Social Media

Strategies for Engaging in Facebook, Twitter & Other Social Media

Marketing

Liana "Li" Evans

QUE®

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Social Media Marketing

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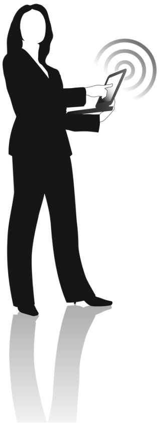
Introduction



I believe that social media is changing the way that companies need to interact with both their audiences and customers by listening and directly engaging with them. I'm Liana "Li" Evans, and I am the author of Social Media Marketing: Strategies for Engaging in Facebook, Twitter, & Other Social Media.

I've written this book to give any marketer, novice, or expert a deeper look into the realm of social media marketing. So much has been touted, preached, and hoisted up on a pedestal as things marketers or companies should be doing, it's hard to believe what's true and what isn't. This book can be your guide from beginning to end in understanding what's hype and what's not. From making the case of whether or not you should be actively engaging in social media, to putting the pieces together to plan a successful social media marketing strategy, I hope you will put this book to good use.

There's a lot to digest when it comes to learning the different facets that comprise the world of social media. It isn't simply just Facebook or Twitter—there's a much bigger world out there than most marketers or company CEOs or CMOs are even aware of. Understanding that your audience and customers might not be where the media thinks they are (Twitter and Facebook, for example) is an important concept to grasp if you want to be successful.

Social media is also constantly changing. The Facebooks of today will be the Friendsters and MySpaces of tomorrow. Communities ebb and flow. They depend highly on engagement and members giving their time. When members cease to find reasons to share and leave the communities, those communities can go through low periods. Some recover, some don't. For this reason, you have to be flexible with your social media strategies and constantly be monitoring and researching the conversations and where they're happening.

Throughout the book, you'll find several themes:

- **Research**—You need to research your audience and customers thoroughly. Without the research, you are only guessing at where to start. Without the research, you will be wasting a lot of valuable time and resources in areas that most likely won't help you attain the goals you want to reach with your social media marketing plan.
- **Strategy**—Social media marketing is a lot more than just a laundry list of items that a company prints out on a marketing slick. Social media marketing, just like any other form of traditional or online marketing, needs a strategy. You need a well-thought-out plan with goals set in place so that you know where you want to be and how to get there.

- **Involvement**—It's not just your social media marketing team that's involved in engaging and participating in social media communities. Just about everyone in your company has some sort of stake—whether it's the stories your customer service reps hear on the phone, or it's people totally removed from marketing (your accounts payable department, for example) who have Facebook pages stating they work for you. Everyone in your company has some sort of involvement in your social media marketing strategy. Understanding that different levels of involvement all have differing affects is key to making sure you plan the right strategy for everyone in your company.
- **Measurement**—One of the biggest questions I hear when it comes to implementing a social media marketing strategy is, "How will I know if it's successful?" I also like to put the questions out there of "How do you know if what you are doing is not successful and when do you know when to stop doing it?" Your social media marketing strategy needs to be measured. Measurement comes in many different forms, from website traffic to the number of retweets your content is getting. No two companies will measure the same things the same way. Success or failure is different for everyone.

Social media is my passion. I have found companies that understand how to harness the power that social media communities offer and have become extremely successful and usually have a loyal band of brand evangelists ready to promote them at a moments' notice. Helping companies and marketers understand how to reach and engage their audiences through the power of social media is something I love to do, and I cringe when I see or hear so-called consultants selling social media services as if it were the next gimmick they need to get into.

Social media marketing isn't a gimmick—it's hard work that can be extremely engaging when implemented in the right way. Now more than ever, it's crucial for companies to be where the questions and conversations are going on that affect their bottom line. Social media is the perfect way to do that.

My hope is that you find this book to be your guide to help you become successful in your social media marketing efforts and that it gives you both the foundation and roadmap to help you along the way to that goal. Thanks for reading!

6

The Conversation Happens With or Without You

A funny thing happened when the Internet went mainstream. Ordinary people could talk to more people than just their neighbors, co-workers, and social club friends about what they were passionate about. Believe it or not, this started happening long before the term social media *was even a forethought in anyone's mind.*

Conversations about brands, products, and services started happening online with the advent of message boards, forums, and web-based chat rooms. From 1992 on, comic book collectors could talk all about which series they loved, advertise any extras for sale, speculate on what might happen in the next issue of their favorite comic, and announce whether they were planning to attend local or national comic cons (conferences dedicated to comic collectors) through message boards and forums dedicated to the topic.

These conversations weren't just on a national level, either. People from around the world could now speak about their passion for comics to fellow enthusiasts in countries thousands of miles away. Have a rare comic you'd like to trade? Wondering what really happened to Gambit *in the last issue of the* XMen *comics? Wondering if Stan Lee would make an appearance at the latest comic con? These are just a small sampling of the types of conversations that still go on in these forums.*

Even When You Aren't Listening, People Are Talking About You

All this was going on without DC or Marvel really understanding the hidden treasure trove that had sprung up without spending even a dime of their own marketing money. As the years progressed and online marketing moved toward banners and flashy graphic ads, ads for comics or movies based on comics or conventions began to appear in these forums. Eventually, forum members became banner blind; most just ignored the ads they had seen hundreds, if not thousands, of times.

Unfortunately, these comic book companies really missed out on an opportunity to connect with a very passionate audience early on. Instead of using banner ads and flashy graphics announcing a new issue, or a special event at a comic conference, they could have had a representative in the forums talking with the community members about upcoming issues, conferences, or maybe even gripes about current plot lines. This would have garnered a lot more engagement and interest than a banner advertisement ever could have.

The conversations in these forums went on without "official" input from any major comic book publishers. And this still happens today. Many companies miss prime opportunities to engage with customers or their audience on social media platforms because they believe that because they aren't involved, nothing is being said. They don't realize this point:

> The conversation goes on with or without you!

The people in these social media communities who are actively engaged in conversations about you, your brands, or your products and services do not adhere to your carefully crafted marketing messages, or your public relations timelines for releasing news, or when your CEO thinks you should be on the front page of the papers for your latest release. They talk about you whenever they want, however they want, and to whomever they want. It doesn't matter if it's a journalist from the *New York Times* or a fellow scrapbooker—community members will share their experiences. And they don't share just the good or the bad experiences, either—they share any experience. To community members, the simple act of sharing with one another drives these conversations.

Forums and message boards are some of the oldest and most powerful places on the Web where these conversations happen, but they are far from the only places where people are discussing your company. Conversations can also seem one-sided until you look deeper into comments, ratings, and reviews of the user-generated content on these social media sites.

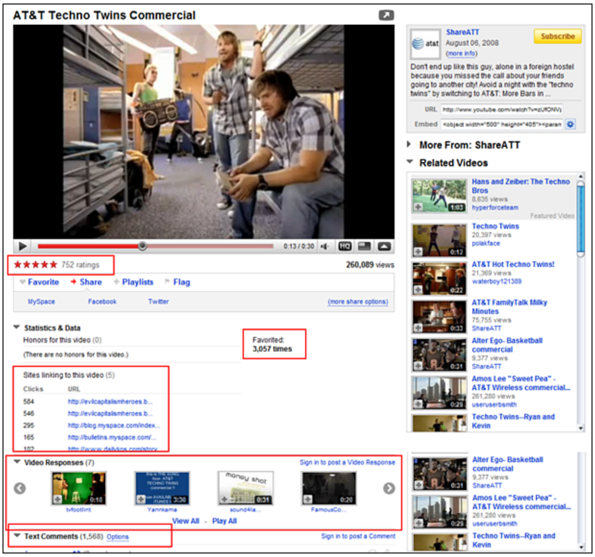
Blog posts, for example, can seem like they are written by someone just spouting off their thoughts, opinions, or experience with your brand or products. But take a closer look. Do you see comments or trackbacks? Who else is mentioning this blog post about your company or its products or services? If a blog has comments and trackbacks, a conversation certainly is going on, and you might want to become active in it if you aren't already.

With videos, perhaps you find one of your TV commercials on YouTube, but you haven't released it on your website. This could be a huge signal that your offline media is affecting the online world. Finding that people have pulled your commercials and put them online tells you that the audience either really likes them or finds them incredibly annoying. The only way to tell is by the descriptions, title, and comments.

Missing Out on Opportunities to Converse

AT&T has a great line of commercials that show people in precarious situations that they could've avoided if they'd subscribed to AT&T's service and gotten an important call. My favorite of these is the "Techno Twins" commercial—and based on the 1,000-plus comments and more than 3,000 saves to Favorites on YouTube in less than a year, I'm apparently not alone (see Figure 6.1).

Although the positive takeaway from this is that AT&T finally put the videos online (these commercials were not on AT&T's account when the commercials first started appearing on video-sharing sites), the company is missing out on a conversation. AT&T also is missing out on a prime opportunity to promote these clever commercials on their website, or even lead people to view them via their YouTube accounts on their website. As you can see in Figure 6.2, there's no obvious way to find the commercials by going directly through the AT&T home page.


AT&T Techno Twins Commercial
ShareATT
Subscribe
0:13 / 0:30
HQ
Favorite
Share
Playlists
Flag
MySpace
Facebook
Twitter
(more share options)
More From: ShareATT
Related Videos
Hans and Zeiber: The Techno Bros
8,635 views
hyperforceteam
Featured Video
Techno Twins
20,397 views
polakface
AT&T Hot Techno Twins!
21,369 views
waterboy121389
AT&T FamilyTalk Milky Minutes
75,755 views
ShareATT
Alter Ego- Basketball commercial
9,377 views
ShareATT
Amos Lee "Sweet Pea" - AT&T Wireless commercial...
261,280 views
useruserbsmth
Techno Twins--Ryan and Kevin
Video Responses (7)
Sign in to post a Video Response
tvfootlint
Yannkama
sound4la...
FamousCo...
View All - Play All
Text Comments (1,568) Options
Sign in to post a Comment

August 06, 2008 (more info)

Don't end up like this guy, alone in a foreign hostel because you missed the call about your friends going to another city! Avoid a night with the "techno twins" by switching to AT&T: More Bars in ...

URL http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUfONV;

Embed <object width="500" height="405"><param

752 ratings

260,089 views

Statistics & Data

Honors for this video (0)

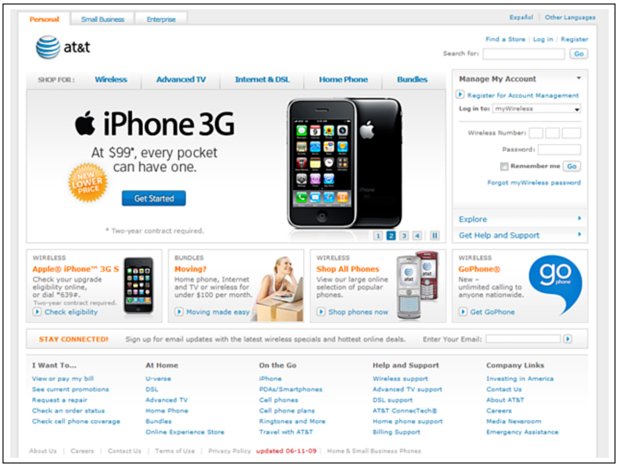
(There are no honors for this video.)

Favorited: 3,057 times

Sites linking to this video (5)

Clicks	URL
584	http://evilcapitalismheroes.b...
546	http://evilcapitalismheroes.b...
295	http://blog.myspace.com/index...
165	http://bulletins.myspace.com/...
102	http://www.dailykos.com/story

Figure 6.1 *AT&T Techno Twins Video on YouTube.*


Personal
Small Business
Enterprise
Español
Other Languages
at&t
Find a Store | Log in | Register
Search for:
Go
SHOP FOR:
Wireless
Advanced TV
Internet & DSL
Home Phone
Bundles
Manage My Account
Register for Account Management
Log in to: myWireless
Wireless Number:
Password:
Remember me
Go
Forgot myWireless password
Explore
Get Help and Support
iPhone 3G
NEW LOWER PRICE
Get Started
1 2 3 4
WIRELESS
Apple® iPhone™ 3G S
Check eligibility
BUNDLES
Moving?
Moving made easy
WIRELESS
Shop All Phones
Shop phones now
WIRELESS
GoPhone®
Get GoPhone
go phone
STAY CONNECTED!
Enter Your Email:
I Want To...
View or pay my bill
See current promotions
Request a repair
Check an order status
Check cell phone coverage
At Home
U-verse
DSL
Advanced TV
Home Phone
Bundles
Online Experience Store
On the Go
iPhone
PDAs/Smartphones
Cell phones
Cell phone plans
Ringtones and More
Travel with AT&T
Help and Support
Wireless support
Advanced TV support
DSL support
AT&T ConnecTech®
Home phone support
Billing Support
Company Links
Investing in America
Contact Us
About AT&T
Careers
Media Newsroom
Emergency Assistance
About Us | Careers | Contact Us | Terms of Use | Privacy Policy updated 06-11-09 | Home & Small Business Phones

At $99*, every pocket can have one.

* Two-year contract required.

Check your upgrade eligibility online, or dial *639#. Two-year contract required.

Home phone, Internet and TV or wireless for under $100 per month.

View our large online selection of popular phones.

New – unlimited calling to anyone nationwide.

Sign up for email updates with the latest wireless specials and hottest online deals.

Figure 6.2 *The AT&T home page doesn't link directly to the commercials that are creating buzz about AT&T.*

These commercials and subsequent videos on YouTube get people talking. The comments might not be directly related to AT&T's products or its wireless service, but they're still a vehicle to start a conversation with the more serious commenters.

Now imagine if AT&T had these commercials on their website and allowed their actual customers and audience members who are more directly interested in their products and services to comment on these videos. Can you imagine the kind of feedback they could get and what they could learn? Talk about missing out on insightful conversations! People are also embedding this video in blog posts and linking to it. This particular video also has seven video responses, plus homemade spoofs of the video. All the videos in the series, which are now viewable videos on YouTube, are conversation starters.

I don't say that AT&T needs to start the conversation, because that's what these clever videos do. Although they make you laugh, because you wouldn't want to be caught in this situation, they also make you think. AT&T could be asking, "Have you ever been stuck like this with your own version of the Techno Twins? Tell us your story!"

So much opportunity exists here for active engagement, from conversing with the company's own "built-in audience"—customers that come to the AT&T website to pay their bills or learn about services—to capitalizing on the spoof videos and video responses posted on the commercial housed on YouTube. Unfortunately, this also shows AT&T that the conversation about these commercials and AT&T is going on without the company's active involvement.

User-Generated Content and Media Give More Control to the Consumer

With the advent of user-generated content and media—and the ability to share any of it via social media sites on the Internet—companies have to be aware that these conversations exist and that they really have no control over them. Trying to control the conversations can only result in revolt by said communities and more bad press than any company could ask for. Listening and actively participating is a company's best course of action when discovering any kind of conversation in the social media environment.

Being humble when you first discover the conversations and trying to enter and participate in them is key. Just because you own the company, product, or service doesn't always mean you know everything about how your customers find value in it. Sit back and listen first; ask questions and then offer advice or information in a way that doesn't offend the community. The last thing you want to be marked as in these communities is a "marketer" or a "know-it-all."

Understanding that these conversations are going on is the first step in social media planning. The second step is finding your audience and understanding how and where members are having these conversations. From there, you can plan a strategy that involves getting engaged in the conversations in a positive manner.

No longer can companies afford to ignore social media or play the "we did not know" card. Consumer-generated content is having wide-ranging effects on both the perception of a company and whether a purchase is eventually made. These effects are not immediate, but somewhere along that decision cycle, a conversation in social media will most likely have had an impact on the purchase decision.

The question now becomes, can your company afford not to participate in the conversation?

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