are interested in succeeding, then that's great. But all too often, they're just jumping on the bandwagon too and they haven't really thought through the resources needed to make these things work. They're used to thinking with as campaign mindset and that's not how SM or the idea of brand experiences works. [DavidPolinchock]

They should also ask themselves first, what benefit will this have to our customers. For example, if someone decides to use Twitter because it could save the company money, then it probably won't be successful in the long run. And I don't mean to pick on Twitter. [DavidPolinchock]

So, they really should try everything that makes sense for who they are. They should avoid things that wouldn't be authentic to who they are. [DavidPolinchock]

The NEXT BIG THING isn't necessarily where your company needs to invest time or money. I can't repeat, "be true to yourself" enough. Where is your audience? Where are your customers? Wherever your true market is - that's where you need to be. [LoriMagno]

#### **Include Goals and Measurement:**

Establish measurable goals, strategies to achieve those goals and measure, measure, measure. [LewisGreen]

Consider the tool you want to start with - why? Who will be the front person? How will you measure results? [YvonneDiVita]

Don't listen to anyone who says social media can't be measured for results. It can be. [LewisGreen]

Remember people want ROI on their investment in time. Ensure that all of your online efforts are aimed at creating value for the user- first. [ChrisKieff]

Place the ROI of your site and your advertising revenue behind the ROI of the user (see #4 above). This is because we've become sophisticated consumers of online content. We all have ADD and you must place your visitor's needs above your own because it shows when you don't, and they'll vote with their mice and click away. [ChrisKieff]

Measure your social media efforts in a meaningful way. Chris Brogan's suggestions from the <a href="HubSpot webinar"><u>HubSpot webinar (How to Demonstrate the Value of Social Media to Your Boss</u>)</a>, provides these suggestions: "actionable clicks over page views, sales calls over views, prospects and conversions over comments, blog sentiment ranking, keyword rankings, and email marketing open rates."

[PegMulligan]

Be prepared to make the case for social media to upper management. Arm yourself with as many case studies, statistics, examples, and success stories as possible. Also see if your competition is using social media and make that a selling point to your bosses. **[PegMulligan]** 

Lower your expectations. Social media is not a magic bullet. ROI is difficult to evaluate and for that reason, it may be a difficult sell to the C-level execs. Don't expect to see material results immediately. Your 3000 Twitter followers are not going to raise you stock price next quarter. You're talking about a cultural change for your organization and that takes time. [DougMeacham]

Listen, test, adjust frequently - don't wait until you have the perfect answer. Start testing small initiatives by integrating them to existing programs and keeping them modest. What you want to do is set up realistic objectives, communicate them to your team, and measure against them. Keep listening for changes in behavior and adjust your tactics or strategies accordingly. This may feel a bit squeamish for those who are classically trained in marketing. They tend to have very specific ideas of what needs to be done. Yes, gone are the days of perfect mass marketing campaigns. Today it's more about micro interactions - personal, relevant, and meaningful exchanges of value. You capture someone's attention when you stop thinking of them as eyeballs and start thinking in terms of exchange. [ValeriaMaltoni]

#### Remember That Social Media Is About 'People':

Companies should consider having one (or more) designated "*spokespeople*" for the brand, who skillfully build relationships using social media platforms. Scott Monty (Ford) is a good template for this [CB Note: Please consider reading Scott's post about Ford and the US Auto Industry]. [SteveWoodruff]

Bring all the people who will be involved in the project around a table for a strategic "red flag" conversation. The up front investment will save you dollars, time and tears. [**TobyBloomberg**]

Don't create a department for social media. No business needs another layer. [LewisGreen]

Leverage the media-savvy people inside your company. In my world, at least one bank economist gives an interview just about every day. These are senior people, well schooled in the ways of talking for publication, and the best ones are interesting, smart and full of personality. They are typically good writers, too. I'm baffled that so few have a blog. Instead, much of their content shows up as a PDF on an 8½ x 11 page. It's not designed for on-screen reading and there's no potential for interaction. It's such a waste of good content. [SusanAbbott]

Run a social media bootcamp for your leaders. I am surprised by how many executives in some industries have no personal experience with the things consumers are involved with. We are not our customers! More than ever, marketers and executives need to work hard to stay immersed in the world of their customer or consumer. [SusanAbbott]

Dedicate a resource to knowing what "the Internet" is saying about your company/product/persona. What Google says about you on the first search page is "who you are" in the marketplace. If your results are a problem - do not delay, solve for it. Engage smart people to help you understand how you came to be regarded as a great company, a bad company, the next big thing (or whatever the Internets says about you!) Data geeks rejoice, there are amazing tools to help you know who is visiting your site, who isn't and what they're saying about you. [LoriMagno]

You have to connect social media with both the marketing and customer service groups in your company. It can't survive without support of the other two groups. The other two groups will also become much better themselves when they're connected with social media. [RichNadworny]

Educate your company on new media - don't take for granted that just because everyone's on Facebook they know how to put these tools to good use for business. Set up training classes for your authors and content owners to help them see the possibilities. We're doing that in my organization as part of the media training program we offer. We share information on how we talk about what we do, our stories, what we've published in traditional media, what resonates with our audience (their readers). That kind of intelligence allows subject matter experts to build on existing conversations. Teach people how to write for the Web and you'll be able to publish more content that is of value to your customer community. It's the old adage of teaching people how to fish. All those who are in customer-facing jobs should be empowered to assist customers wherever they choose to communicate with you. [ValeriaMaltoni]

If you're a company, you'll want to change the way you do business internally and externally, using social media tools, such as an internal social network for your employees. [DanSchawbel]

Consider your company culture. I can't stress enough how important it is for social media to be part of the culture, not just the operations of a company. Take the time to understand what obstacles you'll face, what hesitations your management has about this, how familiar and comfortable your employees are with these tools. Social media can't be siloed in the communications department. [AmberNaslund]

Be open to change: Social media is always changing which is the exciting part. If a social media site isn't working out for you, becomes too overwhelming or takes a nose dive in popularity then it's time to re-evaluate. Try putting multiple people in charge—we have several voices that contribute to our blog and have "behind the scenes" people working on the design of the landing page as well. At some point, you may find you need to switch outlets. We did this at OtterBox from our MySpace page to a more popular, more interactive Facebook page. [KristinGolliher]

#### CREATE RELEVANT, USEFUL, ACCESSIBLE CONTENT

Another aspect of social media that many may not appreciate is that it is premised on the "share economy." Before anyone will give you anything -- attention, business, consideration, even a RT [retweet] -- you must offer them value. The best value is content relevant and useful to you audience, written from the perspective of the end user and NOT from the company. Traditional sales pitches will turn your audience away! Instead, offer humor, inspiration, perspective, advice, simplification, or knowledge that is relevant and useful to your audience. Always give first! More specifically:

Repurpose existing content or give it fresh life. For example, you have a checklist for carpet buying on Carpetology. There's a ton of this kind of material inside places like banks or on their corporate web site. If they put it on a blog, bit by bit, along with knowledgeable but friendly commentary this material would become more accessible and more interactive. People could even ask questions! [SusanAbbott]

It would be great to go to YouTube and have a genuine expert explain things, supported by good graphics. I think of this as educational branding. It doesn't have to be and shouldn't be an ad. It should be good information, clearly and simply presented. My hairdresser has instructional videos on YouTube and my trainer told me she's working on one, too. I think ad agencies have a huge role to play here, but they have to find ways to get compensated without broadcast media budgets. [SusanAbbott]

Shrink-wrap your brain. There is a lot of information out there on the WWW, but turning info into usable knowledge gives you the edge. Everyone has manuals, white-papers etc about their own specialised field. It's very easy to become a specialist. Make that knowledge available online, with or without a price-tag. People are willing to pay for those things that will save them loads of 'search and compile' time. And because you make it available you are seen as The Expert. And everyone wants to do business with The Expert. [KarinHermans]

Select 3-5 (tops) key topics you want to be known for sharing about and those parameters will help you decide when to send a tweet or post something on FB. Make 1-2 of those topics the ones that are personal to you. For me, I don't have any significant work in socially responsible business, but I am personally passionate about it (and would love to someday work within that realm). I also have a thing for fitness/health so occasionally those Tweets will squeak out of me too. [AndreaLearned]

Don't try to do everything. Pick one thing, the most appropriate for your business, and get good at it. [JayEhret]

Speaking of video experts, you don't want your YouTube videos to look like loving hands at home. Best use a professional. A company that conducts excellent SMTs would be the place to start. Staff has a nose for news and marketing as well as the video expertise to advise and provide a topnotch product. Paul Gourvitz, Gourvitz Communications in New York is A++. [JeanneByington]

Hire professional writers for your new media marketing materials otherwise you'll lose readers as quickly as a click of a mouse. Ideally, the writers should be succinct and clear and sensitive to marketing and public relations issues. Faux pas travel fast. [JeanneByington]

From medical to marketing, ours is a country of specialists. You don't have to explore the world of social media yourself if it holds no interest or you have no time. Just as you'd hire a video expert to produce and place a satellite media tour [SMT] or graphic designers to create fabulous merchandisers, web sites and logos, there are experts, such as Christine Whittemore, [Thank you, Jeanne!] who can hold your business by the hand and guide you to select new media options. [JeanneByington]

#### **INTEGRATE NEW & OLD APPROACHES**

As attractive and effective as marketing with social media can be, the best way of ensuring success and truly engaging with customers is by integrating social media marketing tactics with traditional marketing tactics, into your overall marketing strategy so your commitment to customers is reinforced off-line and throughout your organization. More specifically:

Think about ways you can integrate 'old media' connection efforts with 'new media'. If you blog, try adding links to some of your posts to the monthly email newsletter that you send out. If you are connecting with your customers on Twitter, don't be afraid to give them your phone number so you can walk them through a particular problem they are having. Think about how you can leverage product information on your website, to help readers of your blog find the information they are looking for. Social media didn't suddenly become the silver bullet that will save every bad business plan, just like 'traditional marketing' didn't suddenly become obsolete. Both can and should be utilized together, as appropriate in reaching and connecting with your customers. [MackCollier]

We recognize that the majority of today's consumers are web users, so we are sure to include the website address in all our other advertising materials and collateral. If a customer is making a decision about where to buy their floor we believe our website is our second best spokesperson after their sales representative, and if they haven't been to a store yet it's our only spokesperson!

[AlanWoody]

Don't ignore traditional media. It's not dead and never will be. However, look for traditional media that are innovative and also understand the new media. [JayEhret]

Run promotions that bring online and offline together. I read about a campus promotion where pictures were taken of students and their friends during the first week back at school The company had some kind of a big funny couch. Students could pick up the images online, send them to friends, and so on. Brilliant, fun, simple, engaging. [SusanAbbott]

Rethink your sponsorships. I conducted a study on sponsorship best practices recently and at the end of it concluded that it is one of the most effective kinds of marketing you can do. A good sponsorship now provides many ways of interacting, some of them online. This is a great place for any organization to start into social media. [SusanAbbott]

Communicate the availability of new media viewing and interaction options into the older media channels: in-person, telephone, television, print, website, and email marketing and signatures. [MarioVellandi]

I work for a company that creates white label social networks and we work with many traditional print and broadcast media companies. We've seen success where old media converts their existing subscriber base into online communities. In the past, online publications had seen a divergence between their online and off-line memberships with a low correlation of users of both formats. However we are seeing a convergence of these two audiences with many previously off-line subscribers becoming online followers

of publications where they had only had off-line relationships before. With the struggles of many traditional media today their need to convert their offline audiences into online is stronger than ever. And the opportunity presented for them to do so is also tremendous. [ChrisKieff]

Combine your marketing offline and online: use offline to drive online and vice-versa. Create connections on a blog that bring people into your store. Make sure your store has your blog URL or your Twitter ID posted openly. ASK for feedback... [YvonneDiVita]

Connect social media to the rest of your outbound marketing. See above about making one way two way. Integrate this into everything (print, TV, direct and online). [RichNadworny]

When the Internet became popular as a marketing tool, many businesses largely dropped everything else and spent the majority of their marketing budget on their web site. Trouble with that was that nobody knew that they had a web site. Consumers weren't Internet-savvy and didn't Google. A company still needed to promote its site in traditional ways—through newspapers, radio, TV, trade and consumer magazine publicity and advertising. No different today. You need to orchestrate your options to remind people that you are there and tap more than one note. Zagat does a good job. They have a 30th anniversary contest going on that you can participate in daily, but who remembers? They help remind with e-mails along with traditional and more innovative bells and whistles that direct you to their web site. Some restaurants, hoping you'll give them a good review, provide handouts to the site. I passed a bagel shop on Third Avenue in NYC with a handmade sign on its front door, asking you to vote for them for "best bagel" on zagat.com. [They actually do have the best bagels.] Like the early web days, some customers aren't up-to-the-minute on technology. They still read, see and hear newspapers, TV and radio respectively. Don't forget them. And now that we don't get that much anymore, mail stands out. [JeanneByington]

Minding the basics is critical because consumers know how to spread news of their discontent through social media and the Internet as efficiently as a company can boast of its benefits. It's easier to erase words etched in stone than to eliminate negative news from Google and other search functions. Social media is exciting, energizing, efficient and relatively inexpensive, but toll-free number operators still need to be informed to provide accurate information, sales staffs must be knowledgeable and courteous, products have to work and customer service teams must be patient and compassionate problem-solvers or you're wasting your time focusing only on social media to show how hip your company is. [JeanneByington]

Implement an autoresponder email marketing tool – like AWeber - on your web or blog site. Because you have interesting and useful content your web visitor could very likely want to hear/learn more. Capture his name and email address with or without the promise of a small gift and continue your interesting content through opt-in email marketing. Build your relationship one message at a time. We had to create a whole new 'customer-type' in our admin system: "AWeber-clients" (first contact through one of our AWeber lists/campaigns) and it is one of the quickest growing client types we have. [KarinHermans]

Consider what you already have and build on it. Not everything needs to be tossed out or reinvented. It can be incredibly effective to look at your existing communication vehicles – like your collateral or your e-newsletter – and approach them from a more social standpoint. [AmberNaslund]

Use available free/premium content creation and sharing sites as a publication & promotional tool, and as a means to interact with visitors and commentators. [MarioVellandi]

Tap into existing constellations rather than building your own. It's easier, cheaper and more authentic. You may have to give up control, but that's what it's all about these days. If you build it, they probably won't come. [RichNadworny]

I believe social media will grow in importance as more people become accustomed to it, and I believe we will be strongly positioned when that day comes, but right now most customers are using our blog as they would a traditional website. Very few customers have used the comment feature for instance, but I'm sure that will change. [AlanWoody]

#### THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Finally, pay attention to the rules of engagement or the code of conduct inherent to social media marketing. Each tool has its own unique angle, but all are based on sharing and offering value first so as to truly engage with others as social beings and develop relationships. More specifically:

Be generous. Most companies have content that people are interested in. Share it without asking for something in return. The return will come, but it's hard for companies to get in the habit of giving something away, even if it has little value in the company's eyes. [RichNadworny]

Go for the long haul. If you can't make the right investments when it comes to time, energy, money and an attitude to be social, it's better to stay away. [ArunRajagopal]

Always strive to be human and try to give value. [ArunRajagopal]

Offer something of value. Companies often make the mistake of treating social media like another advertising channel. Remember, these are places where your customers spend time with friends. Imagine if it was a physical place. Would you go in shouting your latest offer? Would you plaster your ads all over their walls? I don't think so. Instead, look for ways to add value for your customers. Find opportunities to turn bad experiences into good ones, but then take it one step further and look for ways to address the sources of problems your customers are talking about. Engage with people who are singing your praises; they are your biggest cheerleaders. [DougMeacham]

Understand that there are no rules in new media and gatekeepers in old media. Basically, bloggers can do whatever they want (there are consequences) but the traditional media elite can't because they have to go through bureaucracy. [DanSchawbel]

Start with your product or service - what do you need to do to make it a valuable use of your customers' budgets and time? If you feel you need to improve it, but do not know where to begin or what, do open up the communication lines with your customers. This is the same deal as the employee suggestion box, it cannot be just lip service, you'll need to walk the talk. The main difference between old media and new media is the filter - with new media you have none. That can be really good, or really bad for you. You decide. [ValeriaMaltoni]

Have fun: Social media is definitely not your typical kind of communication. You can tell if people are too serious in their posts and portray a corporate façade. Trust me, we've made this mistake! While it's great to generate sales, it's also important to connect to readers, followers and friends by interacting with them. Sharing insider scoops, exciting happenings, linking to interesting information or sharing details about the industry as a whole show you care about more than just the bottom line. [KristinGolliher]

Don't assume "social media" as next big thing is truly a good fit for your brand. It may not be - just depends who you are trying to reach. [AndreaLearned]

Do share, share and share... links and helpful information you'd pass along to your best buddy in your work-world. Then, when you have a blog post of your own or announcement to make, more people will see it as authentic and helpful rather than self-promoting. [AndreaLearned]

Lose the business speak and learn & practice to speak personally. Professionalism and business policy need not be compromised. It's the tone of voice and demeanor that matter. [MarioVellandi]

Coming back to giving: *learn from others by reading other blogs about SMM and if you think you can contribute to the conversation do so in the comment box.* This way the blog-owner gets to know you, and all his/her readers will too. Don't start linking to your own site or blog in the first every comment you make, give first – freely. If your comments are relevant they will come and check out your blog on their own account. Then your own 'community' will grow. IMHO there is no difference in email spamming or blog spamming – first make sure the receiver wants to hear from you. As with everything this too will take time, but see it as an investment over long term. Short term never worked, not in the old days and not in these new days. [KarinHermans]

Don't be afraid to give. When we first started answering questions on the DIY-forums and allowing web visitors to ask questions on our own blog competitors thought we were crazy: you don't give away free advice up front, only when the product is bought. Otherwise they use your information and buy somewhere else cheaper. It really doesn't work this way. Of course there are those who do just that, but the amount of credibility you build up by giving first is tremendous. It's the old reciprocation effect – as my friend Richard C always likes to point out to me. [KarinHermans]

# **Concluding Thoughts**

**Social media marketing is here to stay**. Although the tools themselves may change, it's important to understand what social media is about and experience firsthand how it can help you forge stronger relationships with customers, relationships that involve conversation, interaction and truly wanting to provide them with value.

It's also important to understand how to integrate the tools and the thought process into your overall marketing strategy. Otherwise, how can you be successful engaging with customers?

**Certainly, if you aren't interested in engaging with customers, you shouldn't bother**. But, if you are, I hope that *Social Media's Collective Wisdom: Simplifying Marketing With Social Media* provides you with inspiration, ideas and a simple path forward per the following guidelines:

- What Social Media Is [And Isn't]
- Start By Listening!
- Explore
- Connect with Customers
- Strategize
- Create Relevant Content
- Integrate New & Old
- The Rules of Engagement

Please, let me know what you find most helpful.

Thank you for reading.

#### About C.B. Whittemore



Christine B. Whittemore [C.B.] is chief simplifier of Simple Marketing Now LLC, a marketing communications consultancy that provides organizations with the right combination of traditional marketing with new, social and digital tools to improve the customer experience and build your brand.

C.B. has been active in the social media space since June 2006 when she launched her marketing blog, *Flooring The Consumer* about the customer retail experience, marketing to women and social media marketing.

- Ranked in the <u>AdAge Marketing Power 150 Blogs</u>,
- Included on AllTop,
- Listed in Being Peter Kim's M20: Top Marketer Blogs,
- Profiled in Susan Abbott's [from Abbott Research & Consulting] blog, <u>Customer Experience Crossroads</u>, on <u>Toby Bloomberg's [from Bloomberg Marketing]</u> <u>Diva Marketing</u> blog in the Biz Blog Profile Series, and <u>interviewed</u> on <u>Anna Farmery's Engaging Brand</u> podcast.

Whittemore published a white paper titled "<u>A Firsthand Tale of Adopting Web 2.0 Technology to Build Brand</u>" in Perform: The Marketing 2.0 Authority by Montgomery Research. She also contributed "<u>The Age of Conversation – Enabled</u>" in 2007 and "Don't Be Myopic About Social Media!" in 2008 to Age of Conversation and Age of Conversation 2 – Why Don't They Get It?, two unique global collaborative books to benefit <u>Variety</u>, the children's charity. Both books are available on Amazon.

She contributes to MarketingProfs and MarketingProfs Daily Fix blog.

For Christine B. Whittemore's full profile, visit LinkedIn or download a pdf of her background information.

# **Summary of Contributors**

This analysis is based on the responses from the first 26 participants in *Flooring The Consumer's* social media series on *Bridging New & Old*. The series was first announced in <u>Social Media Series</u>: <u>Bridging New & Old</u> on December 2, 2008 and has sparked discussion and actionable ideas on how best to reach all customers and include them in discussions about the value marketers offer.

Thank you to those whose perspectives are included in this first volume of *Social Media's Collective Wisdom*. They are listed below with a link to their full interview and to their blogs which I encourage you to visit.

- Susan Abbott from Customer Experience Crossroads
- Toby Bloomberg from Diva Marketing Blog
- Laurence Borel from Blog Till You Drop
- Jeanne Byington from The Importance of Earnest Service
- Mack Collier from MackCollier.com
- Yvonne DiVita from LipSticking
- Jay Ehret from The Marketing Spot
- Kristin Golliher from Otterbox
- Kristin Gorski from Write Now Is Good
- Lewis Green from BizSolutionsPlus
- Ann Handley from Annarchy
- Karin Hermans from Wood You Like
- Chris Kieff from 1 Good Reason
- Andrea Learned from Learned On Women
- Lori Magno from Moda Di Magno Blog For Stylish Living
- Valeria Maltoni from Conversation Agent
- Doug Meacham from NextUp
- Peg Mulligan from Peg Mulligan's Blog
- Rich Nadworny from Digital Strategy Blog
- Amber Naslund from Altitude Branding
- David Polinchock from Experience Manifesto
- Arun Rajagopal from Arun Rajagopal's Blog
- Dan Schawbel from Personal Branding Blog
- Mario Vellandi from Melodies in Marketing
- Steve Woodruff from StickyFigure
- Alan Woody from Carpets By Otto

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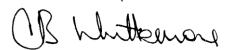
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This book is available for free by download from my website, <a href="http://SimpleMarketingNow.com">http://SimpleMarketingNow.com</a>. While you are there, I would consider it a favor if you <a href="subscribed to my Simple News e-Newsletter">subscribed to my Simple News e-Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple News e-Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple News e-Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple News e-Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple News e-Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple News e-Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple News e-Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple News e-Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on behalf of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on the latter of <a href="simple-newsletter">Simple Newsletter</a> which I send out on the

It would also be my pleasure to have you subscribe to either or both of my marketing blogs:

- > Flooring The Consumer about the retail experience
- Simple Marketing Blog about practical, simple, integrated marketing with social media.

Thank you for reading. I hope it inspires you as much as this social media series about *Bridging New & Old* has inspired me. Please do share this e-book with anyone whom you think would benefit from it, and let me know of any feedback. You can reach me at CBWhittemore [at] gmail [dot] com or CBWhittemore [at] SimpleMarketingNow [dot] com.





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