

# Part I

## Foundation

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# Chapter 1

## QUICK RECAP

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### **In short**

- Why social media isn't about different websites, but people.
- How to recognize need for change.
- What to listen out for before speaking.

### **Overview**

In this chapter London-based Neville Hobson – early adopter, opinion-leader and influencer in social media communication for business – will discuss how introducing social media into an organization means change. Change in the way everyone understands how the organization works. Social media is disruptive, challenging established orders, hierarchies and cultures. You can't stop disruption, but you can harness it and make its introduction a less painful process than it may seem. You need to find a new way of looking at your organization and how you can get things done.

With all the talk you hear about Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+ and other social places online – you name it, people talk about

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it when they mention social media – it wouldn't be too much of a surprise to think that social media is all about Facebook, Twitter and the like.

Yet it's not. Social media isn't about the tools and the channels – the software or the technology. It's all about *what people do with the technology*, the software, the tools and the channels: sharing pictures and video, writing product reviews, collecting content, connecting with old friends, sharing with new friends, collaborating in the workplace.

Social media is a collective term that describes the means of communicating and engaging with people. It's something many people see as evolutionary, if not revolutionary, in helping people connect with each other in ways that are genuine, authentic and natural.

However you see it, social media usage is increasing rapidly and dramatically in all levels of society and in more countries around the world. And businesses of all shapes and sizes are embracing it.

Introducing social media into an organization usually means change: change in the way everyone understands how the organization works. It often means change in the ways people relate to and connect with others, inside and outside the organization. And change in their roles and responsibilities where what had seemed clear to everyone perhaps isn't any more.

For the organization, social media can be hugely disruptive, challenging established orders, hierarchies and cultures. You can't stop disruption, but you

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can embrace it and make the introduction of a new way of doing things a less painful process than it may initially seem.

The benefits of taking a calculated risk to embrace social media as a legitimate business tool are clear and compelling to many companies who have taken the first steps. For them, social media today is an integral

element in their marketing, public relations and overall approach to building business relationships.

The key word is *calculated*. The stakes are high: everything you do should be considered against objectives you can measure. You need to see a new way of looking at your organization and the people it comprises, and create the environment that lets them get things done effectively and with confidence.

Following are five tips to point the way.

## 1. Recognize change

The web is rapidly evolving and is having a big impact on millions of people's behaviours in countries around the world. Little more than a decade ago, all you could really do was read static content on websites. Today, you can *create* rich and interactive content on websites from anywhere in the world where there's a network connection, on almost any kind of device, wired or wireless. Anyone can do this, not just the big companies of the past decade.

This society-level change means we're seeing disruption to traditional business models and new ideas springing up on how people want to communicate and connect using social media – the new tools of the web – whether for personal interests or to get things done at work.

From giving a concise opinion on Twitter, checking in on Foursquare, to saying “Like” on Facebook, there is a dramatic shift in people's behaviours, which manifests itself in the changes in how we communicate online, with whom, where we do it and when.

Another way of looking at it is to consider changes in our social structures in which easier technology puts power in the hands of individuals and communities instead of only organizations and institutions.

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and communication works and how people want to connect with brands. It presents an organization with an affordable way to get measurable results quickly when it's employed

effectively. It's rapidly growing, and customers turn to their peers for answers increasingly using social networks and other online tools and channels – precisely the places where today's organization needs to be present, too, in the right way.

It's an unmistakable trend. You only need to look around you to see it happening right in front of your eyes.

## 2. Make a deal with your employees to eliminate FUD

What often holds organizations back from introducing any aspect of social media – whether it's a single public blog, uploading video to YouTube or creating a brand page on Facebook or Google+ – are fear, uncertainty and doubt:

- **Fear** of perceived security risks in allowing employees access to social media tools and channels: “What if someone stole our secrets or released them without permission, or brought a virus into our network?”
- **Uncertainty** over the effects of losing control: “Isn't there a huge risk that employees will say something they shouldn't if we don't monitor what they're allowed to do?”
- **Doubt** over productivity: “Surely it increases the chances for employees to waste time?”

While you can learn from examples of how other organizations have addressed such concerns – just Google the phrase “concerns about social media” – you can also cut to the chase and begin your calculated risk assessment by starting with creating a climate of trust with your employees.

Such a contemporary approach in the workplace sees employer and employee in a partnership where, through the establishment of trust and mutual respect over time, each partner recognizes the critical stake the other has in the organization's success and how enabling employees, with effective tools, to engage with others online can measurably benefit the organization and support its business goals.

A key component of the climate of trust is helping everyone understand what the rules of engagement are – in essence, what’s permitted and what’s not when employees reach out to others via social channels – as well as an ongoing education framework where employees have access to formal and informal learning opportunities to help them gain knowledge of and confidence in the tools and channels available to them.

Developing policies and guidelines are key building blocks in your engagement planning, and demonstrate your willingness as the employer to foster a trust climate, especially when development is carried out jointly rather than only via the traditional employer-to-employee cascade system.

None of these essential foundational activities as elements in your overall risk assessment will actually eliminate the perceived risks associated with letting go of control. What they can do is eliminate the FUD.

### 3. Be where your customers are

Engaging with customers on their terms, not yours, is a prerequisite for building genuine and sustainable online relationships. The days are long gone when a primary marketing goal was to make your website “sticky”, where visitors came to your site and didn’t leave. Nowadays, the goal is to offer your

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visitors content they will value – even if that content is at places other than yours.

What consumers want are honesty, transparency and authenticity. For companies, this means having a genuine and open personality, one that reflects today’s new consumer values. Therefore, the people in the company must be visible and engaged with people outside the company, talking with customers in their own genuine and individual voices.

Research shows that customers typically like to do three things online:

1. **Share ideas** – “Let’s improve the next product or service together.”
2. **Share product knowledge** – “Here is what I know . . . I hope it helps you.”
3. **Help peers with problems** – “I had the same problem, here is what I did.”

Many individuals in companies recognize this and they join the conversation as well, becoming part of their customers' peer group, and gaining better understanding of what their customers want.

Nowhere is this more true than with social networking sites – increasingly places of choice for consumers and groups to publicly share opinions, recommendations and criticism of brands and products.

In most countries today, Facebook is either the most popular or second or third most popular website. The social network has reached such widespread popularity that it can these days only really be compared to Google, the only other company that can claim a similar reach. Yet while more than 800 million people globally are regular Facebook users (the figure in September 2011), don't ignore domestic social networks in the countries that interest you with memberships still in the millions. Which service you use to connect with customers and others doesn't only depend on the numbers – you need to be where your customers are, whether that's Facebook or somewhere else.

A clear consumer trend is wide rejection of the concept of the corporate voice, where the organization spoke and it was never clear who was speaking. The companies who genuinely promote brand plus individual will enjoy the most influence: wherever the customer prefers to be.

## 4. Listen

Getting started with social media doesn't mean you have to create a Facebook page for your business or open a Twitter account. On the contrary – your first step isn't talking, it's listening.

In fact, there are three simple steps you can easily follow that will not only give you valuable insight into how others see you and what they say about you online but will also give you insight and confidence on what your next steps should be.

1. When you listen carefully, you'll know your customer's world online *with precision*. No more guesswork.
2. That learning will help you focus on actionable insights – what exactly can inform your planning.



3. That will help you identify who drives share of conversation. In other words, who you should pay attention to – with whom you might engage.

You can take your first step today. Ask yourself what you are going to listen *for*. You need to be clear in your focus.

- Are you listening (monitoring social media, in other words) for reputation management or customer service reasons?
- Do you want to gather business intelligence and get feedback on your brand?
- Are you looking to find conversations you can join so your organization can get exposure in front of new audiences?
- Do you want to keep an eye on your competition?
- Are you planning prudently in the eventuality of a crisis?

This is what two organizations have most definitely recognized, according to AdAge.com, which showcases the stellar examples of Kodak and Dell, both of which have Chief Listening Officers.

The advent of social media has brought the topic of listening to the forefront of organizations' communication planning, internally and externally. During the past decade, especially in the past couple of years, we've seen social media become a significant element in the strategic approach to communication in many organizations. Some best practices are emerging, too.

We've also seen the emergence of new roles to bring individuals with wisdom and insight to the communication mix where everyone has an opinion and ideas that often require significant structure for them to be viable in an organization setting.

Enter the Chief Social Media Officer, a job title that sprang up in the US a year or so ago. The case for a CSMO role was well argued by Jennifer Leggio. So I wonder how a Chief Listening Officer will do.

In my view, such a role implied by the title is surely and exactly what organizations need today, especially large organizations. It's not enough just to listen to conversations, analyze what's going on and interpret the metrics: you need to know exactly, *with precision*, what the huge amount of interpreted data means to your organization specifically and what the people in their different roles can and must do as a result of the knowledge and insights you've gleaned from that listening, from that interpretation of the data.

Above all, you must know who in your organization needs what information, and be able to get that information to those people, on demand, when they need it.

Such a role isn't necessarily one for someone with a communication background. That's the case for Chief Listener at Dell Susan Beebe, who told AdAge that her job is "complex."

"There is a data-analysis research role to this job, and I have a very technical background," Ms. Beebe said. Dell has thousands of new mentions per day and the CLO's job is one of "broad listening" – as Dell has such a deep penetration globally in so many different markets.

Unlike many social-media jobs, this position is very inward-facing. She's listening to Dell customers and consumers and giving all the intel to her Dell colleagues internally.

"Our chief listener is critical to making sure the right people in the organization are aware of what the conversations on the web are saying about us, so that relevant people in the business can connect with customers," said Richard Binhammer, communications executive at Dell. Mr. Binhammer points out that "Dell has been listening for four years and created a position called 'Listening Czar' two years ago. We are a leader in the listening space."

Another leader is Kodak, whose Chief Listening Officer Beth LaPierre says that data mining and figuring out who needs the information is her "big task."

"We get about 300,000 new mentions of Kodak every month and we don't censor the comments or videos people create about our company"[...] "I've spent the past five months defining how we handle those data via technology and tools."

[...] "What kind of information does our marketing team need vs. our product team?" Ms. LaPierre said. "How do we classify the data? What is the process for handling 'ABC' information vs. 'XYZ' information?" For example, she sends commentary about features and product requests to a product development team and so forth.

These are great insights, ones to give careful attention to as you consider what you need to do in your organization as part of your engagement planning and attempt to understand the real value of listening as a strategic business tool.

## 5. Permit not prohibit

If there's one critical element in an organization's approach to empowering and enabling employees to go out there on the public web and engage with other people, it's helping them via education and training to know and understand how to conduct themselves in accordance with the organization's wishes. It's a key part of the risk assessment you would conduct when deciding on your approach to digital communication in general and social media in particular.

It's adding substance to the simple phrase "This is how we do things around here."

If you don't have ground rules established and communicated to employees, and their agreement to follow them secured, then you don't have much basis for creating the right environment or framework for your employees to do their jobs effectively, never mind the more fundamental aspects of trust in the workplace. Indeed, any climate of confidence or trust is much diminished in such circumstances.

Let's consider for a moment the picture where the employer swings entirely the other way and restricts or outright prohibits access to the social web in the workplace.

A survey published in 2010 by Cisco Systems, conducted among medium-to-large enterprises in ten countries, describes the scene very clearly indeed for what typically happens in organizations that do have access restrictions imposed in the workplace and where employees then take matters into their own hands:

Half admit to accessing prohibited applications once a week, and more than a quarter admit to changing the settings on their devices to gain access in order to "get the job done."

- Slightly more than half (52 percent) of organizations prohibit the use of social media applications or similar collaboration tools at work.
- Half (50 percent) of the end users admit to ignoring company policy prohibiting use of social media tools at least once a week, and 27 percent admit to changing the settings on corporate devices to get access to prohibited applications.

The easiest ways for employees to circumvent workplace restrictions are outside the workplace, not on the organization network (computer at home, for instance, or using one in an internet cafe) or using one's mobile device, whether work-provided or personal (and it's increasingly common to see employees in the workplace with their own iPhone or other smartphone or tablet to complement the corporate BlackBerry).

Yet surely the better solution is communication and engagement. Examine all the choices in front of you as an organization: weigh up the pros and cons of enabling employee access to social networks and other places out there on the web or letting them use apps to "get things done." Involve employees in creating guidelines (IBM set the benchmark for that way back in 2005) so that everyone is clear on what is allowed and what isn't.

The real challenge for decision makers in the organization is grappling with their fear of the unknown

It isn't hard to manage social media. The real challenge for decision makers in the organization is grappling with their fear of the unknown, their

fear of giving up control over information, and being clear about everyone's expectations. Companies who use social media for business advantage and have developed effective training and education programmes and publish their guidelines – whether they call them policies, guidelines, tips or whatever best suits the way they do things – will find their employees more likely to advocate their products and services and become their own brand ambassadors. People want to work there because there is mutual trust demonstrated.

Make *informed* decisions. Isn't it that simple?

## Roundup

Want more? See what has been said about this chapter or get involved and discuss it with the author and other readers on our LinkedIn group, find it by visiting <http://www.socialmedia-mba.com> or search for “The Social Media MBA Alumni”.

This introduction is for those that haven't yet embarked on a strategy-based social media journey, as this is a prerequisite to enjoying the full benefit of the rest of the book.

A key point to remember from this chapter is that social media isn't a passing trend, it's simply a new method to allow us humans to do what we have always been doing; interacting and sharing information with each other. The difference now is just that it happens faster than before, which is putting pressure on you to become the expert over night, develop an appropriate action plan and deliver results.

Bridging the gap between the way we used to work and a new norm that incorporates social media should be your end goal. In the next chapter Jeremy Woolf provides you with the first set of tools to help you do so successfully.

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