

What Makes Up A Social Marketing Strategy?

Contributed by eMarketer
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Some key questions still unanswered

It's quickly becoming common wisdom among marketers that a strategy is needed to use social media effectively.

Of course, that doesn't mean a majority of those involved in the space have gotten on board yet and created such a well-thought-out approach. According to a May 2010 study by Digital Brand Expressions, 52% of social marketers are operating "without a game plan," similar to the 50% found in April 2010 by R2integrated.

Further, many that do have a strategy find it doesn't address all their concerns or fit their needs.

The most common elements included by companies with a social media communications plan were resource-allocation guidelines for ongoing activities, registration of branded usernames on social sites and research into competitors' use of social media.

To be sure, those are all critical components of an effective strategy, but they are only the beginning.

When respondents were asked what they thought should be part of their company's plan, their answers had a somewhat different focus.

While resource allocation was still top of mind, 71% were concerned with preparing and distributing policies for ongoing communications, such as how to respond to comments on social sites. Just 45% of companies had such policies.

Respondents were equally concerned with the ongoing monitoring of brand reputation, at 71%, but only 52% had a plan for such activities.

The greatest disparity related to departmental protocols detailing how social sites should be used by sales, human resources, customer service and other groups within the company. While more than two-thirds of respondents saw a need for these policies, 29% were prepared.

That desire also highlights how social media has spread throughout many organizations and is not limited to marketing or PR departments.

A majority of companies with a social strategy included marketing, PR and sales in their plans, but most respondents also thought that human resources and customer service should be added. Respondents agreed that, in general, responsibility for creating strategies should fall to marketing departments.

"Companies that have held back on adopting social media throughout their organizations would benefit from starting with a cohesive plan that involves all of the key groups within the organization," said the report, while those that have already adopted the social channel should get all departments and employees on board with a complete strategy.

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