

Agenda Overview for Social Marketing, 2015

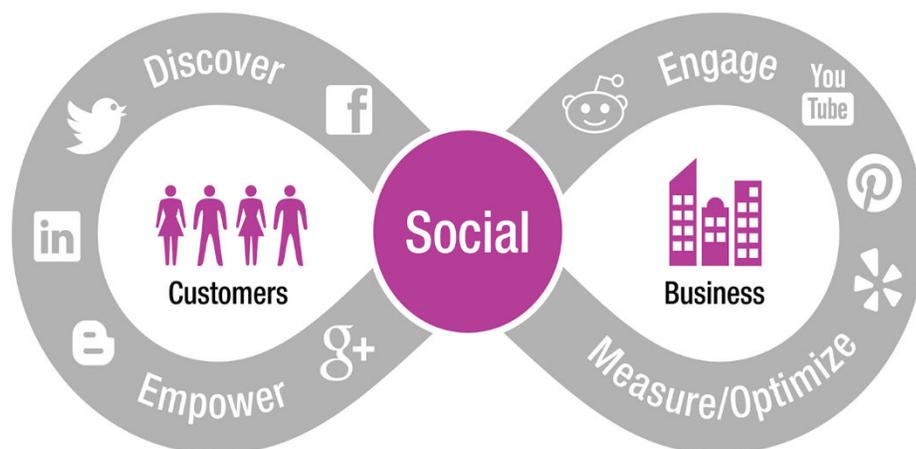
Published: 19 December 2014

Analyst(s): Julie Hopkins

Social marketing programs are maturing; executives increasingly expect ROI to follow social marketing spend and resource allocation. Gartner's 2015 research will help you advance your social marketing efforts to be more efficient, better integrated and create more value.

Analysis

Figure 1. Social Marketing Agenda Overview



Source: Gartner (December 2014)

The great age of experimentation in social marketing is drawing to a close. Social marketing programs that began casually now seek purpose. Programs that are now on solid footing seek growth and new ways to add value to the organization. Expectations are high for social marketing initiatives to deliver business benefit — and support the broader customer experience — to justify continued focus, increased budget and resource support.

You are responsible for carrying social marketing forward into an era of productivity and value creation. Often, demonstrating business impact from social marketing will mean sustained or increased investment in internal personnel, technology, content or analytics resources. How do you turn your social marketing program into one that steadily delivers and increases returns to the

enterprise? Gartner's 2015 research will give you the advice and tools you need to convert your social efforts from experiments into marketing mainstays.

- The transition from experimentation to production will require you to move beyond the basics, and optimize your social marketing program. Optimization starts with tracking social marketing's contribution and impact to multichannel marketing, the overall customer experience and the broader organization. Social marketing tools and capabilities make these goals more attainable, but they also add a layer of complexity.
- Marketers that don't use social analytics will need to build this into their programs to generate and share insight, not just campaign reporting. Use these tools to help close the loop on your social marketing efforts, which will give you the upfront data you need to feed your strategy and the measurement tools required to assess impact.
- Programs that do not yet leverage technology to scale content development, publishing, engagement or campaign management will increasingly be burdened by the frenetic pace of social marketing, as well as the cross-channel and cross-functional demand for social data.
- Your efforts will focus on content insights, as well as customer insights, and will require thoughtful approaches to creating, customizing, managing and evaluating content for publishing and amplification, as well as measuring customer engagement and actions taken with that content.
- You'll need to choose vendors to help you with this work — social marketing management applications can help organize your activities, along with those in related functions, and analytics providers will help you measure results. Vendor evaluation will become a critical skill.
- Your strategies will need to reflect the influence of new forces and trends, such as emerging social networks and the Internet of Things (real-world objects will communicate on behalf of their users via social networks and become part of the conversation).
- Your programs will become part of overall customer experience planning. Audience insights will feed journey maps; content plans will reflect experience design. Campaigns will focus more on enriching the customer experience, rather than promoting specific products, as their primary competitive differentiator.

Our 2015 research will help you handle the growing complexities of maturing social marketing programs.

Key Issues

- What are the best practices in planning and executing social marketing programs and campaigns?
- How can social marketing drive maximum business value in broader multichannel programs?

What are the best practices in planning and executing social marketing programs and campaigns?

You're going to invest significant amounts in social marketing — our research indicates social marketing is one of the top areas of increased digital marketing investment planned for 2015 — as it is viewed as core to digital marketing success, and will be under increasing scrutiny to create value for the organization. Budget alone can address many of social marketing's challenges, but those challenges remain formidable:

- A robust social marketing program is highly dependent on content marketing, mainly content creation, which is resource-intensive and can constrain programs as marketers seek to create, curate and cultivate content that forges an authentic connection through content.
- Social networks are dynamic, and doing business and engaging customers on these platforms can feel like chasing a moving target. Best practices can shift like the wind; marketers that can optimize quickly will fare better.
- Customers can be fickle and demanding. As existing social sites expand their feature sets, new social networks arise, and the bar is raised for engaging content and tactics, marketers can struggle to keep pace and wonder where to focus.
- Social marketing initiatives often contribute to the business indirectly, and marketers struggle to connect the impact of their programs to business objectives. However, social programs can be fully optimized for business value only when insights are understood and applied, and activities are integrated across the customer experience.

Social marketing initiatives must be built with enough depth and flexibility to address the range of customer interests; be designed to redirect, expand, contract or connect as necessary; all while remaining focused on what the program is designed to achieve. Creating the right organization to support these efforts, and following best practices in process, as well as selecting the right tools and technologies, are essential to success in social marketing.

Planned Research

Our 2015 research will help you create effective social marketing initiatives. We'll write Best Practice documents, based on case studies, to show you how industry peers establish and engage communities, plan and contribute to multichannel campaigns, and execute integrated tactics (see "Top Use Cases and Benefits of Social Marketing") in support of the customer experience. We'll provide strategic guidance for how to implement programs on specific networks, use targeted tactics and techniques (for example, paid media), and exploit emerging opportunities for social engagement. We'll help you understand how to manage your social marketing initiatives within your team and across teams connected or adjacent to your own. We'll guide your analytical processes, from how you gather insights from social dialogues, to providing advice on budgeting, metrics and measurement for social marketing, as well as other digital campaigns.

We'll also look to the horizon — how your program should evolve to stay ahead. We will keep an eye on the Internet of Things, and advise how this will impact social sharing, publishing, analytics

and insights. Impact Appraisal, Cool Vendors and Hype Cycle reports will keep you abreast of the latest developments in social networks and platforms and how to take advantage of them (for example, see "Cool Vendors in Social Marketing, 2014").

How can social marketing drive maximum business value in broader multichannel programs?

Stand-alone social marketing tactics — viral videos with million-view reach, Instagram campaigns that generate momentum and inspire followers around concepts and hashtags, or short-term traffic spikes driven by promoted Tweets — can give your brand a quick boost. But social networking will pay bigger dividends as part of an integrated marketing strategy and the full customer experience:

- Social media interactions can provide needed fuel to accelerate commerce transactions or increase mobile engagement. Customers turn to socially shared reviews and advice before they buy, and companies have started enabling social interactions on their commerce sites (see "Market Guide for Social Commerce"). As one of the leading sources of time spent on mobile devices, social marketing also has the ability to drive mobile engagement with campaigns or content.
- Social marketing activity management and tracking is increasingly part of digital marketing hub technologies — that is, the extensible platforms on which you can create and manage integrated, multichannel programs. This integrated approach can provide real-time insights, give you better information about customers and their interactions across time and channel, and offer tools to engage based on these insights.
- Social media will also become part of the organization's coordinated efforts across paid, owned and earned media. Channel activities and investments are planned deliberately when campaigns and programs are designed. Selections are made in hopes of reaching the right people, at the right time, in their buying journey, and with the right content and tactic, rather than undertaking channel-specific campaigns in isolation.
- As the reach of organic social marketing declines, and more social programs leverage paid social investments, the role of social marketing expands beyond content publishing and engagement, to understanding amplification strategy and investment.

Thus, social media will be incorporated and connected to all digital marketing strategies and tactics, and can augment and drive improvements across offline and online disciplines.

Planned Research

Our 2015 research will give you insight into how social marketing programs can help grow the business as part of your overall digital marketing strategy (see "Top Use Cases for Social Marketing in Financial Services"). We will offer reports to guide the transition from social marketing as a channel-specific tactic, to social marketing as a strategic discipline, one that is part of a larger multichannel approach and customer experience design and serves the entire organization. Best Practice documents will help you align tactics with your organization's marketing strategy — on connecting with influencers, for instance. We'll also help you plan for outside involvement in your social program; our research will help you anticipate social marketing costs, as well as identify

service and technology providers (such as agencies or outsourcers). Our Survey Analysis reports will keep you up to date about the latest trends in social marketing. Magic Quadrants and Market Guides will also help you understand how the rapidly changing digital marketing technology landscape will affect your social marketing initiatives (see "Market Guide for Social Marketing Management").

Related Priorities

Key Initiatives address significant business opportunities and threats, and typically have defined objectives, substantial financial implications, and high organizational visibility. They are normally implemented by a designated team with clear roles and responsibilities, as well as defined performance objectives.

Table 1. Related Priorities for Social Marketing

Key Initiative	Focus
Multichannel Marketing	Multichannel marketing represents a coordinated program across digital and traditional media to acquire and retain customers, extend the brand, condition the market, and engage communities.
Emerging Marketing Technology and Trends	Emerging marketing technology and trends, such as big data, social media, augmented reality and context-aware computing, create new opportunities to acquire and retain customers, fueling growth and taking market share.
Data-Driven Marketing	Data-driven marketing refers to acquiring, analyzing and applying all information about customer and consumer wants, needs and motivations.
Marketing Management	New capabilities enable marketers to penetrate customer segments and explore opportunities for growth through modern, digitally inspired strategies — if marketers can overcome the operational and organizational challenges.
Mobile Marketing	Mobile marketing involves using information about people's context (location, identity, relationships and intentions) to tailor information and products that will increase customer engagement and sales.
Digital Commerce	Digital commerce uses the Internet, mobile networks and commerce infrastructure to execute transactions with consumers or businesses, and to support marketing and other activities around these transactions.

Source: Gartner (January 2015)

Suggested Next Steps

- Audit upcoming social marketing campaign plans for business value. Make sure planned activities map to overall business objectives and are assigned benchmarks you wish to meet. Align staffing plans to make sure you have the resource bandwidth and skill sets required to fuel your social marketing engagement needs.

- Work with peers managing other digital channels, such as mobile, commerce, and customer service and sales, to devise a role for social media in their long-term plans.
- Include measurement as an integral part of planning for any digital marketing campaign. Define metrics that align with the organization's business goals. Benchmark performance before the campaign begins so that you can tell whether you have moved key performance indicators.

Gartner Recommended Reading

Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

"How to Turn Social Marketing Activities Into Social Commerce"

"How to Measure Social Marketing ROI"

"Top Use Cases and Benefits of Social Marketing"

"Cool Vendors in Social Marketing, 2014"

"Top Use Cases for Social Marketing in Financial Services"

Agenda Manager Profile



Julie Hopkins analyzes digital marketing strategy, trends and practices. She studies social marketing, multichannel marketing, email marketing, customer experience and emerging digital marketing trends. She helps clients use these techniques to engage customers, evangelize their brand, grow revenue and transform the business.

Before joining Gartner, Ms. Hopkins worked at a full-service digital agency, where she helped companies design and implement digital programs and campaign strategies. She worked with clients new to digital marketing, clients implementing their first programs in mobile or social channels, and clients optimizing large multichannel marketing programs. Previously, she held corporate marketing, product marketing and product management roles in high-tech companies, and was a management consultant in data warehousing.

More on This Topic

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

- Agenda Overviews for Gartner for Marketing Leaders, 2015

GARTNER HEADQUARTERS**Corporate Headquarters**

56 Top Gallant Road
Stamford, CT 06902-7700
USA
+1 203 964 0096

Regional Headquarters

AUSTRALIA
BRAZIL
JAPAN
UNITED KINGDOM

For a complete list of worldwide locations,
visit <http://www.gartner.com/technology/about.jsp>

© 2014 Gartner, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All rights reserved. Gartner is a registered trademark of Gartner, Inc. or its affiliates. This publication may not be reproduced or distributed in any form without Gartner's prior written permission. If you are authorized to access this publication, your use of it is subject to the [Usage Guidelines for Gartner Services](#) posted on gartner.com. The information contained in this publication has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable. Gartner disclaims all warranties as to the accuracy, completeness or adequacy of such information and shall have no liability for errors, omissions or inadequacies in such information. This publication consists of the opinions of Gartner's research organization and should not be construed as statements of fact. The opinions expressed herein are subject to change without notice. Although Gartner research may include a discussion of related legal issues, Gartner does not provide legal advice or services and its research should not be construed or used as such. Gartner is a public company, and its shareholders may include firms and funds that have financial interests in entities covered in Gartner research. Gartner's Board of Directors may include senior managers of these firms or funds. Gartner research is produced independently by its research organization without input or influence from these firms, funds or their managers. For further information on the independence and integrity of Gartner research, see "[Guiding Principles on Independence and Objectivity](#)."