HOW TO INTERACT HOLISTICALLY ON SOCIAL MEDIA
White Paper about Social Media for social change

Abstract

Social Media identifies those applications (currently, still mainly web-based) which allow users to create their own content, share it, mash it with existing content, and access peers' content. Traditional media base their reach on distribution channels, social media on the network which relays them; the network may be based on the permanent personal contacts of the content producer, or be dynamically created based on mutual interest of the users.

Here, we explore together how social media can be used for social change. Because social change starts from within.

Introduction

Social media is media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media uses Internet and web-based technologies to transform broadcast media monologues (one to many) into social media dialogues (many to many). It supports the democratization of knowledge and information, transforming people from content consumers into content producers. Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content"[1]. Businesses also refer to social media as user-generated content (UGC) or consumer-generated media (CGM). Social media utilization is believed to be a driving factor in the idea that the current period in time will be defined as the Attention Age.

Social media can be said to have three key components:
1. Concept (art, information, or meme).
2. Media (physical, electronic, or verbal).
3. Social interface (intimate direct, community engagement, social viral, electronic broadcast or syndication, or other physical media such as print).

Common forms of social media:
- Electronic media with 'sharing', syndication, or search algorithm technologies (includes internet and mobile devices).
- Concepts, slogans, and statements with a high memory retention quotient, that excite others to repeat.
- Grass-Roots direct action information dissemination such as public speaking, installations, performance, and demonstrations.
- Print media, designed to be re-distributed.

Social media can take many different forms, including Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. Technologies include: blogs, picture-sharing, vlogs, wall-postings, email, instant messaging, music-sharing, crowdsourcing, and voice over IP, to name a few. Many of these social media services can be integrated via social network aggregation platforms like Mybloglog and Plaxo.

Examples of social media software applications include:

Communication
- Blogs: Blogger, LiveJournal, Open Diary, TypePad, WordPress, Vox, ExpressionEngine, Xanga
- Micro-blogging / Presence applications: FMyLife, Jaiku, Plurk, Twitter, Tumblr, Posterous, Yammer
- Social networking: Bebo, BigTent, Elgg, Facebook, Geni.com, Hi5, LinkedIn, MySpace, Ning, Orkut, Skyrock, Qzone, Vkontakte
- Social network aggregation: NutshellMail, FriendFeed
- Events: Upcoming, Eventful, Meetup.com

Collaboration
- Wikis: Wikipedia, PBworks, Wetpaint
- Social bookmarking (or social tagging): Delicious, StumbleUpon, Google Reader, CiteULike
- Social news: Digg, Mixx, Reddit, NowPublic
- Opinion sites: epinions, Yelp

Multimedia
- Photography and art sharing: deviantArt, Flickr, Photobucket, Picasa, SmugMug, Zooomr
- Video sharing: YouTube, Viddler, Vimeo, sevenload
- Livecasting: Ustream.tv, Justin.tv, Stickam, Skype
- Music and audio sharing: imeem, The Hype Machine, Last.fm, ccMixter, ShareTheMusic

Reviews and opinions
- Product reviews: epinions.com, MouthShut.com
- Business reviews: Customer Lobby, yelp.com
- Community Q&A: Yahoo! Answers, WikiAnswers, Askville, Google Answers

Entertainment
- Media and entertainment platforms: Cisco Eos
- Virtual worlds: Second Life, The Sims Online, Forterra
- Game sharing: Miniclip, Kongregate

Other
- Information aggregators: Netvibes, Twine (website)
- Social media monitoring:[clarification needed] Sysomos Heartbeat
- Social media analytics: Sysomos MAP

Steps to put social media at the service of social change

We have been spreading the message of the AmAre Way on social media, and we would like to share with you and your readers an approach which we found effective and efficient. We believe change starts from within, so we use social media for social change:

1) Being aware of our goals and the media: everything, on or offline, starts with defining goals and analyzing possibilities. There are medium and long term goals which can be accomplished social media. Medium term: share a message and vision, both with like-minded people and users who may be interested if explained the vision in an appealing way.

The short-term goals are often related to a specific action: do we want peers to share our story with friends? To register for a newsletter? To make a donation? Etc. If one doesn't have already an experience in using social media for personal purposes, then it is advisable to spend some time seeing what like-minded people are doing.

2) Putting everything in prospective: to ensure we are not overwhelmed by enthusiasm, we can take a break and then come back, because it is already time for action.

3) Being active: this is the most interesting part, where the real interaction on social media happens. On a practical level, is advisable to properly build one social media channel, and then move to the next. In our experience, a good way to go is:

a) Start twittering: build your profile, making clear what your non-profit goals are, linking to your website/blog, etc. Search for people supporting your cause, just remember that once you add 2,000 people, then you need to also have a good number of users following you, otherwise Twitter will no longer allow you to follow new people.

Many people reciprocate your add, but if you see that the Twits of some of the people you added are not really relevant, you may decide to unfollow them. Users on Twitters may follow thousands of people, so do not expect much for the first weeks in terms of interaction, and if the main stories highlighted on Twitter home-page are relevant to you, try to write about them

b) Go on Facebook: first, with a personal profile centered around your mission, adding as friends people who share your vision. Once you reach around 4,000 friends, create a Fan Page and invite current contacts to add you there as well, and refer all new contacts there. You still have a wide margin you can use to add friends to your personal profile, if you so desire. Post regularly on your profile and fan-page, at least once per day.

c) Digg: your way out of anonymity. Seed your blog into social bookmarks tools, add a bookmarking bar to your site and blog posts, so readers can bookmark you in one click.

d) Slides and videos: create short presentations and videos. Our approach is 8 8 8: 8 slides for 8.8 seconds each. To the point and effective!

4) Being respectful: by knowing our audience, and respect their time. Stick to necessary words, post only content which is in line with your mission and their vision.

5) Feed your knowledge: read, read, and interact! Monitor developments in social media, especially in relation to your mission. What are similar organization doing? No need to reinvent the wheel here, but remember the wheel can be improved or substituted by wings, so time to make your organization fly!

Conclusion

Social Media are already a powerful way to ignite social change; the reason being that the media in this case is made more by people than material distribution channels. There are no golden rules to be successful with Social Media, and surely there are approaches which are more suitable and others which are not. We look forward for our approach to deliver the results you aim to.

Feedback

We would love to hear your feedback: suggestions about new topics? Ideas about improvements? Like to share your experience and make it an eBook, White Paper, check-list? Etc. Please send all through http://www.amareway.org/ Thanks!

Sources

Special thanks to Wikipedia

Appendix – AmAre Way in more details

AmAre is an Italian verb which means "To Love". It also summarizes our nonsectarian fivefold approach to holistic living and personal development:

Aware (Being)
Meditating
Active (Being)
Respectful (Being)
Eating (properly)

It also shows how interconnected we are: there is no (I) *Am* without (We) *Are*.

These are simple concept to grasp, but with lifetime positive effects. If you want to walk this path toward holistic living, stay in touch with us on http://www.amareway.org/ for more free eBooks, whitepapers, daily quotes, etc. If you just passed by, we hope at least you'll bring with you these simple five steps to happiness, and we hope they will be as beneficial to you as they have been to us.

AmAre Way: fivefold path to happiness - www.AmAreWay.org