

Social Marketing Primer for 2016



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Social marketing is now recognized by marketing leaders as one of the most effective channels across the customer buying journey. This research will help you deliver social marketing programs that drive desired outcomes from awareness through advocacy.

Scope

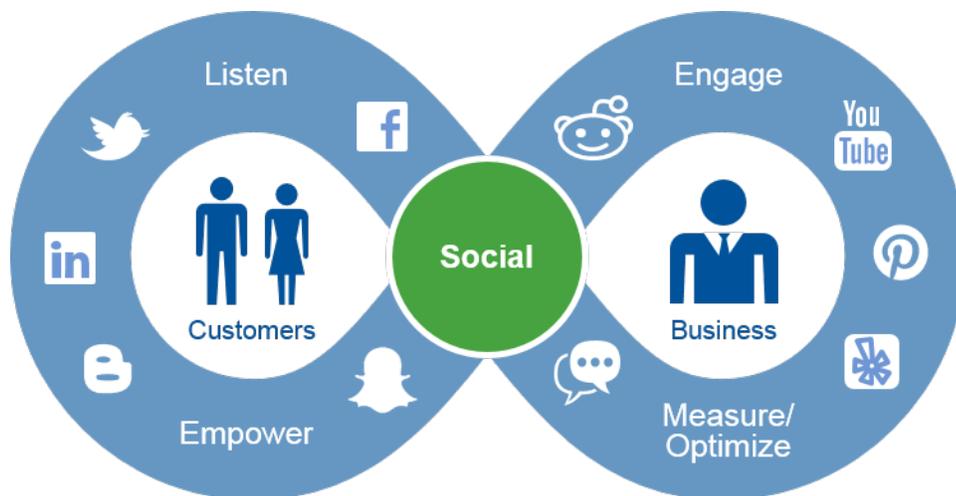
Social marketing listens to and engages customers, distributes content, and cultivates brand advocates. Successful social marketing can increase awareness, consideration, conversion, and advocacy.

Social marketing includes:

- Social media listening and analytics
- Social content development, curation and publishing
- Social marketing engagement with customers, including influencers
- Social media advertising and social commerce

Analysis

Figure 1. Social Marketing Primer Overview



Source: Gartner (January 2016)

At the core of what made social media a revolutionary platform for marketers is the dual value it offers brands and audiences. People use social media to discover new ideas, make connections and add an additional dimension to their personal and professional interests. These attributes also play out along the customer journey — social media allows customers to get better, more objective information about a product or service from their peers and engage with a brand directly in order to inform purchase decisions. For marketers, it allows unprecedented access to audience data and customer insight, and the ability to engage with customers and involve them in brand storytelling.

The promise of social marketing has come to fruition for marketing leaders, who, according to Gartner's 2015 Multichannel Marketing Survey, recognize social as the single most effective channel during the awareness and advocacy stages of the customer journey, and a critical touchpoint for increasing consideration and conversion. As such, the marketing organization is now investing heavily in social marketing technology, and CMOs are reallocating media budgets to tap into social advertising's unique ability to target desirable audiences.

But there is work to be done. Gartner sees most social marketing programs are still maturing, with integrated campaigns driving bottom-line business value, but not yet optimized to truly differentiate a brand. In 2016, our research will focus on elevating your social marketing to the next level by reinforcing core best practices, while highlighting ways leading social marketers are innovating and optimizing investments.

Top Challenges and How Gartner Can Help

Marketers have new social marketing tools and techniques available to help drive impact across every phase of the customer journey. Some of these require investment, while others require refocusing and restructuring the organization. In 2016, Gartner will help you bring your social

marketing programs to the next level of innovation and accountability by addressing the following challenges:

- Quantifying the value of social media programs and investments
- Overcoming organic reach and engagement loss with influence and advocacy programs
- Keeping content funnels full with user-generated content and new content types

As pressure builds on social marketers to justify investment, they must demonstrate value or risk losing momentum

While social marketing is recognized as one of the most effective digital channels across the customer journey, as social marketers invest more than ever before in content and technology, CMOs are holding their feet to the fire on results. Typical ROI drivers — revenue, cost savings and risk mitigation — are difficult to correlate with social media activity. So, social marketing requires continually finding ways to bring value to other areas of marketing and the broader organization, like improving the customer experience. The rich insights available through social listening and analytics tools are a great starting place and, in addition to the value it provides, the act of sharing and collaborating on this data helps break down silos.

Advances in technology and social network capabilities enable digital commerce driven by social marketing efforts. Although their successful adoption has been sporadic to this point, that's likely to change quickly, giving marketers claim to a bigger part of the revenue pie and positioning social marketing as a key ingredient.

Our 2016 research will help you solidify the impact your social marketing programs make on the bottom line, while keeping you ahead of the competition as new techniques, trends and technologies emerge.

Planned Research

- Social Commerce Strategy and Tactics
- Social Command Centers
- The Evolution of Social Marketing Metrics
- Market Guide for Social Commerce
- Market Guide for Social Analytics

With increased focus on paid advertising and digital commerce, social marketers risk harming the customer relationship

The days of "free" social marketing are over. Organic reach and engagement rates have declined significantly over the past two years as Facebook, in particular, has pushed brands to paid advertising in order to continue to reach audiences. While social advertising provides strong

benefits in its ability to target audiences and measure return, the increasing focus on paid versus owned and earned content distribution presents risks. After all, social media's original appeal to brands and consumers was the ability to discover, connect and communicate with each other on a global level and participate in relevant communities. Leading social marketers haven't strayed far from that original concept, even as they are tempted by the lure of direct response marketing techniques. Brands that can cultivate relationships with individual customers and communities, and seize on cultural movements as they begin to coalesce, have built long-term value far beyond what they might have by simply throwing money at the challenge.

Of course, paid social advertising is part of any successful social marketing plan, but social marketing practitioners often lack the planning and buying savvy of their media counterparts. In the absence of those resources, they need additional guidance to navigate the rapidly changing world of social advertising and digital commerce.

As relationships move from being more "organic" to being more "brokered," our research will help marketers understand how to establish and maintain an on-brand, yet authentic, conversation with customers in a way that delivers value for both parties.

Planned Research

- Social Influencer Marketing
- Employee and Customer Advocacy
- Social Advertising and digital commerce

How can social marketers keep their publishing funnels filled with thought-leading and engaging content?

Marketers have expressed frustration with their inability to tie content investments with business results. This disillusionment often rears its head in social marketing. Social networks are constantly updating user interfaces, algorithms and functionality. Content formats and social ad units are constantly changing and expanding. Consumer appetite for new types of content seems to grow unabated. How's a social marketer to keep up, especially if hampered by outdated content development and approval processes? While new tools have emerged to help social marketers create, collect and curate content, the ability to participate in relevant conversations and drive action is heavily reliant on always-on marketing, which requires a steady stream of engaging, branded, third-party and user-generated content at a social marketers fingertips. As visual content, especially video, resonates with customers, creative resources are stretched thin, forcing marketers to turn to technology to source, manage, amplify, measure and optimize content within social marketing.

Our research will help you streamline your social marketing content strategy, development and distribution, while helping you justify those investments.

Planned Research

- Innovation on Emerging Social Networks and Content Formats
- Best Practices in User-Generated Content and Consent
- Top Use Cases in Social Marketing

Related Priorities

Table 1. Related Priorities

Priority	Focus
Multichannel Marketing	Multichannel marketing represents orchestrated interaction across digital and traditional customer touchpoints to acquire, grow and retain customers, engaging audiences and extending relationships.
Mobile Marketing	Mobile marketing involves using information about people's context (location, identity, relationships and intentions) to tailor information and products that increase customer engagement and sales.
Customer Experience	Today, 89% of marketers compete primarily on the basis of customer experience — discrete moments that, together, strengthen or weaken a customer's preference, loyalty and advocacy.
Digital Commerce	Marketing leaders are on the hook to deliver measurable business impact. Digital commerce drives directly attributable revenue and also collects valuable customer insight.
Data-Driven Marketing	Data-driven marketing (DDM) applies data and analytics to planning and execution processes in order to increase marketing's efficiency and effectiveness.

Source: Gartner (January 2016)

Suggested First Steps

- "Maturity Model for Social Marketing"
- "Use This Formula to Focus Your Social Marketing Strategy"
- "Five Big Areas for Breaking Down Silos Between Social and Multichannel Marketing"

Essential Reading

- "Survey Reveals Power of Social Marketing in Multichannel Campaigns"
- "Five Ways to Determine Social Marketing's Role in Your Customer Experience"
- "Structure Your Social Marketing Efforts Based on Five Popular Use Cases"
- "Market Guide for Social Marketing Management"

- "Market Guide for Social Analytics"
- "How to Measure Social Marketing ROI"

Analyst Profiles

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More on This Topic

This is part of an in-depth collection of research. See the collection:

- [Gartner for Marketing Leaders' Research Overview for 2016](#)

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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 & 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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