From customer channel fragmentation to integration

By Wesley Lynch , issued by Realm Digital   12 Jan 2011

Social-integrated websites offer total Web engagement management (WEM).

The emergence of Digital.co.za/page/Realm Digital-services/ WEM
The functional evolution of social network platforms has allowed the most successful among them (notably Facebook and Twitter) to become channels for integrated customer engagement via the Web.

Social both integrates multiple previously separate channels (Web, mobile, e-mail etc), and boasts increasingly advanced integrated functionality, thanks to its success in attracting developer and user interest. Most recently, the introduction of analytics and online shopping on Facebook heralded a huge upset within two of the most monolithic empires on the Web - search and Digital.co.za/page/Realm Digital-services/ e-commerce.

The rise of integrative channels and functions has, in turn, given rise to a new concept - Web engagement management (WEM), a concept referring to the integration of many previous separate customer channels - with social as the unifier.

Talk or be talked about

So why should you consider integrating all your customer channels via social?

It's all about the inevitable conversation people have about your brand. Either you suffer it without deigning to be present or you jump right in, hosting it if possible.

But why risk getting as many complaints as compliments? Socially-integrated customer channels have much to commend them.

- Social attracts a different audience, increasing the number and quality of your customer relationships.
- It allows you to create demand, through relevant enhancements such as personalised and optimised content and targeted marketing.
- It's free, so why not use the opportunity to attract a fan, who might invite their friends and will definitely talk about your brand - without getting paid (through comments or micro-blogging)?
- Even if you have a Digital.co.za/ website budget, the many ways of integrating your fan page and website (trackbacks, content syndication, e-commerce and more) make social media even more attractive. For example, once a user becomes a fan or follower, they can be steered towards your integrated website and, once there, converted into customers.

- Consistency - an integrated social campaign also replicates Web content in automated tweets, Facebook news feeds and e-mail newsletters. Building your site with an advanced integrative platform lets you deliver the same experience and message across channels and devices, online and offline.

All the right places
What does this mean for your choice of channels and communities? Obviously, to spread the net too widely among a plethora of social network options is unwise and unprofitable. Select a few choice platforms - a media outlet may like to tweet and provide a constant flow of Facebook updates, while a travel site may align itself with YouTube and Picasa.

At the same time, it won't do to throw out the old with the new. Retain e-mail, intranet and Digital.co.za/page/Realm Digital-services/ Web-based marketing efforts and explore the opportunities for integration.

Don't worry, they'll love you

It's true, few people would 'like' (or want to be seen to like) some 'boring' business brand. But what if there were something in it for them?

To succeed on Facebook, a cosmetics company may want to tie its campaign to a competition. A financial services organisation may ally itself with an exciting brand to sponsor, such as Formula 1. Or do the unthinkable - post interesting or fun content!

Make it work for you

The great reach of social platforms makes them an ideal common engagement platform that companies are increasingly integrating into their existing digital channels.

What differentiates successful campaigns from the also-ran is the upfront choice of platform, style of integration and content that will make the move to total Digital.co.za/ Web engagement management via social a winning strategy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WESLEY LYNCH, CEO, REALMDIGITAL

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