

Just the facts

Title	What is your social media mission? => ComMetrics eBook series #2010-02
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Short description	Once the purpose of your social media activities has been identified, you must decide what you wish to achieve. We outline how a company's strategy and particular context can be leveraged to use social media smarter. Tips and mini case studies are used to further facilitate application of the discussed concepts in practice.
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ComMetrics eBook series

The ComMetrics eBook series helps readers benchmark smarter to improve performance. Topics and issues may range from risk management and social media monitoring to blog benchmarking.

An important focus is to provide insights that empower readers to develop customized approaches that suit their needs. In turn, these insights can be applied in for-profit as well as not-for-profit organizations. It provides the framework to make any necessary adjustments to consider important organizational context issues (e.g., industry, resources and other key parameters) that affect one's options.

*It is not the strongest of the
species that survive, nor the most
intelligent, but the one most
responsive to change.*

– Charles Darwin

This book is part of the section on **benchmark essentials**, which includes

- #2010-01 – Why benchmark social media?
- #2010-02 – What is your social media mission?
- #2010-03 – Getting solution-driven answers
- #2010-04 – Focusing on quality traffic with social media
- #2010-05 – How it all makes your data matter

You can **get these books for FREE** by registering yourself at My.ComMetrics.com - **benchmark your blog => improve performance.**

These days, even the most successful organizations face new and unexpected challenges. Traditional approaches to marketing and customer relations that worked in the past are no longer sufficient to meet the demands of a changing marketplace.

The ComMetrics eBook series provides the latest insights, strategies, and tools needed to navigate uncertain times and position your company for the next evolution of social media and the Internet.

What is the issue?

The ComMetrics eBook series on **benchmark essentials**¹ started with “#2010-01 – Why benchmark social media?” which explains why you should even worry about tracking things.

EBook 2010-02 asks, “What is your social media mission?” and focuses on determining your purpose or reasons for using social media.

What purpose does social media serve for your company?

These days, most marketers generate leads and fill the top of their sales funnel through

- trade shows,
- seminar series,
- email blasts to purchased lists,
- internal cold calling,
- outsourced telemarketing, and
- advertising.

We consider these methods “**outbound marketing**”, because a marketer pushes out their message far and wide, hoping that it will resonate with a potential client. It’s a lot like finding a needle in a haystack.

Instead of outbound marketing that most people do their best to ignore, we suggest you focus on “**inbound marketing**”, which means you help people who are already shopping around and learning about your industry find you.

To do this, you must set up your website or corporate blog as a “hub” for your industry that will naturally attract visitors through

- search engines,
- the blogosphere, and
- social media sites.

In our experience, most **marketers spend 90 percent of their efforts on outbound marketing** and only 10 percent on inbound marketing. We recommend changing that ratio as quickly as possible and **spending at least 40 percent of your efforts on inbound marketing**.

Push (outbound marketing) versus pull (inbound marketing)

In reply to a comment on our blog², we pointed out that social media marketing (SMM) provides new ways to reach out to clients. Still, most companies are too small to follow in the giants’ footsteps:

¹ You can receive the ComMetrics paper series within 48 hours by registering yourself at My.ComMetrics.com. #2010-02 will be emailed to you once you begin benchmarking your blog using our software, at no cost to you.

- Coca-Cola and Unilever abandon campaign web pages in favor of community platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube, as social media begins to dictate their marketing activity in 2010³.
- January 2010 Pepsi decided for the first time in 23 years not to run a television commercial at the Super Bowl (season final in US Football). Instead, the company decided to spend \$20 million on a social media campaign called the Pepsi Refresh Project⁴.

That's all very interesting, but how many companies create a special website or animation game that only remains online for the duration of a particular product campaign? How many companies spend millions for a single commercial spot during a large sporting event? (For example, in 2010, Intel spent US\$3 – 4 million on Super Bowl ads and post-game sponsorship.)

The real question is whether it makes sense for your company to be on Facebook or launch a public service campaign and use social media to support those efforts. In most cases, goals and dreams are even smaller than that: we simply want to be sure that we are getting the biggest bang for our marketing buck.

Still, customers find a lot of information online these days, which makes it essential to cultivate a positive social media presence for your organization. ⁵

The difference between marketing and public relations

Marketing is always outbound or “pushed out”, meaning the company spreads the message through paid ads, mailed brochures or giving interviews, etc. In marketing, effort is applied to get a controlled message out to your target audience. You decide what the message is, how it is seen, and when and where it is printed or aired.

The focus of the message stays on the positive aspects of the product, and most importantly, while the marketer controls the message, constant effort is put into generating more sales or conversions.

² Maybe bloggers are carpet baggers: ComMetrics.com/articles/following-best-practice-and-business-ethics-would-help-improve-an-intransparent-situation/#comment-28870950

³ Read more about this trend (January 2010): www.nma.co.uk/news/cover-story-coke-drops-campaign-sites-in-favour-of-social-media/3008538.article

⁴ This was headline news across the US in January 2010: www.viralnetworkers.com/profiles/blogs/pepsi-passes-on-this-years

⁵ As our esteemed colleague [Paul W. Reidl](#) put it, "For those of us who are old enough to remember client development before Al Gore invented the internet, I think that potential clients today have much, much more information available to them about potential counsel. That's why having a positive social media presence is so important." [@TMguy](#)
For more information see: ComMetrics.com/articles/getting-real-value/

On the other hand, public relations or **PR encompasses the good, the bad and the ugly**. Still, whatever gets you noticed helps and even bad publicity is better than none. As the saying goes, "I want them to spell my name correctly."

While marketing and PR are joined at the hip, they are by no means the same. Marketing is rather direct, while PR just gets you noticed (and ultimately also increases sales). Until someone knows about you, how can they buy whatever you are offering?

In contrast to the directness of marketing, PR takes longer to hit your bottom line. If a TV ad is aired, you might expect your phones to be busy with customers right afterwards. That is less likely when sports fans see your name in a stadium, and while you do have limited control, what the media does with your efforts later is highly uncertain.

Why is a positive social media presence important?

While it may be true that some negative PR is better than none, Toyota's massive recall exercise in early 2010 proves that a good reputation can easily sustain severe damage if such a problem is not handled properly.

Social media marketing can help an organization build good content to attract people or pull them in to your website or blog. Successful SMM is a slow march, not a mad dash.

Ideally, one develops a relationship that engages the client. For example

- clients subscribe to an organization's blog using RSS or by adding their email to an mailing list;
- adding a comment to the blog with feedback or additional insight;
- becoming a fan of the organization on Facebook; or
- re-tweeting something from the corporate Twitter account.

In part, the value offered by a blog's content to prospective clients is so high-quality that they are naturally attracted to the blog, and by extension, your products and/or services.

This also dictates treating people as interesting and being interested.

Can I trust you⁶

Trust is an issue of increasing importance and SMM, which in part builds on trust, is supposed to help maintain or improve your reputation. For instance, customers trust that your interpretation of a warranty will be generous, not disadvantageously narrow.

Trust has two components

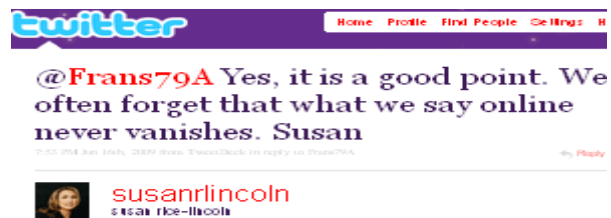
- a) **Perceived credibility** is defined as the objective credibility of an exchange partner such as the expectation that a person (customer) can rely on another (service provider) and their written statement (e.g., we respect privacy, lifetime warranty, satisfaction guaranteed).

⁶ Bloggers: Can I trust you? Comment => ComMetrics.com/articles/following-best-practice-and-business-ethics-would-help-improve-an-intransparent-situation/#comment-28870950

- b) **Benevolence** is connected to the retailer, service provider or software vendor's interest in the client's welfare and motivation to seek a joint gain.

The above makes it obvious that developing trust takes time. People need to get to know each other and acquire experience in dealing with each other. Similarly, making several purchases helps you learn whether you can trust the retailer to deliver on time and take returns as advertised.

Susan Rice Lincoln (Europe's self-proclaimed leading social media specialist) restates that nothing is ever forgotten in our digital age. Meaning if you say someone should tweet daily, like Susan did in her eBooklet you will be expected to do so or risk damaging your credibility.⁷



Susan is not doing herself any favors by preaching one thing and doing something different. To illustrate, she failed to send out a single tweet between November 20, 2009 and January 20, 2010 and had several instances of 30 to 45 days without any tweets during 2009.⁸

Granted, practicing what you preach is not easy. However, social exchange theory explains that how we feel about a relationship with another person depends on our perceptions of fairness. Hence, if people feel you simply take without giving much in return, they will either no longer follow you on Twitter or put little, if any, stock in what you say. Because customers now have easy access to much information, it is increasingly important to become an example for others by doing the same things you say others should. Not doing so is risky. In fact, Twitter followers might feel you do not show much interest in their well-being and do not warrant trust.⁹

People who give a lot expect to get something back. Nobody wants to regularly invite someone for dinner and never be invited back. Social exchange theory suggests that we either try to signal such people to return the sentiment or we accept the consequences and stop inviting them altogether.

Social exchange theory is particularly applicable to social media marketing and Twitter. Simply tweeting about a workshop when you need attendees only a week before it happens does not suggest you care (except about your bottom line). Nor does an extended period of

⁷ 5 winning Twitter tips for your company =>

www.masterthenewnet.com/pdf/5WinningTwitterTips.pdf

⁸ The same day we blogged about Susan's period of no tweets (January 20, 2010), she tweeted several times throughout the day, only to go quiet for an extended period again. Maybe we had an effect on her behavior but it was not a permanent change.

⁹ According to Hormans (1958), the initiator of the theory, it was developed to understand the social behavior of humans in economic undertakings. For more information and how it applies to social networks: www.istheory.yorku.ca/Socialexchangetheory.htm.

tweeting silence suggest that you are interested in strengthening customer engagement. Of course, this also means that regardless of what experts might suggest, those who interact with your social media platform expect a certain degree of consistency, whether on Facebook, a blog, Xing or something else.¹⁰

Social media offers a great opportunity to develop contacts and a very useful social network of weak ties.¹¹ Most importantly, it can help you build a following that puts some trust in your work.¹²

Please use social media wisely, because not only is trust much easier to destroy than to build, it takes far longer to build up than to destroy it, which can happens in seconds. A compromising picture from mobile and uploaded to an Internet platform might be all it takes to do irreparable damage to your reputation, since the Internet loses nothing. There go your chances of getting elected to public office or ever landing your dream-job.

¹⁰ Remember that experts do not always know best. Try things out, follow your instincts and always treat others with respect, dignity and appreciation: ComMetrics.com/articles/getting-real-value

¹¹ Weak ties are a unique social resource because they connect you to a wider set of social networks. However, while the weak hypothesis states that those with few weak ties are deprived of information from distant parts of the social network, **most people are unable to manage a social network of more than 150 weak ties**. More information: ComMetrics.com/articles/four-new-habits-to-save-you-time-on-twitter/

¹² Bloggers: Can I trust you? Please don't forget to read the comments. ComMetrics.com/articles/following-best-practice-and-business-ethics-would-help-improve-an-intransparent-situation/#disqus_thread

Chapter 6: What is social media to your company?

In Chapter 1 (ComMetrics eBook series: #2010-01 – Why benchmark social media?) we outlined the importance of context in measuring blog or social media effectiveness and how important awareness of possible data-bias is.¹³

In this chapter we focus on the purpose of using social media. Some suggest that the purpose of social media “is all about leveraging the positive.”¹⁴ But because of our context, we need to take a step back and address the company’s strategic plan for the next 24 months. During the planning phase, it is critical to discuss and define how social media fits in or helps leverage other efforts, such as:

- using social media to build community support for school initiatives,
- using Twitter and blogging to build an organization’s brand,
- using Facebook to stay in contact with friends or your company’s fans, or
- actively building and maintaining professional networks and contacts in the community on Xing and LinkedIn.

The above are just a few examples found in blog posts and personal profiles of how people and companies use social media, including blogging and micro-blogging.

Kevin Lewis posted several questions about this in December 2009 on LinkedIn.¹⁵ The most critical and fundamental went something like this (edited for clarity):

“What is the purpose of using social media as a non-governmental organization (NGO), not-for profit foundation or charity? For instance, is it for raising funds, awareness or to support advocacy campaigns?”

Raising funds might require using social media channels differently than one would to enhance support for an advocacy campaign. A common mistake is to believe people who say that writing thoughtful blog posts takes less time than thoroughly and carefully using Twitter or Facebook.¹⁶

To allocate financial and human resources effectively, the company must discuss and define what purpose using social media serves for them specifically and how this relates to its corporate strategy, as well as bottom line.

¹³ Online and offline consumer panels in North America indicate that long-time participants are more critical in their responses (e.g., less optimistic about their purchases) than recent arrivals: www.samplemetrics.com/index.php/2009/10/consistency-the_new_quality_concern/

¹⁴ Lauby, S. (June 2, 2009) 10 must-haves for your social media policy. mashable.com/2009/06/02/social-media-policy-musts/

¹⁵ Lewis, K. (December 2009) What social media tools does your organization use? (Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, etc) www.Linkedin.com/answers/non-profit/social-entrepreneurship/NNP_SOC/604877-8214161

¹⁶ Check out Urs’ Facebook page [Facebook.Gattiker.name](#), where he spends time each week, but not much.

What should be your social media mission?

Before we can establish that, we must be clear about what context the company or NGO operates in. Using a tool without outlining the rationale for doing so or what purpose it will serve is a huge mistake.

While we define the purpose to the best of our ability given our understanding of the current situation, it might change. For instance, becoming more proficient in social media could result in your staff wanting to change the agreed-upon purpose for social media marketing.

Common Mistake

Organizations or individuals begin using Facebook, Twitter or launch blog without first laying out a clear purpose for engaging in this time-consuming activity.

Accordingly, the organization's social media mission as written on the page is a living document.

A set of questions that must be answered **using 100 words or less** might look like this ([our own company's answers are in blue](#)):

A. Describe your main product or service.

We offer our subscribers a web-based tool for benchmarking blogs hosted at My.ComMetrics.com. Our second product is StratMedia (info.cytrap.eu/?page_id=24), which offers coaching and support services. This includes establishing and helping maintain a corporate blog that supports clients' social media missions.

The above indicates that we straddle both service and product areas of the business.

B. What resources are available to put the organization's social media mission into practice?

We are a micro enterprise and have limited financial and human resources to take advantage of social media channels.¹⁷

C. Based on A and B, what purpose do the organization's social media activities serve?

The purpose of our social media activities is to move prospective clients through the marketing funnel¹⁸:

- 1) Help raise awareness of ComMetrics as a trusted resource of tools for social media benchmarking.

¹⁷ The European Commission defines any enterprise with 10 full-time employees or less as 'micro': ComMetrics.com/articles/european-commssion-defining-the-term-sme/

¹⁸ All of your marketing efforts should be viewed as a funnel, whereby the first step is usually awareness (getting on people's radar). The next step to get someone sliding down the funnel is usually a free gift or a very low-priced item (e.g., subscribing to a newsletter or a blog's RSS feed).

- 2) Commenting on other blogs or posting questions and participating in online discussions on social networks such as LinkedIn, Viadeo or Xing. This should help increase traffic of people interested in social media benchmarking from referral sites.
- 3) Using micro-blogging sites like Twitter and social networks to drive more traffic to our blog, which offers free sign-up for our web-based software as a service.¹⁹ Our service allows benchmarking of blogs and comparison with others' performance.

A carefully crafted list is necessary and the challenge is to find a balance between setting your objectives too high and too low.

As the above illustrates, effectively using social media can be a relatively inexpensive (except for the time involved) to raise the profile of a small company with a very limited advertising budget. Clearly, our blog is used to attract traffic and increase people's awareness, as well as entice them to sign up for our software tools.

Finally, subscribers to our blog (through RSS or email) give us the opportunity to stay in touch and keep them updated about new trends regarding social media metrics and more.

2 tips for getting your social media purpose down pat

1. **Content is king:** Using social media to grow your business means getting others to talk about you. This requires creating content that sparks talk about your organization or its blog, especially among potential and existing customers. Ultimately, this helps backlinks, subscribers, search engine rankings and hopefully, sales.
2. **Social media begins and ends with your content's home:** Wherever your compelling content is at home online is where people can comment on it, before re-tweeting their comments on Twitter, sharing content via other sites (e.g., Digg) and using social bookmarking. They can also download white papers, watch videos and so forth.

So start defining the purpose of your social media strategy with an interesting corporate blog at its core, and continue fostering engagement and interaction with your readers/customers (e.g., try to respond to each comment left on one of your blog posts by a reader).

Mini case study

One of our clients attempted to define the purpose for his small welding company. His concern was deciding whether he could increase his business leverage by spending about \$15,000 to design, print and mail a brochure to clients or use social media instead.

He quickly discovered that this was not an either/or decision. For instance, many of his older clients hardly knew what a blog was and had yet to visit one. His younger clients – the future, as he saw it – were engaged and in some cases even had their own blogs. Accordingly, he decided to slowly but steadily establish his presence using a corporate blog.

¹⁹ We follow a clear strategy with Twitter that might not work for everybody, as outlined here: ComMetrics.com/articles/getting-real-value/

He was interested in seeing whether clients would subscribe to his blog via email to get the latest in their inbox, as well as learning whether his clients might reference comments on his blog posts when interacting with him on a job site.

He really wanted to get comments, but was off to a very slow start. Only after nudging clients to read and check his blog did he get one to two comments for each blog post - finally. He discovered that clients were interested in reading other clients' comments and found the customer feedback he received via comments, telephone calls and so forth about ideas or issues he raised in his posts very valuable.

The client felt this increased engagement and interaction was worth every penny he had spent on social media, including his time. However, he did admit that he might never have reached his objectives without first clearly spelling out what he expected, how he intended to get there and measuring progress along the way.

Chapter 7: What is social media's value proposition?

In the previous chapter we pointed out that social media requires offering interesting content that people will want to share and talk about with others. People tend to share news on social networks such as Facebook or LinkedIn, which might contain information about themselves (i.e. I am going shopping), links to interesting stories published in printed media or on blogs, and so on. This requires producing interesting content that offers others value.

Just micro-blogging (see [Twitter.com/ComMetrics](https://twitter.com/ComMetrics)) and tweeting links you found interesting can be useful for your followers. However, the intention is also to push content from the company's blog to raise awareness, increase trust and gain a reputation for providing quality material.

To determine the most appropriate content for your customers, social media must be in context. Accordingly, the type of organization (e.g., government agency versus charity), its size (small versus Fortune 500), and the type of product being sold must be taken into consideration (see Chapter 1 #2010-01 – Why benchmark social media?).

As @comcastcares demonstrated when it launched its Twitter account, micro-blogging is a social media channel that can be used to help clients who have yet to get the support they need through other channels, such as the company's help line.²⁰ Nevertheless, doing a great job like Comcast with its Twitter account requires several employees to monitor the channel and communicate directly with customers.

For another company, it might be easier to pick up the phone or Voice over IP (VoIP) like Skype keep in touch with customers need support.

For instance, by clicking on the contact button (ComMetrics.com), clients can reach us via email or just calling. But as the image to the shows, some clients prefer other means, such as sending message via Facebook.

The above illustrates that only offering email may be insufficient for your clients; one or two more options might be required. Most importantly, whatever contact methods you choose, they must be done well: if you have a VoIP option, somebody has to be online during work hours, if not longer, to enable customers to reach you.



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²⁰ The customer service Twitter account: [Twitter.com/comcastcares](https://twitter.com/comcastcares)

In our case, a client who did not see our email address used Facebook, since we have a Facebook button on our ComMetrics blog.²¹ Once he contacted us, his problem was fixed within three hours, despite being “across the pond” and 8 time zones behind ours (GMT +1).²²

Be ready to get value from social media

Below are some of the issues that must be addressed.

Social media must be monitored: If you have a presence on a social network such as Facebook or Xing/LinkedIn, the channel must be monitored. If people send messages or chat with the support team they need to be able to reach you online.

We try to monitor from 6:00 GMT until 21:00 GMT (sometimes longer), using our people in North America to extend our virtual office hours.

Your company may consider social media for other reasons than providing client support. But your clients may use it to get help when other channels, such as a helpline or FAQ section, have failed to provide the support they need.

Questions that must be answered before getting into social media

Before creating a social media presence, we suggest you sit down to discuss and answer the following questions with your team.

1. What can the company do with social media (e.g., Twitter or Facebook) that cannot be done with an email campaign or some online advertising?

When we started out we had neither an advertising budget nor a database with email addresses of potential clients that had opted to receive mailings from us. Using social media helped us get found by potential clients through other sites that linked to us or search engine results returned for a specific query.

Common Mistake

Which social media channel would you stay away from?

Wrong question! Start with a plan, not a tool. Focus on people, objectives and strategy first, then technology.

If 20 percent of your customers use a specific technology, consider using it.

Because the above only points to the potential value of social media for the company, not necessarily for its customers, you must answer another question.

²¹ The key is that your client can reach out for help using whatever channel they prefer (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn/Xing, email, telephone, VoIP). We started with telephone and email but soon learned that some prefer other ways of communicating.

²² This client reached us around 19:30 CET and we had the problem resolved by about 21:30 (13:30 for him). This means with an international clientele, you have to monitor these channels more than the 8-hour workday and on weekends.

2. Can you describe your clientele and how they use social media?

Whatever describes your customer, the country they are located in will make a difference (e.g., Japan differs vastly from how consumers use their mobiles in Europe). Furthermore, customer demographics and how they use online media is key. For instance, most users take advantage of email relatively regularly. By contrast, in some countries, many people use Skype or other telephone alternatives to telephone to talk to their loved ones or chat with friends due to telecommunications expenses.

ComMetrics' clients (for services, see Chapter 6) use social media at work for job-related purposes and sometimes, personal purposes (e.g., posting to private blog or tweeting to friends during work hours).²³

It is possible that, while 20 percent of your UK customers have a personal Facebook page, they do not use it much for work, possibly because they use Facebook to stay in touch with friends and family and do not want to mix that with business. Maybe you can connect with them via Twitter, instead.

Are your customers on Twitter, though? A November 2009 survey revealed that in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, Twitter users are primarily geeks and public relations experts, who might not be your clients.²⁴ Still, it might be worth revisiting this issue in another six months; some customers may well have joined by then.

Regardless of whether customers use such technology for personal or business purposes, there is a chance they are interested in connecting with the company through Twitter or Facebook.²⁵

Common Mistake

Using social media to sell. People don't purchase products - they buy solutions.

Instead, try to engage and provide information and content that helps clients solve problems through your firm's social media channels.

If your business is supplying carpenters with screws and so on, Facebook may not be the best choice of network. Similarly, different countries use different networks. By the end of

²³ Check us out on Facebook: <http://ad.vu/xnk9>. We do have one, but we try not to spend more than 2 hours a week maintaining it. Our Facebook group "Europe – Social Media Metrics" allows people to share and discuss media monitoring issues: <http://ad.vu/xnix>. Because Xing is very strong in Europe and used primarily by professionals and businesses (similar to LinkedIn), we also have a group on Social Media Monitoring: <http://ad.vu/pz9m>

²⁴ For more information: webevangelisten.de/german-twittersurvey/

²⁵ Not many brands enjoy Manchester United's enviable position of continuing to ignore social media in Spring 2010 while numerous Facebook pages about the club and its players counted more than 200,000 fans: socialmediatoday.com/SMC/167243. Most companies cannot afford to ignore a social channel that many of their clients use.

2009, Facebook had about 5.5 million users in Germany alone, but the question is whether they are the people your business needs to reach out to.

Maybe other networks are more relevant for different user groups in different countries; LinkedIn is a great way to build a professional network in the US and Canada, but less so in Europe, where Xing is more popular.²⁶

3. What are your potential and existing customers' specific needs?

The above question does not include the word 'immediate' because in business that usually means a crisis, in which case the company goes to a known and trusted source, such as a frequent consultant.

The customer may have a need to know more about industry-related trends or regulatory developments that affect their business. So if desperate customers have arrived at the end of their rope, they might reach out to your company's Twitter account to get help.

One can always ignore a technology or social media channel if less than 20 percent of your clients use it. The question is just how much this usage may increase in the not-too-distant future.

Another challenge is to remember that some customers may be better served with social media. But if you want to become a fan of Real Madrid on Facebook, this does not mean that you have any interest in becoming a Facebook fan of Banco Santander.

Finally, another issue may be what the company could better provide with social media that the customer particularly values. This must be discussed and clearly stated in order to take advantage of such opportunities, while making more effective use of social media.

3 tips for making sure the company gets value

1. Research where customers participate: This is the part most people miss or take for granted. Any successful marketing campaign, whether online or not, starts with doing research to learn about your customers, and where and how they spend their time (e.g., chatting or participating in groups such as LinkedIn for information purposes).

²⁶ Xing reports that more than 80,000 human resource managers use its service in Germany: corporate.xing.com/deutsch/presse/pressemitteilungen/pressmitteilungen-detailansicht/article/pressemitteilung-xing-agbrmeh-r-als-70-tausend-personalmanager-sind-deutschlandweit-bei-xing-akti/110/5a04b0c27bd3b7d4c5781119e9a54ba2/. As of September 30, 2009, 3.6 of its 8.3 million users were located in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. Xing claims rapid user growth in Spain and Turkey, as well as China (see November 2009 press release: corporate.xing.com/deutsch/presse/pressemitteilungen/pressmitteilungen-detailansicht/article/deutsche-pm/110/96673f0eafd29c03a4a74c220bdde15c/).

2. Know what customers use various social media channels for: It is very likely that somebody has a Facebook page for family members and relatives. By contrast, Twitter might be used for sharing information and getting valuable tips from those that your clients follow.

3. Which one or two social channels best fit the company: Being active on too many social media channels is generally not an option for any but the largest companies. Those you know your customers use and you feel most comfortable with should be employed to help them connect with you. You cannot start by being active in too many networks.

Just remember

Twitter has been excellent for helping us better understand our industry's use of SM, but it is not a vehicle that presents us to many in our target audience.

However, bear in mind that **social media users do not want to be 'sold' to**; they want to build a rapport or relationship with you. Gain their confidence before even mentioning **anything sales-related**, and then **do it very carefully**. **Customers are far beyond getting duped into buying products or services.**

We believe that building a rapport with people who are interested in your product or service over a period of time is of greater long-term value than immediately trying to sell them something.

Communicate, ask questions, answer questions and build a relationship on all platforms you choose to be active on. In time, the results will be obvious in time, as well as show dividends.²⁷

What is the purpose of the corporate blog?

Many issues need to be taken into account and the decision must be made to pursue a social media strategy that adds value to the company's corporate mission. In this context, the company's blog plays an important role, since it presents valuable content that attracts readers. Generally social media experts distinguish between three types of blogs²⁸:

1. Blogging for content: This is when you write with considerable emphasis on search optimization, attempting to drive traffic to the blog via strategic content creation and keyword inclusion.

2. Blogging for commerce: Related to the first, but commerce-oriented blogs are more interested in conversion events than in traffic generation. Funneling traffic from the blog to some other destination (typically a corporate website or lead form) is the prime objective.

²⁷ An extensive discussion of this issue occurred on LinkedIn in December 2009: www.Linkedin.com/groupAnswers?discussionID=11027525&viewQuestionAndAnswers=&qid=66325&trk=EML_anet_qa_title-cDhOon0JumNFomgJt7dBpSBA

²⁸ Read more about this by Jay Baer: ComMetrics.com/articles/using-3-key-metrics-is-critical/

3. Blogging for community: These blogs seek to build trust among a consistent readership that interact with the blogger(s) and advocate on behalf of the content through other social outposts.

Each one of the above categories may be the primary purpose for a company's blog. However, it is also feasible that a corporate blog pursues a mixture of these strategies (e.g., chartered accounting or consulting firm, regional tourism bureau, etc.). In fact, some highly successful corporate blogs produce content that straddles two or all three of the above categories.

4. Blogging for current customers and targeted client groups: Interact with readers (blogging for community), attract new traffic for new readers (blogging for content) and starting people in the marketing funnel (blogging for commerce).

However, it is still possible that more than 50 percent of the content on a blog in Group 4 falls into one of the three previous categories.²⁹

In this context, blogging and micro-blogging is interacting with readers and followers, so it is not about pushing out a brand's message. Twitter and corporate blogs are both about sharing a brand's message with interested followers. The latter wish to interact with the worthwhile information that the brand shares in relation to its offerings, so the company should use Twitter to drive more people to read the corporate blog.

²⁹ More about this in the comments: ComMetrics.com/articles/using-3-key-metrics-is-critical/

Chapter 8: What results must be achieved?

In Chapter 1 of the ComMetrics eBook series (#2010-01 – What purpose does benchmarking social media serve), we outlined issues regarding the importance of context for measuring blog or social media effectiveness and the careful attention that must be paid to possible data-bias.³⁰

In this chapter we go into more detail about context. To illustrate, when you are asked to speak with a journalist, it can take an hour or even longer without trying very hard. You must ask yourself what else could have been done in that time or what your opportunity costs are and how many sales this might generate down the line.

In our case, we do not get much media coverage and therefore have to take advantage of whatever opportunities present themselves.³¹ However, things are vastly different for large brands, such as Credit Suisse, whose employees appear on Swiss TV several times a week in connection with economic matters or news in financial markets. Accordingly, when it appointed Pamela Thomas-Graham as Chief Talent, Branding and Communications Officer on January 22, 2010, it made several inferential statements, such as its biggest perceived future challenges would be staffing and motivation. By making the former President and CEO of CNBC head of corporate communications the bank almost certainly wanted to improve its media coverage in North America and worldwide English-language media.³²

Hiring Thomas-Graham does not, however, ensure that Credit Suisse will be any more successful in how it uses social media. But it may also be that social media is not important when it comes to wooing institutional investors or individual with a large net-worth.

Without context things rarely - if ever - make sense to an outsider, but with context things usually fall into place. A difference in context means various factors are newsworthy or not, or given different weight. In the US, Pamela Thomas-Graham is known for being the first African-American woman to become a partner at McKinsey & Company, the international management consulting firm. While this was noted in US media it did not get any mention in Europe.

Context is nearly everything – 5 things to keep in mind

All else considered equal, **contextual factors influence what one can or should not do**, as well as potentially affecting bias that trickles in with your benchmark data.

Accordingly, contextual factors must be at the core of any proper benchmarking program's activities. The most important factors to consider in a global business world are:

³⁰ Online and offline consumer panels in North America indicate that long-time participants are more critical (e.g., less optimistic about their purchases) than new arrivals:
www.samplemetrics.com/index.php/2009/10/consistency-the_new_quality_concern/.

³¹ How we do with the media, given our context: http://info.cytrap.eu/?page_id=179

³² Ms Thomas-Graham's portfolio also includes human resources and advertising.

1. **Company size:** Goliath has different resources at his disposal than David does. Companies must try to bundle their efforts and expand them where they will get the biggest bang for their buck.
2. **Brand vs. reputation:** Most companies do not have a global brand that helps sales efforts. Nevertheless, building, maintaining and protecting the company's **reputation with existing and potential clients must be a strategic objective of any social media marketing activities.**³³
3. **Type of product:** Selling soap to consumers is different than selling machinery to an industrial wholesaler. Consumers also follow a different purchasing process than industrial buyers, so what works for Amazon might not for ABB or GE. Your product and clientele **affect the message needed to be heard, understood AND trusted** by your target audience, in print as well as online.
4. **Language, culture and religion:** Different people use language in varying ways, whether across regions or countries (e.g., French => Haiti vs. Madagascar, Paris vs. Marseille). Religious and cultural differences or the fact that many readers' first language may not be the one used on your blog make it necessary to avoid slang, humor and many other potential grounds for misunderstanding.
5. **Scalability:** Building relationships, communicating with customers and participating in a social media community takes time, which is a finite and valuable resource.

Common Mistake

Benchmarking efforts that ignore contextual factors during development of a marketing program are doomed to fail.

Accordingly, unless at least 10 percent of your customers use Facebook or Twitter and you believe this number will increase, why already attempt to maintain a corporate presence now?

Of course, things could be different for global brands, whose customers might use Twitter and Identi.ca in the US but only just be starting out with Twitter in India.

The key question is: **where are most of my customers?** The answer will influence where you decide to put your limited resources to use. A corporate blog and Twitter account may be all you can spare on social media for now.

What results must be achieved?

Considering what was outlined above, a few quantitative and qualitative benchmarking goals must be reached to satisfy management that the blog has achieved what it was supposed to.

1. **Blogging for content:** Total visits, percent of new visits, visits from search engines – the key is to get 30 percent or more of your new and/or total monthly traffic from referring sites (those linking to the company's blog such as LinkedIn, other blogs, Business Week, etc.).

³³ Brand is what the company shows the world, the image it strives for, while reputation is how consumers perceive the company, as discussed here => brand versus reputation: ComMetrics.com/articles/branding-versus-reputation-jeff-bezos-richard-branson-josef-ackermann-and-pat-russo-to-the-rescue/

2. Blogging for commerce: Related to the first, referrers from other sites (if other sites are driving significant traffic to one's blog, one must know what they are to replicate that success with other, similar sites), but here one wants to see conversion rates from the blog to a corporate website or sign-up form.

3. Blogging for community: Repeat visits, RSS subscribers and email subscribers, since all three measure stickiness and consistency (blog elements that build community over time), reader comments and referrers from social outposts like Twitter, Digg or social bookmarking sites such as Del.icio.us

Some people will say your blog content has to focus on one of these categories. This is a viable strategy for a Fortune 500 company, mostly because it has the resources needed to successfully manage several blogs, each of which is targeted to produce content that fits its category.

For a small company with limited resources, this is impossible; so one blog has to do the job. This could mean serving content that suits more than one of the above categories. Nevertheless, the **blog's primary focus must be on one group** (e.g., 60 percent of our content serves the blogging for content category but an additional 30 percent is blogging for community).

Based on the above, a successful corporate or not-for-profit weblog may be similar to our own ComMetrics.com. Accordingly, a combination of measures may be necessary to see if the blog has reached its quantitative targets.

4. Metrics for blogs focusing on existing customers and targeted client groups:

Number and quality of reader comments, subscriber rates (using email and RSS feed), reactions to blog posts (e.g., re-tweets, replies to and tweets about posts on micro-blogging sites such as Twitter, Identi.ca and Naijapulse), plus the usual fare: total visits, percent of new visits, visits from search engines and visits from related sites.³⁴

We discuss the above in more detail in subsequent eBooks, including #2010-05 – How it all makes your data matter. Chapter 24 suggests that watching the trends is especially critical, since these indicate whether the trend is moving in the right direction.

What about the company's blogging benchmark program?

The above measures are a start and depending on your context, things might change. Sometimes, that means a two-fold compromise:

- some stakeholders, including management, may understand some measures better than others,
- the ease of how data can be collected may facilitate using one indicator over another, and

³⁴ Assuming all variables not under immediate consideration are constant, visits from referring sites usually results in visitors that will look at more than one page, which positively affects the blog's bounce rate. As importantly, these readers may subscribe to the blog using email or RSS, further improving community engagement.

- your particular context may again result in some measures being better than others.

By the same token, what works for a not-for-profit using social media or blogs in the US may fail miserably in South Africa or Saudi Arabia. While this is obvious to most of us, we still tend to forget it when we try to transfer what might have worked wonderfully in New York City or Los Angeles to our corporate blog in Bangalore.

3 tips for making context work for your organization

1. **Traditional media is worth courting:** This is the part most people miss or completely ignore. Print or TV media can still give your company and its social media efforts a huge plug, but it takes time, so you have to make choices. Moreover, about half the time you will find that too little is said about the company in the published or aired piece. Just move on and try again with the next one.
2. **Key market:** If your key market is in the Bordeaux versus the Catalan region, things could differ. This is another key issue many seem to avoid addressing. While the Internet makes us all part of the world, in some countries we eat dinner at 18:00 while others eat at 21:30. And no, neither Facebook nor Twitter will change this soon.
3. **Non-office workers:** They are simply on the Internet less often than the rest. Also, one tends to forget that a bricklayer who gets home at 18:00 might be too tired to go onto a social network after having dinner with family. Plus, while many work in an office, they may well not be able to access the Internet there. In many cases, organizations prevent Facebook or Twitter access for their staff. How this affects the organization's media presence and benchmarking performance has to be addressed.

To illustrate, in a December 2009 interview given by Edelman's Steve Rubel, he pointed out that about 1,000 of Edelman's employees were active on Twitter and 2,000 on Facebook. These employees can tweet and re-tweet corporate information and share it on their Facebook walls. Every year when it releases its trust barometer at the start of WEF Davos in late January, Edelman shows how this can help make information go viral.³⁵

Mini case study

One of our clients, a luxury jewelry brand, asked its marketing campaign agency about bias in data collected from customers. For instance, most data came from exhibitions and special receptions for existing clients and prospective clients who had been invited to attend special events held at a resort or luxury hotel near their residence. Management felt this would not reach Facebook or Twitter users or users on other social media platforms.

The company started a Twitter and a Facebook presence, as well as a blog and began gauging how 20-somethings felt about certain issues. The company subsequently realized that it might reach customers through the blog or Twitter who were geographically far away

³⁵ Just imagine 1000 employees tweeting a link about the Edelman Trust Barometer report. They each average 300 followers, of which six percent click the link, with another one percent, some of them very influential, re-tweeting (i.e. resending the Edelman employee's tweet) it. The rest is history... Thousands of people, if not millions, will hear about the company's work. Search results here: search.twitter.com/search?q=%23edelman+%23trust.

(cultural issues), but nevertheless might visit one of their distributors' stores on Fifth Avenue or the Champs-Élysées.

After a few months it was clear that while Facebook was a success - in part due to the company's pictures of celebrities wearing its jewelry - Twitter did not create the desired response. So while more emphasis was put on Facebook and the corporate blog, the company tweeted less often, instead using it for some contests for its followers, which yielded some positive results.

As the above illustrates, social media success is partially enabled by benchmarking and measuring your progress, but just as importantly, things are in a constant state of flux, so fine-tuning and adjusting to meet new developments head-on is a necessity.

Two years ago MySpace was all the rage; today it's Facebook and, for some, Twitter. What will it be tomorrow? Nobody knows for certain.

Chapter 9: What does successful social media benchmarking require?

Social media (SM) activities must support the company's efforts to successfully implement its corporate strategy, but it should also help build the organization's brand. To achieve these objectives, however, one must ensure one's house is in order.

Certain things must be addressed to ensure you do not get off track with social media.

1. Focus on a specialty.

Don't try to be all things to all people. You must be **clear about the one thing you offer that helps people solve a problem** (i.e. want a coffee, Nespresso is best).

Similar to web analytics, we often have too much the wrong data. We may actually need very little to improve performance.

Define your niche and make sure that your social media content and activities reinforce what you and company stand for.³⁶

Common Mistake

Using social media without staying on-message.

Regardless of the channel you use (Second Life, Identi.ca, Twitter, Digg, corporate blog, hi5, etc.), make sure your message is clear.

or
data

your

Challenge

As a small organization one may hesitate to bet on only one or two horses, possibly because one believes that this risks missing another opportunity. Get over that fear. The challenge for smaller enterprises is to focus on doing fewer things better.

For a large company like Dell, the challenge is to make sure that its various social media platforms all focus on their core message (help customers or help sales). In cases where various people share a Twitter account or provide posts for a weblog, making sure that the message is consistent is a never-ending battle.

2. Clearly articulate your specialty

Unless you can say it in one sentence (remember the elevator pitch: 30 seconds or less to get between each floor), it will be difficult for potential clients to get the message.

Accordingly, if a self-employed individual cannot clearly articulate their specialty or skill, their personal brand will be muddled and confusing. The same goes for a brand like Nespresso (status symbol – George Clooney representing brand), Starbucks (get the same coffee and

³⁶ It may not be easy. We do work in IT security, compliance and social media but the overarching theme is benchmarking to improve performance and reduce risks. This applies to blogging, data protection and corporate governance issues. When it comes to social media, our ComMetrics division makes sure the client gets one clear AND concise message of what we stand for. Confusion results from trying to be too many things to many people.

ambience from Seattle to Zurich to Beijing) or Thermoplan (small company from Weggis, Switzerland that supplies Starbucks' espresso machines).³⁷

While Nespresso and Starbucks are business-to-consumer (B2C) brands, Thermoplan is more business-to-business (B2B). While few consumers have heard of the company, those in the business know that Thermoplan stands for quality, great engineering and better performance when it comes to brewing a great cup of specialty coffee for your clients.

Challenge

It must be clear to clients and potential customers what the company and/or brand stands for. Sometimes, this message is helped by a slogan, such as Walmart's **Save money. Live better.** This implies not only that you get a good deal, but have more resources to improve your life – and who doesn't love that?



Even a smaller company like ComMetrics can have a clear message: **Tools for benchmarking social media.**



ComMetrics' parent company CyTRAP Labs GmbH uses: **essential source for actionable metrics**, as well as **Benchmark smarter. Perform better.**

The challenge is to make sure people easily understand the message you wish to convey. If a lot of explanation and detail is required to get your potential customer to understand what problem your service or product solves, you have already lost.³⁸

3. Consistency in message delivery, both online and offline

More often than not, professionals' stories are inconsistent across channels, so while the Facebook page could be for personal friends, Twitter is professional, as is the corporate blog. Unfortunately, it is not a good idea to say one thing on Twitter and another on your Facebook page.

³⁷ Tidbit: Did you know that Switzerland has the highest density of Starbucks worldwide, with 45 coffee houses of which there are 20 in the city of Zurich alone (2009)?

³⁸ Avis and its slogan **We try harder** imply better value for your money by going the extra mile. Nike's **Just do it** implies that sport is the great leveler of people – anyone can do it.

Nor does it make sense to explain what the company does in different ways to different people. Making sure employees explain it the same way is also a real challenge. We remind our business clients to stay on-message regarding what the brand or company does.

Challenge

If you have a corporate Twitter account (e.g., [Twitter.com/ComMetrics](https://twitter.com/ComMetrics)), you must ensure that the tweets reinforce the message you want to get across. We focus on web analytics, metrics and so on using hashtags (or keywords) like #webanalytics #metrics #usability, #userexperience and #benchmark.

A good way to find out how people perceive your Twitter feed is to look at the Twitter lists that include your account and create a cloud of the words.³⁹ This is made up of the words people used to describe the lists they made of Twitter accounts and under which they put your feed. We did this exercise a while back and it showed that people saw us in the measurement and analytics space, as well as Europe, metrics and social media. View this image here: identi.ca/notice/15083287.

Does the company have a social media policy that fits its strategy?

At this stage you have probably developed a clear message for online and offline communication. You might even have a company page on Facebook or launched a group on Xing that fits your corporate message.⁴⁰ In fact, even your company's blog is up and seems to be doing well.

Furthermore, you may have addressed the context issues that could affect your social media performance and your employees understand the challenge and try to meet it head on.

Social media policy is key.⁴¹ Your employees not only need to understand what the objectives are but need to make sure things work as effectively and efficiently as they can.

Leveraging benchmarking efforts to reach strategic objectives

1. **Using social media while preventing employee access:** There is always a danger that people spend too much work time participating in social networks, but being a more personable and engaging organization in the public's view requires a social

³⁹ Reputation is how people perceive a brand, while brand is the message a company sends out or wants its clients to believe (image, etc.). Two sides of the same coin, as discussed here: ComMetrics.com/articles/branding-versus-reputation-jeff-bezos-richard-branson-josef-ackermann-and-pat-russo-to-the-rescue/

⁴⁰ Our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/pages/ComMetrics/188946538373?ref=search&sid=1002961835.2928171395..1

Our Social Media Metrics group on Xing: www.xing.com/net/smmetrics (free sign-up).

⁴¹ This social media policy is clear, concise and short (it fits on a napkin, seriously). Best of all, it has worked beautifully for more than two years and might very well work for you, too.

presence and employees are the key ambassadors of that message. A company that does not allow its employees to participate in social media will have no employees to help spread the message. Nor will it come across as very honest.

2. **Start sooner to learn faster:** Similar to the perfect social media presence on Second Life, Facebook or MySpace, the perfect benchmarking program is still in development, but move on. You will not come up with the perfect answer either so better to implement things that might not be perfect but, more importantly, allow the team to learn and improve quickly.

Mini case study

We recently found this question in a discussion group on Xing:

Social Media für KMU's Chance oder nur ein Hype, der wieder vorbeigeht?

(**Translation:** Social media for SMEs – Social and Medium Enterprises – an opportunity or just some passing hype?)⁴²

Several contributors pointed out that social media is a new opportunity, while others suggested that advertising agencies that are able to help set up strategy, implement it and evaluate progress for SMEs are few and far between.

As my colleague Karen Purves pointed out, it is a mindset that requires leveraging online as well as offline marketing. Similar to not asking an advertising agency to develop our corporate strategy, we should not outsource developing our online or social media strategy. Even if we hire experts for the job such as a social media consultant, the business owner or a top management representative of a larger organization must be part of the process and report to the board.

Common Mistake

Adhering to the truism that everybody is in sales, without clarifying that everybody is part of the social media communication channel.

There are too many critical questions that must be addressed and we begin a learning process by answering them. Why would any company want to outsource such important processes that affect core assets?

As noted in our contribution to the forum, support from outsiders is fine but control and decision-making must rest with the organization. Social media is becoming too important to most businesses to allow it to be completely outsourced. Once the strategy has been formulated and the objectives have been set, an advertising agency may have some suggestions regarding how these objectives can be achieved using social media.

⁴² Read the question, discussion and comments at Social Media Club Deutschland on Xing (German): www.xing.com/net/smchh/erfolgsmfaktoren-best-practice-use-cases-zu-social-media-416154/social-media-fur-kmu-s-chance-oder-nur-ein-hype-der-wieder-vorbeigeht-27404907/27464556/#27464556

Chapter 10: Conclusion

In this eBook we pointed out that before you launch a social media benchmarking exercise, it is necessary to define the purpose for your use of social media.

Some suggest you build a following by

- offering value related to your mission,
- following others that tweet stuff relevant to you,
- following customers that tweet interesting stuff,
- re-tweeting other people's postings that are relevant to your followers⁴³,
- replying to thoughts and questions posted by others, and
- cross-marketing on Facebook and other networks (e.g., Identi.ca).

Unfortunately, that still does not tell you what the effect of all this will be to your company's bottom line. Is it helping you better engage your clients, find new customers in far away markets or doing something else entirely?

Your company or management team also has to understand the value proposition of using social media, whatever that may be. While it may not clinch a sale, it may help improve trust or credibility with your customers.

Even a small company can provide its clients with information that helps them be more efficient. In turn, the client sees content or an email newsletter as a valuable addition to the other things they may read and refer to.

But these things must be discussed, agreed upon and written down - on a napkin, for all we care (keep it short and sweet). Otherwise, it is unlikely that your organization can achieve its objectives, whether they include reaching higher sales levels or reducing expenses.

Common Mistake

A social media presence often gets developed without putting it in context with objectives.

The latter must be supported with actionable metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

To **get top management involved** beyond just joining or attending a steering committee, it is necessary to **relate social media's purpose to how it will support achievement of strategic goals**. Only after being shown that link will management get interested in what results can be accomplished and why.

3 tips for focusing on purpose and social media

1. Developing a strategy requires a policy that fits the former. If the company wants to engage clients on Facebook, employees should have the same opportunity. They will need training to circumvent legal quagmires while protecting their privacy and user rights.

⁴³ Tweets and re-tweets do not always increase customer engagement:

ComMetrics.com/articles/getting-better-comments-and-replies-is-critical

2. A strategy without clearly defined objectives that yield actionable metrics and KPIs will be stillborn. The strategy will stand but the company might be unable to demonstrate any benefits to the bottom line (see Chapters 2 and 3 in #2010-01 – Why benchmark social media?).

3. Be ready to refine and adjust your social media purpose in the future. The purpose or rationale for using social media can change due to factors such as new technologies like Twitter gaining popularity or an economic crisis. Alternately, moving up the learning curve may provide new insights that suggest change or adjustments may result in setting objectives higher or lower. You can only find out by practicing what you preach.

About ComMetrics

ComMetrics, a division of [CyTRAP Labs GmbH](#), is an industry leader in the analysis of corporate blogs in Europe, creating web-based software used by social media experts, in-house professionals and advertising agencies helping companies improve social media performance in the blogosphere.

As an independent consulting body, we have been monitoring best practice since its inception at the turn of the 21st century and advise corporations, non-profits and governmental organizations on their social media presence. For these tasks we have developed a range of web-based software tools, some of which are offered for public use. These are available at My.ComMetrics.com.

To find out more about ComMetrics' products and services, please contact us at www.ComMetrics.com.