



HANDLING SOCIAL MEDIA WITH CARE

Social media are viewed with both scepticism and optimism by communicators. They can promote your reputation amongst new audiences, but, unless carefully applied, they can also backfire.

by Chiara Valentini

Social media are considered useful tools in reputation management activities of the 21st century, as they have opened a new way for organisations to interact directly and engage with their stakeholders. Practitioners indicate that their main reasons for employing social media are their friendly usability, lower cost, their capacity to reach different virtual communities and their reputation of providing 'non-filtered' and 'unpolished' information. Despite their importance and role, social media generate diverse problems of a logistical nature (how can organisations identify major stakeholders in the different virtual communities, and then how can companies create valuable systems of relations with them online?), of relational type (which kind

of systems of relations can an organisation have in social media? Can an organisation create trust among its stakeholders using web 2.0?), and, above all, of evaluative type (which consequences on stakeholder relations and reputation may be encountered by an organisation that excessively uses social media?). To illustrate these main points, I'd like to present a recent campaign promoted by VisitDenmark, the Danish National Tourism Board. This case is particularly interesting because important considerations for communication managers interested in adopting social media into their reputation activities can be seen, and because it underlines the implications of using social media

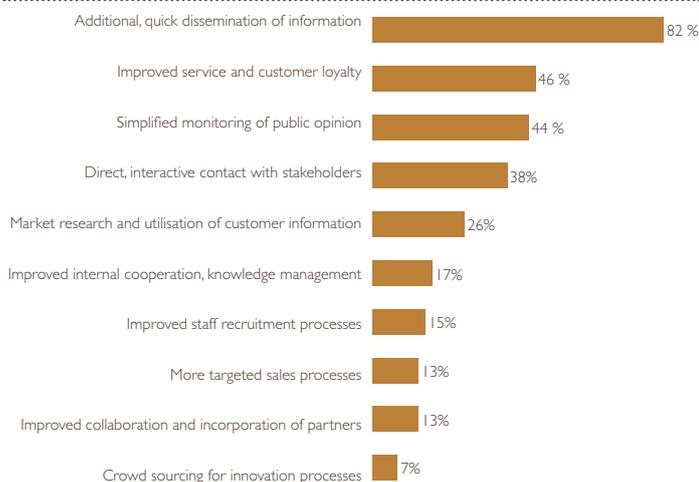
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FACTS & FIGURES

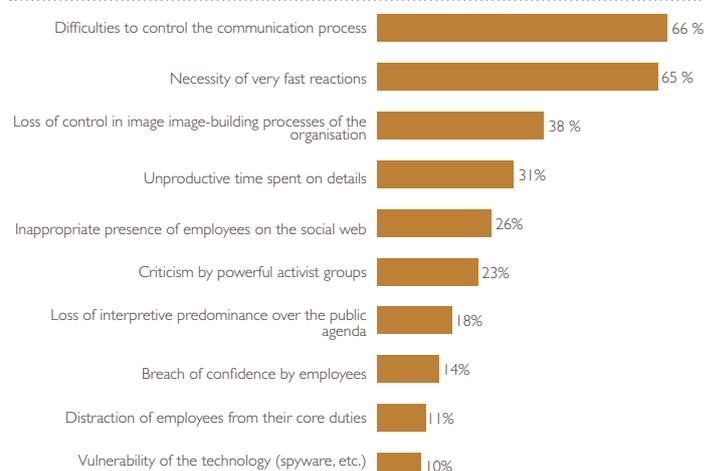
Social media are top of the agenda of many organisations, but there exists a lack of guidelines to ensure that activities help achieve organisational goals. In June this year, the University of Leipzig, Fink & Fuchs PR agency and the Berlin-based Pressesprecher magazine collaborated on a comprehensive survey into social media governance as a means to explore how companies, the public sector and NGOs handle the challenges of transparent communication on the internet. Over a thousand questionnaires were completed, revealing a picture of German organisations' approach to social media that is of striking interest to international observers. 54 per cent of all German organisations currently use social media for

communications purposes; however, the largest portion (26.2 per cent) have been active in the area for less than 12 months and a further 22.1 per cent for more than one year, while only a minority of six per cent has accumulated more than three years of experience. The most frequently stated benefit of social media is the quick distribution of information, followed by improved services, and simplified monitoring of public opinion (below left). On the other hand, a loss of control seems to be the biggest perceived risk (below right); control of the communication process and control of the rate of response, as well as of the organisation's image. *Taken from Social Media Governance 2010* [READ MORE ↗](#)

Opportunities of social media in detail



Risks of social media in detail



COMMENTARY

Taking a bite from the Apple

Successful brand names and their products can blur in the public consciousness; with the right combination of factors, a perfect symbiosis binds the two together until they are inseparable to most consumers. Greeks apply "hansaplasts" to cuts, regardless of the actual make of plaster at hand. The British will vacuum their dusty carpets with a "hoover", despite the fact that Hoover is only one of many vacuum cleaner makers. For a hallowed few, this applies on a global level: people around the world ask for a "coke" regardless of the particular cola on offer. And now it looks like Apple's i-phone and i-pad are determined to reach this unassailable level of market dominance: released in April this year, the iPad tablet computer, sold 30 million copies in 80 days. But there are challengers to Apple's supremacy. Germany's WeTab is one such example; its promise of an alternative publishing solution earned support from a German press eager for alternatives to Apple and Amazon when it comes to electronic publishing. But the PR challenge of carving out a name in the shadow of Apple seems to have eluded the makers, and resulted in a damaging one-two punch of an own



goal. The first misstep was a launching press conference in April, where none of the programmes worked. And then there was the recent decision by WeTab's managing director and spokesman to praise his product on Amazon – under two false names. Helmut Hoffer von Ankershoffen resigned on October 4 after being exposed for faking reviews, including using the pseudonym of "Peter Glaser", a well known Austrian digital expert. Ankershoffen said he wrote the reviews without discussing it with the rest of the management or his communications department. "I would like to apologise at this point". Another PR strategy will have to be found to draw the attention of consumers to alternatives to the iPad.

Image: www.heine-fotoe.de; Sebastian Knoth

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PERSONNEL



Gunnar Bender
(Head, Corporate Communications)

Institution: E-Plus

Start: Oct 01



Germany: New promotion for Gunnar Bender

GUNNAR BENDER is the new head of all corporate communications at the E-Plus Group, Germany's third largest mobile telecommunications company. His department combines public affairs with press and public relations work. Bender replaces Joe Müller, director of corporate communications, E-Plus who left at the end of September. Bender was previously director of corporate affairs.



Stephen Norman
(Chief Marketing & Communications Officer)

Institution: Renault Start: Oct 02



France: Top management appointment at Renault

STEPHEN NORMAN is now chief marketing and communications officer at car manufacturer The Renault Group. His previous role was as senior vice president, global marketing, and in his new position he replaces the senior vice president of communications, Marie-Françoise Damesin, who becomes senior vice president of human resources next month. Norman will report to chief operating officer Patrick Pélata.



Daniel Höltgen
(Director of Communication)

Institution: Council of Europe

Start: Oct 04



France: New communication director at the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe, the Strasbourg-based organisation working towards European integration, has appointed DANIEL HÖLTGEN as the new director of communication. A trained journalist, he has previously worked at the European Commission and for the German government as spokesperson and communications manager. Höltgen's previous role was head of communications and external relations at the European Aviation Safety Agency.

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EVENTS



12.10 – 14.10.2010 European Public Communication Conference 2010

This first EuroPCOM conference will look at how to promote the professionalisation, knowledge sharing and networking of, and between, communication experts from the various levels of government within the EU.

► Various locations, Brussels

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12.10.2010 Strategic Communication Management Summit 2010

This summit will look at developing communication for a new business era. It features keynote presentations from Brian Bannister and James Chalmers of PricewaterhouseCoopers, and Charlie Nordblom (left) of the Volvo Group.

► Melcum, Millennium Gloucester Hotel, London

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21.10.2010 Transform Conference

With sessions on all aspects of rebranding, from creative strategy to implementation, Transform is a practical and essential one-day conference designed to give delegates the knowledge, tools and contacts they need.

► Communicate Magazine, Russell Hotel, London

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30.11.2010 Social Media Results For PR & Comms

This conference promises to explore tried and tested social media strategies for PR and communications to engage audiences, fully embed and integrate social media practices and clearly demonstrate real results.

► Global Insight Conferences, Russell Hotel, London

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