



How Do You Sell Social Media?

You Sell with Knowledge.

The web is emerging as a new force within all markets. Social technology is a new knowledge domain and requires new thinking. Without the knowledge you cannot apply the right thinking. Social media requires new thinking about everything.

By David Bullock & Jay Deragon

November 6, 2009

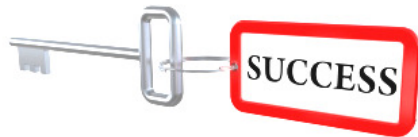
How Do You Sell Social Media?

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The issues of social media (and how to use it) are usually ambiguous, often confusing, and sometimes baffling to business owners. Often, people not only don't know all the answers... they don't even know what questions to ask!

(But the one immediate question that all our clients do ask us is how to use social media to create *revenue*.)



This means that we often find ourselves trying to sell knowledge of social media to a market that doesn't understand it and is already programmed to believe it is something it is not.

We've sold professional consulting services all our lives. We're selling knowledge people want or need to make something better. And bettering a business can be sorted into two categories: reducing expenses without hurting services, or selling more of something a business has (or don't yet have but want to develop).

As consultants, we always have to provide not only subject-matter expertise, but also critical thinking coupled with a neutral perspective gained from experience dealing with very similar - and also very different - situations. The difficulty in selling social media is that the market is tainted with misconceptions. There is so much noise about social media, with everyone telling everybody what it is and how to use it.

As consultants, we have to add value through communicating capabilities and enabling relationships. But we also have to actually create value through intellect and experience combined with just the right level of creativity. In other words, we must approach a prospective client with solutions - thinking that appeals to their needs.

What Solution Does Social Media Create?

The right question is: what problem does social media solve? You can't recommend a solution if your client doesn't perceive it as solving a problem they have and want to fix.

So the first issue is to understand what problem a client has that *they* want to solve. Clearly identifying and defining the problem is half the battle. If you can't identify a problem that social media may be able to solve, your chances of getting engaged are slim. Worse, though, is giving the impression that social media can solve all their problems. Because it can't.

Social media can't solve all your problems. As a matter of fact, using it improperly can create more problems than you ever had before. Yet everywhere we look, many consultants seem to be selling social media as the cure all for everything. (Here is a hint. It isn't!)

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The Problem with Expected Results

Most of the market is consumed with creating an ROI from social media. Many want social media solutions that drive revenue. The problem with these perspectives is they haven't identified a problem they want fixed or a solution that want to achieve...besides more revenue. ROI comes from lowering cost or improving revenue from investments in new initiatives aimed at solving problems. Social media doesn't do either without knowledge.

Social media is a system of communications, period. While communications is part of any solution to solving problems and generating more revenue, it is not the whole solution.

Social media is a communications tool that can help you increase awareness, improve brand recognition, reach more people efficiently and pull a market to your value proposition. However, simply starting a social media campaign doesn't translate to revenue or solving problems if you don't think through the process and related issues.

Jumping into social media and pushing your message without planning is like just yelling at your sales force for more revenue. If you haven't first figured out what your market wants or needs and whether you are capable of delivering it - then you are peeing in the wind. How's that for an analogy?

If you don't know where your market is and how they are participating in social media how will you communicate with them? Worse yet, if you are communicating the wrong thing the wrong way how can you expect the market to pay attention to you or your proposition? The analogy for this is throwing money into advertising with no way to know *who* it reaches and who is responding. Sound familiar?

Social media affords you that specific data so you can measure how effectively you are communicating with your market.

So again, what is the ROI on social media? The answer lies in two metrics: how well you communicate with your market (*all social media does is deliver it*) and what value you have to offer (*that is the job of every business to define, improve and deliver*).

Fix your communications and deliver superb value...and social media will return a huge ROI. Selling social media is only relevant to improving your market communications, which can improve revenue and saves money if you know how.

Why Do People Use Social Media?

My six-year-old asks a lot of questions. Most questions start with "Why?" The reason children ask why a lot is because their minds are geared to



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learn why things are the way they are and why people do the things they do.

A lesson we can all learn from the minds of children is that asking "why" is always a good question to ask about anything and everything. However, the older we get, the more educated and the higher position we have in a company we assume we know "why" about a lot of things. In reality, we really don't *know* why...but we pretend we do!

When I look at how brands and people use social media it becomes obvious that they never have asked themselves "why" before they started using social media. How can I tell this? Because what they use it for and how they use it isn't connected to why people use it.

We must understand why people use social media so we can better define why we, as individuals and organization, should be using it.

Why Do We Communicate?

In a previous article entitled "[Again, What Is Social Media?](#)" we said that, fundamentally, social media is a system of communications. The process of social media involves:

1. Use of technology.
2. Identifying and providing valuable conversations.
3. Distribution of conversations to appropriate and relevant markets.
4. Methods and messages that create pull, and engagement.
5. Building and sustaining an audience (relationships) of listeners.
6. Continually feeding the audience with [conversational currency](#); value they can *use*.

Now if you agree with our definition of what social media is (and the process of use) then the answer to "why" is relevant to thinking about why and what you communicate to the market of conversations. However, to determine why you or your organization should use social media...it is best to understand why others do first.

So Why Do Others Use Social Media?

We are consummate students of social media. We say "students" because our primary motivation for using social media is to learn how the market is using it and what methods create what results and why.

The word study means: *a state of contemplation: application of the mental faculties to the acquisition of knowledge: a careful examination or analysis of a phenomenon, development, or question.*

Notice the last word in the definition: "question." If you haven't noticed, 99% of our articles start out with a question. The reason is we are asking questions is to know why. We learn why based on what others do and what the system is meant or enable us to do.

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People and organizations are producing varied results when using social media. As you can imagine, there are numerous methods being used and because *most* view social media as a marketing channel they are getting the same results as other marketing methods, AKA terrible results.

But when you instead study why, what and how the crowd of sincere people, not institutions, are using social media...you'll find different methods and different results. Whether it is learning about new tools and the application of use or simply answering questions about anything, everything and anyone, people find utility in learning from others.

The results that come from learning are much different than those that come from marketing. Learning *pulls* people, which enables and enhances relationships. Marketing *pushes* people and is not centric to relationship-building.

Learning has always been and will *always* be a powerful force that draws people. Whether it's an individual or organization asking the question, the answer to "why" leads to another question. What can you communicate that enables people to learn something of value they can use and share with others how they used it? In order to find out why you must listen to the market's needs and wants. Your response to the wants and needs may not have anything to do with your own product or service but it has everything to do with building market relations. The results of doing so will surprise you.

Remember, the title of this article is "*How Do You Sell Social Media?*" The answer to this question lies within asking the right questions...and the first one is why.

Do You Know Why?

Young children ask a lot of "why" questions because they are curious about everything. Adults then ask their children "why did you do that?" When others ask us why, we want to know "why do you ask?" In organizations, success is influenced by a common understanding between people as to "why" things are done the way they are and why do we continue to do things that simply don't work or matter to anyone.

Learning the answers to "why" about everything is a lifelong journey of experience and study. Unless people know the answers to *why*, they cannot apply the right knowledge to the right circumstance and subsequently responses and actions may not yield the right result. Ever wonder why you don't get the right answers? Just maybe it is because you are not asking the right questions.

The Right Questions about Social Media

In a previous article, we discussed "5 Things You Must Ask About Social Media." In this article, we addressed some fundamental issues to consider before using social media. Additionally, we've created a ["How" series](#) which begins to address what, when, where, how, who and why questions which we should never stop asking. The relevant

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questions are proposed collectively in a white paper titled "[Social Media Directions](#)" [available here](#).

As more and more individuals and organizations continue to use social media, effective results will be realized by those who know "how" to ask the right questions and subsequently never stop seeking the answers. What is today's answer to market needs *can* change at the click of a mouse as consumers find more relevant and relative answers from their friends on a daily basis.

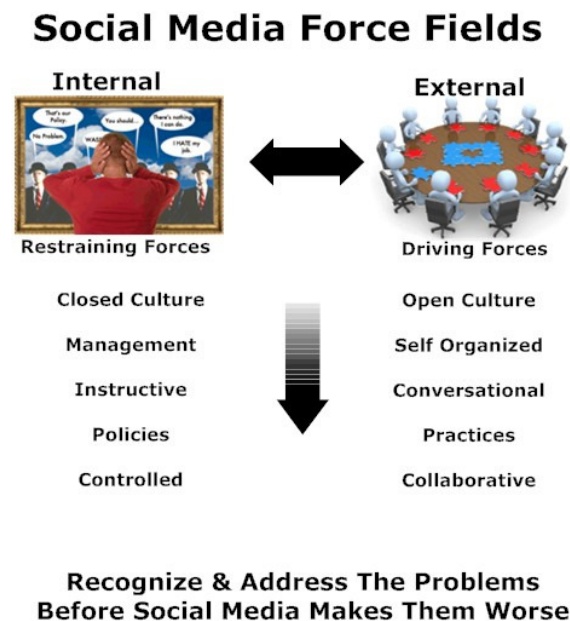
The science of social technology accelerates consumption of answers to questions the market has relevant to anything and anyone. Your answers can become irrelevant unless you are monitoring the relative questions that consumers are asking. Worse yet - if you are not engaged in the market of conversations then you are not likely to even know "what, where, when, who, how and why" the market is conversing.

Back to "Do You Know Why?"

Not knowing **why** social media is so powerful means you won't know **how** to use it effectively. Not knowing "**how**" means you are likely to use it out of alignment with "**what**" your market wants.

If you are communicating out of alignment with your market then your market isn't likely to know "**who**" you are "**when**" you communicate. If you don't know "**where**" your market is then you are not likely going to reach them. If social media isn't working for you then you must ask the question "**why**". The answer to this question may not have anything to do with social media. Rather it has everything to do with "**how**" well your people relate to the organization, your processes, products and technology.

Fixing your organization's "connectivity" to your internal and external market requires



you to ask the same questions, but in a different context than social media. The answers to those questions will lead to why social media doesn't work and why it does. Having the right [social media directions](#) is always a good thing; that is, if you really want to know "why."

If You Know "Why," is Your Organization Ready?

Before jumping into social media, organizations need to assess possible problems first. Why? Social media will only make the problems worse if you are not prepared.

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Use of social media continues to cause problems for businesses. The initial problem is trying to control it. Then the next problem is a lack of knowledge of how to leverage it.

All problem situations, regardless of the specific kind of problem, have the same general structure. The three elements of this structure are:

1. the problem state
2. the solved state, and
3. the solution path.

The practical implications of the general problem, relative to use of social media, are usually ones of opposing force fields. On one side of the problem you have internal forces pushing an organization's culture to do things the way management wants them done. On the opposing side you have the market forces desiring outcomes from the marketplace represented by the businesses who offer value to the market.

Internal forces of a business represent the collective interaction of people, processes, technology and communications. Collectively these forces should be managed for optimum outcomes that exceed any markets expectation. Doing so is an aim of never-ending improvement that constantly and forever listens to the wants, needs and desires of the external forces, the market.

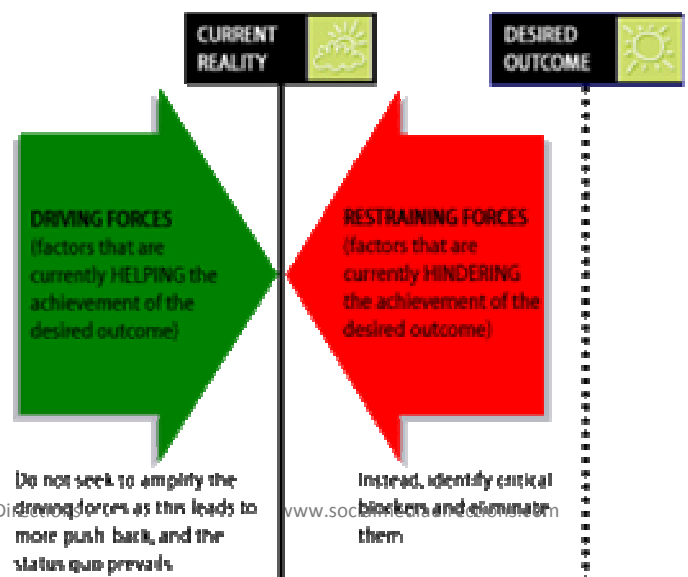
The Force Field of Social Media

Generally speaking, users of social media enjoy the freedom to communicate, which the technology enables for personal and professional objectives. Users are growing in influence and power, while the suppliers to the markets chase the user's attention and attraction to their business propositions. The irony is that most businesses don't realize that the market of conversations includes their internal resources, their suppliers, and they do indeed communicate.

The field between driving forces and constraining forces is where either conflict arises or opportunities are realized. Conflicts represent unmet expectations which are then communicated and either resolved or ignored. Opportunities are where issues that impact the organizations performance are openly communicated and resolved.

Problems not resolved represent issues that sooner or later get communicated into the field, which lies between the two forces fueled by communications.

Current vs. desired conditions can either be improved by resolution or ignored. This separation of current conditions vs. desired outcomes represents organization opportunities to improve market relations and subsequently revenue. Notice the term



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“**market relations**” which implies people’s experience with the organization. “People” means the internal and external relations which engage with your organization.

The current reality may be viewed as a response to a complex set of interacting opposing forces. The opposing forces are institutional methods vs. crowd methods resulting from use of social media. This represents a field of forces and the forces can go against you or with you. Going against the crowd brings consequences. Many behaviorists might call it the **imbalance of consequences**. Because of social media, the balance of power and influence has shifted to the people vs. the institutions.

Businesses want to increase economic gains, users want the opportunity to be heard and served. Why don’t business leaders apply thought leadership and simply close the gap between business wants and user desires? The reason is that the power of communications has been unleashed to people and most business leaders think of communications as the means to seek control of their current environment.

The current environment has shifted away from previous environmental constraints. This new “open environment” of communications is both a threat to the old and an opportunity for the new. Old vs. new is not about age; rather, it is all about thinking.

How to Think? And What Should You Think About?

Social media doesn’t come with directions. Instead it is a never-ending process of learning “what, where, when, who, how and why” you should use it purposefully.

Social media doesn’t come with a manual and it isn’t something you should learn by simply copying others. Social media is simply a new communications system and instead of thinking about social media, people should think about how communications has changed as a result of social media.

What Has Changed?

In the past, communications was a one-way marketing system aimed at getting people’s attention. The old system “pushed” out messages and offers and the consumer had one decision: respond or don’t respond. Social media now makes communications a two-way exchange and people have been empowered to connect and collaborate with others who have similar experiences or opinions about anything, everything, anyone and everyone.

Consumer feedback is now instantaneous through crowds of people who desire to be heard. The subject matters threaded throughout all these interconnected conversations is all relevant and relative to any business, institution, celebrity, government, product or service and people’s daily experiences with anything and everything. The market intelligence embedded in these conversations is strategically significant to those who know how to listen and take action accordingly.

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What Direction Should Your Organization Follow?

The direction of any business is set by leadership. Most leaders engage in strategic thinking before finalizing an organization's plan or direction. Strategic thinking encompasses assessing relevant issues that impact an organization's ability to deliver value propositions to specific markets, better than the competition.

Once a strategy is concluded then it is all about execution of related initiatives and activities. Execution involves people, processes, technology and, last but not least, communications. Without effective communications, the cost of execution rises which then creates the need for new directions. Changing directions adds complexity. Complexity increases cost. When communications fail, an organization cannot progress towards its strategic aim efficiently.

Social Media Can Cause a Change in Your Directions

If you don't have good market intelligence, than any effort to propagate your value proposition to specific markets may be a wasted effort. Market intelligence is about knowing what value your markets seek. Knowing where your market is, who is your market, when your market engages, how they engage and why.

Knowing what, where, who, when, how and why is relevant and *relative* to monitoring market sentiment and subsequently focusing your message around the markets of conversations.



However, if your organizational design, culture, knowledge and communications are not in alignment with the market's conversation then the market is not likely to respond. (And a market that doesn't respond to you is a market that is likely responding to someone or something else.)

Even if you have the best market intelligence you cannot effectively respond without having an organization that:

- cares to respond.
- knows how to respond.
- believes in your response.
- is capable of responding.
- enabled to deliver actions that satisfy your market.

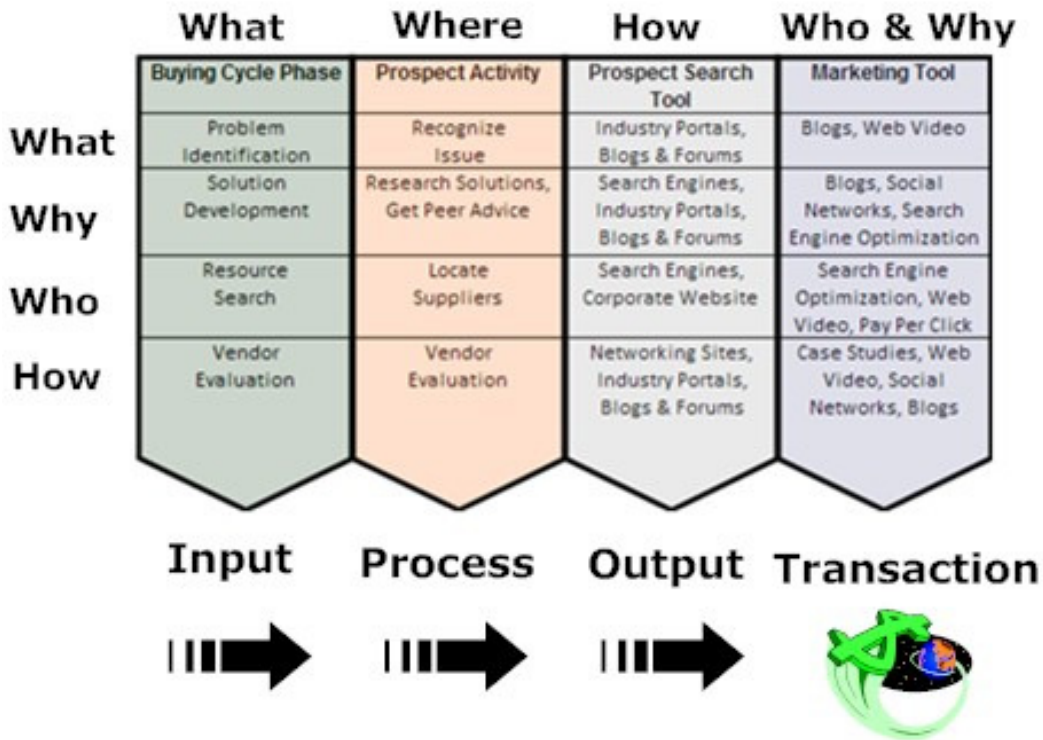
Without enabling your organization (AKA people, processes and technology) to properly and effectively respond, you are doomed to fail because the five points listed above is what all markets want from the supplier.

Social media magnifies an organization's capabilities. The market of conversations is quick to point out companies that fail to meet the criteria of 1-5 above. Being able to

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meet these criteria is a function of organizational design, culture, management and communications. Social media cannot fix these issues. Rather, all it does is magnify how well they perform. Not being able to perform to the expectations of the market has never been as transparent as it is today. To maximize the power of social media, companies must first assess organizational design, culture, management and communications or face the consequences of ignoring that which has become transparent to the market of conversations. The directions needed to fix these issues are very different than marketing and PR.

Consumer Behavior On The Web



How Do You Explain Social Media?

It has been said that pictures speak a thousand words. Many businesses do not comprehend why their presence on the web and use of social is critical to their success.

Given the consistent questions we get asked, we decided to try to simplify the technical responses and instead provide pictures that hopefully convey the message and help people connect the dots. The illustrations in this post and the following dialogue are aimed at helping people and organizations understand why the web is critical to their success.

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The Story

Everyone seeks solutions to problems. Problems represent opportunities for businesses whose product or service provide solutions to problems. When people have a problem or desire to fulfill, where do 95% of them go to find the solutions? On the web, or to friends and family. Every day there are over 250 million searches done on Google. In other words, people are looking for solutions that address a multitude of issues. The greatest library of solutions is the web.

So when people seek solutions, if they can't find you in the web they are not likely going to consider you as a resource to use, whether a product or service. If your web presence is weak (not properly built) or, worse, if your content is *anti-social* you are not likely to not only not be found but be considered clueless if found. Last but not least, if the market isn't engaging with you in relevant and relative conversations then those seeking solutions will find no reference to your value by others (peer to peer).

Thus the critical path to commerce is to be found and be *noted* as a solution provider or an organization whose products and services people talk about. However, in order to do so you must understand what all this social stuff is about. Using social media effectively demands mind-sets and capabilities that are unfamiliar and sometimes even counter-intuitive to previous marketing and advertising methods.

[David Gillespie writes](#): *If both the web & media are inherently social & if business must have a presence online, then business must have a social element. To not have that is to forego both logic & opportunity. The internet has taken the previous model of content being scarce, media being expensive, and the attention of the audience being guaranteed – and flipped it.*

Now your challenge is figuring out the how, what, where and who you want to reach and giving them meaningful value they can use and share with others. The consumer market has shifted from who has the most data, to who can provide the most meaningful value. Meaningful value is relational, while traditional advertising and marketing is not. For your business to survive and compete it must learn how to build relational value and use the Internet to propagate that value.

So What Should You Do First?

The first step for any business is to learn and apply new thinking about the organization and its relationship with the market it aims to serve. To learn, one must have relevant and relative data that relates to your business and the market it is trying to serve.

The illustration above outlines critical research that must be conducted in order for your organization to gain an understanding and learn the critical skills and thinking needed to better serve your market. In other words, first you must listen to understand before you try to engage with any market.

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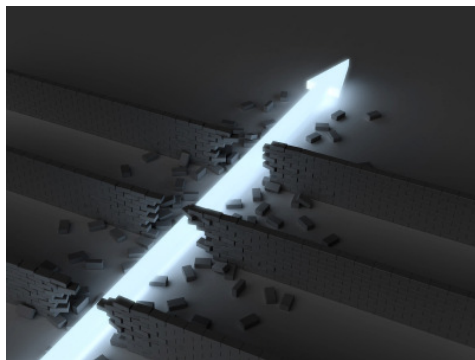
Without having the relevant data concerning how, where, who and what are your market's interest, needs and desires, you cannot effectively provide a reason as to why the market should pay any attention to you.

Once you have this data and insight you can then begin to learn what meaningful value you can create for the market and give them that value for free. Use "free" to pull the market to a higher value proposition that they will then pay for. Giving free knowledge that is meaningful is considered valuable and relational.

If the knowledge you give is in context with your products or services then you just increased the probability of a transaction which is what you ultimately want. The difference today is how you get what you want is by giving others what they need, when they need it and enabling them to find it at the click of a mouse or from friends. If they can't find it or their friends aren't suggesting it, well, then you lose.

What Drives Social Media ROI?

It seems that online and offline conversations are consumed with measuring the ROI from social media. Much of the dialog is a waste of time and focused on the wrong thing. Yet organizations seem to be demanding a measure of ROI from this thing we all call social media.



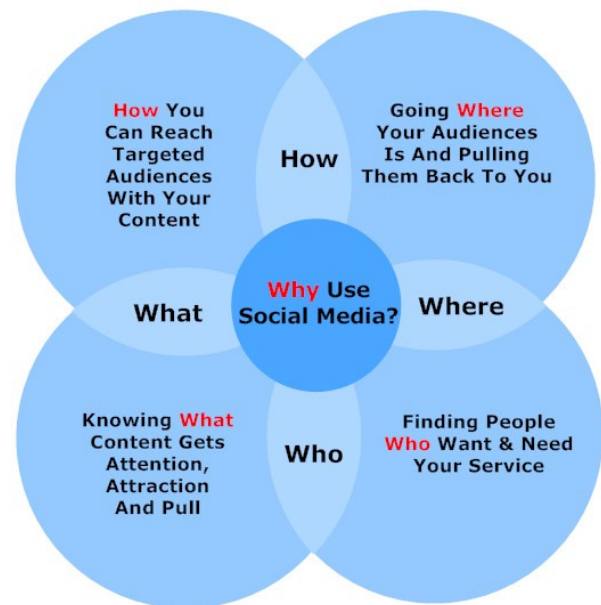
All businesses represent a system of inputs, processes and outputs. Most businesses measure output, or results and said measures are purely financial results. The irony is that results do not tell you what may be wrong with the process or the inputs into a process. Results just tell you what you've produced as a result of the inputs and processes you've used. Social media does produce results but all those results can tell you are whether your inputs and processes were operating effectively. To change the result you must focus on

both the inputs and the processes. But who measures those? Not many, if any.

A Problem with Thinking about ROI

If you use existing social media metrics, most of them will tell you about the reach of your message and its popularity with the market of followers. Reach and popularity may

Social Media Marketing Mix



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not be the right measure of effectiveness and efficiency. Getting reach is easy thanks to the power of social technology. Popularity only equates to being popular! The question is “are you popular with the right audience that has an interest in your conversations or an interest in a relationship?” Relationships beget opportunities for a transaction if the basis of a conversation has an affinity to the markets needs and wants. Getting lots of followers, connections, and massive reach could create results that are meaningless. Yet many organizations measure these results (outputs) and use them to justify their presence, their efforts and the time and money spent doing so. It is a lot like the days of measuring advertising and marketing effectiveness, which was justified by a 3% or less response.

So How Do You Measure ROI?

If you understand systemic thinking you know that all results are produced by the quality of your input and related processes. For social media, the input is communications. The process is distribution of communications. On the other hand, the input is what you communicate to whom, where, when, how and why. Now those elements of social media aren't so simple and if they were, everyone would be applying the thinking behind each element and creating massive ROI.

The questions of what, where, when, how and why are deep and wide and require critical thinking. Critical thinking is purposeful and reflective judgment about what to believe or what to do in response to observations, experience, verbal or written expressions, or arguments. Critical thinking might involve determining the meaning and significance of what is observed or expressed, or, concerning a given inference or argument, determining whether there is adequate justification to accept the conclusion as true. It seems that today most organizations are chasing social media ROI without even considering whether there is adequate justification to accept the conclusion as true! Subsequently, everyone is consumed with measuring the results without thinking through the inputs and processes that produce results that can go beyond your expectations.

Unless you think critically about the ROI from social media your thinking is not likely to produce any results. Thinking is the input, communications is the process, and the results reflect the quality of your thinking.

Trying to Sell Social Media with the Wrong Knowledge Devalues It



Social technology is being devalued by the labels and the sophomoric uses being applied by most of today's users. It is also being devalued by the current pricing of social media products and services offered by early adopters claiming to be social media experts and gurus.

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Let's put things into context. Devaluation is a reduction in the value of a something with respect to its initial or potential value. In common modern usage, it specifically implies an official lowering of the economic value perceived by the market. The opposite of devaluation is called revaluation. Revaluation means a rise of a price of services or products which is usually created by the market's perception of new value created. Revaluation is usually created by the introduction of new knowledge or innovation created by or from the previously devalued product or service.

A market that doesn't understand the value of something or how to create value with something usually demands to understand the ROI from something. Trying to understand ROI from something without understanding how to create value *with* something is shortsighted.

Social media is getting a lot of attention, maybe the wrong attention. Much of the online and offline media is positioning social media as another marketing channel and their usage reflects their beliefs. Everyone is talking about the ROI from social media or trying to define it. Most metrics and examples are all tied to a response from marketing and advertising messaging using social media. While applicable to those vertical uses, organizations are missing the larger value that can and should be created and captured. By narrowing the markets' view and use of the relevant technology, the value is being limited rather than expanded. In other words: devalued.

The Revaluation of Social Media

McKinsey Consulting looks at social technology as more than social media. As the premier management consulting firm in the world they view "social technology" as a significant enhancement to collaboration and communication processes. It's an enhancement that changes everything a business does, not just marketing and advertising. How much can be saved from improving communications and collaboration?

Exhibit 2: Waste in collaboration

10 forms of wasted effort in collaboration

Divergence

Wasted effort due to politics, mismatch of goals

Misunderstanding

Disconnect in understanding

Undercommunicating

Excess or not enough time spent in communication

Interpreting

Time spent interpreting communication or artifacts

Searching

Time spent searching for information, relationships

Motion

Handoff of artifacts or communications

Extra processing

Excess creation of artifacts or information

Translation

Time spent conforming objects to new outputs

Waiting

Delays due to reviews, approvals, and bottlenecks

Misapplication

Incorrect use of methods and technologies

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In an article titled "[Using technology to improve workforce collaboration](#)" James Manyika, Kara Sprague and Lareina Yee write:

Consider the collaborative creative work needed to win an advertising campaign or the high levels of service needed to satisfy public citizens. Or, in a similar vein, the interplay between a company and its customers or partners that results in an innovative product.

Raising the quality of these interactions is largely uncharted territory. Taking a systematic view, however, helps bring some of the key issues into focus. Our research suggests that improvements depend upon getting a better fix on who actually is doing the collaborating within companies, as well as understanding the details of how that interactive work is done. Just as important is deciding how to support interactions with technology—in particular, Web 2.0 tools such as social networks, wikis, and video. There is potential for sizeable gains from even modest improvements. Our survey research shows that at least 20 percent and as much as 50 percent of collaborative activity results in wasted effort. And the sources of this waste—including poorly planned meetings, unproductive travel time, and the rising tide of redundant e-mail communications, just to name a few—are many and growing in knowledge-intense industries.

To put this in better perspective, consider what happens when organizations use social media solely as an advertising and marketing channel. They are likely to initially get the market's attention and, in doing so, increase the cost of responding to said attention. Even worse, the market takes notice then criticizes the brand or organization for terrible service, poor customer relations or spamming the market. Worse still, the organization's employee attitudes reflected in their online conversations produce a negative sentiment about the organization. These incidents are happening everywhere because organizations do not think systemically about social technology. Rather they think about marketing and advertising. And there's a *big* difference.

ROI is driven by efficiency, effectiveness and innovation. Communications and collaboration creates efficiency, effectiveness and innovation. ROI is an end result of doing things right and doing the right things. Measuring the wrong things and measuring them wrong doesn't create a return on anything. It's time to create a reevaluation of this thing being called social media.

How do you do that? By applying new knowledge and creating innovation with this thing called social media.

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David Bullock

Co-Author – Barack 2.0: Social Media Lessons For Business

How do you sell social media?

That's a big question with which requires a big answer. However, it also requires some deeper questions and investigation.

Let's begin by dissecting the question, as the knowing how to sell something assumes that you know what you are selling.

Not truly knowing what social media is, how it works (and doesn't work) and the technology behind the whole machine is the precursor to missing the mark.

Understanding the whole picture means:

- The Platforms
- The Culture
- The Tools
- The Trends
- The Customs
- The Influencers
- The Leverage Points

This understanding is required if you are going to use this thing called "new media" successfully. There are many who say they know all about "new media" but when you see how they are moving in the marketplace they only have part of the picture. Having part of the picture will serve their immediate needs, for the time being, but when the market shifts - and it *will* shift again - they will be left behind and caught blindsided like most of the world was with the latest shift.

Note the 2008 Presidential Campaign.

How Do You Sell Social Media?

Who would have thought that these new platforms could be the undergirding for the coordination of a nationwide mobilization around a common idea? You need look no further than this single example to see the real world power of the collective new media (see www.Barack20.com).

These “new media” are a situation that can be leveraged in ways that are unimaginable by most. And, to the dismay of many, the innovations are not coming from “normal” marketing, media and educational channels.

This open communication and vetting environment is not going anywhere, and in fact, it is evolving on a day-to-day basis. I believe that the obvious change of power is what is so disruptive to the marketplace.

The market moves and thinks collectively. The marketplace can and will collectively move against you if you move incorrectly; alternatively, it will marginalize you if you are found to be irrelevant.

It's easier said than done: Be meaningful. Be relevant. Be valuable.

What is social media?

It is truly something new, or it is a communication technology that is misunderstood and miss-applied because these new broadcasting and networking platforms have commoditized messaging by allowing the masses to have access to broadcast capacities and influence that were only available to a few years ago.

The answer is very basic. It starts with being meaningful and relevant to those that find you.

And where should they find you?

Everywhere that they are looking. Social media allows you to be everywhere, talking to everybody and listening to everything.

First, you have to be where people are looking. Second, you have to know how to engage by being interesting to and interested in the audience.

The problem with new media and the access to an abundance of data is that people don't need to you to bring them any new information. Your prospects want you to be useful, meaningful and valuable. And your clients want to find value instantly. If you are

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valuable, you can't be found if you are not there. So you must first show up and then deliver.

Sitting on the sidelines and not being in the market is not a strong strategy.

These search engines allow us to find data about just about anything we can identify by name. The problem is that data, in and of itself, is meaningless, unless it is framed within the proper context. Case in point, the 2008 Presidential Campaign at any other time would have not been framed powerfully without the other issues that were looming in the background of the United States, such as the economy and the current state of the government. This speaks to timing and relevance as it relates to value assessment.

The key is to show up, saying the right thing and having others saying good things about you.

Contrary to popular advertising and marketing beliefs, you can't sell a future that people don't want or need anymore. The Obama Campaign was promoting a future that the people wanted. People wanted the future, thus they promoted the story and in the end acted to fulfill the story.

Social media are like the wind. It is there. You can see it moving. And more importantly, you see the effects. **Social media are all about developing and engaging in consistent intentional conversations around relevant content within a meaningful context within an eager community.**

Yes, that is a mouthful. If you look at that statement at a surface level you will most likely continue to advertise and market in the same manner that you have for years, and you will get the same dwindling results. However, with a true operating understanding of new media, that statement above not only sounds impressive; it is actionable and measurable.

Again, we witnessed the monumental rise of Senator Barack Obama to the White House using this new media and networking platforms as a catalyst for actionable conversations.

The proof is in the case studies, the businesses, the individuals and the causes that have been brought to the forefront of traditional media because the story was first carried by social media.

Social media is about communication. Not the one-way communication from a company to consumer that has been the standard for centuries; rather, true conversations and

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two-way dialogue based on common interest and concerns. The glamour and push methodologies that worked for decades are no longer valid.

Your customers can know more about your company than you do because they are able to understand and evaluate your:

- company
- products
- services
- customer service
- culture
- people
- reputation

before you have the opportunity to make your pitch. Thus the tables have turned. Companies come to pitch and convince and the marketplace comes to simply decide if this is a good fit based on everything you say and the world says about you. What you say now is not enough.

Now you are known by your content and context. And it is up to you to fill the void in the marketplace via reputation with the narrative that you want to be known for.

Now you are evaluated by the conversations that you are in, the conversations that you are and the conversations that surround you.

Those with power and money have typically controlled communication lines. At the present time, anyone with an Internet connection, a keyboard and an idea can broadcast to millions. This is the shift that was illustrated on a global scale in the 2008 presidential campaign.

Simple ideas are being promoted by ordinary people to the world without needing your blessing. Scary, isn't it?

The power of communication - and thus, commerce - now lies with the individual. Not the corporation. Not the advertising agency. Now the power is with the individual who understands and uses communication technologies effectively.

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Technology has finally made communication a commodity.

How are you going to increase the value of your message to lift yourself above the noise like a Senator from Chicago?

You have an opportunity here that never existed before.

Are you going to seize the moment?

Do you know how to seize the moment?

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About The Authors



David Bullock is President of White Bullock Group, a business development firm. He also is a Senior Consultant with Social Media Directions.

David is a degreed mechanical engineer with a thorough understanding of process control. A switch to sales resulted in over \$100 million worth of goods and services sold in a seven-year period.

David has created very effective combination of processes that lead to increased sales by up to 300%. His unique approach and proven success have made him an authority among internet marketing and business development experts.

David is co-author of [Barack 2.0](#), a case study of Barack Obama's successful use of social media during the 2008 presidential campaign. This book has been added to the curriculum at the Wharton School of

Business.

David is highly regarded as a professional speaker and consultant. Clients include Black Enterprise, American Express, Lending Tree, RIM Blackberry, and a variety of community-based business organizations. You can learn more about David at davidbullock.com and via [LinkedIn](#).

Email: david@davidbullock.net



Jay Deragon is a Senior Consultant with Social Media Directions.

His professional career includes providing strategic management consulting practices for Fortune 500 companies as well as local small businesses. He has consulted with numerous industries spanning over 25 years of professional experience globally.

His current professional endeavors are all centric to the disruptive nature of the social web. He writes at [Relationship Economy](#) and provides social media strategic services to businesses large and small.

He is co-author of "**The Emergence of the Relationship**

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Economy” released in January of 2008 and can be [accessed here](#).

The book was a collaborative effort with three other authors, Scott Allen, Carter Smith and Margaret Orem and the forward is written by Doc Searls, co-author of **The Cluetrain Manifesto**. Doc Searls is a *Berkman Fellow* and co-author of the business best-seller "*The Cluetrain Manifesto: The End of Business as Usual*."

Jay Deragon has also written a second book titled “**Socialutions: The Emergence of New Management Methods**. “

His blog, [The Relationship Economy](#), is rated within the top 150 blogs rated by Advertising Age. He is an international speaker and has conducted in excess of 100 seminars on a variety of topics.

His formal education started at the University of Maine with continued education at Dartmouth College, Penn State and the University of Wisconsin. He has certification as a Certified Quality Engineer, Quality Function Deployment, Advanced Risk Management, Statistical Process Control, Hoshin Kenari, D.I.S.C Instructor, Organizational Dynamics and Strategic Planning.

To learn more about his professional life you can review his [Linkedin profile here](#).

jay.deragon@gmail.com