

SPECIAL REPORT

Top Tactics of Strategic Social Marketers

How to reach the Strategic phase of social marketing maturity and lift results

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Top Tactics of Strategic Social Marketers

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HOW TO REACH THE STRATEGIC PHASE OF SOCIAL MARKETING MATURITY AND LIFT RESULTS

Expectations for social media’s contribution to marketing results have changed. Outcomes directly related to ROI – like converting social media audiences into paying customers – are now the top priorities of CMOs.

To meet these expectations, organizations are advancing beyond the trial-and-error phase of social marketing maturity and are now in transition to, or have already reached, the Strategic phase. The reward for reaching the Strategic phase of social marketing maturity is a significant increase in performance that produces measureable business value.

“We have moved from ‘Let’s see if this works’ to ‘How can we make this work better?’ The onus of proving social media is a useful tool for customer interaction and brand awareness has been done. We have proven that. Now we move to showing how it can generate new customers, new revenue and new opportunities of immediate interaction and feedback.”

“Expectations have risen dramatically. Initially, social media has changed from being an adjunct to PR, to being a driver of program and campaign strategy. Along with this have come requirements for measurability and ROI, which has been a challenge to get agreement on.”

- Marketer insights

SOCIAL MARKETING MATURITY DEFINED

The process an organization uses to plan, execute and measure the performance of social marketing programs determines its phase of social marketing maturity. The three phases – Trial, Transition and Strategic – are defined as follows:

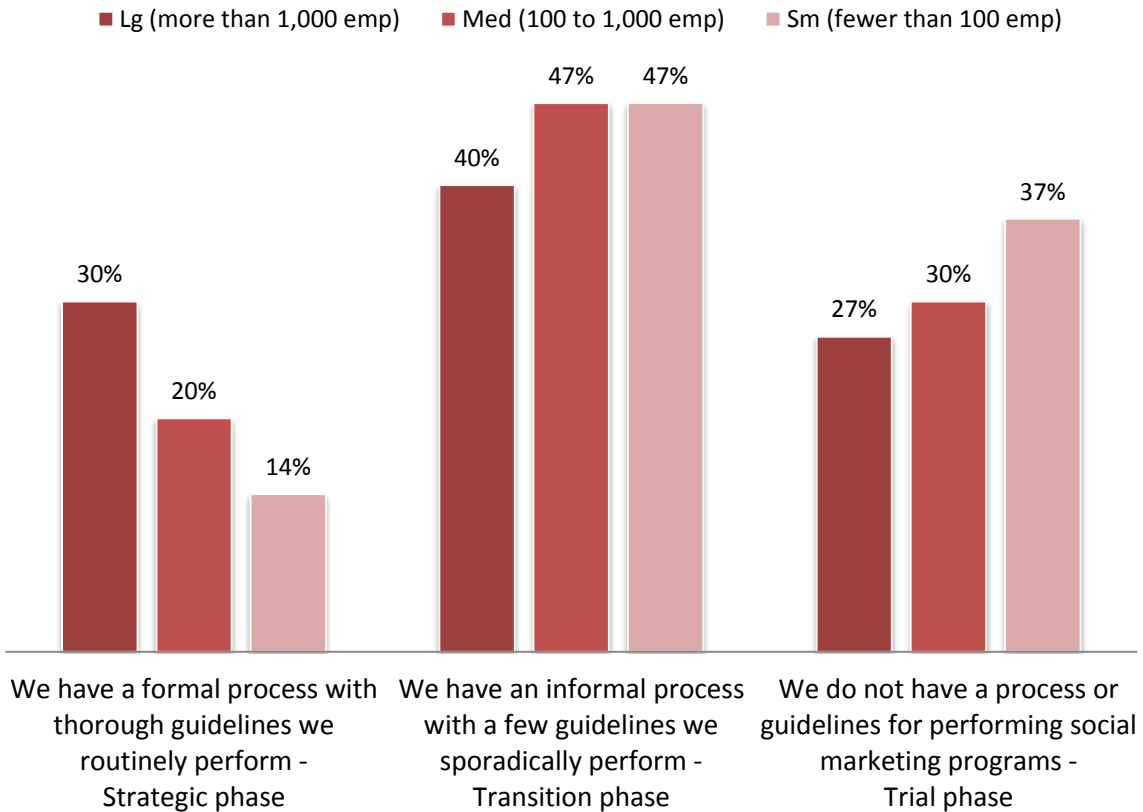
Three Phases of Social Marketing Maturity		
Trial Phase	Transition Phase	Strategic Phase
Organization does not have a process or guidelines for performing social marketing.	Organization has an informal process with a few guidelines it sporadically performs.	Organization has a formal process with thorough guidelines it routinely performs.

The benchmark data throughout this report has been segmented by these three phases. The purpose of segmenting the data this way is to demonstrate the disparity in the performance of social marketing programs, by each phase of social marketing maturity. This segmentation will also help you understand how strategic social marketers think, and which tactics they use to lift results.

NEARLY HALF OF MARKETERS ARE IN TRANSITION BETWEEN TRIAL AND STRATEGIC PHASE

Q. Which statement best describes the process your organization uses to plan, execute and measure the performance of social media marketing programs?

Chart: Organizations in each phase of social marketing maturity, by organization size



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Social Marketing Benchmark Survey
 Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=3,342

Social marketing is a time-intensive practice, requiring the contributions of numerous employees from various departments within an organization. The more people involved, the greater the need for a formal process with thorough guidelines to routinely follow.

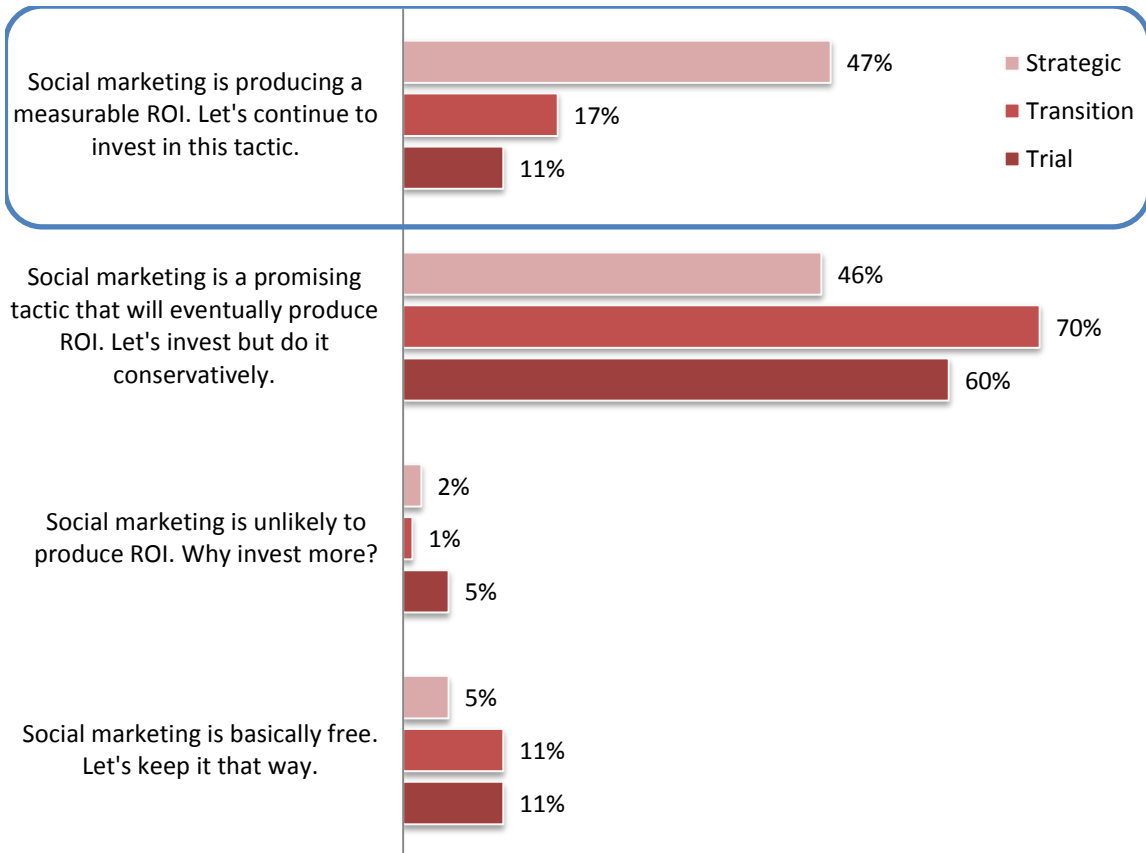
As this chart shows, large organizations that have in excess of 1,000 employees are more than twice as likely as small organizations to have reached the Strategic phase of social marketing maturity.

But no matter the size of your organization, or the resources required, the rewards of reaching the Strategic phase of social marketing maturity are considerable.

ROI IS THE REWARD FOR REACHING THE STRATEGIC PHASE

When it comes to convincing skeptics who control the budgets you need, perception is everything. Eight of 10 CMOs now believe their social marketing programs are producing ROI, or eventually will. Driven by this perception, these organizations continue to invest in social marketing budgets, with the confidence they will gain a measurable return.

Chart: CMO perception of their social marketing ROI, by social marketing maturity phase



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Social Marketing Benchmark Survey
 Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=3,342

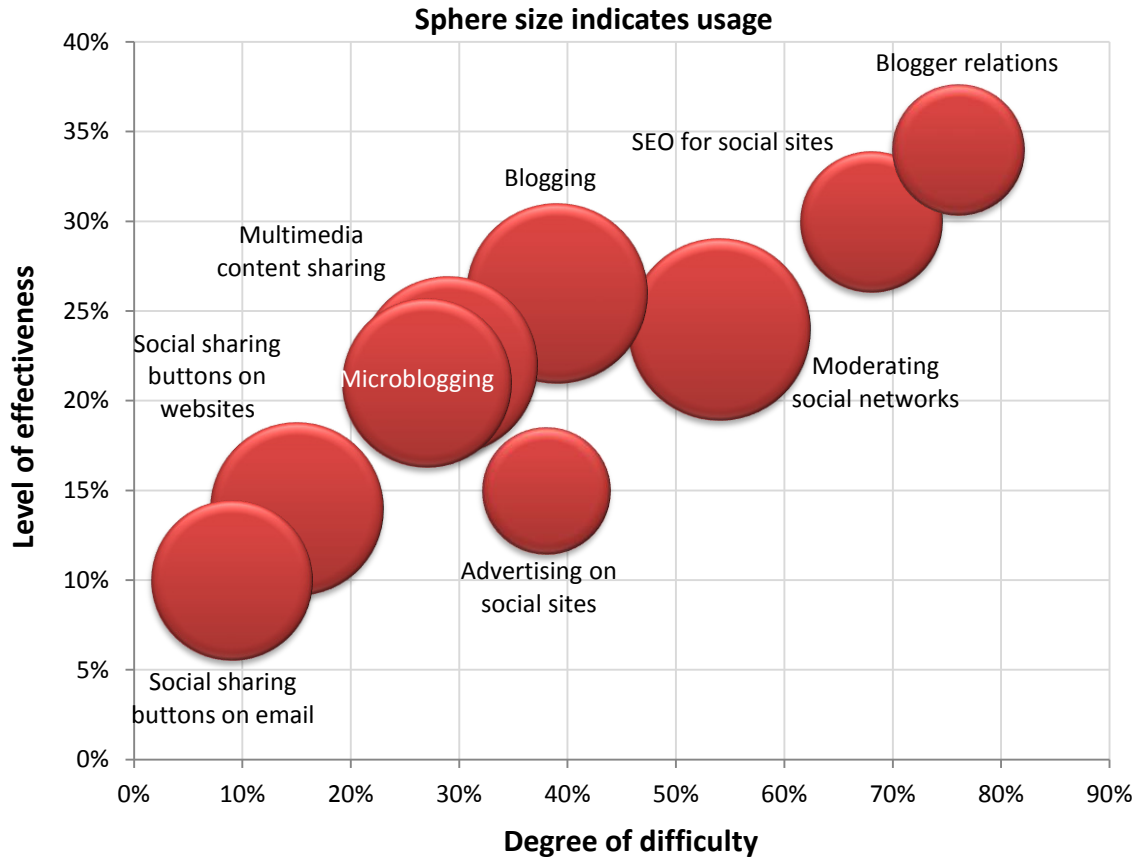
As this chart highlights, organizations in the Strategic phase are more than four times as likely to produce measurable ROI – the most important performance indicator to a CMO – than are their counterparts in the Trial phase.

For 70 percent of organizations in the Transition phase, and 60 percent in the Trial phase, social marketing ROI is not yet a reality, but the promise is strong enough to drive investment, albeit conservatively.

TOP TACTICS OF STRATEGIC SOCIAL MARKETERS

WHEN IT COMES TO USAGE, “FAST AND EASY” TRUMPS TACTICAL EFFECTIVENESS

Chart: Comparing tactical usage, degree of difficulty and level of effectiveness



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Social Marketing Benchmark Survey
 Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=3,342

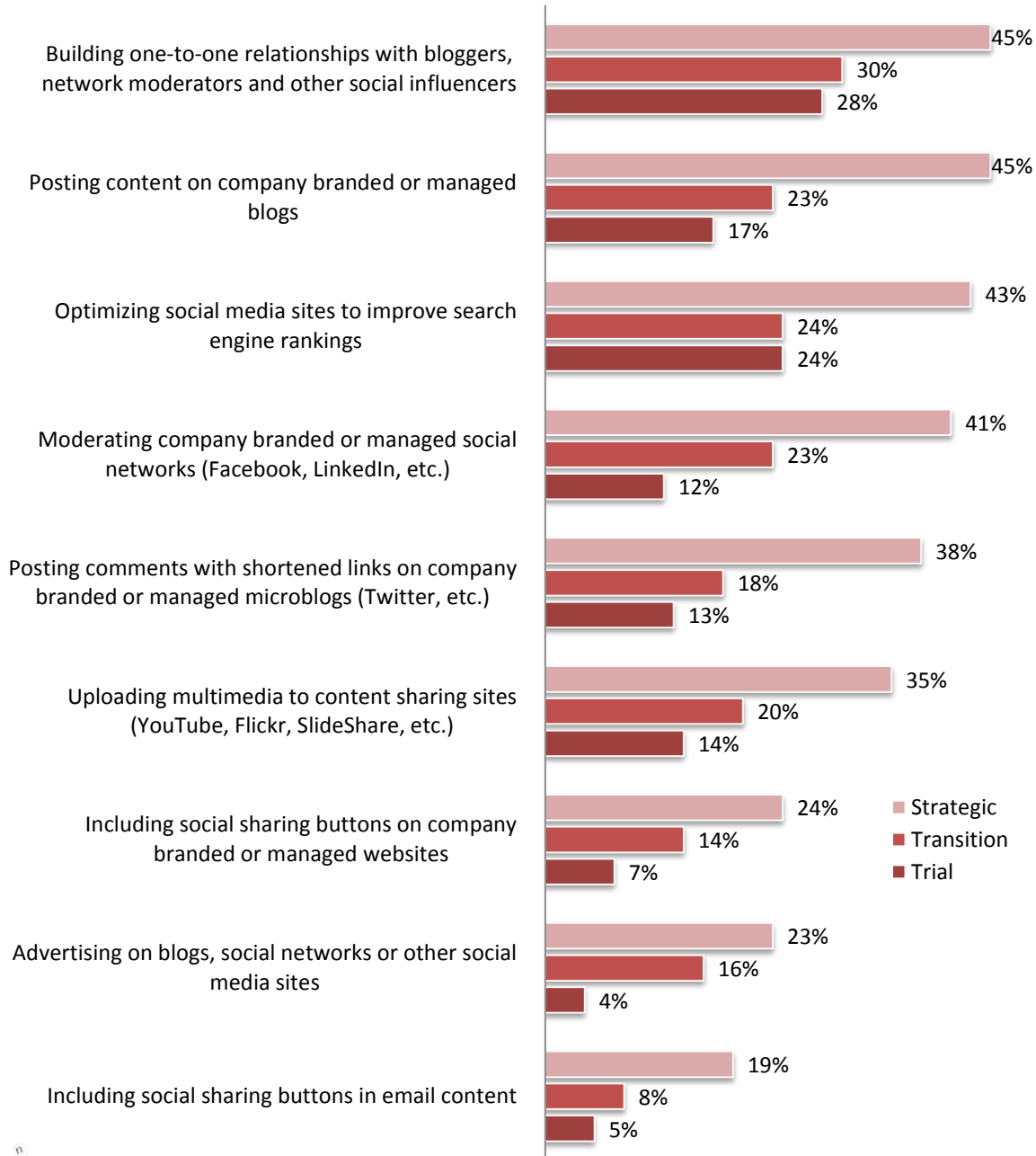
Cross-tabulating response data across multiple questions in a survey can provide an interesting perspective on research findings. Here, we combine data from three questions asked of all marketers about social marketing tactics: The effectiveness to achieve objectives; the degree of difficulty to implement each tactic; and the percentage of organizations using them.

What we find, more often than not, is that “fast and easy” trumps effectiveness when it comes to determining which tactics to implement. For example, the most effective tactic shown in the chart above – blogger relations – is used by far fewer organizations than other less effective tactics. The reason for this? As a tactic, blogger relations has the highest degree of difficulty.

The big payoff of advancing to the Strategic phase of social marketing maturity is tactical effectiveness that results in a greater return on investment – an essential objective of today’s social marketing programs.

STRATEGIC PHASE SOCIAL MARKETERS FOCUS ON EFFECTIVENESS

Chart: Use of tactics ranked “very effective” by social marketing maturity phase



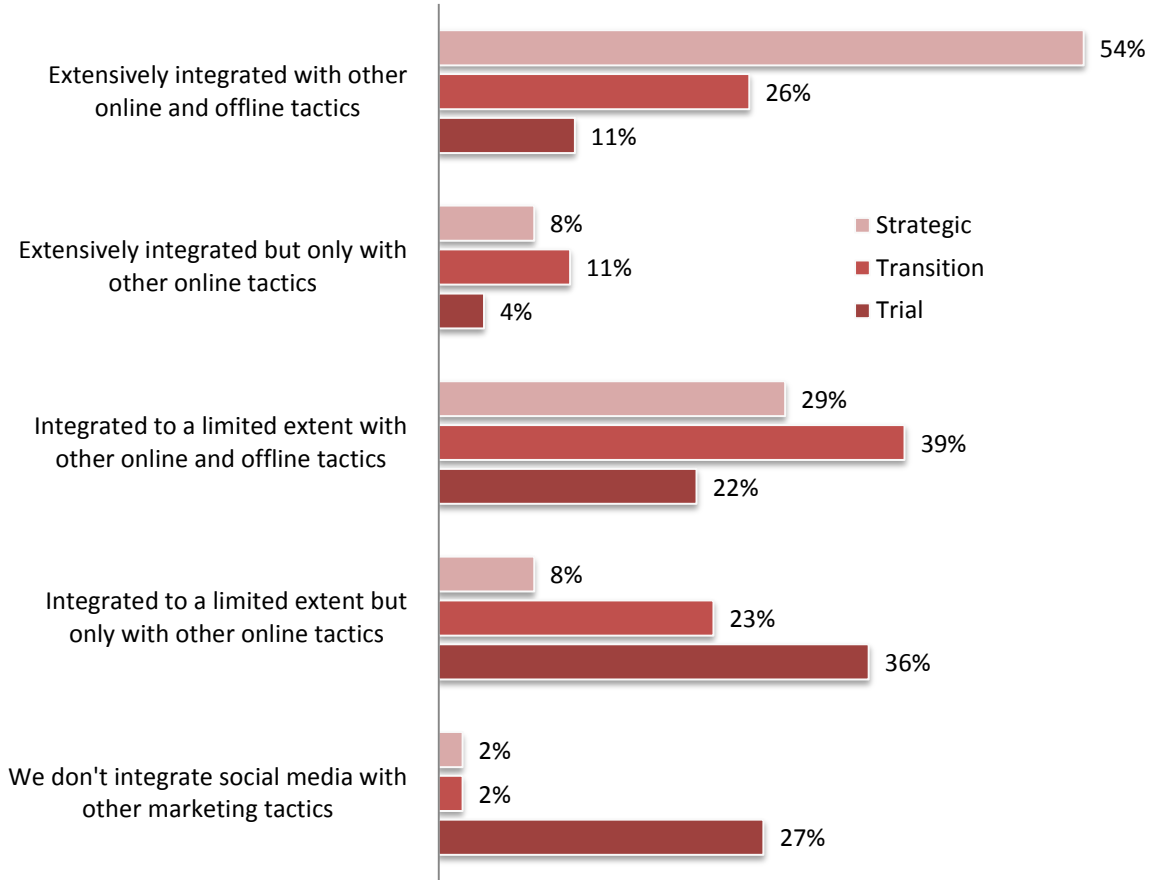
Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Social Marketing Benchmark Survey
 Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=3,342

As this chart shows, a significantly larger share of organizations in the Strategic phase rank the tactics they use as “very effective,” compared to organizations in the Trial and Transition phases. Strategic phase marketers routinely perform a formal process with thorough guidelines for lifting social marketing effectiveness.

INTEGRATING SOCIAL MEDIA INTO THE MARKETING MIX

The integration of social media with other tactics in the marketing mix is about finding synergies and exploiting these relationships. Strategic phase organizations have a strong lead on other organizations when it comes to extensively integrating social media with online and offline tactics. Organizations in the Transition phase also integrate with other online and offline tactics, but to a limited extent. Lagging behind are Trial phase organizations who integrate social media into the mix, but do so primarily with other online tactics.

Chart: The extent of social media integration, by social marketing maturity phase



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Social Marketing Benchmark Survey
 Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=3,342

“With an integrated social media campaign, we were able to move our position in the search rankings from page three to the first position on page one. We accomplished this by posting quality content, using keywords, adding links, blogging and Tweeting about the relevant content and tracking our progress.”

Marketer insight

SIX-STEP STRATEGY TO SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTIVENESS

Case Study ID: 31600

Summary

Consumers are talking about your brand in social media channels, and you need a strategy to engage in these conversations. Ignoring them – or jumping in without a plan – is a missed opportunity.

Read six lessons a team at Kodak learned from more than two years' worth of social marketing efforts. Includes advice on when to engage in conversations, how to add value, and the importance of creating and sharing your company's social media policy.

There is a lot of online discussion around Kodak – about 470 million brand mentions on Twitter last year alone, says Thomas Hoehn, Director, Interactive Marketing and Convergence Media, Kodak.

"We can't ignore that," he says. "We have to engage in these conversations."

That's exactly what Hoehn's team has done for more than two and a half years. When they started listening to and engaging in social media conversations, they noticed many consumers had a vague familiarity, at best, with Kodak's products. They also noticed their competitors were mentioned more often than Kodak in certain categories.

The team worked hard to reverse those trends, and in the process developed a comprehensive social media strategy.

"The fact that I don't see any conversations such as 'Kodak, they make digital cameras?' is an improvement. Whereas two-and-a-half years ago, I did see that," says Hoehn.

Also, Kodak's direct sales and online share-of-voice are on an upward trend, Hoehn says, due in part to his team's social media efforts.

Below, we highlight six lessons the team learned about using social media to shift brand perceptions and increase online sales. Consider them as you develop your own social media strategy:

Lesson #1. Listen before you speak

Listening and researching your market are well-known prerequisites to entering social media. However, once you've entered the space, you should keep your ears open.

Kodak recently hired a "Chief Listener" who monitors daily social media activity around Kodak and their industry. This person has a rare blend of marketing, business and social media expertise that was not easy to find, Hoehn says.

The Chief Listener monitors the blogosphere, forums and other social outlets for opportunities to bring Kodak into conversations and to assist and enrich conversations already involving Kodak.

- Study market sentiment

Listening to social channels gives Kodak insight into the market's reactions to their brand, products, competition and trends. It also can guide the team's response to negative feedback.

For example, the team saw that many consumers were raving online about their new Zi8 Pocket Video Camcorder. However, they also found a review that liked the product but said it had a terrible name. They responded by launching an online contest to name their next pocket camera, the Playsport.

- Use social monitoring tools

Manually monitoring social networks and blogs is not practical. Many tools have sprung up in the last two years to help marketers keep track of online conversations related to their brand or industry keywords.

Kodak's team uses a paid tool for their efforts. If you're looking for an inexpensive way to get started, Hoehn suggests trying free tools such as:

- Google Alerts
- Technorati
- TweetDeck
- Seismic

Lesson #2. Add value when joining conversations

The team looks for opportunities to add their input to relevant conversations. Here are examples of how and when Hoehn's team reaches out to add value:

- Discussing related topics

Kodak's brand is relevant to many related topics, including:

- Scrapbooking and photo crafts
- Digital printing
- Digital camera history
- Film

The team developed resources to help people interested in such topics. When the team finds a group of people online discussing a related topic, they often add Kodak's point of view and share a link to their online resources.

- Comparing products

People often compare products in forums and blogs, or wonder aloud in social channels which product they should buy. In these cases, Hoehn's team can respond with third-party reviews and sample photos or videos from their products. The key is to provide information to help the consumer decide – not to barge in and offer a discount.

- Complaining

The team often responds to social media complaints about a Kodak product with links to potential solutions. For example, the team will send a person complaining about a Kodak printer links to the printer's manual and to customer service contact information.

"Some of the most powerful words you can say in social media right now are 'How can I help you?'" says Hoehn.

- Correcting misinformation

The team also listens for misinformation surrounding its products and services. They are quick to dispel myths, such as a rumor that a product might be discontinued.

When the team finds these cases, they respond as quickly as possible. Using tools that monitor real-time conversations is a must for quick response.

Lesson #3. Don't be intrusive

Knowing when to refrain from joining a conversation is just as important as knowing when to add input. Hoehn's team avoids becoming "the Kodak stalker," he quips, by not reaching out in these situations:

- One-to-one conversations

A conversation between two people, such as on Facebook, is not a good place to add your company's point of view. Doing so would be intrusive and could upset them. Places such as public forums and blog posts are much more appropriate places to add your commentary.

- Simple mentions

Comments such as "I bought a Kodak camera today" and "I'm loving my new Kodak printer" often do not require a response. At most, the team might write "That's great. Thank you," in response, Hoehn says.

- Offering promotions

The team also avoids pitching promotions in social media, because "barging in with offers" does not fit with their strategy of listening and adding value, says Hoehn.

Lesson #4. Use real people behind the brand

The team strikes a balance between having social media participants speak for the brand and having them show their personality.

For example, their Chief Blogger's Twitter profile features her picture above the Kodak logo. In the feed, she maintains a personal tone, but everything she says is with the knowledge that she is representing the company.

Showing real people behind your brand is important, Hoehn says:

- First, no one wants to talk to a logo. They want to speak with a person.

- Second, if someone is angry, they're more likely to tone down their language when dealing with a person.

Lesson #5. Treat consumer and business customers differently

Although consumer purchases make up the majority of Kodak's transactions, 60% of their revenue is attributable to businesses customers through Kodak's commercial printing, high-speed inkjets, printing plates, and other products

The team interacts differently with business customers. They strive to raise awareness and establish thought leadership by:

- Creating relevant content, such as whitepapers or blog posts
- Contributing to relevant conversations online
- Referring commentators to their educational content

"It's deeper in the engagement in terms of the kind of information you share," Hoehn says. "It's not about a Facebook wall post."

Lesson #6. Transparency is paramount

When engaging in social media, team members make it easy for consumers to identify who is speaking. This transparency engenders trust.

The company created a formal social media policy for all employees. They have taken transparency a step further by publicly releasing a social media tips book which contains this social media policy.

Their guidelines include:

- Uphold Kodak's values
- Be transparent and be yourself
- Protect confidential information
- Avoid unsubstantiated product claims

Be aware that linking to another site may imply endorsement of its content

Publishing this information shows consumers that Kodak has nothing to hide in the social space, says Hoehn. The document also features social media tips and industry information, which helps establish the team's thought leadership in the category.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS – CREATE A ROAD MAP

A METHOD FOR MAPPING AN EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Developing an effective strategy for integrating social media into the mix presents a significant obstacle to the successful adoption of social marketing. Seeing the need for a practical method to overcome this obstacle, MarketingSherpa created the Social Marketing ROAD Map. Using this methodology gives marketers the ability to make winning decisions. “ROAD” is an acronym for the following elements:

Social Marketing ROAD Map

- Research**

Gather intelligence on target audiences, social use and competition.
Stop, look and listen – it’s the first step to an effective social marketing strategy. Profile your target audiences and their social characteristics. Monitor their dialog and how preferred platforms are used. Benchmark brand popularity, share of voice and other qualitative and quantitative social metrics for your company and competitors. This is also an opportunity to assess your organization’s existing resources, communities and digital assets that may add value to your strategy.
- Objectives**

Define objectives aligned with target audiences and social metrics.
Forget about soft objectives like “increasing awareness.” Achieving hard, measurable and targeted objectives is the only way to win over social marketing skeptics who control the budgets at your organization. Segment, select and prioritize target audiences by social status. When possible, align objectives with metrics traceable to financials like ROI, cost-per-lead and sales conversions rather than qualitative measures such as sentiment. There are a variety of free tools (Google Analytics, Social Mention, etc.) and commercial analytical solutions for providing the quantitative tracking data required.
- Actions**

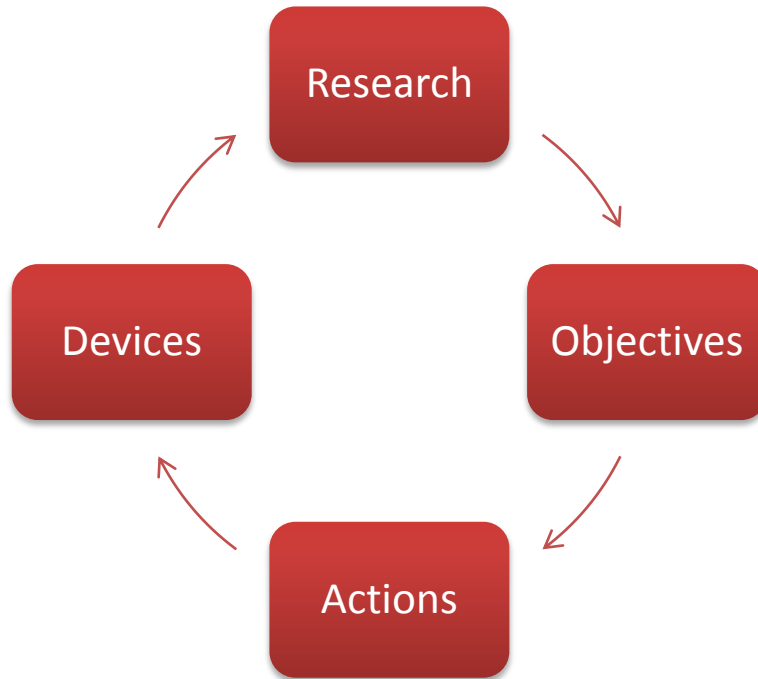
Create a social marketing strategy with a tactical plan of action.
Once you have established targeted and measurable objectives, you will need to plot a course of action toward achieving the desired outcomes. This section will specify the social marketing tactics, implementation timetables, campaigns and best practices, roles and responsibilities, policies and procedures, and budgets your strategy will require. It will also define your social marketing architecture – the pathways for connecting target audiences and conversations to content hubs, landing pages and conversion points.
- Devices**

Select platforms by their tactical effectiveness and architectural fit.
An effective strategy is expected to outlive the brief lifespan of today’s popular social platforms. Therefore, your ROAD Map to this point has been technology brand-agnostic. But now is the time to identify, assess and select the appropriate social platforms (Devices) that effectively fit into your current social marketing architecture. If a social network is appropriate, will it be Facebook or LinkedIn? Do you need to build a private customer service forum or will a Twitter account be a better solution? These are the final questions your strategy will answer.

THE SOCIAL MARKETING ROAD MAP IS A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

The Social Marketing ROAD Map is a four-step process for creating an effective strategy. The process is not linear, but circular. It is a continuous process for improvement that grows more powerful with each cycle. The Japanese coined the term “Kaizen” for the continuous improvement process, or the never-ending effort to improve products, services and processes. In this case, we use Kaizen as a never-ending effort to improve the results of your social marketing strategy.

THE SOCIAL MARKETING ROAD MAP CYCLE



The Social Marketing ROAD Map cycle begins with Research, or gathering intelligence on your social marketing situation prior to developing your strategy. Once the initial cycle is complete, it begins again at the research step by gathering intelligence, not only on the current social marketing situation but also on what worked – and what *didn't* – during the previous cycle.

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