SOCIAL MARKETING PRIMER FOR 2018

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SUMMARY

Marketing leaders recognize social marketing as one of the most effective channels across the customer journey. Use Gartner's 2018 social marketing research to solidify your strategy, innovate and execute to deliver business results.

Scope

Social marketing involves listening to and engaging customers, distributing content and cultivating brand advocates. It can increase awareness, consideration, conversion and advocacy.

Social marketing includes:

- Mining social media data for customer insights
- Developing, distributing and measuring social content
- Engaging with prospects, customers, influencers and employees on social networks
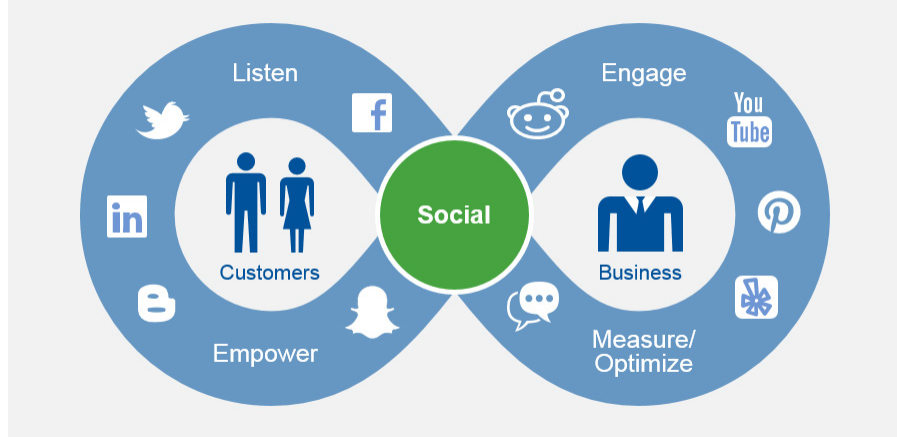- Expanding social media advertising campaigns and social commerce initiatives

Social marketing is consistently ranked as the most effective digital channel from awareness through advocacy.

ANALYSIS

Figure 1. Social Marketing Overview

Source: Gartner (January 2018)

At the core of what makes social media a revolutionary marketing platform is the dual value it offers brands and audiences. It enables peer-to-peer and customer-to-brand conversation along the entire customer journey, while producing rich data-driven insight from those conversations. Social marketing is consistently ranked as the most effective digital channel from awareness through advocacy, and 80% of marketers responsible for marketing via social channels or connections rank themselves as "highly knowledgeable" about the channel (see "Survey Analysis: How Social Marketing Mastery and Measurement Drive Investment").

Less mature social marketers, particularly in B2B companies and regulated industries, are beginning to make significant investments in the channel. And there we find scenarios, such as B2B social selling, which represent some of the most compelling social marketing use cases and most measurable results.

Social marketing has suffered — broadly — from a lack of innovation in recent years. With the exception of the rise of social advertising as a core component of social marketing programs, there's been little change or disruption in the practice of late.

Marketing leaders who believe they've mastered the channel should be wary, however. Recent innovations point to significant changes in social marketing — from audience migration to messaging apps to the democratization of live broadcasting (see "Five Trends That Will Disrupt Social Marketing (And What to Do About Them)"). These trends will converge to drive social marketing further from its silo, putting specialized roles, teams and tools at risk. Even mature and knowledgeable social marketers need to find innovative ways to continually sharpen their game by embracing disruption.

Top Challenges and How Gartner Can Help

Marketing leaders should use Gartner's 2018 social marketing research to overcome the challenges of delivering results in social media. Use this research to prepare your brand for coming changes to social marketing, extend the value of your social programs and data across the organization, and prioritize your martech investments to support effective social marketing.

How can we leverage social marketing to drive business outcomes?

Social marketing processes, technologies and staffing will need to respond to significant changes in the landscape in the coming year. The rise of messaging apps, fundamental changes to the social networks themselves (and therefore the ways marketers do business with and through them), the importance of unified customer data and the democratization of live broadcasting will have significant impact on how brands approach social marketing. While operating in this changing environment, marketers need to place bets where they're most likely to move the needle on their business objectives, from driving awareness to nurturing advocacy.

Planned Research

- How successful B2B marketers are leveraging social media, including social selling initiatives

- What marketers need to know about today's Facebook and the growing role of messaging apps

- How marketers in regulated industries receive value from social marketing while remaining compliant

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How can we provide value from social across the organization?

Marketing leaders still struggle to quantify the return on their social marketing investments, and need to look beyond marketing for ways to bring value to the organization. Fortunately, the ubiquity of social use cases across an organization presents many ways to do this. Many of these areas, like crisis management and customer service, take marketers outside their comfort zones. But marketers must adjust, and learn how to connect their discipline across the organization. Gartner predicts that by year-end 2022, 40% of specialized social marketing jobs will be absorbed into generalist roles or be replaced by automation. The role of the marketer thus shifts from master of a stand-alone domain, to leader and director of a social symphony. A strong playbook of known best practices, as well as governance of social content, becomes increasingly important, especially in distributed marketing and sales business models.

Planned Research

- Anticipating, preparing for and managing social crises, from social analytics to uncover smoldering issues to using 1:1 engagement to engage customers

- Connecting social IDs and first-party data to better support multichannel marketing initiatives

- Marketing's role in social customer care, and how to leverage insights from customer service interactions to inform marketing initiatives, while supporting the care organization with tailored content to improve those interactions

- The evolving skills of the social marketer — from social governance to multichannel orchestration

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How should we invest in social marketing technology?

Social marketing began as a bastion of shadow IT. While social marketing technologies have evolved into organizations' strategic tech stacks, there's still opportunity for greater integration between social marketing tools and the platforms used by the rest of the organization. In determining where social marketing technology connects with other platforms, marketers are identifying significant redundancy and lack of efficiency in their social marketing technology deployments. Gartner's research will help you identify how to consolidate and invest in the technologies that will be most impactful for your organization.

Planned Research

- Market Guides and research on social analytics, social marketing management and specialized social marketing technologies

Related Priorities

Priority	Focus
Multichannel Marketing and Communications	Multichannel marketing constitutes purposeful, mutually orchestrated engagements, across digital and traditional customer touchpoints.
Mobile Marketing	Successful mobile marketing uses valuable data emitted by mobile devices while balancing effective microtargeting of audiences with overwhelming prospects and customers with interruptions.
Advertising	Advertising encompasses the creation, delivery and orchestration of paid marketing messages and content across channels.
Marketing Data and Analytics	Data and analytics have become the foundation of marketing, driving efficiency and effectiveness through better data collection, modeling, optimization and greater relevance to the consumer.
Customer Experience Strategy and Design	Customer experience management is the practice of designing and reacting to customer interactions to meet or exceed their expectations, leading to greater customer satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy.
Content Marketing and Management	Content marketing and management focuses on creating, distributing and amplifying content via digital and offline channels. This content fuels audience engagement to achieve organizational goals.
Digital Commerce	Digital commerce involves the use of marketing technology, techniques and channels — along with data-driven insights and compelling content — to deliver revenue growth through digital sales channels.

Source: Gartner

GARTNER RECOMMENDED READING

Suggested First Steps

"Use This Formula to Focus Your Social Marketing Strategy"

"Use Social Media to Power the Entire Customer Experience"

"Survey Analysis: How Social Marketing Mastery and Measurement Drive Investment"

Essential Reading

"Push Your Social Marketing Further With Innovative Content, Advocacy and Analytics"

"Market Guide for Social Marketing Management"

"Achieve Your Marketing Objectives on LinkedIn"

"Embrace a New Approach to Social Marketing Measurement"

"Should You Invest in a Social Command Center?"

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Digital has redefined the role of marketing, adding new players and creating bigger complexities

Gartner for Marketers helps you get up to speed on and stay smarter in the eight marketing areas that matter most: social, mobile, multichannel and data-driven marketing, digital commerce, customer experience, marketing management, and emerging marketing technology and trends. Our clients say that they use our real-time, expert advice and objective research, data and tools to:

• Target the right audiences

• Choose the right channels

• Quickly shortlist marketing and technology providers

• Stay informed on market and competitors

• Save time and avoid costly mistakes

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