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Chapter **1**

Launching SMM Campaigns

Launching a social media marketing campaign is, in some ways, similar to launching any other marketing campaign. But at the same time, you need to approach certain aspects of it very differently to maximize the results.

In this chapter, we discuss the components of a successful SMM campaign and how you can make it work in harmony with other marketing efforts. We also discuss how best to respond to criticism, how to turn a crisis to your advantage, and, finally, some tactics for turning the campaign into a long-term marketing asset.

Defining Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing (SMM) is a technique that employs *social media* (content created by everyday people using highly accessible and scalable technologies such as social networks, blogs, micro-blogs, message boards, podcasts, social bookmarks, communities, wikis, and vlogs).

Social media (which has probably been one of the most hyped buzz terms of the last decade) refers to content created and consumed by regular people for each other. It includes the comments a person adds at the end of an article on a website, the family photographs they upload to a photo-sharing service, the conversations they have with friends in a social network, and the blog posts they publish or comment on. That's all social media, and it's making everyone in the world a content publisher and arbitrator of content. It's democratizing the web.

Facebook (facebook.com) is the most popular social network. It allows you to connect with friends and share information in a matter of minutes. Facebook has 2.41 billion monthly active users around the world.

Discovering the Types of SMM Campaigns

At this point, it's important to talk about the different types of campaigns. After that, we discuss the rules and guidelines that make SMM campaigns successful. In the realm of social media marketing, how you implement a campaign is nearly as important as what you implement.



REMEMBER

Before you launch your SMM campaign, make sure that you've done an inventory of all the other major campaigns going on at the same time that target your stakeholders or are within your nonprofit niche. The last thing you want is to launch a campaign in which you're asking your stakeholders to do basically the same thing that they may have just done for another nonprofit organization.



WARNING

In 2017, the FTC (Federal Trade Commission) imposed guidelines on how pharmaceutical companies can market using the social web. Those regulations cover the promotion of FDA-regulated products. More information can be found on this FDA website: www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/CentersOffices/OfficeofMedicalProductsandTobacco/CDER/ucm397791.htm. If you're operating in a regulated space, be sure to check with your lawyers about what you're allowed and not allowed to do before launching an SMM campaign.

UGC contests

Contests in all their various forms have always been a big hit in the marketing campaign arena. But now contests structured around user-generated content (UGC) are all the rage. And with good reason: They are invariably extremely popular, engaging, and fun. With *user-generated content (UGC)*, you structure a contest

built on participants who contribute something in return for rewards. This can be something as simple as crowdsourcing a TV advertisement, as General Motors did in the early days of social media with its Tahoe campaign in 2006, to asking users to contribute video clips of their funniest moment with a product. The best clip (by the predetermined criteria) gets a prize, with all the other participants getting some sort of recognition.

As *Wired* magazine reported, in the case of the Tahoe campaign, the microsite attracted 629,000 visitors, with each user spending more than nine minutes on the site and a third of them going on to visit the main Chevy.com website. Sales took off from that point, even though environmentalists tried to sabotage the UGC campaign by creating video clips that highlighted their views on the impact the vehicles had on the environment.

Another successful contest was run by the restaurant chain Applebee's in the summer of 2014. Applebee's asked its customers to snap pics of their meals or themselves chowing down. The best photos were then published by Applebee's on its Instagram feed using the hashtag #fantographer and were cross-promoted on Facebook and Twitter with posts and ads. When the campaign ended in the fall of 2014, engagement had risen 25 percent and tweets tagged with #fantographer appeared in 78 million users' timelines (users would submit their photos to Applebee's via Twitter and used the hashtag when doing so).

Podcasting

A *podcast* is a digital audio file that is made available via web syndication technologies such as RSS. Although it's not, strictly speaking, social media, it's often classified as such because it allows anybody to easily syndicate their own audio content. You can use podcasts as a way to share information with your audiences. Often, podcasts take the shape of celebrity interviews or discussions about an entity's product, services, or brand.

A successful example of a podcast is the Butterball Turkey Talk podcast. It's a seasonal podcast including stories from Turkey Talk hotline workers. You can subscribe to it via iTunes and other online podcast directories.



REMEMBER

Podcasts typically don't form a whole SMM campaign in and of themselves but work well with other parts of a campaign and are a great way to get the word out about your good cause.

Recognizing What Makes a Good SMM Campaign

A *social media marketing campaign* is one that specifically allows for social influence to take place digitally. A few years ago, marketing through social media was a niche activity, and the notion of targeting influencers was an obscure one. The closest comparison was word-of-mouth campaigns conducted in the offline world to build brand awareness for a product by incentivizing people to talk about it among themselves. Digital campaigns, for the most part, were about *display advertising* (banner ads that appear at the top and side of a website) across large magazine and newspaper websites, complemented with paid search campaigns and maybe email campaigns. These campaigns were used to drive prospects to a *microsite* (a site devoted to that particular campaign) or a website, where they were encouraged to make purchases or engage with the brand.



REMEMBER

With an SMM campaign, you mustn't drag people away from the social platform on which they're communicating and interacting with each other. They don't want to be distracted, and you'll probably only waste precious marketing dollars trying to lure them to your website. Instead, it's more important to execute the campaign on those very platforms where your potential stakeholders are in conversation. You have to engage your stakeholders where *they* want to participate, not where you want them to be. And unlike in a digital marketing campaign of yesteryear, the stakeholders of an SMM campaign ignore you unless your SMM campaign is aligned with their objectives and behavior patterns on those social platforms. In the following sections, we outline specific guidelines that you should follow when launching an SMM campaign.

MEET USERS WHERE THEY ARE

A good example of a failed “build it and they will come” attempt was Bud.TV by Budweiser. They tried to create an entertainment destination bypassing YouTube. The effort failed miserably because Budweiser had to spend valuable advertising dollars to encourage consumers to do something that they had no interest in doing — moving away from YouTube, where they had the most entertaining content (and all their friends), to a corporate-sponsored website. What's more, the fact that users couldn't embed the video clips elsewhere (including YouTube) hurt the effort. Bud.TV launched in January 2007 and was shut down early in 2009. Fast forward to 2019, and you'll notice that very few advertisers launch social media marketing campaigns where they try to pull customers to their websites to engage with them (granted, pulling customers to a website to make a purchase is different and appropriate if done with sensitivity).

Creating Your SMM Roadmap

As with any other good marketing campaign, you need to construct a roadmap that shows you where you're going and how you'll get there. In this section, we discuss seven steps that you can take to bulletproof your campaign structure:

- » Define your objectives.
- » Develop a powerful story/experience.
- » Create an action plan.
- » Craft the content path.
- » Execute for influence.
- » Create partnerships.
- » Track the results.

Define your objectives

This may seem obvious, but it is amazing how many of us forget about articulating the objectives when it comes to an SMM campaign. Your objectives need to be tightly defined, and they must be practical and actionable, too. The objectives must be specific to the stage of the marketing funnel that you're playing in as well. Saying that the objective of the campaign is simply to take a TV advertisement and make it *go viral* is definitely not enough.



TIP

The objectives must also specify *where* you're planning to run the campaign, *whom* you're targeting (which stakeholders and which influencers), the *duration* of the campaign, and *how it synchronizes* with other digital and offline marketing efforts. It's easy to forget that no SMM campaign happens in isolation. How you participate on the various social platforms is always a mirror of what you do and think in the physical world. If you ignore that fact, you'll lose your stakeholders and supporters even before you've had a chance to meaningfully engage with them.

Develop a powerful story/experience

People's expectations about how they will learn about your organization and services have changed completely. Because the Back button on the browser is ever-present, waiting to take users away from your website, you have a very short window to engage and educate. You have to work to communicate the intrinsic value of each service you offer and who benefits from those services.

Also, because people want to know whom they are dealing with, you need to inject the *why* into your nonprofit's story. You need to let them know why you started your organization and what you care about. The social aspect must be visible. The following are stories you should consider telling during your campaign:

- » **Why you're running this campaign:** Yes, you want to provide services and/or raise money, we understand that. But what's the larger picture? Who's benefiting from your services? What problem are you solving? How are communities at large benefiting from your services? Are you providing a service that doesn't currently exist? You have to be specific.
- » **What value the stakeholder will get from participating:** Stakeholders want social proof that others you have dealt with have had a great experience. You need to gather testimonial stories to share. If you can provide video of people speaking whom you've previously helped, you have a way to demonstrate authenticity. You also need to show how your organization will either specifically improve stakeholders' lives or contribute to their sense of worth in relation to their friends and family (otherwise they won't share your content).
- » **People who are impacted:** Provide visuals that tell a story. Well-known screenwriter Robert McKee has said that stories "unite an idea with an emotion." Make sure that yours does. And with so much of social media being visually driven today, using rich, evocative photography has become all the more important.
- » **Who the hero is:** Have a story about the person or thing that is leading this effort. It can be a service that works, a founder on a mission, and so on. Show that hurdles have been overcome. To borrow an example from the business world, the late Steve Jobs was a visionary who figured heavily in the promotion of Apple products because he was the heart and soul of the business.
- » **How internal staff feels about what they do:** Borrowing once again from the world of business, a commercial by General Electric showed children talking about what their parents do at GE. The message comes through loud and clear: Not only are the employees proud of what they produce, but their children are, too. Who among your staff or volunteer pool would love to show what their organization means to them? Why do they want to be a part of your story?

Create an action plan

Obviously, the actions you take are dictated by the length and complexity of the campaign. Every campaign has special features and highlights that need showcasing. However, here are some things that are common to most SMM campaigns you'll want to consider creating:

- » **A clear call to action:** Decide what action you want the user to take, and make sure that everything you do supports that. If the user has to sign up for something, display the sign-up process front and center at all times.
- » **Hashtags and other tools:** Most SMM campaigns create a hashtag for Twitter and Instagram so that people can follow the conversation. A hashtag has the pound sign (#) and a word or phrase related to the project.

For example, a 2011 campaign to feed people on Thanksgiving was started by Pepto-Bismol with the hashtag #HelpPeptoFeedAmerica. Whenever someone retweeted the message with that hashtag, the makers of Pepto-Bismol donated money to hunger relief. Dyson, the vacuum cleaner brand, uses several hashtags when it posts to Instagram but chooses them carefully so that it doesn't come across as heavy-handed. Here's an example of the hashtags used in a single post on June 4th, 2019: #dyson #dysonhome #insidedyson #vacuum #instatech. Most organizations limit themselves by only using one or two hashtags.

- » **A venue for crowdsourcing:** Are you going to create your own web page for people to share and submit their comments, or will you use the current platforms? Decide whether you want to create a Facebook page, or a community on your own website or another third-party one such as Tumblr. There are pluses and minuses to each choice. If it's important to own the content, by all means create your own. Just remember that getting people to participate is easier where they normally hang out. A new venue could be an impediment.
- » **Content that can be shared:** The key to every great SMM campaign is the content you create to get attention. If you're a small or new nonprofit and can't afford to create something splashy, you can still do a video and create PDF posters, contests, and graphics. Look at all the content you have already created, and see what you can repurpose. Have your stakeholders create content, if doing so makes sense, and pick a winner.

Craft the content path

When creating SMM campaigns, people often forget to map where their actual touchpoints will be and how they will look. It's not enough to say, "We'll send a tweet with a link." You need to be specific about it. You need to document that you will send three tweets a day at 9 a.m., 5 p.m., and 9 p.m., say, with certain text and a link.

As a handy way to document your campaign, you can map each of your channels and the content that will go into it. One of the best ways to do this is to create a mind map that shows you the big picture of your campaign and all the moving parts on one sheet of paper. Mind maps start with a circle in the middle and radiate ideas that relate to it. For example, you can put your campaign name in the center circle and then radiate circles of the different platforms you are using. From each platform circle, you can note the content that will be sent. From those mind maps, you can then create specific content calendars that help you manage the content production process.



REMEMBER

Your preplanned content is only the first part of what you will be doing. You have to also organically create messages that respond to the ongoing campaign to make it real. When people post something about your campaign on Facebook or Twitter, make sure to respond to it in a reasonable amount of time, which should typically be no more than 12 hours later at the very most. The preplanned items are just the starting point. Social marketing means reacting to real-time events.

Execute for influence

Traditionally, most campaigns have focused on getting a potential stakeholder (or donor) to take a specific action or to view a specific message. The focus has always been on that individual engaging with the nonprofit in some form. However, with an SMM campaign, you need to design for sharing, influencing, reciprocity, and social currency.

Unlike most other campaigns, an SMM campaign needs to accomplish two objectives concurrently:

» **It needs to engage the individual who's being targeted via the campaign.**

This is similar to any other type of digital marketing campaign. You want to engage with your target audience in a specific fashion and solicit a specific response.

» **You need to design the campaign so that the target person shares or discusses it with someone else.** Sharing is the social currency element. The person should feel that by sharing the campaign with someone else, they derive greater value from it. This greater value could be something as tangible as a free gift (say, a coffee mug or tote bag) or something as intangible as status among their peers. The point is that the more people the person shares the campaign with (or discusses it with), the more value they generate from it. In this sense, the campaign takes on a network effect, with its value growing each time someone participates.

Create partnerships

Few SMM campaigns are successful in isolation. A more traditional digital campaign, which is based on display and search advertising, comes together through a series of partnerships between the agency, the advertiser, and the publisher, and the same is true of an SMM campaign. However, in this case, the participants vary slightly. Rather than have a regular publisher, you have the social platform to contend with. Your campaign must be in compliance with that platform's policies; otherwise, you can't run on that platform. For example, Facebook (facebook.com/terms.php) and YouTube (youtube.com/static?template=terms) have strict terms of service regarding the type of advertising that can appear on their platforms.



REMEMBER

The platform players aren't the only things you have to consider. With most large brands, for example, ad hoc user groups that have a sense of ownership over the brand or product category spring up on the social platform where you're planning to run the campaign.

For example, on Facebook, if you were to search for "Ford," you'd find not just the Ford Motor Company page (facebook.com/ford), but literally hundreds of pages created by and for people interested in the Ford Motor Company. If you're a marketer at Ford, when you're planning an SMM campaign on Facebook, it's not enough to talk to Facebook and your own agency about the campaign. For it to be a truly successful SMM campaign, you must engage with these ad hoc groups when the campaign is starting. They can be your biggest marketers, helping the campaign succeed. On the other hand, if you upset them, they can turn into saboteurs.

Irrespective of the social platform you're running an SMM campaign on, the ad hoc user groups might already be there. Find them and be sure to engage with them. An SMM campaign means new players and new partnerships that need to be forged early on for it to be a success. Finding and engaging with those communities of people becomes critical.

Track the results

There's a saying in the world of social media that only successful SMM campaigns can be measured; failures can't be. The point is that marketers often say that SMM can't be measured if in their heart of hearts they know that their campaign has failed. If the campaign is a success, you bet they'll be telling you about it and explaining exactly why it was a success.

You can measure an SMM campaign in a lot of different ways. The best method depends on the objectives, the targeted audience, and the social platform on which the campaign is running. But you must determine what you're going to measure and how *before* you run the campaign. Otherwise, you're never going to know whether it's a success. SMM campaigns often spiral out of control, and the law of unintended consequences starts applying.

That's not a bad thing, but it doesn't take away from the fact that the campaign you're running is being run for a purpose — and you'll know whether you've achieved that purpose only if you're measuring the results. It's also important to measure a baseline of online activity before you begin the SMM engagement and decide what to measure. The baseline helps you determine how successful your campaign is relative to the level of conversations and online activity before running it.

Getting into measurement is outside the scope of this book, but for now it's sufficient to say that you must measure not just how many people you reach or who is aware of your campaign, but also the following: the influence generated; the *brand lifts* (increased awareness of the brand — that is, your nonprofit organization — across key brand attributes); and, most important, whether any of this effort led to people signing up for services, promising to make a donation, or requesting information about becoming a volunteer. With the measurement tools in the marketplace (many of which are free or close to free), you can easily track your SMM campaign to the point where the user completes the action you wanted them to take. The measurement tools that exist on the social platforms are getting stronger and stronger by the day, too. Don't hesitate in trying to measure this.

Participating: Four Rules of the Game

Many different factors can make or break an SMM campaign, and sometimes it's even just a matter of luck. But four rules matter above all else when it comes to SMM campaigns. These rules don't always apply to other forms of marketing. Pay attention to them, and make sure that your SMM campaign abides by these.

Be authentic

Authenticity is a tricky word, because it's overused in the context of social media. Everybody talks about being authentic when marketing in the social media realm, but what that means is rarely explained. To spell it out, authenticity is being honest, transparent, and true to the values of the brand: It's as simple as that.

Here are some examples:

- » **When you set up a blog as part of your campaign, make sure that you're using your own voice.** Don't outsource the publishing of content to a third party. If you have to, make sure that writers accurately identify themselves as contributing on your behalf.

George Colony's blog *The Counterintuitive CEO* is a great example. The blog (http://blogs.forrester.com/ceo_colony) is written in the first person by Forrester's chief executive officer, George Colony. There's no doubt that he is the writer.

- » **When you're publishing your thoughts and opinions or simply sharing information, don't do so anonymously.** In the world of social media, your stakeholders don't relate to or care about organizations as much as they care about the people behind them. People build relationships with each other, not with anonymous entities. Let your stakeholders know who is behind the voice blogging, tweeting, or running the contest on Facebook. You're not authentic if your customers don't know who you are. Worse still, don't ever use a pseudonym the way the Whole Foods CEO did when responding to critical comments in a discussion forum about his company in 2007.

Fortunately, companies learned from his mistake; fast forward to 2023 and it's rare for someone to use a pseudonym to defend their company or organization.

- » **Learn from the community and respond to its feedback.** A key part of being authentic is telling your stakeholders the way it really is, hearing their feedback (both positive and negative), and being willing to respond to it. It's no use participating in the social realm if you don't respond to commentary or feedback. If you're worried about not having the time to respond, consider not participating at all.

- » **Be humane in your approach.** It's easy to forget that for every comment and every unique visitor, there's an actual person somewhere in the world. Make sure that you participate with consideration and with the same respect that you'd reserve for someone you're talking to face to face.

For more information on authenticity as it applies to word-of-mouth marketing and social media marketing, visit the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) at <https://www.ana.net>. Through their acquisition of the Word of Mouth Marketing Association in 2018, they have amassed a rich repository of research around word-of-mouth marketing that you can find at <https://www.ana.net/content/show/id/womma>.

Remember quid pro quo

For all the altruism associated with the social web, it's easy to forget that it operates on the premise of quid pro quo. We're all good human beings, but most people expect something in return if they're giving you their time. As you develop an SMM campaign in which you'll be demanding your stakeholders' attention (and often a lot more than that), think about the possible quid pro quo. Are you giving enough back in exchange? If you're not giving something back, your stakeholders won't participate. They'll simply ignore you. The social web is littered with marketing campaign failures. These campaigns assumed that just by putting a banner advertisement in front of stakeholders, they would achieve their objectives.

Much better is the example of an SMM campaign that provided a strong quid pro quo for its audiences and was highlighted by Ad Age. Target ran a marketing campaign in the summer of 2014, through which it donated millions of dollars to the Kids In Need Foundation by contributing money for each Up & Up school supply purchased during a specific time period in the summer. The campaign was launched and promoted extensively through social media, which served as the anchor to the entire marketing campaign. This was an SMM campaign that encouraged the consumer to purchase a particular product by tying the purchase to a cause and then motivated them to share their experience and encourage others to participate in that fashion. Success of the campaign was defined as much by the amount of money raised as it was through any traditional measure.

In a similar fashion, Shiv's company Eargo, which offers a high-end hearing loss solution, ran a 2019 summer campaign in which for every hearing aid sold, it donated a hearing aid to a person in need via charity. With the hearing aids costing approximately \$2,750, this was a major cause marketing effort tying the purchase to people's belief that giving back is important. Customers were encouraged to share their purchase on social media and encourage others to purchase as well given the altruistic dimensions to the campaign.

Give participants equal status

Many marketing campaigns are designed to make the stakeholder feel special — more special than everyone else around them. That's a good thing. They feel special, and they end up having favorable feelings for your product and go out and buy it. Apple and Harley-Davidson are two brands that personify this philosophy: They make their customers feel special and different from everyone else.

That's wonderful, but it doesn't apply to the SMM realm in the same way. People across the social web like to believe that they're as special and as unique as the next person, as they should. If someone is doing something special, others want

to do that as well. If a person does something interesting, others want access to it as well. That's human nature, and the social web encourages behavior through the voyeurism it allows for.

Let go of the campaign

By virtue of starting the campaign, you probably feel that it is your responsibility to moderate and shape it. That doesn't have to be the case. Successful SMM campaigns are the ones in which the organization's advocates take the campaign in new directions. As you develop the campaign, think of yourself as a participant and not just the owner of the campaign. You make better decisions regarding its evolution that way, and by letting go, you allow others to take it in new and amplified directions. As always, remember that your stakeholders will be in control of the campaign. That's what makes social media marketing different. However, you will always be in control of your own response to the audience's participation, and that always presents exciting opportunities.

Keeping Your Supporters Engaged

You're probably used to thinking of campaigns as having a start date and an end date. And they usually need that. You have a finite marketing budget; the campaign is geared around a series of events (like end-of-year celebrations or fundraising dinners and auctions); new services might join existing ones throughout a year; and all of that forces you to end campaigns and launch new ones. However, SMM campaigns are unique in that after they start, they may not stop when you want them to. It's like turning off the lights midway through a dinner party. If you have a conversation going and have brought a community of people together around your organization, service, or campaign, the last thing you want to do is to suddenly disown those people. It's very important that you plan for migrating that community of people to a broader purpose or goal.

Here are four ways to move people onward successfully:

- » **Give participants new reasons to engage with you.** Your original SMM campaign has a set purpose and objectives. After those objectives are accomplished, don't turn off the lights. Instead, think of the next campaign that you have planned and how you can customize it to this community of people.

In fact, try to weave the campaigns together into a program that benefits these people. As you do this, remember the four rules of participation that we outlined previously: authenticity, quid pro quo, equal status, and letting go of the campaign.

- » **Encourage participants to coalesce into communities.** Often, the people who participate in your SMM campaign all share something in common. This may not always be the case, but depending on the campaign type, they may indeed be interested in forming a community. If you believe that to be the case, encourage people to coalesce into self-supporting communities. It only helps you in the long run and gives new life to the campaign. Campaigns that have generated goodwill transform into stakeholder communities that you can tap into for future marketing and fundraising efforts, or when you need more volunteers.
- » **Treat participants like existing community members.** People who have participated in your SMM campaign may not have used your services (or donated to your cause), but they have given you their time and probably have shared a bit of themselves with you in the process. This may have taken the form of commenting on a blog post, participating in a contest, or sharing your viral video clip with friends. Because they have done more than someone who experienced a traditional marketing campaign, you owe them more.

Treat them like existing members of the community, whether that means sending them special offers or inviting them to participate in focus groups. But always remember that when you send your stakeholders a special offer, it must be on an opt-in basis. Don't spam them if you don't have their permission to communicate with them.

- » **Extend the campaign to the website.** Many an SMM campaign has failed because it was kept separate from the company website. The campaign is traditionally built on a microsite with display advertising promoting the campaign. When the campaign has run its course, the microsite is shut down and the advertising is stopped. In the case of an SMM campaign, don't shut down the microsite. Instead, promote the SMM campaign on the nonprofit's website, and when the campaign winds down, find a place on the nonprofit's website for it. That way, your stakeholders can always find it, and if they coalesced into communities during the course of the campaign, they always have a place to return to. In fact, it may be best to launch the campaign on the nonprofit's website itself and move away from developing discrete microsites.



TIP

Often, your participants may know better than you how to create greater meaning from the SMM campaign in the form of a community. Ask them what you should be doing, if anything at all. You'll definitely get strong advice from the people who care the most.

Monitoring Conversations

It's no use running an SMM campaign if you can't measure it. You should always measure your SMM campaigns. Depending on the SMM campaign, different measurements may matter more than others. Brand and conversation monitoring tools help you measure the success of your SMM campaign and your ROI (return on investment). But they do a lot more than that. These tools also help you plan and design your SMM campaigns. They give you a peek into actual user behavior on social platforms, telling you what people are discussing, whether those conversations are positive or negative, and where they're taking place.

Any time you're planning to launch an SMM campaign, you must begin by knowing what your target audiences are doing across the social web. These tools help you do that. They can be classified into three groups:

- » **Low-end tools** that primarily focus on the volume of the conversation over a period of time and cover only positive and negative sentiment. Many of these tools are free or dirt cheap. Included in this category are HootSuite and Social Mention.
- » **Middle-of-the-road tools** that do some analysis but don't always have the breadth of sources or the depth of analysis that the high-end tools have. Tools in this category are Salesforce Radian6 and Sysomos. Cision, through its Viral Heat acquisition, is another player that straddles the high and low ends with different service levels and capabilities.
- » **High-end tools and services** that use linguistic analysis and deep data mining to provide insights into the conversations, who is having them, and where. These tools can cost anywhere from \$5,000 a month to \$50,000 a month, based mostly on the number of topics mined and the frequency. Included in this category are Sysomis, NetBase, and Crimson Hexagon (since merged with Brandwatch).

When choosing which tool to use, keep the following factors in mind:

- » **Your audience:** If you don't know your audience and aren't sure what their motivations are, where they are participating, and how, you want one of the high-end tools.
- » **The length of your SMM campaign:** If you're running a short campaign targeting a small population of users, you probably don't need to use one of the high-end tools. It won't be worth the money.

- » **The size of the campaign:** If your campaign touches lots of people, you need a higher-end tool that can help you track the activity as well as manage responses.
- » **Influencer identification:** If you're planning to focus on influencers rather than the mass population, choose a tool that's strongest at *influencer identification* (the ability to assist you in identifying people who influence customers about your brand). Not all tools do this equally well.
- » **Regulatory considerations:** If you work in a highly regulated industry, you want a tool that lets you view commentary and glean insights anonymously. Higher- and mid-level tools have this capability.
- » **Dashboard functionality:** Some marketers require interactive dashboards through which they can view the conversation in real time. If you're one of them, be sure to look for a tool that allows for that.



REMEMBER

Lots of free tools for conversation monitoring are out there. Regardless of the complexity of your SMM campaign and tracking needs, there's never any harm in beginning with the free tools. It'll cost you only the time in setting up the domain names. Keep in mind that these tools are valuable to departments like public relations and customer research, too. They may be willing to share the costs of the tool or service with you.

Responding to Criticism

No SMM campaign is a complete success. It never is. Although you may reach many more people than you could have ever imagined, more likely than not, you're still bound to upset some people and even potentially spark an inflammatory response among a few others. From the outset, before you launch your SMM campaign, you need to plan for the potential criticism that may come your way. There's no perfect way to respond, and the answer usually depends on the type of criticism, how widespread it is, and where it is coming from. Your PR department, if you have one, is usually more versed in responding to criticism (and more broadly, crisis management) than anyone else, so be sure to bring that department into the process early.

Regardless, here are some guidelines to keep in mind as you launch your campaign and prepare for the criticism that may come your way:

- » **Respond early and often.** There's no greater insult to people criticizing your SMM campaign than to be ignored. Ignoring criticism results in greater anger and more vitriolic responses that can snowball into a full-fledged crisis as the

anger percolates across the social web. Before you know it, the board — or maybe *The New York Times* — is calling your desk, so respond quickly.

- » **Respond honestly and clearly.** Be sure to use your own name when you respond. Just as you have to be authentic with your campaign, so you have to be with your response. Be clear about your rationale for why the campaign is designed the way it is, admit mistakes when the fault is yours, and be inclusive in your responses.
- » **Be prepared to change based on the feedback.** It's easier to be stubborn and not to change your SMM campaign. But if criticism about the campaign is valid, whether it's of the structure, the creative aspect, or the rules regarding the type of conversation, you should incorporate the feedback and make the appropriate changes. You'll win back trust quickly.
- » **Don't hesitate to bring humor to the situation.** Some of the best responses have been those that included a touch of self-effacing humor. Organizations aren't above people, and neither is yours. Humor goes a long way in the social web, and sometimes the response becomes the new SMM campaign.
- » **Use the same channels for the response.** This may seem obvious, but it really isn't. Respond to people in the way they've criticized you. Don't go on national television to respond to a YouTube outburst. You'll become the laughingstock of the social web.

