

Online Branded Communities Grow Up

Contributed by eMarketer
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Marketers get on board with best practices and strategic thinking

According to the second annual “State of Online Branded Communities” study by full-service social engagement firm ComBlu, which examined practices in the online communities of major brands, marketers have adopted a wide variety of best practices and begun to integrate their online community efforts across a variety of social media.

In 2009, just under a third of communities studied were integrated with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or other social sites that the marketer had a presence on.

By 2010, the proportion had more than doubled, to 68%.

Comparing a variety of features studied in 2009 to levels of adoption in 2010, the study found online branded communities had increased adoption of best practices across the board.

Some of the biggest jumps were in availability of faceted search, inclusion of rich media content, integration with social media and the use of “fun” engagement tools.

Newer best practices studied this year included share features (used by 61% of communities) and brand advocacy programs (used by just 20%).

The report said that lack of engagement and recognition of brand advocates and experts was a failure to take advantage of some of the brand’s most valuable assets.

“If activated properly, community members become the face and voice of the customer” and ultimately of the brand “across the social cloud,” said Kathy Baughman, a principal at ComBlu, in a statement.

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