Companies Struggle To Keep Social Media Content On-Message

Contributed by eMarketer
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Nearly three-quarters of blog posts donâ€™t reflect corporate messaging

Marketers and other corporate communications professionals may sometimes feel they have a thankless task: carefully craft messages about their companyâ€™s thought leadership, social responsibility efforts and new product or service launches, only to find those messages distorted as theyâ€™re disseminated through the media.

PR and communications firm Burson-Marsteller analyzed more than 150 messages sent out by companies in the Financial Times Global 100 list of firms and discovered a large gap between the messages that went out and how they were covered on blogs.

Message distortion was highest for companies in Latin America and the US, with a global average of 69% of blog postings not reflecting the message companies were trying to send.

According to the report, bloggers tended to include â€œopinions, personal experience, knowledge of competitors and products, and speculation.â€•

Distorted messages are not a new phenomenon; they have been a problem in mainstream media as well.

Still, the message gap between companies and the traditional media is significantly smaller: Less than half of all messages in mainstream media failed to reflect company messages, and here the US performed above average.

But as blogs continue to grow in importance and become integrated in mainstream outlets, along with the growth of other forms of social media, the chances for message distortion are likely to be high.

One way companies can combat the message gap is to make the most of owned media. If companies create their own compelling content and distribute it across social networks, there is no room for such a gap.

Bloggers are not likely to simply reprint such old-media items as press releases, but relevant branded content can attract links across Facebook, Twitter and the rest of the social web.

According to the â€œ2010 Social Media Usage, Attitudes and Measurabilityâ€• study from King Fish Media, HubSpot and Junta42, 73% of US companies with a social media strategy were using branded content they created in their campaigns.

Such original content was considered the most important part of a successful social campaign, with nearly half of respondents calling it â€œextremely important.â€•

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