SOCIAL MEDIA ROI

Managing and Measuring Social Media Efforts in Your Organization

OLIVIER BLANCHARD

Foreword by BRIAN SOLIS

Praise for *Social Media ROI*

"Blanchard is demanding. He won't allow you to flip through this book, nod your head, and leave. If you're in, you're going to have to invest to get your rewards."

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"Social media isn't inexpensive; it's different expensive. The human effort required to do it right is significant, and not knowing precisely how social media helps your business and how to gauge that progress is a dereliction of duty. In *Social Media ROI*, Blanchard provides the missing playbook for sensible, sustainable, profitable social communication. It's about time."

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—**Brandon Prebynski**, social media strategist

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Olivier Blanchard

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Foreword

ROI Doesn't Stand for Return on Ignorance

I'm often asked, what's the ROI of social media? To which I answer, you can't measure what it is you do not value or know to value.

Sounds simple enough. But, the truth is, determining value is not an easy process. But then again, whoever said using social media effectively in business was easy…is wrong.

As in anything in business, the ability to tie activity to the business values is critical. If we are to commit time, resources, and budget to social networks, our investments must be justified. Indeed, social media strategies must prove long-term value and contribution to the bottom line in order to evolve into a pillar of business success. But how do you measure something when best practices, case studies, and answers in general are elusive? We are struggling to prove the merit of an important ingredient in the future success of business because precedents have yet to be written or tested.

While many companies are already investing in social media, the reality is that most are done without the ability to demonstrate any return on investment. The truth is that you succeed in anything if success is never defined. The good news is that success is definable and attainable. It just takes a little work…well, honestly, a lot of work to tie intended outcomes to the "R" (return) in ROI. And, even though social media, as a platform and series of channels, is inexpensive or free to host a presence, time and resources still carry fixed costs. To that end, if we enhance our presences or apply greater resources, the investment goes up exponentially. It comes down to the old adage, "time is money."

Everything starts with the end in mind.

Success is not a prescription. There isn't one way to excel or measure progress. But that's the point. We must first design outcomes into the equation. What do we want to accomplish? What's the return we seek? Are we trying to sell, change, drive, cause, or inspire something specific? Are we reducing customer problems as measured by inbound volume, open tickets, public discourse? Are we trying to shift sentiment to a more positive state that increases referrals as a result?

Success requires definition based on intentions, goals, and mutual value…across the organization from the top down, bottom up, inside out, and outside in. Success is defined departmentally and also at the brand level. And success is tied to desirable actions and outcomes. As we've already established, it's impossible to measure the

ROI for something if we haven't first established the R (return) or the I (investment). No amount of new acronyms will change this, yet we see new terms introduced as if we've already given up on defining ROI: return on engagement (ROE), return on participation (ROP), return on listening (ROL), return on fluid listening (ROFL), return on ignorance (the new ROI). In the end, everything carries cost and effect.

The debate over ROI is only going to gain in importance. But that's where we need to go in order to gain the support we need to expand our investment in social media. You're in good hands though. Olivier Blanchard is indeed one of the few who can help. Here, he has written a comprehensive guide that will help you at every step, from planning to program integration to management to measurement.

Thanks to Olivier, you'll find the answers to your questions and also answers to the questions that you didn't know to ask.

As they say, failing to plan is planning to fail. The success of all things social media is up to you to define, quite literally.

—Brian Solis
Principal, Future Works
Author of *Engage: The Complete Guide for Brands and Businesses to Build, Cultivate, and Measure Success in the New Web*

About the Author

Olivier Blanchard is a brand strategist with 15 years of B-to-B and B-to-C marketing management experience ranging from manufacturing and distribution to new media and consumer goods. He manages BrandBuilder Marketing, a brand consulting and marketing management firm that helps companies combine traditional and new/social media, and the Red Chair Group, which delivers executive social media training worldwide. When he isn't writing, speaking, or consulting, he can be found on his blog at www.thebrandbuilder.wordpress.com or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/thebrandbuilder. An avid triathlete, photographer, and travel junkie, Olivier lives in South Carolina with his wife, two children, and their roving pack of wild Chihuahuas.

Dedication

*For Lisa, Ethan, and Rowan, who help change the world every day—
and for everyone with a mind to do the same.*

Acknowledgments

A lot more goes into a book like this than people realize, and I need to thank a few folks who contributed to this one in their own particular way.

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A very special thanks to Brian Solis, one of the smartest people I know, for agreeing to write such an elegant foreword for what is essentially a *meat and potatoes* business book.

Kudos to Rob Moyer and Microsoft's channel distribution team for introducing me to F.R.Y. Without them, a lot of this book would make very little sense.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you to Dr. Judith Bainbridge, who many years ago in a small classroom at Furman University inspired me to write more than term papers—and more recently to Steven Pressfield (though he may not know it) for picking up where she left off.

I cannot thank enough my courageous clients, the faithful readers of the BrandBuilder blog, and my Twitter tribe for pushing me to be smarter and more focused on solving business problems than I would ever have been on my own. This book is in no small part the result of our many exchanges over the years and would not have ever seen the light of day without you.

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To my parents—Alain and Francine Blanchard—*merci* for teaching me to question everything and draw clear ethical lines in the sand. I suspect that you have been watching in complete horror the degree to which I have applied your advice from day one. You can stop worrying now.

Finally, a deep word of gratitude to Lisa, Ethan, and Rowan for the love, patience, and support with which you showered me in the long months it took to put this book together.

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Planning for Performance Measurement

Most of your social media program's effectiveness will rest on your ability to establish measurement methodologies that are aligned with your organization's goals, objectives and targets. Without a clear means of gauging success and shortcomings every step of the way once your program is launched, you will not be able to determine the extent of its impact on these objectives. Even the most carefully crafted and executed social media program in the world can crash and burn if both success and areas of improvement cannot be properly identified and measured. You could wait until the program is launched to think about measurement, but because this measurement methodology is directly tied to your program's goals and targets, it is better to develop it now before you begin assigning resources to the program.

Tools, Methodologies, and Purpose

Because measurement methodology is driven by the needs of the organization and shaped by its capabilities, before planning for performance measurement, you need to remember to do the following:

- Align your program's goals with existing business goals.
- Set realistic targets.
- Determine what metrics will help you gauge progress and the ultimate success of your program in regard to accomplishing its goals and hitting its targets.
- Develop best practices to ensure that measurement is handled ethically, accurately, and consistently.
- Find ways to improve the model. Turn everything into a learning experience.

Performance measurement is pointless without first establishing purpose, so determine the purpose of your program first. Second, determine the purpose of your activities within the program. Third, determine the purpose of your measurement practice in regard to the program's activities.

Remember that purpose can refer to more than one outcome: From measuring the progress of a campaign to holding employees accountable, from calculating ROI, to determining the impact the program has on a breadth of business functions, each program can bring its own unique set of measurement opportunities. Just make sure your measurement practice serves specific purposes (not just monthly reporting for the sake of it), and you will be off to a good start.

Selecting Adequate Social Media Measurement Software for Your Program

It is futile for me to recommend specific social media measurement software in this book because it changes so quickly, and new players enter the market almost weekly—but take solace in the knowledge that such software is in no short supply. Some are free. Others are extremely expensive. Some fall somewhere in the middle. Some focus on one type of metric only, whereas others provide their users with elaborate dashboards that incorporate a plethora of data, insights, and measurement capabilities. If you elect to go with enterprise-class software, chances are that most of your social media measurement (that is to say, measurement specific to social media channels) will be taken care of. If you elect to use free or inexpensive software, look for specificity of purpose. In selecting measurement software for social media, err on the side of tools that offer a high degree of precision when it comes to measuring one specific thing rather than selecting software that measures ten things poorly. Better to use ten reliable tools to measure ten types of data than to use two that may leave you wondering if your data is reliable. Doing your homework when it comes to selecting the best measurement software will pay off in the end.

A word of caution in the selection of monitoring and measurement software for social media: Start by thinking about what the company wants to measure. Don't just invest in measurement software because it is the one used by big companies or because it seems to be getting a lot of positive press. Start with what metrics matter most to you and find a tool that measures those well. If one piece of software does it all, that's great. If you must combine several tools, that works, too. Most companies use a combination of measurement tools, so don't be afraid to experiment. Every company is different. Find out what works for you.

Here is a simple way to do it:

1. Write down everything you want to be able to measure online that directly impacts your program or campaign.
2. Look for software that measures this type of data.
3. Test the software.
4. Organize the software from best to worst—in terms of accuracy, flexibility, reliability, and ease of use. (Don't underestimate user-friendliness.)
5. Select the best software your budget allows for.

Choose the tool that best meets your organization's needs, whether it is a simple open-source tool that you download for free or the most expensive, sophisticated application on the market. One of the central themes of this book is that one-size-fits-all solutions rarely work in the world of social media program management. Measurement software falls into that category. What may work well for one company may not suit the needs of another. Moreover, one set of measurement tools used for one campaign may not work at all to measure the effectiveness of another, even within the same company. Chances are that your mix of tools will change often in order to keep up with the ever-growing needs of your social media program. Do your research, ask for live demos, test the tools that strike your fancy, and go with what works for you.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

We cannot talk about performance measurement without bringing up the term *key performance indicator*, or KPI. Key performance indicators illustrate the effectiveness of a campaign or program as it relates to hitting a specific target. What constitutes a key performance indicator depends on what you want to measure. Anything can be a KPI—from website visits and clicks on a banner advertisement, to RSS subscriptions, foot traffic at a retail location, registrations for a webinar, and sales revenue. The list is virtually infinite.

A word of caution: Though most web measurement professionals may try to sell you on the notion that key performance indicators are the same in social media as they are in other digital disciplines, remember that what you are measuring is not limited to the Web. In the world of social media program measurement, what makes a particular metric a key performance indicator is both its relationship to the program's purpose and its value in evaluating the program's effectiveness.

What is vital to remember is that the breadth of measurable data available today should not cloud the water. Countless companies spend an inordinate amount of time measuring things that were neither critical nor relevant to diagnosing the effectiveness of their programs and campaigns. If the golden rule of business measurement is "measure what matters," the golden rule of social media measurement is "just because you can measure it doesn't mean that it matters."

The challenge that many business managers run into when they begin working with measurement in the social media space is that the abundance of data can be overwhelming. Many fall prey to the temptation to measure everything. The problem with trying to measure so much is that data overload is the enemy of focus. Knowing ahead of time what metrics matter and what metrics don't will help program managers avoid falling into this trap. In order to create an effective measurement practice for your social media program, you must be diligent when it comes to separating critical data (KPI) from noncritical data.

For more advanced measurement professionals, layering metrics in tiers (basically levels) with an eye to both the importance and relevance to the program and its desired outcomes can help broaden the range of performance indicators without causing data overload or confusion. A simple structure to help organize performance indicators in tiers might look like this:

Top tier:	Key performance indicators
Second tier:	Secondary performance indicators
Third tier:	Other data

Let me give you an example:

Objective: Increase sales of red tires

Target: 25,000 additional red tires sold in Canada in Q3

Key performance indicators (KPIs): Sales of red tires sold in Canada in Q3

- Positive online mentions of red tires leading into Q3
- Net new "Likes" of red tire content on Facebook page from Canadian locations
- Net new click-throughs of links leading to red tire web content from Canadian accounts
- Redeemed coupons and discount codes for red tires in Canada in Q3

Secondary performance indicators: Sales of red tires outside of Canada in Q3

- Net new "Likes" of red tire content on Facebook page (global)
- Net new click-throughs of links leading to red tire web content (outside of Canada)
- Net change in global online sentiment for red tires in Q3

Other data: Sales of black tires sold in Canada in Q3

- Visits to company home page
- Comments on the company blog
- New followers on Twitter
- Bounce rate
- Brand mentions (global)

What is the difference between these three tiers? Simple: The KPI tier focused on metrics that directly illustrate the connection between your activity and the outcome, starting with the outcome: "Sales of red tires in Canada in Q3." The target in this example is 25,000 net new red tires sold. The first KPI is simply: Are we hitting our target? The other key performance indicators in the group are directly linked to this target. They focus on activities aimed to drive purchases of red tires in Canada leading to and during Q3.

"Positive online mentions of red tires leading into Q3" shows whether or not the company's campaign is having an effect on the perception of red tires. More mentions means a win. More positive mentions means a win. Net new nods of approval for red tires from Canadians on the company's Facebook page means a win. It simply means that the company's activities are driving its audience from awareness to preference, bringing them closer to a purchasing preference.

Secondary performance indicators help illustrate the impact that a program may be having on other parts of the business that were not included in the program's objectives. These collateral outcomes can be helpful in identifying new opportunities and understanding the broader impact of a program.

Here, the secondary performance tier measures red tire sales and the drive to grow that part of the business, but these performance indicators do not directly touch the target of 25,000 net new red tires sold in Canada in Q3. It is, however, important to measure changes/deltas in sales of red tires outside of Canada during Q3, if only to baseline Canadian sales. Likewise, online activity relating to red tires that isn't specific to Canadian consumers is secondary. Why? Because the campaign's target, in this particular case, is specific to Canadian sales. Online activity from consumers in Europe and Japan, for example, although important, is not a key performance indicator when it comes to this very specific target. Because it has no direct bearing on the desired outcome, it falls to the second tier.

The value in identifying and monitoring secondary performance indicators is that they can help business analysts identify critical correlations that would have otherwise remained undetected. Let me give you an example: What if a clever data analyst realizes, over time, a link between positive activity about red tires in France, Switzerland, and the Benelux and red tire sales in Quebec (Canada's French-speaking region)? What if a clear correlation exists between the volume of positive mentions in Francophone Europe and sales in Quebec? In such an instance, this data would have to be considered for an upgrade to the KPI tier. Sometimes, key performance indicators aren't obvious. You might uncover them by accident or by process. Make no assumptions about cause and effect, but if you spot a pattern, test its validity. If you can prove this type of correlation exists, that is one more data point you can add to your list of KPIs.

The third performance tier shows data that is too *vague* and unfocused to relate directly to the campaign and its specific target. This brings me to a word of caution about KPI measurement, especially in the digital world. I am not limiting my comments to social media here, but the Web as a whole: Beware of cookie-cutter web measurement methodologies that treat key performance indicators as a nonvariable group. For many digital measurement analysts, visits to your website, bounce rates, click-throughs, and other general metrics constitute the bulwark of KPI reporting. This is wrong. Web measurement professionals don't get to tell you what your KPIs are. You tell them. The typical cookie-cutter approach to web measurement rarely assigns KPI nomenclature to program/campaign-appropriate metrics.

Case in point: If your campaign's objective is to increase positive mentions of your brand across the Web by 30% in Q3, your key performance indicators will not be the same as if your goal were to shift 10% of your customer service "tickets" from toll-free call centers to a micro-blogging platform over the next six months. Different objectives mean different sets of KPIs.

Key performance indicators are media-agnostic. They are based on the target you have set for a program or campaign. When developing a measurement methodology with your team, get together with them and go through the process of separating KPIs from secondary performance indicators and secondary performance indicators from all other metrics. Creating a tiered system like the one I have just described will help give your measurement order, clarity, and purpose. Map it out.

Social Media and Sales Measurement: F.R.Y.

F.R.Y. stands for *frequency*, *reach*, and *yield*. I first came in contact with it while developing SMB (small and medium-sized business) reseller communities with Microsoft. The software giant was trying to help its distributors identify specific areas they could target to increase sales. "Sell more stuff" wasn't good enough. Microsoft wanted to be able to teach its distributors how to peel back the layers of their sales process and understand the various ways in which sales behavior could be influenced. What it came up with was F.R.Y.

The beauty of F.R.Y. is that it breaks down transactional mechanisms into three distinct and easy-to-understand elements. Here is how it works:

Let's assume that 100% of your company's revenue comes from sales. No royalties or anything of the sort. The sales department's general objective is to increase sales. Now, what are the three basic ways you can increase sales?

1. Get existing customers to buy from you more often.
2. Acquire new customers.
3. Get existing customers to spend more with you every time they buy something.

Boiled down to the core, what you are looking at is buy rate, net new transacting customers, and average amount per transaction—or frequency, reach, and yield.

With these three elements now clearly defined, you can get under the hood of your revenue model.

One principal objective of most businesses is to generates revenue, probably through its sales process. Using our previous example, we can start to map out our goals, objectives, and targets:

Goal:	Increase revenue
Objective for small tire group:	Increase sales of red tires
Target for red tire product team:	25,000 net new red tires sold in Canada in Q3

Now let's plug-in frequency, reach, and yield: If increasing sales revenue from red tires in Canada in Q3 comes from increasing the customer buy rate, acquiring net new customers, or increasing the amount of each purchase specific to red tires, how do we achieve these objectives? How does social media fit in, and how should we measure success? The social web provides opportunities not only to generate new customers, influence buy rate, and impact yield, but to determine the extent to which each contributes to the increase in revenue you are looking for.

Because we know that the objectives dictate the strategies and tactics, we know that the objectives also dictate program measurement. At this point in our program's development, frequency, reach, and yield exist as both a means to reach a desired outcome and the heart of what types of metrics will constitute the core of our measurement practice. Our list of key performance indicators as it relates to sales will be directly derived from frequency, reach, and yield data.

The company's frequency strategy can be summed up in one simple question: How do you get existing customers to buy red tires more often than they do now? Let's assume that most red tire users buy a new pair of tires every three months. The idea is now to change their behavior in such a way that the interval between purchases of red tires will be reduced. In the short term, you can push a special sales campaign in which customers are incentivized to buy their tires now rather than when they normally would, some weeks or months from today. You could use social media channels to amplify your campaign, and that would be that. For many companies, this is what social media boils down to: another set of channels through which to cram promotions. But let's look at this a bit closer because short-term thinking, although effective, falls short in a space that rewards long-term vision.

The problem with short-term thinking is that its impact is limited to the here and now. In our example, a promotion would satisfy the aims of the Q3 target (selling more red tires in Q3) but perhaps at the cost of Q4 sales. A key point to understand is that accelerating a one-time purchase is not the same thing as shortening buy rate. The overall aim of increasing transactional frequency is to shorten the purchase intervals over time, not just once. So let's put this option on the back burner for now and consider smarter ways of meeting this objective.

Instead, what if the company created an awareness campaign that focuses on tire wear? Content could be produced that shows how after two months of normal use, small tires start to wear out. Their roundness edges down to a flatter surface, which creates more resistance against the road. The impact of more resistance: It takes more energy to go fast than when the tires are new. In other words, three-month-old tires slow you down and new tires make you faster. For cyclists, for example, such a revelation would surely strike a nerve.

This content could come in the form of reports, fact sheets, videos, podcasts, and tutorials. The company could embed sales information about their tires within the content and plant the seed of their audience's next transaction: Don't wait three months before buying a new set. Buy it now or soon.

In terms of social media, the method is simple: Create the content. Post it to your website and blog. Push it out through social networks and online communities. Make it easy to share. If you have reports or fact sheets, make them available in a format that's easy to attach to a social network update. (PDF still works fairly well.) Post videos to YouTube. Make your podcasts available on iTunes. Whatever works. Seed every relevant social web channel with your content. Engage in discussions. Answer questions. Drive attention to the campaign, to tire wear, to tire performance and value. Inform people and keep their minds on your point. Use social media channels to amplify your campaign and drive to the desired outcome: a change in behavior leading to an increase in buy rate for your product.

You can also take a safety approach to the frequency strategy: Old tires are less safe than new ones. Don't risk getting a flat or crashing to save a few bucks. Change your tires often. Two months between sets is safer than three...and so on. Whatever the angle you choose for your campaign, the social communications mechanism is the same.

Now, how do you *measure* changes/deltas in frequency? Well, because of the nature of the bike tire business, you may not be able to measure it at the cash register because your resellers are independent of your company. They are an external layer. Although you influence their customers (the end users), you don't have visibility to what is happening at the point of sale. Problem? Not really. This only adds a layer of complexity to the measurement, nothing more.

If you cannot measure transactional frequency directly, bypass the obstacle: Your resellers react to demand. When their customers start buying tires more often, your resellers have to start increasing their stock faster. This data, you have access to. Whereas a reseller may normally order four sets of red tires per month, he may now start placing orders for eight sets for that month.

Twice the amount of tires for the same time period? Something is happening. Call up your reseller and ask him: Why the change? He'll know. If he doesn't, see if he will ask his customers for you. Better yet, create a survey on one of your sites (or a social network) for tire buyers. In fact, create a painless mechanism to drive buyers of your tires to that survey. A prompt and web address on a sales receipt perhaps, or a decal on the packaging, a point of purchase display with tear-off cards, an insert, a daily prompt across social networks? Whatever works. The data is there. Sometimes it comes to you. Sometimes you have to go hunt for it.

The point is, if frequency of transactions is one aspect of transactional behavior you aim to influence, you must find a way to measure it.

Now let's talk about reach. Here's a question for you: Where do new customers come from?

Let me ask you another question: If your message currently reaches 10,000 people and 1,000 of them are transacting customers, what would be the impact of reaching 100,000 people? By growing your audience to ten times its current size, is it possible that you might acquire net new transacting customers from the additional 90,000 people you are reaching?

Without making any assumptions about conversion rates from prospect to customer, and also without making assumptions about the quality of your interactions, can we assume that the bigger the audience, the greater the chance of attracting more customers? Generally, yes. This is the premise behind *reach*: Increasing reach should in turn increase the number of net new transacting customers. Think of it as building a pipeline, using social media as the funnel.

Why did Dell's @DellOutlet Twitter account take two years to reach its first $2M in sales yet reached $6.5M in its third year? Why the sudden acceleration? Simple: reach. The numbers tell the story. When Dell started experimenting with Twitter, it was still a relatively unknown micro-blogging platform. As the number of Twitter users grew, so did Dell's reach. Reach determines the potential size of your pipeline. This is true for sales, for information, for feedback, and for influence.

Measuring the impact of reach on sales performance begins with measuring changes in the size of various key communities managed by your social media program. Examples might be your number of new followers on Twitter, your number of new connections on Facebook, net new group members on LinkedIn, and new subscribers to your RSS feeds or your YouTube channel.

The next step in the process is to measure the impact that these increases in reach have on your number of new transacting customers. The secret to a company's reach strategy lies in the program's ability not only to acquire fans, followers, subscribers and connections, but to convert them through its use of social media into transacting customers.

The final step in the conversion is to develop these customers not only into loyal customers but into brand advocates and ambassadors as well. When customers begin to help you recruit new customers through lateral engagement, your ability to increase your reach can be scaled beyond your own limited resources. One community manager can only interact directly with so many people on any given day, but thousands of enthusiastic customers can cover a lot of ground for you. Their networks become your networks. This is the secret to building an ever-growing pipeline across social media channels.

From sales to online reputation management and everything in between, measuring reach is possibly the single most important aspect of your program's methodology.

If you measure nothing else, at least measure reach. If growth is an objective for your organization, increasing reach is at the core of its execution. Track it.

Finally, we come to third element of F.R.Y.: yield. In both sales and social media terms, yield is simply the average dollar value of a transaction. If you cannot acquire any new customers and you cannot increase buy rate, then you are left with convincing your existing customers to spend more money with you when they transact.

There are two ways of increasing yield. Your first option is to raise your prices: If you were selling red tires for $35 each in Q2, selling for $35.50 each in Q3 might do the trick. Caution: If prices tend to be inelastic in your industry or for that product category, you might do more harm than good by raising prices.

Your second option is to develop your customers in such a way that they will *want* to spend more money with you. Go to any coffee shop in the United States and order a small cup of coffee at the counter. What is the barista trained to do? Suggest a bigger size. "Are you sure you don't want a medium? It's only 35 cents more." (Insert smile.) "Would you like a croissant with that? Or a cranberry muffin? They're really good today."

What may have started out as a $2 transaction has just become a $6 transaction. By inserting dialog into the process, then additional options, and then creating value for those options, the seller has convinced the buyer that it was in best his interest to spend a little more money than he intended to.

Airlines do the same thing by offering seat upgrades, for example, or the option to move up to Business Class. Giving you the option to upgrade is not a means to increase yield just one time. It is also a discovery mechanism that aims to convert you into a premium services customer. Increasing yield isn't easy, but it can be done by making the value of an upgrade difficult to resist. Build value, reduce the upgrade barrier, give customers a little push, and voilá.

How this relates to social media is twofold. First, social media is a means of creating awareness for upgrades or bundle packages (anything that will incentivize customers to spend more per transaction) directly from the company. This is vertical engagement. Second, it uses the power of lateral engagement to reinforce the value and increase the message's reach. By encouraging customers who have just been wowed by their first upgrade experience to share their enthusiasm with other people via social media channels, more customers may be moved to upgrade as well.

As Virgin America's Porter Gale explains: "The community closes the sale." She's right. Leverage your *social capital.* Use social media to create awareness for the value of a premium service and encourage your community to be a part of the process.

Measuring performance in regard to changes in yield can either be straightforward or pretty difficult to pinpoint, depending on your business. In the straightforward category, companies with CRM (customer relationship management) systems that track individual customer behavior will have no problem spotting changes in yield from specific customers. Most hotels, airlines, and an increasing number of retailers (especially e-retailers) are able to track these types of changes. For companies whose products fall into distinct categories (bronze, silver, and gold levels, or basic vs. premium, for example) it also isn't too hard to figure out changes/deltas in yield by looking at changes in those ratios.

Sometimes, though, it isn't that simple. You may have to look into your transaction data (your receipts) and look for changes in product sales. In the instance of the coffee shop mentioned earlier, assuming that the number of transactions remains the same (say, 500 coffee drinks per day), you would want to look at changes/deltas in the percentage of large, medium, and small coffees sold.

Say that before you launch your next social media marketing campaign (this one focusing on increasing yield), your mix of coffee sales looks like 30% small, 40% medium, and 30% large coffees. Within a week of the start of your campaign, you start to see a shift. Your numbers now look like this: 20% small, 45% medium, and 35% large coffees. That is the basis of your measurement for this project. The main KPI to track in this instance would be the net number of small, medium, and large coffees sold, relative to each other. This would most clearly illustrate the trend toward a change in purchasing behavior favoring larger sizes.

What you can then do is look at social activity and determine whether or not your social media program and campaign played a part in supporting that objective and perhaps even determine how much of a role it played. The number of online mentions promoting the value of upgrading to a larger size coffee for this particular chain of coffee shops, as well as where and when these mentions occurred, would be obvious key performance indicators to consider.

What else could *yield* stand for besides sales? Any type of outcome that shows a quantifiable increase in zeal from your community. You could measure yield in terms of engagement: A particular subgroup of Twitter followers could go from lightly sharing some of your content to sharing and discussing it in greater depth. This increase in participation would mark a positive change in their level of involvement. If you are a charity organization, existing members may escalate the level of their volunteerism from just showing up at events to help out, to volunteering to help manage them for you. These are examples of nonfinancial yield.

Now that we have properly discussed the role that measurement will play in your social media practice, we can start exploring the need for structure, talent, organizational buy-in, and commonsense change management.

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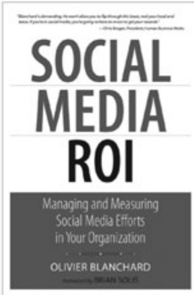

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