Consumer behavior has changed radically over the last few years. The way people make purchase decisions is increasingly based on word-of-mouth and peer recommendations. Social media have accelerated this evolution on a scale as never seen before. As a result, social media is hot in business.

Every company is trying to do ‘something’ in social media to surf on the trend. Most often it’s marketing- or campaign-oriented, focusing on short term results. But very few companies succeed in integrating social media throughout the entire organization. Because, in essence, it’s not about social media itself, it’s about the dynamics these networks have unleashed over the last couple of years.

Social media enabled the urge for transparency and human interactions with brands and companies. People expect to be informed, respected, helped, involved, amused… Expectation levels are higher than ever before, companies can no longer play hide and seek. This not only affects the way companies do marketing, but it also affects their customer service, R&D procedures, IT structure, HR strategy… In fact, there’s impact in the very heart of doing business: making people (clients, employees and other stakeholders) happy.

So the real challenge companies are facing is not learning how to use social media for marketing purposes, it’s trying to integrate its dynamics throughout the entire organization, in all touch-points.

In this paper we describe the different steps and strategic projects your company needs to adapt. These conclusions are based upon market research. We interviewed 25 international companies about this topic. These are our conclusions.
What to expect from this paper:

- A clear and **pragmatic roadmap**. The roadmap consists of 13 strategic projects your company should implement to reach its goal.
- The roadmap is based on **interviews** with managers from 25 companies from different countries, different sectors and different phases in the integration process of social media.
- All this should not be seen as a visionary document, you’re reading a hands-on guide of what to do to make the true **implementation of social media in your company DNA** happen.
It requires a four step journey

Based on the outcome of extensive in-depth interviews with 25 international companies (see attached list in the appendix and the quotes we’ve published throughout the interview) we have analyzed what it takes for companies to integrate the dynamics of social media and customer centric thinking in 4 consecutive steps. Going through all these steps leads to:

- A higher predictability whether a social media project will work or not.
- A more scalable approach of using new media in all your activities.
- Increase the business impact of all your marketing actions.
The very first step is building internal belief and knowledge. The objective of this phase is to get everyone in the company aligned on the importance and value of social media and customer centricity, and setting up the right infrastructure to succeed.

The capability building step consists of 4 projects:

1. Running an internal and external audit to map the current situation
2. Creating company-wide knowledge via structural & ongoing training
3. Adapting the overall HR strategy
4. Setting up the right infrastructure

In this phase pilot projects are defined. Concrete projects are set up which should lead to immediate business results. Next, these projects need to increase the learning curve of your organization. Afterwards, two structural projects need implementing: installing a center of excellence and a company-wide listening culture.

The pilot mode step consists of 3 projects:

1. Setting up a center of excellence and an operational workflow
2. Executing pilot projects to show the business value
3. Cultivating a company-wide listening culture

During this phase, we bring the entire organization closer to the customer. By adapting the structure from a silo to a network organization, we create benefits for clients. Clients are more involved. Further, an important change is the installation of new business KPI’s for measuring success.

The integration mode consists of 4 projects:

1. Redesigning the overall company structure
2. Implementing external collaboration
3. Setting up a content strategy
4. Installing conversion thinking

The last phase is about making your company more flexible on the one hand and, due to the integration of social media, we want to increase the return on investment of all our marketing and communication efforts on the other hand. At this point, the real ROI of social media pops up: leveraging on investments.

The leverage mode step consists of 2 projects:

1. Leveraging on investments
2. Agile marketing: shorter processes and faster time to market

Here is a short overview of the four steps; later on in this paper we give more details on the required steps per phase.
‘At Nokia we work with dedicated online care experts. They are helping people in social networks, offering support around the clock. Going into social media as a company is a long term commitment, not a short term campaign. We acknowledge that social media have no boundaries. Our customers don’t think about us as in Nokia Belgium or Nokia France, for them we’re just Nokia. Therefore there is direct contact with people in charge of social media in other countries and regions. At Nokia, it’s our ambition to make ‘social’ part of every one’s job. It’s not merely a marketing activity.’

Jurgen Thysmans – Communications Manager, Nokia Benelux
1. CAPABILITY BUILDING
Running an extensive internal & external audit

Creating companywide knowledge via structural & ongoing training

Adapting the overall HR strategy

Setting up the right infrastructure
**Running an extensive internal & external audit**

The very first step is setting up an extensive internal and external audit. The audit process consists of:

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**An external conversation scan:** what are customers, prospects, suppliers and competitors saying?

Research the existing conversations on your company and brands. Understand the tone of voice of your stakeholders, the most discussed subjects in your domain and the most popular channels where people discuss topics related to your industry. Also monitor how people talk about your competitors. DUBBELOP

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**An internal conversation readiness scan**

Research the social potential of your employees. Do they have the right level of knowledge about social media? Are they willing to help in conversations? Which channels are they already using? This zero measurement enables you to map the effectiveness of your training program.

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**A SWOT analysis with a focus on customer centricity**

Make a mapping of the company’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats if you look at the current usage of social media and your current level of customer centricity.

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**Setting up a social media dashboard**

After the audit process, you have to consolidate. Install a professional monitoring dashboard to track ongoing and real-time conversations, based on the right keywords and channels defined.
Running an extensive internal & external audit

Creating companywide knowledge via structural & ongoing training

Adapting the overall HR strategy

Setting up the right infrastructure
‘Most companies still think in silos. Social media is not a department, it’s an approach. It’s important to connect the global and local social media level to share best practices. We have monthly social taskforce meetings to learn from each other cross country.’

Marta Majewska – VP Digital & Social Media Strategist, Porter Novelli
Creating company-wide knowledge via structural & ongoing training

As our world (facilitated by technology) changes at the speed of light, training needs to be an ongoing and iterative process. Training will create buy-in and will accelerate the implementation in day-to-day business.

Start with inspiration workshops:

The first training sessions need to inspire your team by outlining the importance of social media & customer centricity for your business. These inspiration sessions don’t focus on technology; they deal with the impact on your industry and company on a strategic level. Firstly inspiration workshops are organized for top management to create buy in, in a later stage every employee of your company should get these workshops.

Install hands-on iterative training modules. Cater to different levels:

The next step is making things concrete and hands-on. The overall belief needs to be translated to the existing business environment. Provide a list of attractive training modules (e.g. community management, monitoring conversations, and online customer service) for different levels and needs. This training is not a nice, but a need to have. Every employee will need training. It is of course important to tailor the training to the day-to-day jobs of each employee.

Share best practices on collaborative platforms:

Create an online training & best practice platform where employees can share knowledge on a daily basis. It’s important to share learnings and cases cross department. Beware, it’s not easy to make internal social platforms successful; think about smart ways to engage your employees. Again: commitment. It’s not only important to set up an external dialogue with customers, it’s equally important to have strong internal communication.

An internal consultancy team offers project-based support:

Sometimes employees’ knowledge will be insufficient to integrate social media into a specific project. Therefore an internal expert team is needed, that can provide professional advice to make projects ‘conversation-ready’ on both a strategic and a tactical level. Many companies currently outsource their social media activities to agencies because they lack internal knowledge. Based on our research we recommend collaborating with internal specialized people, since they have better knowledge about the company values and culture. In the second phase, this team will evolve towards a center of excellence.
Running an extensive internal & external audit

Creating companywide knowledge via structural & ongoing training

Adapting the overall HR strategy

Setting up the right infrastructure
‘For the first time in business it’s not just the agencies doing the talks for companies, companies and their employees now actually have to dive into conversations themselves. The challenge is to set up efficient information streams across departments, to guarantee that what comes out of conversations is sent to the right internal stakeholders.’

Jo Willemyns – Corporate Brand Manager Private label, Colruyt
Adapting the overall HR strategy

This phase consists of the real NEED to have projects to implement social media & customer centric thinking in a structural way in your company.

Provide all employees with access to social networks

56% of all companies block social media sites in their organization (InSites Consulting research) because of various reasons. In order to grasp the opportunities of social media (both for talking & listening) it’s essential to give up command and control and provide access to all your employees. As a company it’s far more important to think about the opportunities rather than the possible pitfalls. Moreover, thanks to the extensive training program, employees are guided to use social media in an effective & beneficial way. Giving access without training does not fully grasp the opportunity. It’s the combination of access and training that is key.

Hire a Conversation Manager

The Conversation Manager is accountable for organizing the conversation management strategy of your company. He will be in charge of the center of excellence (see next phase) and facilitates the organization in its process of change. The Conversation Manager is the central axe in facilitating the dialogue with customers in all touchpoints. Check out the full job description of The Conversation Manager here.
Write a conversation guide (formerly known as a ‘social media policy’)

We prefer ‘conversation guide’ over ‘social media policy’ because it’s not just an enumeration of what employees shouldn’t do on social media. The ambition is to create a document that motivates employees to leverage the power of social media and customer-centric thinking. The basics of the conversation guide are simple: use common sense, always be transparent and build human relationships.

USE COMMON SENSE

Don’t try to set up rules and restrictions for your employees on social media. In fact, they have to use common sense as in any other situation. Stimulate employees in representing your company values and empower them to take initiative. If you have a code of conduct, apply the same guidelines in your conversation guide.

BE TRANSPARENT

Honesty—or dishonesty—will be quickly noticed in the social media space. If people are interacting with customers, they need to be clear about their role and function. Help people by giving example profile descriptions for Twitter and LinkedIn, for instance.

BE HUMAN AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

In an era with ever more technology, people crave for human connections with companies. Stimulate employees to talk to customers in a natural way, avoid overly pedantic or “composed” language. Be real.
Add new recruitment criteria in the recruitment process

Companies currently hire people based on credentials and track records. New recruits should be screened on some additional criteria. Not every candidate needs to score on these criteria, but it is recommended to obtain a good balance in your total staff.

1. Digital expertise: visit the social profiles of recruits to see how they approach the opportunities of new media, and incorporate specific questions on digital and new technologies in the recruitment interview.

2. Influence level and network: research the ‘social capital’ (followers on Twitter, connections on LinkedIn…) of new recruits as an indication of their influencing power. Opinion influencers can leverage the company’s overall thought leadership position.

3. Openness for change: adaptation capacities are an important aspect for modern companies. Recruiting people who are open to change will help the company in becoming more flexible and dynamic.

4. Level of customer centric thinking & acting: it’s often said that being customer-friendly is something you are or aren’t. It is important to hire as many people as possible who have it in their nature to help other people. Other skills are easier to learn.
Include individual KPI’s in the annual evaluation of employees

Putting the customer in the center of your business is easily said; acting upon it is a much bigger step. By including clear objectives related to customer centricity in the employees’ yearly evaluation, you underline the importance of the philosophy. Make sure it’s not merely a theory or a vision, but a concrete expectation and commitment for every employee.

Leverage your internal superstars: activate & facilitate them

Make sure to optimally facilitate employees who are influencers with large networks (=digital superstars). They can be extremely useful in your marketing mix. Based on the internal conversation readiness scan you’ll be able to reach out to them in a structural way. They’ll be honored to help.

Adapt job descriptions

Most job descriptions lack KPI’s for engagement with customers. Every employee can try to help customers or to promote the company, starting from his or her job responsibilities. It’s important to include these expectations in existing job descriptions. Especially for employees in a commercial role: sales, customer service, marketing & HR.
Running an extensive internal & external audit

Creating companywide knowledge via structural & ongoing training

Adapting the overall HR strategy

Setting up the right infrastructure
‘At Zappos there’s no brainswitching between work – and private life. Our job is just an extension of our life. Company culture is the backbone of our business. Most companies are just trying to pretend to be something they’re not. We don’t even speak about social media. We are a service company, it’s just what we do, we want to help people in all possible touchpoints.’

Graham Kahr – Social Engagement Scientist, Zappos
Setting up the right infrastructure

Provide the necessary hard- & software

The first training sessions need to inspire your team by outlining the importance of social media & customer centricity for your business. These inspiration sessions don’t focus on technology; they deal with the impact on your industry and company on a strategic level. Firstly inspiration workshops are organized for top management to create buy in, in a later stage every employee of your company should get these workshops.

Clean up the social media war field

The next step is making things concrete and hands-on. The overall belief needs to be translated to the existing business environment. Provide a list of attractive training modules (e.g. community management, monitoring conversations, and online customer service) for different levels and needs. This training is not a nice, but a need to have. Every employee will need training. It is of course important to tailor the training to the day-to-day jobs of each employee.

Tell people where to find you, through all touchpoints

Create an online training & best practice platform where employees can share knowledge on a daily basis. It’s important to share learnings and cases cross department. Beware, it’s not easy to make internal social platforms successful; think about smart ways to engage your employees. Again: commitment. It’s not only important to set up an external dialogue with customers, it’s equally important to have strong internal communication.

Increase your social media reach

Sometimes employees’ knowledge will be insufficient to integrate social media into a specific project. Therefore an internal expert team is needed, that can provide professional advice to make projects ‘conversation-ready’ on both a strategic and a tactical level. Many companies currently outsource their social media activities to agencies because they lack internal knowledge. Based on our research we recommend collaborating with internal specialized people, since they have better knowledge about the company values and culture. In the second phase, this team will evolve towards a center of excellence.
PILOT MODE
This phase consists of the real NEED to have projects to implement social media & customer centric thinking in a structural way in your company.
Setting up a center of excellence and an operational workflow

The coordinating strategy for integrating social media within the organization needs to be determined by a center of excellence. This central team, accountable for facilitating the integration of social media in the entire company, is directed by The Conversation Manager. Main goals of the center of excellence include:

- Setting up the overall vision & philosophy
- Finalizing and updating the conversation guide and other HR related aspects
- Rolling out an iterative company-wide training program
- Collecting cross-border (and cross brand) learnings
- Guiding pilot and flagship projects
- Providing internal consultancy & support regional and local teams

The center of excellence manages the corporate social brand, gathers knowledge and analyzes company related metrics. It is important to have this team installed early in the change process as this creates accountability. It also avoids ‘internal conflicts’ about the ownership of social media.

Putting the best people in charge here is crucial. Build a team of people who have a natural passion for new media & technologies and who have great communication skills.
For global companies there are 3 levels of implementation:

**Global**

The center of excellence operates and monitors on a global level and supports the regional and local teams. They collect cross country best practices and work closely together with representatives on a regional level. The global team reports directly to the board.

**Regional**

Every region has a representative, a gatekeeper between the overall global strategy and local implementations. Regional spokespeople meet consistently with the global team to share knowledge and experiences.

**Local**

Local teams are responsible for day-to-day execution, translation of the overall approach to the local culture and languages and are in charge of local monitoring. They report to the regional representatives.
Setting up a center of excellence and an operational workflow

Executing pilot projects

Cultivating a company-wide listening culture
‘Hierarchical structures don’t work in this new environment. We need to move faster than ever before, companies need to optimize their decision making process to become more flexible.’

Truike Vercruysse – Coordinator Communication Services – Dexia
**Executing pilot projects**

The extensive training project during the capability building step will create internal knowledge and support. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. It’s important to show the value of integrating social media through tangible output in pilot projects.

When choosing pilot projects, there a few things to consider:

- **More than 1**
  - In order to create momentum and to build a steep learning curve, it is important to work on a set of pilot projects at the same time.

- **Center of excellence is informed and consulted**
  - Make sure the people in the center of excellence are consulted and informed about all pilot projects. This does not imply that the center is actively managing all projects. The core is that they are involved, facilitate and share learning’s across projects.

- **Different people involved**
  - To boost the experience in your company we advise to involve different people. This creates a stronger commitment towards each other and towards the momentum in your organization.

- **Different departments involved**
  - Make sure it is not concentrated in one department. As mentioned at the beginning, social media is often related to commercial activities but it is clear that other departments are important stakeholders as well. Make sure they are also responsible for a pilot project.

- **Create business impact and company learnings**
  - Pilot projects should have a short term result. Every company wants to see immediate return from its efforts. So, choose your projects wisely way. Next to business impact, the objective is to increase the overall learning. Both objectives are important.
To guide the selection process, you can use the return/feasibility matrix. Based on these two axes:

1. **Return**: whatever your desired return is. It may be an increase in conversations, generating leads, direct sales... it is up to you to set the definition of return.

2. **Feasibility**: how hard is it to implement the idea. This is related to the difficulty (e.g. do we need to change our processes before we can implement them) and the amount of resources needed (e.g. time & money).
Mapping projects on these two axes, we find four quadrants.

1. **Creating disappointment**: This is a very dangerous quadrant. This project looks like a quick win, it actually is a quick win, but one without any value. These projects will lead to internal disappointment. The company expects some sort of return from your social media actions, and this one is just easy to do without any results.

2. **Slow and painful death**: These projects are a challenge, hard to implement and in the end they won’t give the desired return. A lot of energy, time and money will have flown to this project and in the end people will lose their belief in social media.

3. **Smart quick wins**: You should definitely have two or three projects in this quadrant. Things that you can do as from tomorrow, but with a fast and visible return.

4. **Strategic investments**: Projects that take more time but result in a concrete business value at the end of the day. You also need a few of these projects.
Setting up a center of excellence and an operational workflow

Executing pilot projects

Cultivating a company-wide listening culture
**Cultivating a company-wide listening culture**

**Observing conversations becomes a companywide KPI**

Conversations are a pile of insights that can be used to enhance the existing company portfolio and to develop new products/services. Every employee can benefit from observing conversations and adapt his/her job accordingly. Listening to customer feedback will enhance your processes and products; hence observing conversations needs to be a company-wide KPI.

**Share listening-reports to make observations tangible and action oriented**

Make observational efforts visible within the company by sharing learnings and insights on a daily or weekly basis. Don’t just create informative documents, make clear action lists. By defining clear actions and timings you not only make internal progress, you can also keep customers informed on how you are dealing with their feedback. Building external expectation management is a necessity.

**Install an active listening community**

By monitoring ongoing conversations you will collect answers on questions you did not even ask. It’s like a giant ongoing focus group. But it’s equally important to set up a dedicated community with specific profiles (e.g. brand fans) to ask for concrete feedback and collaboration on projects.
A modern research toolbox for structural listening

Just like in advertising, traditional tools in research – like surveys and focus groups – still have value, but should be complemented with ‘next generation’ methods that incorporate the power of conversations and social media to fully grasp the customer.

Think about listening methods like social media netnography - a structured mapping of thousands of existing online conversations, statistically analyzed using advanced text analytics – and research communities. Traditional focus groups often just create a snapshot, whereas long term research communities enable companies to build consecutive learnings. Always on-research via communities gives customers a seat on the board, to deliver insights into the heart of your business.

Using innovative research methods is an essential step to keep up with the ultra fast moving consumers. Also look into the opportunities of new devices like mobile phones and tablets to capture satisfaction levels of customers at the moment of experience. Monitoring real time feedback becomes a new element in the customer service process.
'At Diageo ‘social’ is at the core of every new concept. It has become a natural part of our setup. We are in highly regulated industry, so for us it’s an extra challenge to bring ‘social’ into our business. If there’s a will, there’s a way.'

Andrey Davtchev – Senior Digital Marketing & eRM Manager – Diageo
3. INTEGRATION MODE
In this step, we integrate our learnings and our new beliefs into everything we do. Developing a framework to implement a new way of doing marketing is the key of this phase.
**Re-designing the overall company structure**

Large companies are typically built in silo structures, a model that often results in different mindsets per silo. The biggest loser of the silo structure is without any doubt the consumer. Modern companies need an organizational design of interlinked ‘networks’. Bringing the right stakeholders together based on customer connections. Building a new structure in which the goal is to increase the customers’ happiness level.

In order to succeed, a few steps need to be taken:

**Engage in difficult (internal) conversations at an early stage**

In big companies (especially in highly regulated industries) internal approvals (e.g. legal) are needed for external communications. Since flexibility is that important, it’s essential to involve these ‘difficult’ conversation partners at an early stage. Not in a defensive frame, but in a positive way. Ask for help and collaboration. Postponing that conversation creates insecurity and will only entail problems. In order to go all the way, you need buy-in, so find a way that works smoothly for everyone.

**Decrease time to market.**

**SPEED of execution is the real differentiator.**

Leveraging conversations is not just about acknowledging and thanking customers for their comments and ideas. It’s about acting upon them. Companies need to cut out redundant decision making units and procedures that block fast processing. Traditional long term R&D & marketing cycles need to be revised. Time to market needs to be reduced drastically. We’ll come back to that in the final stage of the integration roadmap.
Install the RASCI mode for employee empowerment:

Companies can no longer work in a command and control model. It’s not sustainable in today’s reality, where employees need to be able to take initiatives to support and surprise customers. The RASCI model is a simple model to set up a logical structure for internal empowerment on a project level. On Wikipedia it’s explained:

Create a customer and an employee happiness network.

In order to become customer-centric and to use all opportunities of social media, we need to make sure that both our employees and our customers are happy. The customer happiness network is a combination of three old silos: sales, marketing and customer service.

Responsible
The ‘responsible’ is the person doing the work to achieve the task. There is typically one role with a participation type of ‘responsible’, although others can be delegated to assist in the work required.

Accountable
The ‘accountable’ person is the one ultimately answerable for the correct and thorough completion of the deliverable or task and the one who delegates the work to the ‘responsible’. In other words, an ‘accountable’ must sign off on work that the ‘responsible’ provides. There must be only one ‘accountable’ specified for each task or deliverable. In the integration of the Social Dynamics model this is the Conversation Manager.

Support
Resources that are allocated to the ‘responsible’. Unlike the ‘consulted’, who may provide input to the task, ‘support’ will assist in completing the task.

Consulted
Those whose opinions are sought, typically subject matter experts, and with whom there is two-way communication. Think about the center of excellence for internal consultancy.

Informed
Those who are kept up-to-date on the progress of the project, often only on completion of the task or deliverable. In this case top level management.
Re-designing the overall company structure

Creating Implementing external collaboration

Setting up a content strategy

Extending conversion thinking to track evolutions and business relevance
**Implementing external collaboration**

**Incremental co-creation**

Co-creation is very valuable for companies to collaborate with stakeholders while developing new products and services. Social media and online communities enable co-creation on a far bigger scale than ever before. Unfortunately too many companies want to start co-creating openly too early, often ending up with PR disasters.

Co-creation involves some very specific skills and has a structural impact on the overall company. Thousands of people uploading their ideas requires moderation and follow-up.

Before starting to co-create openly it’s crucial to understand how customers behave in online communities. Note that co-creation can backfire if you’re not fully prepared for it. Therefore it’s advisable to opt for incremental co-creation:

- **Start in a closed community:** Testing co-creation methods in a small and closed community enables you to see how things work out, map the possible pitfalls and evaluate the outcomes. It’s a controlled pre-test environment allowing companies to fully prepare before venturing into public co-creation.

- **Start with co-creation on specific projects:** Don’t just ask people to provide feedback and ideas on your total offering, because it’s simply not manageable (and unfocussed). Start with sharing concrete insights about certain products or experiences and ask people to search for solutions and new ideas based on that.

- **Co-create with your biggest fans:** Co-creation can be done with the entire target group. But working together with true fans will generate the biggest impact. They know your business by heart and will be delighted to be part of the project team. It will make them proud and they will talk about it with their friends.
Re-designing the overall company structure

Creating Implementing external collaboration

Setting up a content strategy

Extending conversion thinking to track evolutions and business relevance
'It's important to measure the actual implementation of social media in projects. It's not just the theory that matters, the true value is in the execution. The very first KPI of ‘social’ is not about monetary value, it's measuring the evolutions in internal knowledge.'

Jef Vandecruys – Global Project Leader Digital connection – AB InBev
Setting up a content strategy

Infrastructure for content marketing

Content is the ‘fuel’ of conversations in social media. People want to discover and share content with others on social networks. Brands and companies can play a very relevant role in this process: “Every company should think of itself as a media company and publish to its customers, to its staff, to its communities.” (Tom Foremski, journalist and thought-leader).

But a solid content strategy requires an efficient infrastructure. Especially in larger international companies with many brands and products. Content creation takes time furthermore it’s a challenge to seek for the right and consistent tone of voice over all products and categories your company is active in. Moreover, in an international context high translation costs are involved. So in order to make the content strategy efficient, there is a need for a professional infrastructure.

Think about a content strategy on 4 different levels:

Product level:
content created around the different products and brands

Category level:
content created around the different categories your company is active in

Company level:
content about your company, not just facts and figures but compelling stories worth sharing

Industry level:
content about the evolutions and future of your industry to increase your thought leadership
Make it a team effort:

Creating content should not be just a job for professional editors. Based on the information that comes from the internal readiness scan, companies can involve blogger-minded employees to become part of the content team. It’s important to have stories from all levels and departments.

Think about content curation:

“As a brand or company, you don’t need to create 100% of the content provided; you have to be great at directing users to great content.”

Content curation is about selecting relevant content and spreading it to your communities. You can become a trustworthy gatekeeper for your customers, which will increase your network and influence.

STP (Segment-Target-Position)

Think about a valid social channeling strategy. Lots of companies are auto-posting content to all their social media profiles. Each channel, be it Facebook, Twitter, Flickr… has very specific qualities you can leverage. People connecting with you on Facebook may have different expectations than people connecting with you on Twitter. Cater to different expectations, do it smartly.

Content strategy should be about ‘gradual engagement’:

The challenge is to move towards a system in which your customers get new content on a regular basis. Ensuring that your content is appealing enough to interact with is important. This implies that next to your campaign efforts, ongoing content programs are important as well.
Re-designing the overall company structure

Creating Implementing external collaboration

Setting up a content strategy

Extending conversion thinking to track evolutions and business relevance
Extending conversion thinking to track evolutions and business relevance

Evaluate business objectives and KPI’s

Companies often make the mistake of measuring business KPIs at the beginning of the process. But it’s only after successful capability building and an insightful pilot mode that companies can start tracking the real business value. There have been numerous articles and books published on the ROI of social media. But the discussion needs more nuance. It’s not just about the return of using social media, it’s about the return of integrating customer centric thinking throughout the entire organization. A layered KPI structure on both company level and department level helps to measure the right dimensions.

Think about a content strategy on 4 different levels:

Revenue growth:
visit the social profiles of recruits to see how they approach the opportunities of new media, and incorporate specific questions on digital and new technologies in the recruitment interview.

Savings:
research the ‘social capital’ (followers on Twitter, connections on LinkedIn…) of new recruits as an indication of their influencing power. Opinion influencers can leverage the company’s overall thought leadership position.

Leads:
adaptation capacities are an important aspect for modern companies. Recruiting people who are open to change will help the company in becoming more flexible and dynamic.

NPS:
it’s often said that being customer-friendly is something you are or aren’t. It is important to hire as many people as possible who have it in their nature to help other people. Other skills are easier to learn.

Knowledge and integration KPI’s:
adaptation capacities are an important aspect for modern companies. Recruiting people who are open to change will help the company in becoming more flexible and dynamic.
'You can’t buy or sell trust, you have to build trust along the way. If you manage doing so, the return will follow for sure. Companies need to understand that it’s actually permitted to be fun. It’s written nowhere that you have to be boring.'

Damien Van Achter – Social Media Manager – RTBF
4. LEVERAGE MODE
In this phase, our company is ready to take full advantage of this new philosophy. All marketing and communication investments should have a higher ROI than before this change process. Furthermore, your company should be able to become more agile.
Leveraging on investments

The objective is that all marketing plans integrate social media and a more customer-centric approach. The target here is 100%. As social reach will increase during this transition, all marketing investments should have a higher impact than before. There are two ways to create this leverage on your investments:

Additional reach

Your online presence can increase your reach. New target groups can be reached and the possibility to spread the content is realistic. This new reach through your owned social media is a possible leverage.

Savings on media budget

You can have the same total reach by decreasing your traditional media budget. However, relying on social media reach alone to get the message out is not enough. The savings can be the second possible leverage.
**Agile marketing**

The concept of agile marketing is about making internal processes shorter in order to increase the speed of execution towards the customer. Actually it means that you act like a start-up company again.

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**Go for fully flexible budgets**

In the book *The Conversation Manager* we recommend allocating a 20% flexible budget to grasp opportunities that occur suddenly. In order to fully integrate social media in the company strategy, 20% is not enough actually. There’s need for more flexibility if you want to surprise your customers, since you’re no longer in push mode. You’re reacting on what’s happening in the community.

The goal is to reallocate traditional advertising & marketing budget towards ongoing community building & customer service. So agree on the size of the total budget, but keep it fully flexible.

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**Keep an eye on the ball. Invest in micro-trends.**

Our world evolves at the speed of light, so it’s extremely important to react to new trends rapidly and proactively. Many companies have only just started the implementation of social media, whereas consumers have been having online conversations for years. Even if the number of users of certain channels (e.g. Foursquare) or certain tools (e.g. tablets) is still rather limited, it is important to increase your company’s preparation speed to the possible implications.

Hire/assign someone who’s in charge of spotting evolutions, an internal trend watcher who keeps a close eye on how the field is moving. Being a first mover shows you’re on top of things, shows that you’re flexible and willing to move along with the community. And you create learning value, which ensures that you will move faster than your competitors.
‘Companies really need to learn how to adapt corporate speak to a more human tone of voice. Connecting mouths and ears (preferably with a brain in between). That’s what companies are obliged to learn thanks to social media.’

Danny Devriendt – EVP Digital & Social Media Strategist – Porter Novelli
The ROI of the Social Dynamics Model

Integrating the dynamics of social media and customer-centric thinking within an entire organization takes time and effort. It’s a long term and continuous process. The Social Dynamics Model enables companies to approach this process in a structured way, via 4 consecutive steps. But what is the actual return?

In fact, the end goal is not about social media. Social media is just a means to an end, in this case: a facilitator in becoming a customer oriented company. We believe that integrating the outlined process will have a positive impact on all stakeholders involved around the company ecosystem, i.e. the customers, the employees, the suppliers and eventually the shareholders.
Happier clients

The responsiveness of the company towards customers will increase significantly, not only in a reactive way but also in a proactive way. Customers will be involved in the decision making process, and will be enabled to provide feedback and ideas to enhance products, services and experiences. They become valuable partners of the company.

This customer-oriented focus will drive:

• More positive and impactful word of mouth: people will talk about great customer experiences, and influence their peers;
• Better customer retention: better customer relationships will drive loyalty;
• Higher NPS: people will become ambassadors in the long run and help you in spreading the word for your business;
• The ‘humanization’ of your company: people interacting with people (not with logos) contributes to giving your company and brand a more ‘human’ touch
**Happier employees**

Integrating social dynamics and customer-centric thinking in the company’s DNA will have a significant impact on the internal company culture. Empowering and rewarding people to get actively involved in conversations and social media (instead of warning and blocking them) will contribute to an ‘open’ and ‘collaborative’ atmosphere. Breaking down the internal business silos and working together towards a bigger goal creates drive. A great company culture will lead to happier employees. If people truly like working for your company and if they believe in the bigger goal, they will go the extra mile.

**A dynamic company culture will drive:**

- Passion and dedication amongst employees are resulting in better performance levels;
- More conversations from within the company: proud employees will talk about their positive experiences at your company with friends and family;
- Better employer image: people will be triggered to work for your company, based on what they experience in conversations.
**Happier suppliers**

Suppliers are mostly regarded purely as resources, whereas they can really help in building a great company. As speed of execution and exceeding expectations are getting more important by the day, it’s crucial to work on strong and flexible partnerships with your suppliers. Make sure they believe in the importance of word of mouth and customer-centric thinking, and make sure they are willing to push it harder for the bigger cause. And give back; don’t treat them as a cost, treat them as friends.

**Happier suppliers will drive**

- Consistent supplier processes and shorter time to market: this will delight your customers because you can help them faster. Suppliers who feel like friends will make more efforts.
- Again, more conversations: don’t forget that behind every B2B, there’s a C involved. Happy suppliers will talk positively about your business with other people and recommend your business to others.
And ultimately: happier shareholders

At the end of the day you want your business to grow. And so do your shareholders. Based on the studies we’ve outlined at the very beginning (WOM as the key driver for business growth) we’re convinced that implementing the Social Dynamics Model will ultimately boost your business.

Hopefully the outcomes of our research have inspired you to implement the Social Dynamics model in your own business and to start your changes. Don’t hesitate to get in touch if we can be of any help. We’re more than happy to hear your feedback and further ideas. Take care and good luck!

Brought to you by:

Prof. Steven Van Belleghem | Managing Partner | steven@insites.eu | @steven_InSites | +3292691607
Dado Van Peteghem | @dadovanpeteghem | +32474826807
We are a crazy blend of academic visionaries, passionate marketers and research innovators who are determined to challenge the status quo by taking research forward every day and bringing a sense of ‘coolness’ to it. We are change agents as we connect marketers and consumers on research communities, help them develop cool brands with the power to stay hot and develop marketing activation which is worth talking about. We help our clients to let go and delegate real power to consumers, the ultimate key to making better marketing decisions and driving business growth. Follow us via Facebook, Twitter or visit our corporate website.
The Conversation Manager is the award-winning and bestselling book by Steven van Belleghem, managing partner at InSites Consulting. Old school advertising is not working anymore. Change is necessary in the daily business of advertisers: the gap between today’s consumer and the old-fashioned advertiser is bigger than ever and growing rapidly. In the book you can find some great examples and crystal-clear concepts about how any advertiser can be a Conversation Manager. It does not stop with only theory: the book also gives you practical guidelines to start the conversation within 48 hours. Follow the book via Facebook, Twitter or the accompanied blog.
Appendix 1: The four key barriers for change

Most companies are trying but face big barriers for REAL change.

Even though all companies acknowledge the (r)evolution, most of them are struggling to structurally change their modus vivendi. In our research, we found a number of barriers for change:

No internal belief:

One of the biggest barriers is getting support of top level management. In many cases young enthusiasts try to get things going, but their ad hoc initiatives often lack business impact. Senior executives need to believe in the purpose to drive change. The organizational shift has to be installed top down to create impact, top management needs to show the way to the rest of the company.

Lacking internal knowledge & capabilities:

In many cases there is insufficient internal knowledge to move forward. Integrating social media requires capabilities on both strategic- and tactical level. Understanding how social media work, what the actual impact is they create, and how they can be used for business purposes is important from a strategic standpoint. On a tactical level it's important to have an in depth understanding of all the different channels and tools. Company-wide training is therefore the fundamental stepping stone to start the process.

Missing the right resources:

Even with fundamental belief and knowledge the biggest challenge is allocating the right people and budgets. Social media is too often the playfield of juniors and interns. Given the impact on the organization, it needs to be approached in a professional way. Without structural investments it's impossible to succeed.

Old habits die hard:

Very often there's a huge gap between good intent and execution. It's against human nature to change our habits:

“The only human being that likes change is a baby with a wet diaper.”
(Hans Crijns, Professor of Management Practice, Vlerick)

Every employee will have to change daily routines to make this process of change successful. A company can only move forward if there is true commitment and change on an individual level.
## Appendix 2: The people we interviewed

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company name</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Job title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB InBev</td>
<td>Jef Vandecruys</td>
<td>Global Project Leader Digital connection</td>
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<td>ABB Benelux</td>
<td>Lien De Leenheer</td>
<td>Social Media Coordinator</td>
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<td>Cisco</td>
<td>LaSandra Brill</td>
<td>Sr. Manager, Global Social Media</td>
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<td>Cisco II</td>
<td>Petra Neiger</td>
<td>Senior Manager Global Social Media</td>
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<td>Colruyt</td>
<td>Jo Willemys</td>
<td>Corporate Brand Manager private label</td>
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<td>Dexia</td>
<td>Truie Vercruysse</td>
<td>Coordinator Communication Services</td>
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<td>Diageo</td>
<td>Andrey Davtchev</td>
<td>Senior Digital Marketing &amp; eRM Manager</td>
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<td>Dutch Rose Solutions</td>
<td>Natasja Paulssen</td>
<td>Director Sales &amp; Marketing</td>
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<td>Intel</td>
<td>Eketarina Walter</td>
<td>Social Media Strategist</td>
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<td>Kodak CMO</td>
<td>Tom Hoehn (thomas)</td>
<td>Director Interactive and Web Marketing</td>
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<td>Madlen Nicolaus</td>
<td>Social Media Manager EAMER</td>
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<td>Lina Eidmark</td>
<td>Head of Communications</td>
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<td>Microsoft</td>
<td>Mischa Claessens</td>
<td>Marketing Manager Interactive Entertainment Business</td>
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<td>Nokia Benelux</td>
<td>Jurgen Thysmans</td>
<td>Communications Manager</td>
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<td>Rod Brooks</td>
<td>V.P. &amp; C.M.O.</td>
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<td>Danny Devriendt</td>
<td>EVP/ Digital &amp; Social Media Strategist</td>
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<td>Marta Majewska</td>
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<td>Van Marcke</td>
<td>Philippe Borremans</td>
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<td>Zappos</td>
<td>Graham Kahr</td>
<td>Social Engagement Scientist</td>
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