

SOCIAL MEDIA

How Can Your Customer Contact Center Help “Listen In?”

ISG

By now you've probably heard the story. In July 2009, a major airline's stock price plummeted by 10 percent almost overnight. The incident cost shareholders more than \$180 million and was among the worst stock hits in the airline's history, according to *The Los Angeles Times*. What caused the airline's stock to drop so rapidly? Was it jet fuel costs, grounded aircraft, or sudden safety concerns? No.

A year earlier, the airline broke a passenger's guitar.

As musician Dave Carroll and his fellow band members were waiting to deplane, a passenger behind them shouted, "They're throwing guitars out there!" Carroll's friend saw the baggage handlers throw their guitars onto the tarmac, and Carroll later discovered that his Taylor guitar was broken. After months of frustration with the airline's policies, Carroll crafted a 4-minute and 37-second satirical song describing his ordeal. He posted it on YouTube, and the song soon became his most famous work.



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More than 10 million people around the globe watched Carroll's video. Its popularity led to talk-show appearances and news articles, proving that a seemingly minor incident by yesterday's standards can quickly become a corporate crisis by today's standards. How? A surge in the newest channels of communication, or social media, can cause any issue, no matter how small, to capture public attention worldwide.

Your company could face its own broken-guitar incident some day. Social media has immense power in today's world, and that power belongs to those who use it. To take advantage of this power, while preventing others from using it against you, you must find and engage the people who are talking about your brand – and also those who are listening.



WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is best defined as channels of communication that are designed to promote social interaction. You may know social media as Facebook, Twitter, or Blogger, but there are many more. And they are all fundamentally democratic by nature: No one owns a sphere of influence, no one inherently has more power than anyone else, and no one has any real control over the sphere. The broken guitar story provides insight into the kind of power the ordinary citizen now has: a little-known musician with a festering complaint turns his laptop, Internet access, and maybe a back-up guitar into a lethal solution that brings a powerful company to its knees.

WHY LISTEN?

Now, more than ever, you need to find ways to understand your customers and how they are using social media. One organization that provides “social listening” tools, RightNow, offers this explanation:

“After years of being managed and forced to adapt to companies’ internal business processes, consumers have had enough. They are unleashing their power on the social web, and it is rapidly gaining momentum. Businesses that ignore this and don’t look beyond internally focused customer management systems to externally focused customer experience management solutions will not survive.”



70 percent of Inc. 500 executives actively monitor their brands on social media sites.

MOST BIG CUSTOMERS DO UNDERSTAND THEIR POWER

Conversely, with the right strategy, planning, and approach, companies of all sizes can use social media to go after new opportunities, including sales leads, product testimonials, the ability to tap target markets, and superior reputation management to help avoid nightmares like the broken guitar story.

A recent study by the Center for Marketing Research at University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth found that 70 percent of Inc. 500 executives actively monitor their brands on social media sites. Furthermore, among just the Inc. 500 executives who use social media, the majority report favorable results.

1. 85 percent said Facebook has successfully helped their brand.
2. 81 percent, 88 percent and 93 percent, respectively, said the same for Twitter, blogging and online video.

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STILL NOT CONVINCED?

Making smart use of social media is like having your CEO shake hands with a few million potential customers. The problem? Any creative individual with a laptop and a lunch break can use 140 characters or less on Twitter, for example, to build those same relationships with the same millions of potential customers.

HOW DO YOU MONITOR SOCIAL MEDIA?

Many tools are readily available for monitoring the social media sphere. If you want to get started right away, free tools such as TweetDeck and Google Alerts can get you going, albeit with limited capabilities. You can also pay for high-powered programs such as Radian6, RightNow, or BrandWatch, depending how deep into analytics you want to go.

TweetDeck allows you to actively search words or phrases on Twitter and Facebook to help you identify and assess what the chatter is all about.

By contrast, Radian6, RightNow, BrandWatch, and other high-powered tools provide full-scale analytics. They monitor everything – online news, blogs, images, videos, and social networking sites. These tools also allow you to do more sophisticated assessments, such as tracking positive and negative sentiments, identifying potential customers, and generating demand.

NOW THAT YOU FOUND THE NEEDLE IN THE HAYSTACK

A “listening” program is only helpful if it enables you to craft a hard-hitting response with timely delivery to the right source. Don’t let this be an overwhelming task. Your customer contact center can be the perfect place for managing issues generated from social media chatter. Contact center agents are familiar with customer problems and concerns and are typically on the job during off hours, when much of the chatter takes place. These agents already have the training and skills to answer questions quickly and effectively, 24/7.

Many contact center service providers recommend an integrated approach, with a cross-channel knowledge database that is readily available to contact center agents anywhere in the network. The database includes scripted responses to common questions and can be distributed across a variety of channels.

Selecting the right listening tool is critical to agent efficiency. Using the wrong tool may require an army of contact center agents to sift through the chatter in order to determine what’s really important. The right tool, properly designed, will sift through the chatter, analyze and gauge sentiment, and point to sales and revenue opportunities in an efficient manner.

Some service providers have already created social listening systems at the request of their clients. Service provider TeleTech, for example, has successfully implemented a robust social media sales and support program that includes social listening and engagement best practice tools and processes. Additionally, C3/CustomerContact Channels has developed dynamic,

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customized social listening tools so clients can better manage, make sense of and capitalize on the chatter.

Teleperformance has recommended RightNow to some of their clients who are attempting to integrate their use of social media with other aspects of the customer experience. Tom Gebhart, Vice President of Business Development for Teleperformance USA, explained it this way:

“With RightNow you get all the bells and whistles of a high-powered social media listening application, but it doesn’t stand alone. At the end of the day, you know that your e-mail, chat, and social media will all work seamlessly with your CRM. This is critical to maintaining a smooth operation.”



Successful monitoring of an engagement requires sophistication and experience to drive powerful results.

LISTENING DOESN'T GUARANTEE SUCCESS

Listening to social media is just the first step in the evolution of branding and reputation management. Successful monitoring of an engagement requires sophistication and experience to drive powerful results.

How do you know which is the right tool? Is it best to have a service provider create a customized system? Do you need full-scale analytics to gauge public sentiment for your brand? Will you miss opportunities with a free social listening tool? How will any social listening tool interact with your current tools and technology?

Not only can you avoid your own broken guitar story, but you can also take advantage of the power of social media. ISG contact center experts can help you sort through the many available social media tools and technologies to arrive at the optimal program for your business.

ABOUT ISG

ISG (Information Services Group) (NASDAQ: III) is a leading global technology research and advisory firm. A trusted business partner to more than 700 clients, including 75 of the top 100 enterprises in the world, ISG is committed to helping corporations, public sector organizations, and service and technology providers achieve operational excellence and faster growth. The firm specializes in digital transformation services, including automation, cloud and data analytics; sourcing advisory; managed governance and risk services; network carrier services; technology strategy and operations design; change management; market intelligence and technology research and analysis. Founded in 2006, and based in Stamford, Conn., ISG employs more than 1,300 professionals operating in more than 20 countries—a global team known for its innovative thinking, market influence, deep industry and technology expertise, and world-class research and analytical capabilities based on the industry’s most comprehensive marketplace data. For more information, visit www.isg-one.com.

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