

Surveys, Social Media & CSI



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Marketing 3.0: Surveys, Social Media, CSI and Missing the Mark

Social media is evolving too quickly for most of us to keep up with. But your business depends on your understanding. It is where consumers share information first, including how they feel about brands and products. Long before a survey reaches a customer, that customer has likely communicated an opinion through a social media portal. Auto dealers rely heavily upon surveys to measure CSI, which is unlikely to change anytime soon. But, a dealer can upset a customer with the survey, itself, as consumers are being bombarded with online survey requests. Used correctly, social media can serve as a tool to measure consumer sentiment, as well as effectively market with a personal touch.

Social 101

You most likely have been hearing *social media this* and *social media that* for almost a decade. Maybe you've heard about webinars, classes, and even full-blown conferences about how to use social media for your marketing efforts. You probably know about people being Facebook friends, "liking" company Facebook pages, and "following" companies and individuals on Twitter. You may have even heard about the prevalence of social media making its way into the courtroom during divorce cases, with Facebook being the market leader (1).

Beyond people getting themselves into trouble with significant others on Facebook and learning that their best friend's brother's mother-in-law just bought kitty litter from a verbally abusive street merchant on Twitter (seriously, Marge, what'd you expect?), how are marketers utilizing the emergence of this new craze? With only 41% of auto dealers having a Facebook page (2), your dealership stands to benefit.

Facebook: the megalith: scheduled to reach one billion users in 2012

Facebook is by far the most successful and popular of all social media. Thus, for the purpose of this discussion, we will focus on Facebook.

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Facebook Basics:

An individual can have a personal page, while a company can create a business page. The difference is that, with a personal page, a person can request other people to be “friends.” With that, people can view photos, status updates, and the companies and organizations they “like,” as well as other interests, such as music and movies. A company, on the other hand, is restricted to waiting for individuals to come along and choose to like their page. Note that “liking” a company’s page was formerly referred to as becoming a “fan.” Instead of fans, a company now has likes.

Worldwide, Facebook boasts nearly one billion users. The social networking site currently reaches 51% of Americans ages 12 and up (3). What’s a company to do with this newly found access? Perhaps, more importantly, what does a company *not* do?

To properly utilize this medium, Matthew Funk, social media expert with TK Carsites, says, “People develop positive feelings with a person, not a page” (4). Your challenge is to market without attempting to sell—or not appear to be selling.

“Companies that spend their time focusing on gathering Facebook likes are completely missing the mark,” says Brandon Piersant, Director of Marketing at DealerSocket. “Social media is a place to get to know your customers,” continues Piersant, “not to directly sell to them.”

Funk recommends marketers to “Write about your local community and events, and try to post items of interest that go beyond your business. A good viral video doesn’t make you think, ‘I want to buy a car from the dealership,’ but it does keep you in the news feed and reinforces the name.”

Who Are We Reaching?

As stated above, 51% of the U.S. population, ages 12 and older, are on Facebook. A study by CoTweet and ExactTarget reports that 43% of that 51% said they like at least one company page. Thus, approximately 27% of Americans over 12 like at least one company on Facebook. That’s a lot of Americans liking a lot of companies. But, before you can decide how to market to those who like your Facebook page, you need to get the like.

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Do You Like Me?

What motivates one to like a page? Those polled by CoTweet and ExactTarget (5) said they like pages for the following reasons:

- 40% to receive discounts and promotions
- 39% to show support of a company to their friends
- 36% to get a “freebie”
- 34% to remain informed about a company
- 33% for updates about future products
- 30% for updates on sales

Your corporate social media strategy is vital, as you can lose customers quicker than gaining with the wrong approach. CoTweet and ExactTarget also released a report titled “The Social Breakup,” polling users as to their reasons for “unliking” a brand on Facebook.

Be careful, though, because 55% have un-liked a company they liked. In addition, 51% say they seldom or never visit a company page after liking them. Tellingly, 71% of those who liked a company page have said they have become more selective about liking company pages—companies are clearly not using Facebook properly.

Piersant’s view of using social media properly puts the focus on the personal touch. “Imagine if you’re a semi-loyal customer of a brand, and someone at that company follows you on Twitter and sees that you’re really into fishing. You get some fishing lures in the mail as a thank you for being a repeat customer. That’s the personal touch companies can use social media to obtain. Right now, they’re completely missing the mark by trying to use it as an advertising forum.”

Social Media, Consumer Surveys and Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI)

Can you keep a secret? Good. Here it is: Auto dealers want customer feedback to help calculate CSI scores. And they want it *bad*.

Duh, right? But customers are being inundated with survey requests more than ever before. With the proliferation of customer satisfaction survey building websites, your uncle, grandma and pet chinchilla can easily create a survey and start bombarding internet users. There’s a good chance that you, oh gentle reader, have been annoyed, maybe even angered, by these persistently reappearing creatures (the survey, not the chinchilla).

Now, you really have a problem: you want to know what is attracting—and turning away—your customers—but you’re annoying them in the process. To grasp the enormity of the survey freak-out, consider some numbers by William Grimes, published by New York Times online on March 16, 2012: “There is no way to determine exactly how many consumer satisfaction surveys are completed each year, but Mindshare Technologies, a small company that conducts and analyzes on-the-spot electronic surveys, says it completes 175,000 surveys every day, or more than 60 million annually.”

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The online explosion has provided businesses unprecedented access to communicate, and anger, consumers. As surveys fatigue and annoy consumers, what's a CSI-data hungry dealer to do? Many are becoming more aggressive with their surveys. The same NYT article cites retailers such as Wal-Mart adding web addresses to receipts with invitations to fill out surveys with chances to win prizes—Staples has offered a \$5,000 store card. The auto industry, meanwhile, is astronomically less subtle. Grimes states, "Sales representatives have been known to show pictures of their wives and children as they plead for a favorable review in their dealership's satisfaction survey."

The survey is not likely to suffer the fate of the phone booth. But, to be effective, it must be used in a more targeted manner. Maybe it is time for incentive structures to rely less on survey scores. With the removal of this archaic method, sales people will be far less likely to pursue shenanigans such as featuring photos of their children on crutches a la Tiny Tim.

It's time to turn to social media, itself, for data. Some are already doing just that, as reported in a white paper by Elliot Bricker of NetBase and reviewed by UC Berkeley Haas School of Business, titled *Can Social Media Measure Customer Satisfaction*: "Forward-looking businesses have recognized that a new source of customer satisfaction has emerged: social media. Every hour, consumers make more than 500,000 new blog and micro-blog entries, status updates, and comments in social media. They are raving about companies and brands that they like and spreading the word about the experiences they have had. In fact, social media is where new impressions propagate first and fastest today." The paper goes on to state, "Social media is the next strategic source of consumer insights – and of competitive advantage. Social media insight and analysis can play an important role in the next wave of customer-centric businesses. The businesses that will get ahead of the competition are the ones that are starting down this path today."

Auto dealers must be innovative as technology progresses and consumer media consumption quickly evolves. Be targeted with your survey requests; get to know your customers via social media; and, please, keep the chinchillas in the cage and little Timmy's photos framed at home.

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Sources:

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