The Social Media Community Manager's Role

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Being a community manager these days is a fascinating fusion of various roles, previously assigned to multiple areas of most marketing agencies and in-house departments. This chapter defines the role of the community manager.

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Be There or Beware!

The act of communication is nothing short of a total marvel, paramount in the preservation and perpetuation of cultural beliefs and functional civilization. From leisurely storytelling to sharing vital information, it is a way for one person to say to another, in so many words, "This is what I think! This is how I feel! Can you dig it?"...and it's been like that forever. The biggest variable is the constant evolution of communication mechanisms.

Today, tons of conversations—consumer-centric chatter, complaining, praising, smack talking, and evangelizing—take place online. But as few as two generations ago such exchanges were neatly confined to the family dinner table, under hair dryers at the salon, around the knitting circle, on the bus, in the park, on the phone, etc.—much to the chagrin of companies hungry to sell products or services and understand how consumers feel about them.

The emergent adoption of personal computers, household dial-up modems, the Internet, and thus, the gradual shift of these conversations from offline to online in the mid-1990s was huge. Throngs of people—consumers—were connecting and communicating faster, easier, and more frequently than ever before. AOL email, Instant Messenger, chat rooms, forums, and eventually social networks like Facebook were total game-changers for human interaction and the dissemination of information. But shiny new communities didn't solve anything for companies. They were walled gardens accessible only by account holders with a username and a password. Unfortunately, search engine spiders, corporate spies, and uninvited flies on the wall were strictly excluded. Inside those walls, oh, the sweet, juicy gossip to behold!

Even as users flocked to popular new communities, marketers were still out of earshot of customers, potential or existing, and therefore, as out of the loop as they had been 50 years back. Any walled garden or digital platform with direct message (DM) functionality meant Target Customer A was communicating with friend, a.k.a. Target Customer B, and Brand X not only couldn't do anything about it, but had no clue who was talking to whom about what, or, of arguably equal importance, the sentiment of their exchange. No spiders meant no content indexed. Search engines weren't effective for that kind of reputation monitoring.

Brands were at risk of catastrophic damage—because who was there to stop it? Companies didn't have community managers in the digital trenches, on the hunt for brand mentions, ready to field angry rants or dispel inaccurate claims from dissatisfied customers. Such omnipresence was more or less impossible, and far from common practice. Likewise, companies couldn't offer incentives or recognition to shoppers who endorsed their brand to friends. Countless opportunities to turn average consumers into brand evangelists and turn disgruntled buyers into believers, thereby creating a beloved, prosperous company, flew the proverbial coop by the flockload.

Until now.

Social Media: The "Always On" Channel

It happened. The wall came down. Well, sort of, in some places. Facebook, for example, gradually morphed from a no-exceptions closed-circuit cyber-campus into an environment welcoming of high school students and, eventually, anyone with a valid email address. The garden underwent perpetual (if not infuriating) renovations until Facebook decided to let companies in too. That's right! Search engines still weren't on the VIP guest list, but brands could *finally* enter the social playground to set up shop, giving customers a place to air grievances and heap praise. It wasn't the equivalent to copping a squat at the dinner table when family members bemoaned or lauded recent shopping experiences. But Facebook took significant steps in exciting directions and the community manager role went mainstream.

Community managers had a new beast on their hands when microblogging channels hit the scene. Twitter was revolutionary, giving everyone and his dog a mouthpiece that was, by default, public to the world and crawlable by search engines. Video-hosting and -sharing sites gained popularity, and suddenly everyone was uploading their own video clips, everything from OMG-adorable kitties to epic skateboard wipeouts—even product and service reviews. An assortment of similar social communities cropped up and gained mass. People began to delight in sharing their two cents as consumers and as citizens of a digital world. Social sharing has quickly become second nature.

The majority of contemporary consumers are, in one way or another, operating online—around the clock—surfing, shopping, commenting, rating, raving, ranting, perusing, recommending, and weighing a healthy mix of all this user-generated content (UGC) as they move closer to or away from a purchase decision. When it's 5:30 p.m. in Minnesota, and we aimClearians are punching our cards after a long day in the shop, community manager clients of ours in Sydney are just getting into the office with an 8:30 a.m. cup of coffee, and their customers are logging onto Facebook, ready to engage. We come to work at 8:30 a.m. Central, but that's just after lunch in London, and even back at home, people have been awake and angrily tweeting @ClientBrand for three hours already.

These conversations don't stop. They are real. They're rampant. And they're happening whether companies are listening or not. The most titillating development over the past century is that now companies *can* listen.

The Art of Vigilant Monitoring and Engaging

Yes! Part of the wall's come down, and billions of consumers are active online at any given part of the day, any given day of the week, from all corners of the globe. For the first time in history, marketers have unprecedented access to social chatter, from the crucial to the casual. If brands are not listening, if marketers are not keenly devoted to monitoring all relevant conversations, if community managers aren't at the helm ready

to engage when customers reach out or whisper smack to their friends, nasty brand damage is imminent. Be there. Or beware.

Bear in mind, there is no blanket coverage across the Web when it comes to reputation and community monitoring, no simple solution for companies to catalog every atom of conversation surrounding brand terms, products, or services. Google Alerts are an awesome start, but they aren't enough, simply because not all content is crawlable or indexed. Which sites are crawled and what content triggers Google Alerts is up to Google. Also, the Internet is just too big. No search engine can keep track of all of it. Companies and community managers need a more comprehensive monitoring strategy. Social listening software and social customer relationship management (SCRM) tools are available to organize the conversation happening about your brand online, often at a high cost and sometimes contingent on social network APIs—but it is paramount that a human still sift through this for qualitative analysis.

Brands need a green-beret rep in every channel, at every portal, under every digital bush and rock, armed with the most sophisticated listening tools and monitoring 24/7, because social never sleeps. Marketers need a cohesive and strategic action plan for proactive engagement, crisis management, and everything in between. This isn't new.

> **Note:** Even mainstream customer relationship management (CRM) software or tools, like SalesForce, have built-in modules to monitor multichannel chatter.

Social media community management isn't what's next. It's already every online marketer's job description. You need to be the definition of a diligent, vigilant, hardcore social media community manager. We're confident this book will show you how.

The New Marketing Mash-up Player

In order to be effective, community managers (CMs) must possess a solid understanding and practical fluency in public relations (PR), search engine optimization (SEO), pay per click (PPC) advertising, analytics, and content marketing. It's a tall order to be functionally literate in *all* these classic roles, because such skills can be highly specialized. Also, most companies do not cross-train PR team members in PPC, SEO jocks in PR, and other combinations.

Therefore, to understand the next-gen community manager's role, we'll spend a few minutes reviewing marketing fundamentals, timeless tenets that have served our industry well for generations. The confusion that still exists surrounding online marketing, even after 20 years, still surprises us. The good news is that things have not changed much for decades (or longer), certainly since well before the Internet's rise. Let's dive in and remember to review the basics of what it means to be a marketer!

There are essentially two major types of marketing in the world: search and contextual. Search means that marketers respond to users' questions with answers. When a user types a keyword into Google or Bing and clicks Submit seeking answers on a search engine results page (SERP), that's called search.

Contextual is also commonly referred to as display or walk-by. Users don't search and they're not necessarily seeking solutions at the time of exposure to marketers' content. A great example of contextual marketing would be those "Ads by Google" you see in major online publications such as the *New York Times*. Readers are exposed to ads relevant to what they're reading, not what they search for. Usually when one refers to banner ads, they're talking about contextual.

Both search and contextual marketing come in two delicious flavors: paid and unpaid. Paid search marketing is known as PPC. Major search channels Google, YouTube (owned by Google), Bing, Yahoo!, Yandex, Baidu, and other mainstream engines dominate the paid search market. Unpaid search is commonly known as SEO.

Eyes, Ears, and Brand Representation

In social media, the minimum any community manager must do is partner with PR to understand what the goals are for online reputation management and to passively listen for opportunities to capture online brand sentiment potential for crisis. Reacting to positive, neutral, and negative feedback from the customer-mob is optional, but often called for and something to plan for.

The next level of social media commitment is to undertake assertive outreach, researching and joining communities that align with your brand values in some way. Once your brand is established by building relationships in these communities, it often makes sense to sweeten the mix with social advertising.

Being worried about one's reputation is not new. Fervent desire to successfully exist in the pack is undoubtedly as old as human instincts. Certainly during Madison Avenue's Mad Men glory days, skinny-tied PR gray-hairs took the pulse of customer and prospective customer bases to stay in touch with users' affinities, complaints, and opinions. The 1962 community listened and reacted and undertook triage on behalf of the brands. Companies crowed about victories and worked to mitigate public #fails.

The role of social media community manager is the modern representation of a classic listen-and-react role as described earlier. Facebook now has nearly one billion members; a large percentage are fanatically engaged, every day. YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest, Foursquare, and niche players such as StumbleUpon scream at scale and are continually sprouting up and growing deeper.

Note: Social media channels have such massive penetration that interactions mirror users' physical lives!

Attaining Social Prominence

The first goal of any marketing channel is to define its value proposition and obtain a prominent presence. Look to simply be present by providing contextually relevant content. The more targeted those users are, the better. In other words, we want to be in the right place, among users who matter, and in ways that fit in and stand out according to the channel's voice and tone. This applies to search, social, billboards, newspapers, and sponsored golf outings. The community manager's primary goal is to attain social visibility in ways that blend in and stand out, according to the voice and tone of the channel.

In the real world, you would never run naked through the airport (or at least we hope you wouldn't). In social media, there are plenty of behaviors just as glaring and, as in life, companies need to behave in ways that are acceptable. It's OK to be disruptive, but customers have limits in every channel, physical or virtual.

Organic Prominence

An organic social media impression means a brand did not pay the community to be seen. There are many methods and tactics to attain organic social prominence, most of them simple. As an example, if the brand has 50,000 Twitter followers, a percentage of those followers are logged into Twitter when the brand tweets. A measurable percentage of those followers might interact with the brand's tweet, by retweeting, replying, and sending direct messages. Brand visibility and user engagement are great examples of organic impressions and represent a key component of social media prominence.

The simplicity is similar in most social channels. Posting to a brand's Facebook wall is most highly visible to those who have liked the brand's page. The same holds true in YouTube, StumbleUpon, and nearly all social communities. Think of likes and follows as users subscribing to receive the brand's posts organically. That's a really simple way to think about prominence, right?

Paid Prominence

Brands can also attain prominence by placing ads. Figure 1.1 shows one type of Facebook Ad. The area to its left (Iridium Jazz Club) is organic. Paid and organic units—that is, blocks of content standalone or in a feed—live in a variety of locations on Facebook and in other communities. Where social sites place paid units is all about how that community is monetizing the site. Paid and organic units often appear in the same proximity on a page. When paid ad units appear in a place where traditionally organic units also appear, that is called paid inclusion. Since users usually seem to trust organic content over paid, any ambiguity about what's what is great for marketers.
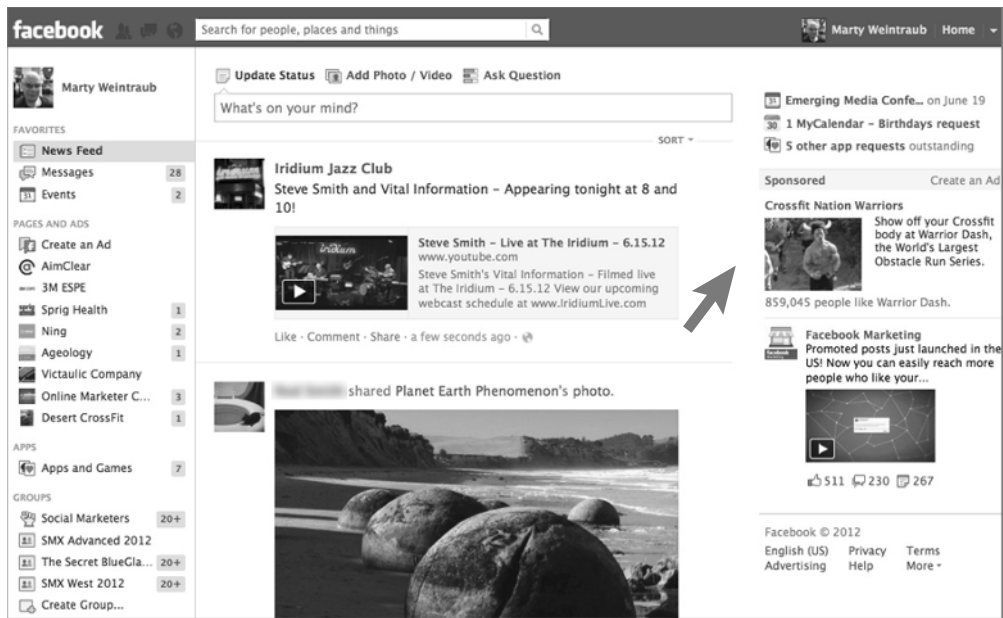
Figure 1.1 Facebook Ad, a paid unit on the right sidebar an advertiser purchased

We'll discuss the blurred lines between paid and organic prominence in Chapter 6, "Dominate with Paid Organic Amplification," in the paid-organic section. Figure 1.2 shows how paid prominence is mingled in traditional Twitter space, a promoted post sandwiched between otherwise organic feed items.
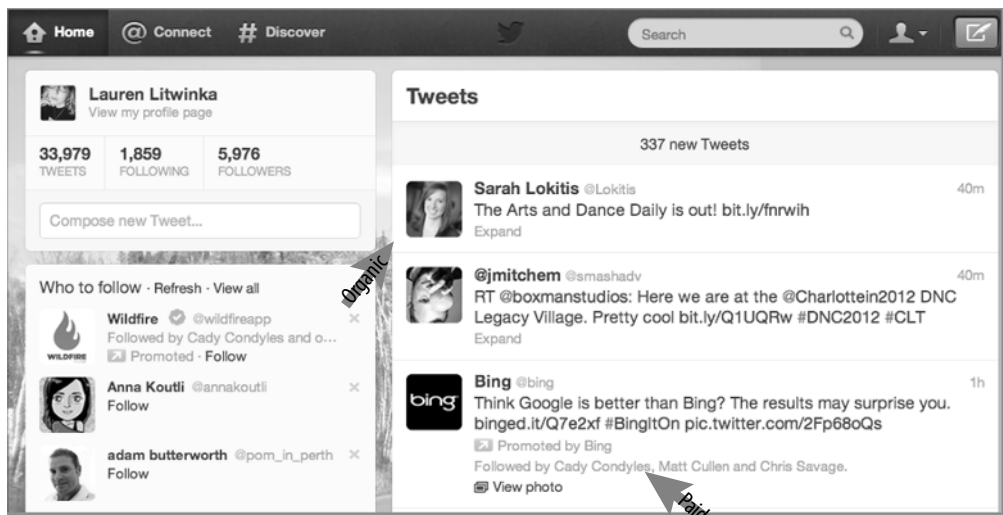

Figure 1.2 Comingled paid and organic Twitter feed items

Impact on Search Engine Optimization

A huge part of the modern community manager's role is about search engine optimization (SEO). Sure, prominence on any social media site *within* that site is easy to understand. You participate in Facebook and want to be visible in Facebook. For the investment in social, you want activities in channels to be visible to others in the channel.

In addition, there are other central nodes of visibility, the most notable being in Google, Bing, and other search results. When someone searches for keywords, it's a cool thing for your social media meanderings to show up in the results. Yep, public-facing pages from social media sites are indexed (listed) in mainstream search engines, including international ones like Yandex, Baidu, and Yahoo! Australia.

The lines between social media and SEO have been blurred for years, as marketers have grown more and more concerned about how social activity is indexed and reflected by mainstream search engines. In fact, one of the first lines of reputation defense is to push an unflattering result down in the SERPs by creating social profiles from channels that engines favor. These days, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter profiles tend to show up prominently in Google and Bing. Powerful niche blogs and forums, where users' account profiles are public facing, can be super powerful in the SERPs, especially when marketers build true links on relevant anchor text to the profile.

Social Signals and Google+

Traditionally, search engines evaluated links, trust, keywords, metadata, and other on- and off-page attributes when ranking websites. Though metadata formats have changed with the evolution of new tag sets like Schema (`www.schema.org`), many traditional ranking factors still apply.

Over the years, search engines also began to look at social signals from mainstream communities. When users in Facebook and Twitter take content hot by retweeting, sharing, and otherwise trafficking content in public, search engines "see" the activity and surface content in transient waves. Bing, because of its business relationship with Facebook, is hyper-sensitive to Facebook social signals.

Google is another story. One of the biggest changes to SEO over the last 20 years occurred in spring 2012, when Google took social signal ranking factors to a new level with its fledgling social community Google+ (Figure 1.3). Following someone in Google+, known as subscribing to a circle, means that the follower's SERPs are much more likely to receive suggested content as a result of the followed user's sharing.

Google+ totally blurs the line between social and SEO, and it's now essential for brands to crank out an optimized Google+ feed and strive to get other users to subscribe in circles. No longer do we just target keywords. Marketers must now also target users to qualify them to receive socially prioritized SEO.
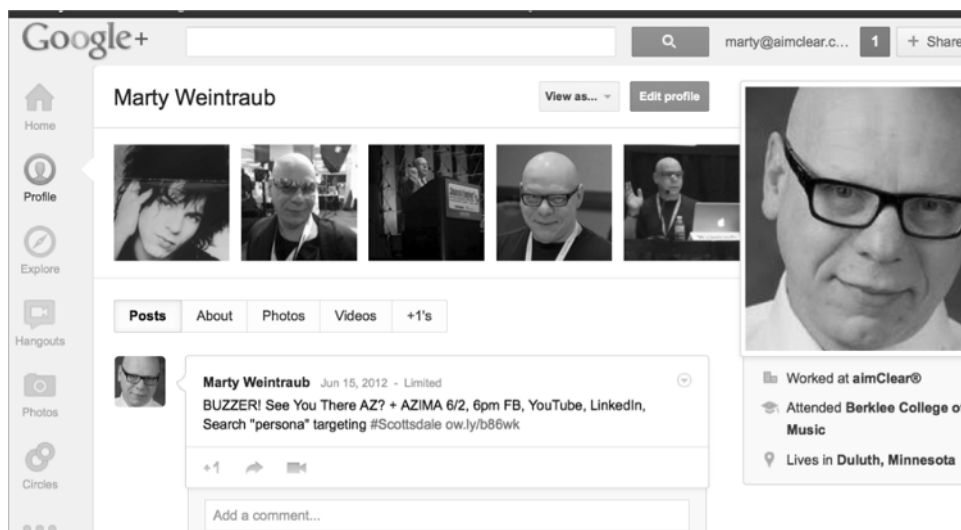
Figure 1.3 Google+ is now essential fare for SEO.

Social Advertising Partner

SEO is not the only thin line community managers traverse. The new hybrid CM also needs to be informed and fluent in social advertising formats that affect how content is visible in mainstream social channels.

Social media communities need to make money from the massive influx of users to widespread adoption of their sites. That means selling advertising so marketers can gain visibility, otherwise unavailable by organic activity alone.

As you'll learn in Chapter 6, Facebook intentionally limits virility unless you reenable key organic features by opening your wallet. Also, there is not always clear delimitation in Facebook as to what's organic and what's paid, so some ad units deliver astonishing results as Facebook users act on what they believe to be trusted organic listings when, in fact, they are paid. Ah, we love paid inclusion!

Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, StumbleUpon, and other communities sell advertising as well. Although each somehow blurs the lines between paid and organic units on the page, the message is clear: For the greatest chance to attain optimal prominence in social media, brands need to advertise. Because community management has the ability to inform on consumer behavior, sentiment, and trends in real time, CMs need to attain fluency in social advertising methods for maximum effectiveness.

Figure 1.4 is a screen capture of YouTube Ads, which are powerfully effective to drive views of your own videos and even send users back to your website to study, hang, and convert.
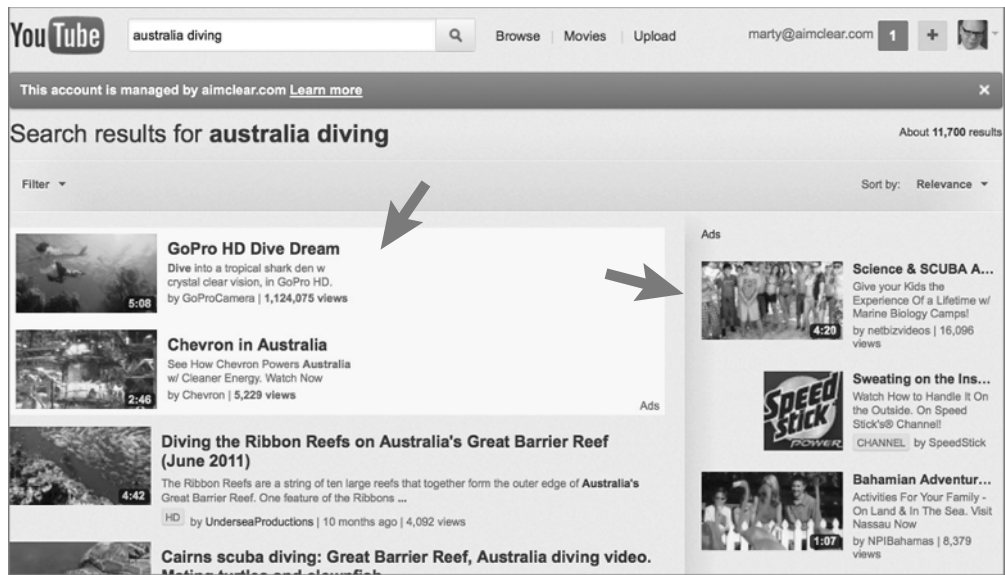
Figure 1.4 YouTube Ads can drive branded video views and even traffic back to the brand's website

Interestingly, while buying ads in social channels is all about attaining prominence in that specific channel, in-channel visibility from social ads often results in additional sharing of the promoted material. This content propagation can cause viral activity. In turn, the viral sharing can influence search engines, especially if users radiate the sharing out to Google+. Wow, it's a brave new world!

Public Relations Team Member

We know that community managers affect SEO, which means that a certain baseline of non-spammy output in social sites is required. Think of it as an "Identity feed." The question begs to be asked, "Where is this daily or weekly content going to come from?"

Well, let's think about that content. Though much will be generated on the fly, sharing ideas and inspirations from others and our own brand, baseline (minimum) social feeds need to reflect the true personality and goings-on of the brand. Since channels like Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ are inherently social, then our brand's output needs to also engage users consuming the feed for maximum success. We'll explore this deeper in Chapter 4, "Content, Reputation, and Hardcore Listening Hacks."

Community managers also stand ready to make the feed an exchange, truly bi- and multi-directional. In other words, since conversations will break out, the CM needs to be ready to participate. That sounds a lot like traditional PR to us and public

relations pros are excellent folks to source for modern CM training and duties. No traditional role in the marketing mix is better equipped to crank out appropriate baseline content along lines of relations including media, investor, community, customer, internal, human interest, and crisis management. These relationships are timeless staples of PR.

As social signals have become critical mash-up feedstuff for social and SEO prominence, so has the understanding of classic public relations thinking become crucial. It's official now. PR is an absolutely essential skill set for community managers.

Data-Driven Community Outreach: The Holy Grail

Many community managers, as they manage profiles, are content to sit on the brand's wall, greet social users who stop by, and "mind the store." That's only part of the picture.

The modern community manager is also charged with identifying related communities where users may have an affinity for the brand's offerings. The art of ascertaining which communities may hold interested users can facilitate healthily assertive acts of engagement and friendship as CMs leave the comfortable environs of their own walls and head out to meet people and engage them on behalf of the mother brand.

The Demographic Research Ethic

We would never undertake SEO or search PPC without doing keyword research. Reciprocally, it's foolish to commence community management without doing social demographic research to reveal the inventory available to target users within a social site. Just as SEO artists use Google's keyword tool, a utility designed to serve search advertiser targeting, social organic targeting is best researched using paid social advertising tools. Good examples are

- Facebook Ads creation tool
- YouTube placement and keyword research tools
- LinkedIn Ads tools

Social media sites are loath to give up exact proportions of community makeup but are forced to pony up the data where the sites sell advertising. Another awesome place to look for social inventory is where sites allow users to search for content. Say we're targeting travelers. Using paid and organic tools to do demographic research for campaigns is fundamental to online marketing because the engines and communities have to give up the information in order to sell ads and service users.

Figure 1.5 shows examples of inventory in YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn.
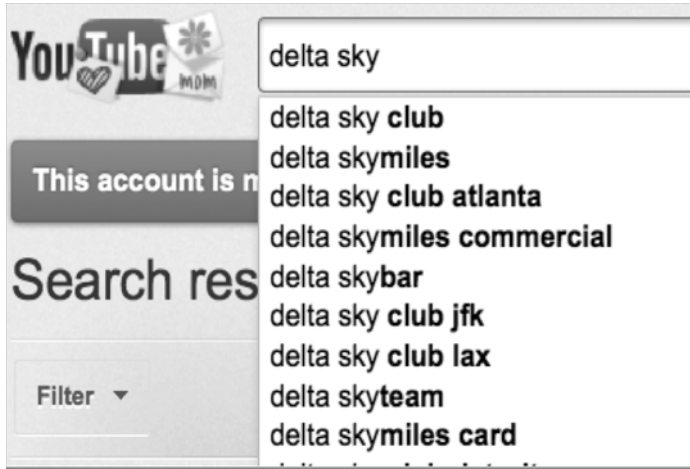
Using the YouTube search box to identify users' interests

Using the Facebook Ad creation tool to research user concentrations

Using LinkedIn Ad creation tool to research themed groups for participation

Figure 1.5   Inventory in various social channels

Making More of the Right Friends

There are myriad approaches to holistic befriending via social media channels. We'll discuss this in great detail in Chapter 2, "Timeless Tenets of Non-Gratuitous Social Behavior," from targeting the right friends to conveying a sense of familiarity and

interest, expanding conversations with thoughtful questions to reaching out without selling and enhancing rebroadcasts with insightful editorials.

As previously mentioned, the first step is demographic research to identify social media influencers and potential friends from a number of channels ranging from Facebook and YouTube to forums. We then challenge CMs to take these "friend leads" and convert them to organic friends over a period of time, at a "cost per friend lead" calculated from how much time the friend conversion takes.

Quality is much more important than quantity. Let's use the LinkedIn group in Figure 1.5 earlier, where we've uncovered focused clusters of LinkedIn users. We know from our demographic research using the LinkedIn Ads creation tool that there are 14,301 such users. It stands to reason that as we bring ourselves to participate in those groups on behalf of our brands and ourselves, we will make friends with others of similar mind.

The premise here is that once we've identified users who demonstrate affinities related to our brand, we can go meet them where they hang out. It's better to make fewer of the right friends than oodles of unfocused peeps who are much less likely to be interested in the same topics we are.

Modern Community Building Key Performance Indicators

So, what do we look for as indicators of successful community building as the front end for marketing efforts? As mentioned, such metrics are not necessarily about quantity of friends, rather about their congruency with the marketing mission. Of course it's good to have both. We love the intersection of quality and quantity.

There are two main considerations when evaluating strength-of-community. First, we want to know the percentage of the demographic segments targeted that like, follow, and otherwise subscribe. If there are 13,301 users in LinkedIn's hospitality-related groups, then we ask what percentage of those users follow our brand in LinkedIn and/or become personal contacts.

The next consideration is usefulness-of-community. What is having this collection of like-minded users good for anyway? Are we successfully converting them to customers and/or serving existing customers? Are community-building efforts truly entrances to the purchase funnel? Do we regularly drive traffic back to sites we own to accomplish key performance indicators (KPIs)? Does building the community result in SEO prominence in Google and Bing SERPs?

Later in this chapter, in the "Understanding Social ROI" section, we'll take a detailed look at what KPIs can be monitored and measured. The stronger and more focused the community building effort is, the more likely it is we'll see KPI conversions. Start with community-building goals that are about connecting with the right users, after identifying them with demographic research.

Determining Brand Voice: Who Are We? Why Are We Here?

Close your eyes. Imagine your company's dream community manager. What does he/she look like? (For the sake of pronoun simplification, let's assume it's a she.) Better yet, pretend your team sent this model CM to a business event—a networking cocktail hour. The marketing team collaborated prior to the gig to establish her intent: The social media community manager is there to mingle, meet prospective clients, catch up with familiar ones, chat with likeminded professionals, and, above all, represent your company with grace and enthusiasm.

Determining Your "Person"

What's your hostess with the mostess wearing? A corporate uniform? A branded hoodie? Perhaps a polo with the company name stitched on the breast pocket? Maybe the spokesperson representing your brand is in ripped jeans, a cozy rock-band t-shirt, and scuffed-up Chuck Taylors—just what the target audience might wear on the weekends. Or is the CM walking around in a theme-park mascot outfit, complete with full mask and bodysuit, just like the cartoon character on your corporate website?

How does the community manager talk? Is dialogue fixed in the third person plural, the *royal we*, resolutely conscious of the company for which she's speaking? "Our approach is this," "We weren't aware of that," "We're sorry to hear that," "Tell us more," and so on, even though this community manager is clearly the lone representative in the room?

Or are voice, tone, and content unabashedly direct? Does the CM discuss personal interests, extraneous as they may be to the company, to encourage and sustain a friendly conversation? Would she be overheard saying, "Get out of town, I *love* that restaurant!" to another attendee, even if your business has nothing to do with fine dining?

Is your dream community manager some hybrid placed gracefully on the spectrum between polar opposites: the corporate talking head and the groovy girl people want to be friends with, who cares about her job? Does the CM have a neutered voice and impersonal tone that could put up a wall between your company and potential customers? Will there be little return on investment (ROI) because the CM is too busy socializing?

These are essential questions every business on the quest for a seriously amazing social media community manager must ask and establish upfront. In short, how do you envision your brand being represented in cyberspace? What, *who*, is your company avatar?

Choosing an Appropriate Avatar

An avatar is a term used to describe how people (that includes companies) represent themselves online, essentially a social media persona. The combinations and

possibilities are as endless and as complex as the actual guy or girl behind the computer monitor advocating for the brand. Regardless of the freedom given to an actively engaging community manager, in the end it's a commercial avatar, that is to say, an avatar participating in social media for corporate gain.

As happy-go-lucky as social media interactions can feel, if participation in a social sphere is on behalf of a company, the goal is to *gain* something for the company: links, organic prominence, awareness, promotional opportunities, PR value, traffic, and so on. Community managers are community marketers. Mission: market. That's not to say being absolutely fabulous and appreciated isn't part of the package.

> **Note:** One takeaway from this book we hope you'll embrace is that the true secret of social media is to give more than you take.

To this day, there is a remarkable lack of consensus regarding the right avatar for a brand. Appropriate social media usage for a company and level of transparency are open to interpretation. Marketing commercial goods and services in an environment where people are just hanging out could have ugly ramifications. Social media is still very much the Wild West for online marketers. That said, there are tiers of transparency to take into account when crafting a commercial avatar:

- Is corporate affiliation revealed?

- Is the CM's ultimate mission apparent to the community? (Remember: The ultimate mission is marketing!)

- Are personal elements (authentic or altered to mirror target audience) such as age, gender, ethnicity, orientation, social status, or location disclosed?

- Does the company CM bare *personality* traits—shades of who's behind the computer screen? Is tone obviously sarcastic, patient, compassionate, excitable, or knowledgeable?

- Is the community manager's goal to become a beloved presence in the social community, or is the purpose to lurk and listen to brand chatter?

- Does the company want a staunch defender of the brand in times of crisis, or a passive participant or mediator?

- Who owns the avatar? The brand? The individual community manager? An agency or client? (This is already becoming an important dialogue among attorneys.)

These concepts of identity, transparency, and ownership beg a discussion of the continuum of black hat vs. white hat tactics—in other words, the range of what's acceptable, shady, legitimate, manipulative, fair game, illegal, and so on.

If a fully corporate avatar is selected, does that conflict with the terms of service (TOS) of the marketing platform? If the CM is to parade around as a fabricated character meant to embody the brand spirit or target consumer, is there a breach of trust, rules, even laws in a certain jurisdiction? Do a gut-check prior to dipping your toes into any social media channel. Be totally honest with yourself and the community.

Let's cruise through some common avatar models and corresponding attributes to demonstrate the range of possibilities and combinations a commercial avatar may embody.

The Data-Driven Community Manager

- Honest and transparent in role
- Extremely well-developed persona
- Forensic psychologist/profiler
- Targets lists of authority users by topic; only manipulates to serve
- Makes the right real friends
- Makes them think they thought of it
- Persona derivative of blogger team, or mostly fictional
- Feels emotional and shares
- Strategically defends brand and leverages opportunities for the win
- Sells by sophisticated, nurturing, and subtle maneuvering
- Builds links by sharing remarkable content
- Ownership is negotiable

The Press Secretary

- Uses real name; puts personal reputation on the line
- Fully transparent; represents company interests
- Not focused on link building or SEO (directly)
- Communicates directly on behalf of the brand
- Persona owned by blogger (of course)

The Admin Press Secretary

- All features of press secretary model, but uses pseudonym
- The key difference is ownership (not a real persona; ownership open to interpretation)

The Lovely Celebrity Spokesperson, Endorsement Included

- All features of press secretary model
- History, reputation, and authority
- Often much more expensive
- Built-in readership and buzz
- No question of ownership or transparency

The Walled Garden Forum Lurker

- Not transparent; doesn't reveal association with clients
- Lurk and report; fly below the radar
- Participate selectively to gain street cred
- Loner, limited engagement
- Never sells anything
- Does not attempt to influence, except in extraordinary circumstances
- Makes few friends in forums that do not require friendship to search and view chatter streams
- Makes some/many friends if required to search and view chatter streams
- Limited or no influence on behalf of clients, selectively engages to counter threats only by gathering information

These are but a taste of the multitude of avatar models we've noticed in the wild. Any combination of model attributes can be employed. The role and identity of a community manager can be as customized as a swank new car, specific to a company's objectives, industry, morals, whatever. Community managers *are*, as it were, some of the most powerful vehicles for brands eager to get into the minds and hearts (wallets, too?) of consumers and the vast empire of social media.

Hungry for some real-life examples to put this all into context? Grab your forks for a three-course meal of social media community manager case studies. Most echo elements of the classic and beloved Data-Driven Community Manager and Press Secretary models, with noteworthy variations. For now, we'll focus exclusively on each brand's Twitter presence, and the CM avatar they've designated for that specific conversation-based channel. The goal here is to hone in on how each brand verbally and visually represents itself in an untamed stream of tweets, rather than how the community manager manages its own branded corner of the World Wide Web, such as a company Facebook page. This is all about voice, face, and overall identity.

First up, a few demonstrations of unified brand presence, then on to examples of multiple brand representatives.

Unified Brand Presence

Check out GNC's main Twitter presence, @GNCLiveWell. Popular brand, respected company, pretty household name. How has this legacy brand chosen to represent itself on Twitter? Figure 1.6 gives us some hints.
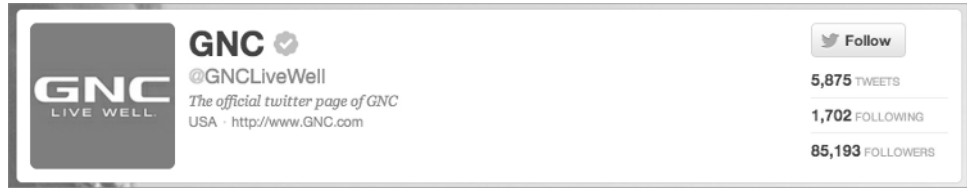

Figure 1.6 @GNCLiveWell Twitter bio

Branded avatar (here, avatar will mean the 128×128-pixel image associated with a Twitter account). Branded name. Branded handle (username). An almost impersonally succinct bio. Not even a city in the location. GNC is operating omnipresent in the USA!

There isn't one shred of personality in this key introduction. We haven't the faintest impression of who's on the other end of the monitor typing out tweets for @GNCLiveWell. Male? Female? Buff? Trim? Mommy blogger of four? Twenty-something college grad frat dude? Sports nuts? Yoga pro? Carnivore? Vegan? We don't know. There's pretty much zilch to glean from the bio, avatar, name, and handle. If GNC's community manager were at that cocktail party with your dream CM, "it" would be a giant asexual foam red square with white blocky text, kicking it by the punch bowl.

GNC assumed a unified brand presence for its social media model. All tweets are in the third-person plural state, further removing any sense of the individual. The CM is participating on behalf of GNC, always and forever. Everything is in terms of "we," "us," and "our." Topics of conversation with fans and customers fall somewhere under the GNC umbrella: general health and fitness, branded products, and daily deals. Extraneous chatter simply for the sake of socializing coming out of this feed is unlikely; everything is in some way related to GNC's business and target market.

That said, the tweets are informative, helpful, and enthusiastic. @GNCLiveWell uses exclamation points to mark passion, and easy-going shorthand Internet jargon, such as "Thnx!" for "Thanks!" and even the slightly tacky AOL-4.0-tastic "u" for "you," as shown in Figure 1.7. An overall welcoming and amiable tone, definitely not a corporate bullhorn with the sole mission of blowing branded content out the feed with no concept of two-way engagement.

Figure 1.7 @GNCLiveWell customer service tweet

Let's move on to a similar case: @VasqueFootwear. Take a peek at this company's Twitter bio in Figure 1.8.

Figure 1.8 @VasqueFootwear Twitter bio

Nearly identical to @GNCLiveWell in terms of branded representation. Company logo as the avatar, branded name, branded handle, and even a similar bio: "The official twitter account of Vasque…" followed by a brief description of the company, "…a leader in outdoor performance footwear," which is helpful, because we had never heard of Vasque before. Location: "Red Wing, MN." Nice. We know where Red Wing is—one of our aimClearians grew up there. This bit of contextualization helps humanize the entity.

A quick skim of tweets unearths the unified brand presence, that *royal we*, showcased in Figure 1.9.

Figure 1.9 @VasqueFootwear sample tweet

Similar to @GNCLiveWell, there's personality marked by exclamations and genuine eagerness to assist and share, but the community manager's identity is irrelevant, hidden behind a branded mask. It seems to be working for this company. Though a majority of the tweets are Vasque product–centric, they're not noisily hocking links to e-commerce pages for hiking sneakers. Figure 1.10 shows Vasque Footwear's CM diligently monitoring tweets from both jazzed and frustrated customers. After listening, the brand's CM engages thoughtfully.

Figure 1.10 @VasqueFootwear monitors @Mentions and engages.

@VasqueFootwear must have some additional brand reputation monitoring strategy in place. Check out the tweet chat in Figure 1.10: The user didn't directly @mention Vasque, but its community manager's hawk eye picked up the generic brand mention and pounced on the opportunity to engage. We'll take a deep dive into tight brand monitoring tools in Chapter 4, so to all you deadeye super-ninja CMs in training, stick around.

A commendable portion of all tweets from this company is @mention based, that is to say, conversation based. Too often we see companies, typically those that fall under the unified brand presence umbrella, miss the boat with Twitter. Rather than utilizing its supreme conversation functionality as a tool for powerful customer service and proactive engagement, they treat it as a one-sided RSS feed to blast out links to the mothership (branded content, that is).

In this case, Vasque's CM chats with customers and followers about its products and topics related to outdoor activities, and the material is rich. The more you study this company's Twitter stream and approach to community management, the easier it is to see why they're a beloved regional brand.

Onto another example: @MayoClinic. Let's review the tweet-stream from one of the most prestigious treatment centers in the world.

Combing back through a month of tweets, you can count the @mentions on one hand (*cough* two fingers). Clearly not a very digitally interactive brand. The bulk of tweets are one-way broadcasts aimed at no one in particular, just a mass of 360,000+ followers (Figure 1.11). Almost all point back to branded content. Little to no personality. As-removed-as-it-gets Press Secretary. Unified brand presence all the way.

Figure 1.11 @MayoClinic tweet-stream

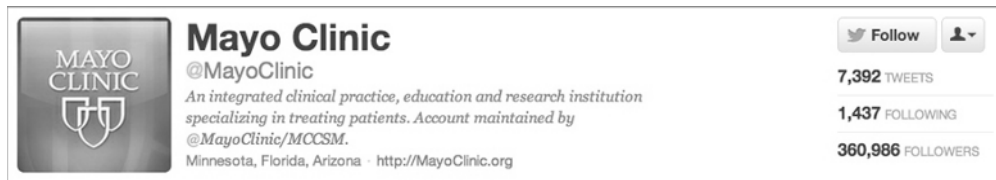Check out Figure 1.12—time to dissect the bio.

Figure 1.12 @MayoClinic Twitter bio

All right, pretty much what you'd expect. Branded avatar, handle, name, and a bio that reads like a pamphlet: "An integrated clinical practice, education and research

institution…" Hang on now, what's this? "Account maintained by @MayoClinic/MCCSM," and a hotlink to another page. Let's follow it (Figure 1.13)!

MCCSM

A public list by Mayo Clinic

The team of people that make up the Mayo Clinic Center for Social Media. (#MCCSM)

13 MEMBERS **37** SUBSCRIBERS

Subscribe

Figure 1.13 @MayoClinic community manager Twitter list

Interesting! @MayoClinic has leveraged Twitter Lists (we'll talk more about those in Chapter 4) to introduce the individuals contributing to the branded Twitterstream. We can assume that the "team of people that make up the Mayo Clinic Center for Social Media" all have their hands in @MayoClinic in one way or another. Nice to put a few faces with the big blue square, even if they aren't represented whatsoever in the stream.

So we have our first taste of multiple brand representatives. Let's move on to some more examples that employ this model in a more transparent way.

Multiple Brand Representatives

aimClearians fly all over the world to speak at online marketing conferences and visit with clients. None of us are immune to the occasional flight delay or double-booked seat or similar travel frustrations. We may even have sent an angry tweet or two to @AirlineX after such experiences.

Unlike @VasqueFootwear, whose customers are stoked about their awesome new kicks and can't wait to tell the world about them, we know from experience, and from a perusal of our next case's tweet-stream, that generally when passengers engage an airline, it's to complain. Kudos to @DeltaAssist for being on the ball with warp-speed customer service and replies to weary travelers armed with a smartphone and Twitter application.

Figure 1.14 provides a top-down review of this Twitter presence devoted exclusively to customer service.

Delta Assist ✓

@DeltaAssist

We're listening around the clock, 7 days a week. We try to answer all tweets but if you require a response pls visit www.delta.com/talktous or call 800-221-1212

· http://www.delta.com/

Figure 1.14 @DeltaAssist Twitter bio

At first blush, this appears to be another case of unified brand presence. Branded handle, branded name, branded avatar, "we"-laced bio: "We're listening around the clock, 7 days a week. We try to answer all tweets…" Delta's certainly got the always-on channel part well understood. But come on, no *one* person can handle a task like that. They'd have to be a cyborg CM. That or they'd have to have multiple community managers operating in shifts so each hour of the day in each time zone around the world is covered fully.

Bingo.

@DeltaAssist introduces us to its team of 14 community managers with a branded background wallpaper, shown in Figure 1.15.
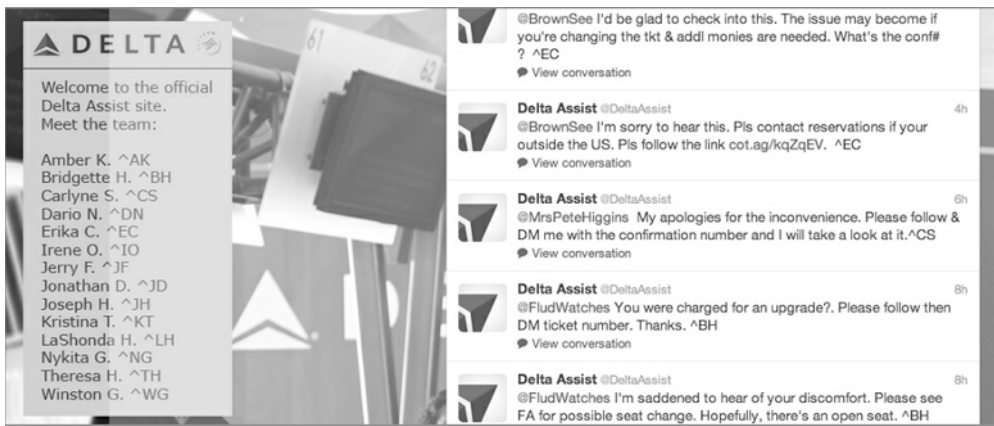

Figure 1.15 @DeltaAssist community manager roster

Characteristic of Twitter feeds with multiple brand reps, each CM initials his or her tweet to display ownership. Amber K. signs her tweets "^AK" so you can tell it's her, and although you don't know her last name or her hair color or whether she prefers dogs or cats, it helps humanize the customer service exchange. Those three characters begin to break down the wall between anonymized brand and customer, making it more person to person. Instead of "We're sorry to hear your flight was canceled," you get more empathy: "I get it, I'm human, too, I know flying sucks sometimes—I want to help make things better." Powerful stuff!

@Starbucks is another example of a branded account that taps into the personalities and prowess of multiple community managers. CMs are introduced playfully in the bio: Brad, Lee, and Paige (Figure 1.16). You don't know anything about them beyond their first names, and unlike @DeltaAssist, they don't append initials to their tweets. Brad's tweets are indistinguishable from Paige's, likewise with Lee's. Branded handle, name, and avatar neuter individuality, but personality shines through in the trio's tweets, populated with smiley faces and exclamation points. You can't see who's tweeting what, but that doesn't seem to discourage their 2+ million followers.
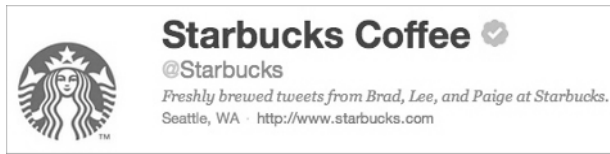
Figure 1.16 @Starbucks Twitter bio

@MallOfAmerica shakes things up by including hotlinks to the personal Twitter bios of its three community managers, Bridget, Sarah, and Erin (Figure 1.17).

Figure 1.17 @MallOfAmerica Twitter bio

You have to click each link to visit the PR gals' own Twitter profiles and learn more about them, but at least now you have the chance to do so (Figure 1.18). It's a real game-changer to know that even though you're tweeting with a branded avatar, the woman answering your question about where to get awesome yogurt in the largest mall in the country is a yoga-loving shopaholic with funky taste in jewelry.
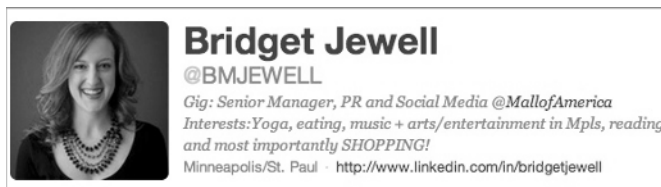

Figure 1.18 Mall of America community manager Bridget Jewell

Whenever links to branded content are shared, no one CM is attributed. They save initialed tweets for @mentions, from chitchat to customer service.

Last but not least for this section, @foiledcupcakes. Figure 1.19 shows us a new breed of multiple brand rep accounts. Branded handle, straightforward bio similar to what we've studied thus far: "Chicago's exclusive gift cupcake delivery company! Order a box of cupcake love & we'll handle the rest!"

Figure 1.19 @foiledcupcakes Twitter bio

Then, a twist: personal interests. "Loves Hugh Laurie, shoes, karaoke." And what's this? A photo of real-life human beings! No square brand logo here, not even an overlay of the company name on the ladies. Official Twitter name for this account is "Mari-Kelly-Kristina." Are they some of the folks in the photo? Likely, yes.

We met Mari at an online marketing conference in the Windy City back in 2010. From personal experience, we can say this is one of the more laidback companies we've encountered, both on and offline. You're never quite sure who's firing the tweets on the other end of the monitor, Mari, Kelly, or Kristina, but whoever *she* is, she has a bright, adorable, sassy personality and isn't afraid to make friends by chatting about things that are in no way related to inventory (though really, it wouldn't be the worst thing to gab about cupcakes all day).

The community manager(s) for @foiledcupcakes keep it light and fun on Twitter. They don't sell themselves. Foiled Cupcake's CM seems to, above all, use the channel as a tool for socialization, with the secondary mission of generating brand awareness. The CM is tweeting like a human being without a sales agenda under a branded name, admirably dissolving the wall between company and customer (Figure 1.20). It seems like customers are friends with the company by way of Mari and the ladies, and eventually they morph into cupcake purchasers.

Figure 1.20 @foiledcupcakes Tweets

Understanding Social ROI

Social media ROI is a daunting concept. This is especially true because classic web analytics were tooled to evaluate traffic to websites, not social media communities owned by third parties. Still, there is much that can be measured and the role of community manager is integral in this process. Let's dive in.

K.I.S.S. Social Media KPI Chart

As social media has become inexorably intertwined with search engine optimization, so too has the spectrum of goals. In the spirit of K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple, Stupid), we

set out to reduce classic and potential KPIs to a streamlined chart, expressing a matrix of analytic possibilities.

Use the chart shown in Figure 1.21 to spawn creative thinking as you construct social media metrics that reflect evolving realities. From the most basic traffic KPIs to multilevel social/SEO mash-ups, brainstorming on this grid of analytic options may be of benefit to your team.
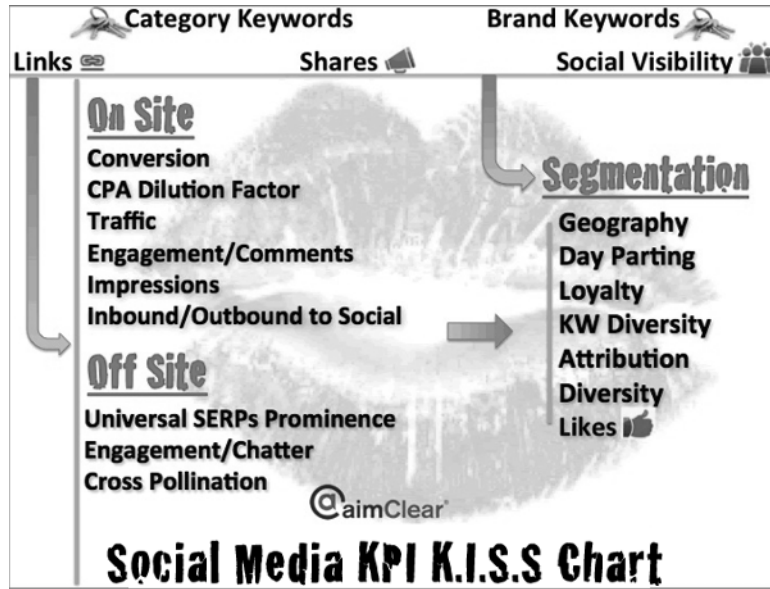

Figure 1.21 SEO KPI K.I.S.S. chart

Chart Usage Fundamentals, Top Down   Start with five variables above the gray line: category keywords (nonbrand), brand keywords, links, shares, and social visibility. These are the building blocks. Examples are

- Social media that drives traffic to our website and converts
- Social shares resulting in chatter
- Social visibility that results in organic prominence in search engine results pages

Path One: Straight Down to the Left or to the Right   Add another layer of segmentation. Follow the arrows to either the left or right from the building blocks to "On Page," "Off Page," or "Segmentation" to form KPIs. Examples include

- Links earned by social resulting in chatter that generate likes and other subscriptions
- Shares by traffic by loyalty (returning visitors)

Path Two: Left, Then Right   Follow the arrows down to the left and then to the right. This yields SEO KPIs that are more complex, including

- Shares resulting in conversion segmented by geographic area
- Social visibility that cross-pollinates to other channels that result in likes
- Links to off-site properties (like YouTube) that boost organic prominence in Universal SERPs for geographic-specific keywords

There are 640 possibilities on this chart, many of which are already widely adopted. Some apply to SEO and are great to have on a social KPI chart. Others range from innovative and immediately useful to more theoretical expressions. Use the chart as a starting point to discover new KPIs.

Creating analytics mechanisms to report on some of these KPIs is an interesting matter. Some combinations are super easy to conceptualize and execute in Google Analytics using Advanced Segments and other analytic packages. Others require more sophisticated systems and are difficult to isolate or even impossible to measure except for feeling lift. The idea is to get those creative KPI juices flowing. We hope you enjoy this chart as a starting place for creative social media KPI thinking.

Lead Gen vs. Sales

Some sales are either too expensive or complex for us to expect a user to click "Buy now" and pony up their credit cards. From mining leads for universities to selling multimillion-dollar business-to-business (B2B) equipment, very often the first step toward a completed sale is generating a lead. Direct response means eliciting an action from a user now. That can be either a completed sale or a lead.

The important consideration is whether the actions we seek from users happen now or later. You might hear the phrase "first-touch conversion." That means that a marketer got a user to complete an action the first time the user was engaged by a paid or organic result. While first-touch conversions are absolutely possible in social, they most often come from ads. Another common term is "last-touch conversion." This speaks to the last channel a user was in, leading to the conversion action.

Keep in mind the following basic division of actions:

- We are generating either a lead or a sale. This is dependent on the length of sales cycle for any particular product or service.
- A sale can be many things, from cash purchases and event signups to likes, subscriptions, and follows. The final action is the sale conversion.

Social Media and Attribution

Attribution, as pertains to the marketing process, means the order of channels a user touches on their way to a conversion. A user may see a television commercial, search for the brand, find the brand's Facebook page, like it (thereby subscribing), see the brand's wall post three weeks later, click on a mobile Facebook Ad targeted at them, send him/herself an email so as to remember later, and head over to the brand's website on a different laptop to convert. Whew! That's pretty deep and the complexity of the sequence of interactions is representative of the inherent challenges of measuring social media.

The problem is made more acute because our ability to gauge user behavior in social communities is limited to what each individual community tells us with built-in analytics. LinkedIn tells us almost nothing. Facebook Insights offers fantastic data about users in general but hardly anything about individual users. YouTube Insight analytics are cool but also limited, providing only general data.

Social communities can yield sales, leads, direct response, and first- and/or last-touch conversions. Often, communities built by brands result in sales that are less direct and barely measurable by this generation of web analytics. Here are a few key concepts for community managers to keep in mind:

- Analytics to measure attribution chains don't totally work because there are sometimes hops that are not completely measurable.
- Emergent platforms to measure attribution range from free (Google Analytics multichannel funnels) to more costly (Adobe SocialAnalytics, Convertro, Acquisio, and others).
- Last-touch conversion is usually possible.
- Tag all social ads with source, demographic segment, and creative elements.
- Whenever possible, place the conversion mechanism (form, buy button, etc.) on a site you own. Ask your friendly web developer to set a cookie on all new traffic to your site and build a visits history by concatenating each new visit to the site, matriculated to the source and any other tagging variables.
- Remember that zooming out always works. Total Cost Of Marketing All Channels / Total Conversion = Total Cost Per Conversion. As social media programs come online, study the effect on the total program, including search—paid and organic—in all channels.

It's important to understand that not all social media conversions are easily attributable, end to end. Such is the fickle nature of today's web analytics paradigm. If you're not working in a true attribution analytics environment, start by learning Google's multichannel funnels and explore paid tools.

Social as a Subscription Channel

At its core, someone liking, following, adding to circles, and so forth is equivalent to subscriptions or relationships—it's the same as someone subscribing to an email list or newsletter. Treating social channels like subscription lists or like email lists of old can be a highly effective approach for brands to monetize social.

For instance, when someone likes your brand Facebook page, they are signing up to see things you post in their newsfeed, on a prioritized basis over other brands they have not subscribed to. The same holds true in Twitter. After the user follows, your updates show up in their main feed.

Say a brand has earned 25,000 Facebook likes. Each time the brand posts, a measurable percentage of users will see the post. Facebook gives us that metric. Some users will click through to either the Facebook brand page or directly to the content that was highlighted on the wall. That is analogous to the "email open" metric in an e-marketing campaign and subsequent traffic to the internal or external asset being promoted. Out of the number of visitors driven to an asset, a certain amount of them will take an action. Over time, this can result in sales. Treating social media follows, likes, and so on as subscription marketing is the new wave, as classic becomes new again.

Setting Realistic Social Media Marketing Goals

Your job as community manager is to lead the team and set realistic expectations rooted in business objectives. What's key here is not allowing any stakeholder to set unrealistic goals. Educating multiple audiences about social media best practices and setting attainable goals is fundamental to the CM's role. We strongly encourage you to challenge the realism of plans others make. Your boss's wanting a certain social media result in a certain timeframe at a desirable cost does not mean it can be attained. Reciprocally, it's important to reach for the stars.

Because most nonagency marketers don't have the opportunity to touch dozens or even hundreds of case studies each year, we've learned that it's essential that marketers making the plan insist that objectives, strategies, and tactics be rooted in the company's overarching business goals and objectives so that there's a strong foundation for a holistic marketing communications presence. Chances are your boss does not know jack about social. Keep in mind that *you* may not know squat about something important the boss knows. Be open-minded.

Here's our list of planning questions. Some of them may not apply to every project, but most of them do, at least in some way.

Building a Kick-Ass Social Media Marketing Plan

The secret of building a kick-ass marketing plan is to ask and answer the right questions. In fact, the best way to do it is to use all the question words. Yep, you know,

those five big "W" words and the one "H" word: who, what, when, where, why, and how. We apply the "W" words and "H" first to groundwork and then execution.

Marketing plan means constructing a written outline of what will come and setting expectations as to how we're going to get there. It seems simple, but there are often many moving parts. It's best to lay out the important variables, ask crucial questions, and write down the answers.

At this point we'd like to introduce the first downloadable resource in the book, which is denoted by that spiffy icon in the margin. Right now, before we go any further, head over to `www.aimclear.com/cm/chapter1` or `www.sybex.com/go/communitymanager` and grab the marketing plan preparation template for your own use. Download the zipped file.

You'll want the files handy. Have a close look at the docs and then read this chapter again. Apply the process to a real-life or role-played case study of your own. We want you to test this system to create a marketing plan right away.

There are three versions of the file in the zipped directory. The first is blank (`marketing-plan-blank.docx`) and the other is completely filled out with sample answers (`marketing-plan-sample-answers.docx`). The third zipped doc is a finished ready-to-deliver marketing plan made up of statements derived from the example answers (`marketing-plan-complete.docx`).

> **N o t e :** It's easy to turn questions answered into marketing plan statements simply by reformatting answers from the completed questionnaire. For instance, if the question is "Who do you want to sell to?" and the answer is "53-year-old female Latinos in East LA," then the marketing statement is, "The demographic segment is 53-year-old female Latinos in East LA."

Great! Let's get started. A marketing plan is just that: planning. So, you also better allocate time and invite key stakeholders and anyone else you find valuable to help. One tip: Think about the first session in advance, in the shower, while listening to music, or on a flight. The best marketing plans come from passionate marketers who don't candy-coat obstacles, who challenge conventions, and who show up at the planning party ready to rock!

Preproduction: What Are You Marketing?

It is paramount that the brand's purpose be defined and that the CMO, marketing director, or owner is clear on what the brand's promises and purposes are. It's tragically funny how often a brand fails to do this, and it ultimately creates a shaky foundation. What are the planning basics you need to know? Are you building a program to last indefinitely or are you planning a seasonal campaign? Usually companies need both base programs and campaigns. Create the base program and then additional planning for fixed-length campaigns to run on top of the foundation.

Most social media plans differentiate between what is programmatic (ongoing) and campaigns (fixed length):

- What countries will you be marketing in?
- Will you only be marketing in English?
- What channels will you use?
- Is this ongoing or fixed length? If fixed, how long will it last?
- Will you have organic and/or paid campaigns?
- If you're using multiple languages, do you have translation teams in place or will there need to be a third-party team? If yes, who?
- Will this be a fully in-social effort or involve the promotion of external assets like website landing pages, other social communities, and so on?
- What pages, apps, and profiles need to be (re)built, and who is going to build these assets? Will the team be in-house or are external vendors required? If external, then who?
- Make a list of existing in-community social pages and/or external landing pages and content that is the closest you have to facilitating whatever a KPI conversion is. For instance, if Facebook likes are the KPI, then tell us what tab in Facebook you're going to send users to.

Demographic Research

What are the interests and affinities of your customers and prospective customers?

- What channels do your customers and potential customers frequent?
- List the top 20 characteristics of personas susceptible to your KPIs (here, you can leverage the broad and precise interests in the Facebook Ads creation tool).
- Are there occupations that suggest the presence of meta buyers or internal employees who make purchasing decisions for larger groups of people?
- Specify common usages of the products and what goals they should accomplish.

Strategy and KPIs

Now that you have the data, it's time to ask the right questions. For starters, what is the expectation of monthly KPI conversion volume at what cost-per-action (CPA)?

What are the goals? Be explicit regarding expectations of monthly KPI conversion volume at what CPA. (See the K.I.S.S. KPI chart). For example, some goals might include:

- Friendship, subscription, and subsequent content marketing
- Direct response via organic social and/or paid prominence
- Branding impressions leading to increased brand searches over time

- Media and other influencer outreach: passive or aggressive
- Links and citations
- SEO and organic prominence in mainstream search engine results
- Other

ROI Modeling

What will social media cost and what ROI can you expect?

- For any paid channels, what results can you expect in terms of media spend, traffic, conversion quantity, overall cost, and cost per conversion (see Figure 1.22)?
- For organic social, what results can you expect and at what cost?
- Adding paid and organic together, including any agency or third-party fees, what are the costs and conversion expectations?

aimClear®

4/22/12 | 64 connections

Channel	Facebook Ads
Impressions	3,679,760
CTR	0.0280%
CPC	$1.57
Conversion Rate	2.03%
Visitors	1,034
Conversions	21
Cost	1,620.52
CPA	$77.17

Figure 1.22 Predictive modeling for Facebook ads

Channel Tactics, Creative, and Testing

What paid and organic social channels are you testing?

- Social media mirrors and amplifies physical life. How is/are the product(s) currently sold, with how many conversions per month, and at what CPA? Include offline and other online channels. Is there any information here that might contribute to your understanding of how this product can convert in social media?
- What channels should you market in? Paid? Organic?
- What are the messages that will motivate a community member to convert to your KPI?

- Provide any written collateral materials (such as PowerPoint slides, sell sheets, value proposition statements, case studies, and any other materials you can leverage to call creative).
  - State the differentiation points from whatever any competitor says.
  - How is your messaging the same as everyone else?
  - Why will your efforts succeed over others?
  - What are the significant challenges and classic objections?
  - Is your messaging disruptive? How? Why? Why not?
- Have there been any brick, broadcast, search, print, or other collateral ads surrounding this product? Are they working? If yes, who were they targeted to and what were the messages?
- Are you attending any real-world events (consumer expos, trade shows, etc.) to promote your brand? Which ones? Which messages have worked? Is there a theory as to why?
- Who will be listening, responding, and monitoring the wall?
- Will your team partake in healthily assertive outreach in communities other than your own profiles?
- Include a list of approved product claims, or is this information easily available on the landing pages or brand identity center?
- What are the brand standards? Can they be superseded? Who approves the exceptions?
- Are images on the website and/or in brochures (PDFs) fair game for ads?
- Is any/all text on the website approved as derivative text for ads?
- Who will sign off on all ads, creative, targeting, and so forth?

Reporting and Optimization

What reports will be generated and when?

- Will they be derived from standard output from mainstream platforms using standard reports (for example, Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, Adobe SocialAnalytics)?
- Are custom reports required, and if so, what information needs to be included and who will construct the report?

Team and Responsibilities

Who will work on this account and what access credentials do you need?

- Supply the name and contact information for the technical liaison with whom you can discuss mechanical specifics of providing assets.

- How will you track conversion?
- What analytics will you use to track traffic? Is conversion tracking set up? If not, can you be of assistance?
- Where in the attribution chain can you not track your efforts? What are the workarounds?
- What do you anticipate the media spend will be moving forward, assuming you reach a palatable CPA?
- Please provide credentials where possible:
  - Analytics
  - AdWords
  - CMS
  - FTP
  - Any subdomains that would be good sell URLs (for example, buy.domain.com)
  - Bing
  - LinkedIn company page
  - Facebook page
  - Twitter
- Is there a geographic area you want to focus on first?
- What is your three-month media spend limit?
- Anything else you want us to know?
- Provide the name and contact information for your team member contact:
  - Primary contact
  - Contact for logistics (meetings, etc.), if different
  - Targeting and ad-signoff contact
  - Analytics contact
  - Accounts payable contact
  - Technical/development contact
  - Design contact

The role of social media community manager is a quickly evolving and fascinating mash-up of traditional and online marketing roles. Be ready to become the next-gen hybrid marketer. The voice and how the avatar represents a brand's interests should be carefully determined and dictated by a brand's purpose. Think of such decisions as part of a social stylebook. Build a kick-ass marketing plan by asking lots of questions, which subsequently get turned into statements. When the plan takes shape, it'll provide clear direction, strategy, and goals for the entire team. Onward!