

# SOCIAL MEDIA AS A COMPETITIVE ASSET

Hiccup views the Social Media phenomenon through our own special lens. After all, we practice unified marketing — so we focus on making every effort work together to initiate, develop and manage customer behavior. On the other hand, our competitors tend to view Social Media primarily in terms of narrowly defined silos:

- As a technology solution that facilitates interactive dialogue among organizations, communities, and individuals — “If you build the infrastructure, they will come”
- As an advertising solution that creates another place to post “billboards” or announcements
- As an operations/PR solution for addressing and managing customer satisfaction in a “connected” marketplace
- As a brand awareness solution for building and enhancing customer engagement

Our view is that in reality, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Small single-proprietor shops have always talked and listened to their customers as part of the natural business process. And as companies grew larger and more complex, smart organizations listened to customers through research. Social Media has brought us full circle to the point where companies are now “back at the counter” talking and listening — except now they are also party to conversations between customers.

Hiccup’s holistic approach brings together skills and perspectives from across the marketing and communications spectrum — digital, CRM, general advertising, offer development, direct, media, life-cycle management, analytics and research.

What does this mean with regard to Social Media? It means instead of insulating ourselves and watching conversations and “responding” to what’s being said, we are analyzing what is not being said. We are marrying explicitly stated wants with unstated needs. We are not just listening to conversations, but starting the right kinds of conversations. It means we view Social Media as being about engagement AND lead generation. It means that we don’t count fans, followers and “likes” for reports to management, but as the first step in nurturing, growing and harvesting customer relationships. It means that for our clients to succeed, Social Media cannot exist in a silo, but as part of an integrated, customer-centric communications management strategy that ultimately has to be accountable to the bottom line.

Companies cannot own social media — they are one of the participants. Customer interaction, community development, comparisons, ratings and even ranting are going to happen with or without company involvement in the medium. Companies can watch all of the conversations take place, report on it and respond after the fact, OR they can pro-actively guide and influence them.

At Hiccup our comprehensive and holistic approach to Social Media allows our clients to do just that within a strategic framework, clear execution plans and concrete performance metrics.

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