

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE YOUR BRAND

By Allan Steinmetz, CEO | *Inward Strategic Consulting*

Lately, it seems that every time you open a newspaper, read a blog (a blog is also a social media app) or surf the Internet there is someone commenting about social media applications, such as Facebook, LinkedIn and more recently Twitter. Social networking Web sites, such as Facebook and others, now attract more than 500 million visitors a month and are valued in the billions of dollars. Those statistics are staggering.

The past four years has proven social media is no longer an Internet phenomena but rather something that is here to stay that drives innovation, collaboration and unleashes human potential. It brings people closer together to create abundant conversations around topics that range from consumer topics like pregnancy to business topics like production throughput.

From a consumer perspective it has created an environment where the collective knowledge of a group is leveraged to the benefit of the individual user. For instance, I recently joined Facebook, because my son posted some photographs of a recent trip he took with his wife. As soon as I joined I was inundated by friends, relatives and old acquaintances that requested that I befriend (term is "friend" them ("befriend them" - I didn't even know that was a term until two months ago). My first reaction was how much time do these people spend on the sites? When I started digging deeper I realized it wasn't just for passing gossip and reconnecting with acquaintances, I realized that real knowledge on a variety of subjects is being conveyed.



Social Media Applications Work For Business Too

Some of the most popular consumer social media are real people promoting their own views and sharing with others who have similar interests such as Moms talking to Moms, gamers communicating with gamers or political junkies talking to whomever. A simple Google search of blogs on your favorite topic will yield limitless results. The same can be said for business topics:

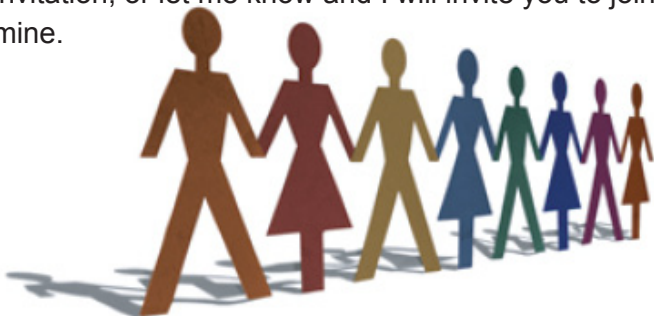
- **Blogs:** A blog (a contraction of the term weblog is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. Check out the Inward

Consulting blog as an example:
<http://inwardconsulting.blogspot.com/>. We use Twitter to allow our readers to follow what we are doing every day. <http://twitter.com/shsteinman>.

- **Social Media:** Social media is information content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies that is intended to facilitate communications, influence and stimulate interaction with peers and with public audiences, typically via the Internet and mobile communications networks. Sites such as LinkedIn, and even Facebook and MySpace are very useful in disseminating and collecting information. Check out my LinkedIn profile at <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/0/43/333>.

From a business/professional perspective I have been a member of LinkedIn from its inception (at least four years ago) when a professional colleague who I respect asked me to join his LinkedIn group. At the time I had no idea what I was doing, why I was doing it or what benefit I would derive from making these connections? However, if my professional colleague made that request I couldn't deny him. Over the four years I've come to realize that it indeed is a very powerful tool for business development, asking probing questions and receiving advice, and finding talent for filling vacant positions.

The referrals I receive through LinkedIn are substantial and have benefited the growth of our company in many ways. More importantly, I have been able to expand my relationships with people all around the world, in several networking groups to clients and friends in ways that I would otherwise rarely have a means to communicate with them. I now have 289 connections and 28 recommendations. If you would like to join my network, send me an email invitation, or let me know and I will invite you to join mine.



Using Social Media to Promote Your Internal Brand

To take it one step further I started to investigate how the aforementioned social media applications are being used within corporate cultures as a medium to facilitate effective change/communications. What I found was amazing. I found that social media is now being used through corporate platforms to unify, and establish collaboration, create innovation, solve global client problems, establish corporate standards across large multinational corporations and the list goes on and on.

Here are a few poignant examples:

EMC has an internal social platform called Global/One:

- Their goal was to build relationships on a one-to-one “personal reference” level amongst staff and the corporation with virtually zero-budget toward branding.
- Over the last three years it has become the driving force behind a cultural shift in a collaborative environment that is spurring innovation, global collaboration and solutions that solve client's problems.
- It has created social media “rock stars” within the company who are becoming recognized leaders for their blog writings as the go-to opinion leaders who people respect and follow for their thoughtful ideas and inspiration.

IBM has created a similar platform called Beehive:

- Beehive is an internal social networking site that gives IBMers a “rich connection to the people they work with” on both a personal and a professional level.
- The Beehive team created the site to help IBM employees meet the challenge of building the relationships vital to working in large, distributed enterprises today.
- The team is also exploring if Beehive can help

IBMers discover people with common interests or the right skills for a project, whether learning more about someone -- either personally or professionally -- facilitates making contact, and to what extent it entices people to learn about ongoing projects and activities beyond their immediate team.

Google uses social media tools as a reporting mechanism:

- The company's engineers use blogs and wikis as a way to report work progress.
- Managers stay abreast of their progress and provide direction by using tools that make it easy to mine data on workflows.
- Engineers are better able to coordinate work with one another and can request back up help when needed.

Pixar has a video wiki for animation collaboration:

- The company started with text based—then moved to video based wikis to share information about films in production and to document meeting notes.
- Once the system was installed, critique lead to increased efficiency and faster film development.

Conclusion

Social media advances are getting so much attention that McKinsey recently conducted a analysis and assessment of what major corporations were doing and what some of the impediments and obstacles were that were preventing more wide scale participation in social networking technologies. The result of their analysis was reported in the February issue of McKinsey Quarterly.

http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/Six_ways_to_make_Web_20_work_2294

In summary there are six initiatives/ideas that are

promulgating effective use of social media. McKinsey sees it as a major development within corporate cultures with potentially higher success factors in comparison to the CRM and ERP initiatives of the late 90s. It is not just a timely phenomenon that will likely pass with time, but rather a rules changing paradigm shift that will dramatically change how companies will compete and conduct business. Some of the items they suggest are as follows;

1. ***The transformation to a bottom up culture needs help from the top.*** Social media channels need senior leaders using it as an example to gain credibility and traction. Senior executives need to become role models and lead through informal channels for it to catch on across the board.
2. ***The best uses come from users-but they require help to scale.*** Applications that drive the most value through participatory technologies often aren't those that management expects. When management chooses the wrong uses, organizations often don't regroup by switching to applications that might be successful.
3. ***What's in the workflow is what get's used.*** Adopt social media as part of the daily work routine—not just something extra on the side.
4. ***Appeal to the participants egos and needs***—not just their wallets. Recognize and reward employees' positive participation in social media experiments publically. Like EMC, shower contributors with public praise, make them "Rock Stars" and reward their enthusiasm, acknowledging the quality and usefulness of contributions.
5. ***The right solution comes from the right participants.*** Getting the right audience to participate is critical to the quality the social media channel. Select users who will help drive a self-sustaining effort (often enthusiastic early technology adopters who have rich personal networks and will thus share knowledge and exchange ideas). And be committed to create collective value.

6. ***Balance the top down and self management of risk.*** A common reason for failed participation is discomfort with it, or even fear. In some cases, the lack of management control over the selforganizing nature and power of dissent is the issue. In others, it's the potential repercussions of content—through blogs, social networks, and other venues—that is detrimental to the company. Make sure the content and participants in any social media channel are managed and expectations are set so there is a balance. Include all stakeholders in the discussions to resolve potential issues before they arise.

As all the current thinking suggests, there are major employee mind set adjustments and change management communications requirement with implementing an effective social media strategy inside your company. Change management communications were also required during initiation and launch of reengineering and process redesign in the mid 90's and CRM systems after the millennium. If you don't motivate your people to embrace the new technological change by educating them, by demonstrating how the change is relevant to their lives/jobs, the acceptance/adoption of new habits will never occur and your firm will fall behind on this new technological social media movement.

We have put together a timely PowerPoint tutorial explaining the trends with advice on how to get started. If you would like us to set up a time to review that with you and your team or would simply would like a copy, reply back to this email. Also at Inward, we are curious how social media is changing the rules of engagement, so if you have stories from your own experiences and ideas to share with us please reply back to this email as well.

So jump into this new social media world. You can decide to dip your toe into it or your whole body. Let us help show you the way. We have the skills, strategic relationships with some of the best social media designers, strategists and technologists around and the change management communications capabilities to insure your success.

About The Author:

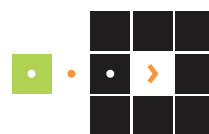
Allan Steinmetz is the CEO and founder of Inward Strategic Consulting, an internal & external branding, change management, team alignment and market research consulting firm with offices in Boston, Orlando, Chicago and San Francisco.



He has over 30 years' experience in marketing, branding, change management, and advertising/communications. His background includes work for Ford Motor Company, US Postal Service, Ericsson, Pitney Bowes, Campbell's Soup, several High Tech companies and start-ups and professional services firms.

Prior to establishing the firm, he was Senior Vice President and Corporate Director of Marketing for Arthur D. Little, a premium management consulting firm; where he was responsible for the firm's brand identity, business development, lead generation, advertising and communications. Prior to ADL, he was the Worldwide Director of Marketing and Communications for Andersen Consulting (now called Accenture). Prior to Andersen he was with Young and Rubicam for ten years as Senior Vice President and Director of Marketing in a variety of management and new business roles.

Allan has been cited in over 100 business publications such as the Wall Street Journal, Adweek, BtoB Magazine and many others. He has been a featured speaker and presenter at International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), American Learning Institute, American Marketing Association, Information Technology Services Marketing Association (ITSMA) and the American Strategic Management Institute (ASMI).



Inward
STRATEGIC CONSULTING

www.InwardConsulting.com

T: 617.558.9770 | F: 617.964.9355

Boston | Chicago | Orlando
San Francisco | Bentonville | Minneapolis