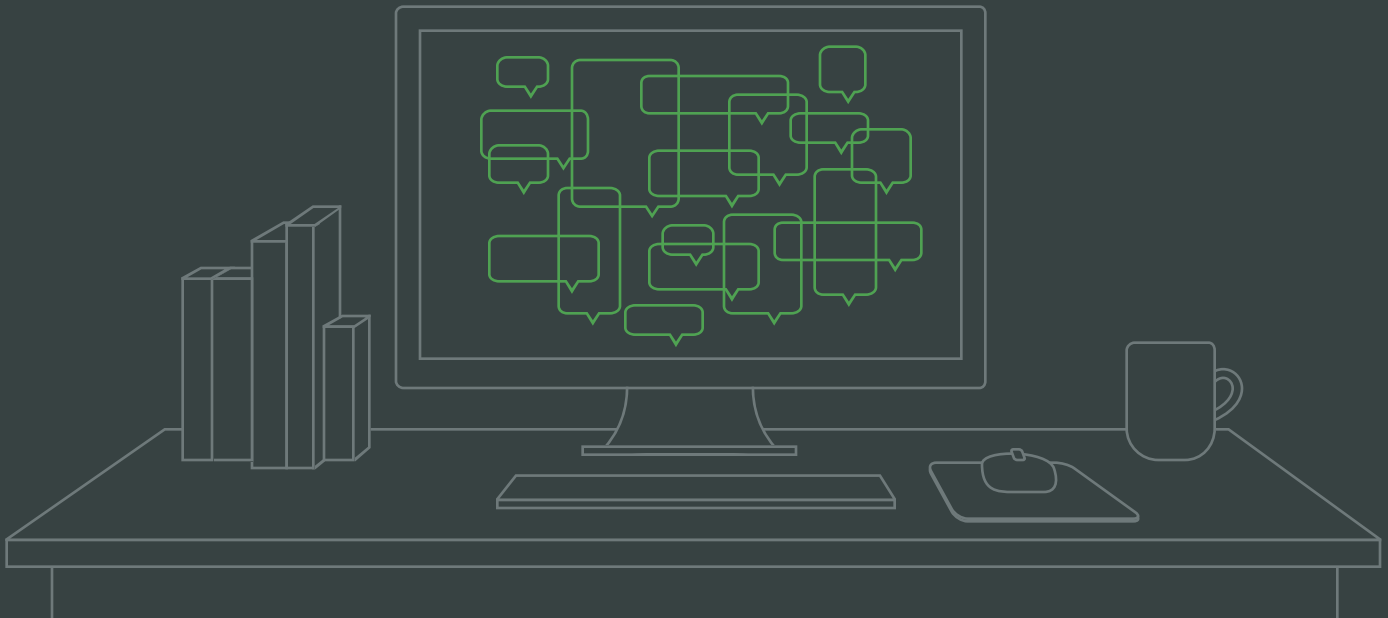




FOUR FUNCTIONS

That Benefit from Social Business

“Social media now extends well beyond the marketing mix.”



Social media traditionally makes its most permanent home in the marketing and communications function of many businesses. It's emerged in recent years to become a critical engagement channel for brand awareness, promotions and customer loyalty. However, social now extends well beyond the marketing mix and should integrate into a number of key functions. Aside from often being dubbed the new customer currency, the reality is effective social business can be a tangible and sustainable contributor of incremental revenue for your entire organization.

Customer support associates, human resource professionals, business development leaders and product innovators take note: social media is a crucial component to successfully reaching your functional objectives. Not totally convinced? Keep reading to discover why embracing social will not only make your job easier, but will ensure your contributions to a successful bottom line define what it means to be a social business.



1 Customer Care & Service

One of the most obvious functions to benefit since social media's inception is customer care and service. Social quickly became a vital channel for responding to customer inquiries and many brands have recognized this trend appropriately. In fact, social media analytics firm Simply Measured reports that more than **32 percent of top brands** have dedicated customer service handles on Twitter.

Social channels are rapidly becoming a preferred consumer communication and feedback channel. In turn, social media takes much of the workload previously reserved for email and telephone, so it's more important than ever to staff and educate customer care teams correctly. Not only must they pay attention to sensitive support inquiries and service requests via social, they also need to constantly transform these public interactions into positive brand evangelism.

If you have not yet focused on social care, first build a team of brand advocates to spearhead your efforts and, above all, choose passionate, considerate people and train them thoroughly. Successful social care can make or break your brand.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Do we have dedicated care & service social profiles and handles?
- Is our care team properly educated, equipped and able to act to solve issues?
- Do our specialists show humanity and compassion when managing social care?
- Does our social management platform integrate with help desk solutions?
- Do we have guidelines for when it is appropriate to take customer issues offline?
- How does our brand define successful social care (response rates, times, tickets)?

As you shape your social customer care and service efforts, treat each interaction as an opportunity to strengthen customer relationships. Know that the results of ensuing conversations will greatly impact your brand reputation, customer loyalty and new sales.

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2 Human Resources & Recruiting

The first place HR managers look when reviewing a possible new hire is their Facebook page, right? As a job candidate, you've likely wised up to ensure your social profiles are properly private or removed of questionable content. (Bravo for doing killer keg stands at your high school reunion, but it's probably not the best profile pic if you're on the job hunt.) Yet aside from scouring the networks for bad behavior, recruiters continue to find tangible value through social recruiting efforts.

In fact, social media management is a critical component to many recruiters daily regimen. From creating, publishing and sharing open positions to searching for and interviewing potential candidates, LinkedIn has long been considered the primary social recruiting site. More recently, sites like Facebook and Twitter now offer enhanced ideas and apps to discover qualified candidates, establish meaningful connections and bring the best people on board. For example, [Pizza Hut recently embraced social recruiting](#) for a social manager position with Twitter topping 140-character interviews at SxSW.

Marketing and HR teams have an opportunity to collaborate and cohesively manage their brand's social sphere of influence. Don't ignore social sites as an inspired and, in many cases, necessary resource for recruitment. Appropriate attention should be paid to this aspect of social business as you map out a hiring strategy and activate key channels.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Which social sites are more useful for cultivating possible talent and new hires?
- Do we publish and share appropriate job listings with our social audience?
- How can we tap into our existing fan base to connect with qualified candidates?
- What tools should we use to efficiently and effectively amplify openings?
- Can we accurately track jobs that are interesting to our social audience?
- Do we adequately check social profiles as part of the candidate review process?

While not the only channel to be used for talent development, social recruiting adds needed depth and dimension to your brand's outward persona and, conversely, offers invaluable insight into the people who might just be your next great hires.

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3 Sales & Business Development

Social selling is a term that gets thrown around lately, but what does it actually entail? How can sales functions tap into social networks to develop new customers? Sales representatives are continually faced with challenges when it comes to social. They are required to maintain visibility, work with new tools and rethink how to navigate deals in a more connected and public world. Though technologies and tools may mature, it is important to maintain the fundamentals to make the most out of social media.

The relationship between sales and marketing is key to successful social business development. If teams are nicely connected, there will be greater consistency in how your brand is showcased socially—whether the message comes from marketing, a sales rep or any other brand ambassador. Furthermore, just as sales teams can promote approved marketing messages, a social media manager can subtly bring sales talking points into online conversations without being pushy or provocative. It's a give and take with powerful results.

As overall public understanding of what your company and products are about increases, sales teams will better connect and convert new customers. Typically a larger team of individuals—perhaps separated by product, category or geography—sales group leaders should work closely with marketing to implement cohesive strategies across the board.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Where does social fit in with our sales objectives, strategies and tactics?
- Do our sales and social/marketing teams collaborate and augment each other?
- Do sales people maintain active, appropriate and professional social profiles?
- How can sales people effectively sell on social without seeming like stalkers?
- Should our social selling highlight ideas and insight rather than tangible products?
- Do our CRM and SMM technology platforms properly integrate for holistic views?

Since social media was not built with sales as original intent, focus your social selling on the people behind the profiles. Maintain a healthy attitude and focus on ways to humanize your social efforts to build rapport, continue conversations and, ultimately, close the deal.

“ Focus your social selling on the people behind the profiles. ”



4 Product Innovation & Development

By its very nature, social media provides an almost rapid, informal feedback loop that can be extremely useful for product innovation and development teams. The sheer volume of social chatter, key phrases and brand mentions may either expose unmet needs or the most valued aspects of your products and services.

At the most simplistic level, social conversations are important indicators of how people actually use your product. They provide a unique and usually unfiltered opportunity to view the product through the eyes of those who matter most. In fact, annoying bugs, technical glitches, and undesirable experiences are many times first uncovered through active social communities. What people value, how they use features and what bothers them most can and should be regularly extracted through quick scans of social media.

Innovation and development teams are skilled, creative and energized individuals who work tirelessly to build and deploy top-notch products and services. Rightfully, they must maintain a level of autonomy to what is best for the brand—but social interactions provide a necessary pulse check.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How can we incorporate social conversations into product innovations?
- Can we proactively use social to gather essential customer feedback?
- How do we differentiate between social chatter and viable concepts?
- What patterns can we recognize to indicate product strengths and weakness?
- How do we eloquently address product requests that may not come to fruition?
- Do we listen to competitive or category conversations to uncover industry trends?

Don't let social conversations define your roadmap, but take thoughtful consideration of feedback, new ideas and product reviews presented on social media. It's important to recognize and celebrate your customers' emotional investment because one thing your team cannot manufacture is an unbridled passion for your brand.

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While social now extends well beyond the marketing mix, as marketing leaders you should step up to encourage additional discovery, enable conversations and implement best practices across your entire organization. Not only will customer care, recruiting, sales and product innovation functionally benefit, but your brand's overall marketplace visibility and perception will also improve thanks to more cohesive, collaborative social efforts.

About Sprout Social

Sprout Social provides social media engagement, publishing and analytic tools for top global brands including AMD, McDonald's, Pepsi, UPS and Yammer. A powerful platform for social business, Sprout enables brands to more effectively manage social channels and provide an exceptional customer experience. Headquartered in Chicago, Sprout is a Twitter Certified Product and a Facebook Preferred Marketing Developer.

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