

B2B Marketers Still Unsure About Social Media Strategies

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Firms need more tools and technology to measure success

Although they have been slower than their business-to-consumer counterparts to adopt social media strategies, business-to-business marketers are increasingly acknowledging the value of social media.

According to research from global consulting firm Accenture, almost two-thirds of B2B marketing executives view social media as an extremely important or a very important channel to interact with customers, partners and stakeholders. However, only 7% of the survey group felt that their organization was leveraging social media very heavily.

In addition, the Accenture survey showed that 9% of B2B marketers were not using social media at all. To that point, a study by Webmarketing123 compared social network activity among B2C and B2B brands and found that 12% of B2B marketers neglect social networks entirely, compared to only 2% of B2C marketers.

According to Kevin Quiring, North America CRM lead at Accenture, uncertainty may be the reason for ignoring social. "B2C marketers have been doing social media at scale for 3 to 5 years and have had a significant head start," Quiring said. "Now B2B marketers have to learn the tough lessons about engaging in the dialogue and having to deal with the damage control that comes along with that" and that frightens them.

B2B marketers told Accenture that technology, tools, metrics and collaboration could be useful to strengthen their social media programs. Nearly half of respondents said new tools and technology would make their social media efforts more effective, and 41% said improved measurement would be helpful. Almost as many B2B marketers said that cross-organizational collaboration would help make their social media programs successful.

One of the biggest barriers, though, is knowing where to start. Quiring recommended that B2B marketers begin developing social media strategies by looking at social holistically as a way to build better relationships with consumers. When marketers begin to give social a more defined role in acquiring, developing and retaining customers, Quiring said, "the opportunity to leverage social media beyond brand marketing then begins to emerge very quickly."

11 November 2011