



ARTICLE

Twitter and B2B Marketing **What Would Miley Do?**

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Twitter and Business-to-Business Marketing

By now, every CEO has heard the story, as one-by-one, the latest generation of ad agency execs stroll through the hallowed doors of corporate America, touting the virtues of Twitter, current poster-child of social media marketing. The success stories are impressive and ostensibly irrefutable. Starbucks, Coke, Dell Computers, Jet Blue...all show big revenue gains with only David-sized (not Goliath) investments.

It would seem, if all the hype is true, that in the 40 years since Trout and Ries defined USP, marketers have just been wandering in the desert, and Twitter is the new Promised Land.

The B2C market is rife with Twitter experiments, and soon, time will tell. But what about Twitter's value in Business-to-Business markets? Will Twitter's initial B2C success translate into B2B?

Big Numbers

The premise of Social Media Marketing is sound, indeed. Since Everett Rogers introduced the concept in his seminal book, [The Diffusion of Innovations](#), the concept that a large percentage of any market space can be reached through a vocal minority of "influentials" has been widely held. Today's viral marketing campaigns are built on that very premise. Marketing guru Seth Godin compares these influentials to "sneezers," who advance the spread of ideas through a population, the same way infected people spread viruses.

And if large populations alone spell success for marketers, then Twitter holds great promise.

In April of 2010, Twitter revealed some impressive stats, boasting that 106 million registered users were posting an aggregate 55 million new tweets every day. Granted, those are some big numbers! Still, I can't help but recall that large numbers of people turned out to see George McGovern in the 1972 Presidential race, and Richard Nixon won the election with a landslide 23% margin in the popular vote - the widest margin in any U.S. presidential election.

The Power of the Internet

“Hold on!” say Twitter advocates, “The Internet is different. It’s a phenomenon, a social tsunami. The Internet cannot be ignored, and neither can Twitter.”

No one would deny the power of the Internet. Of the 344 million people believed to be living in North America in 2010, an estimated 77.4% (266 million) are using the Internet. According to [USA Today](#), Americans spend nearly a quarter of their Internet time on social networking sites. And while we’re networking, we’re changing the way America does business. In a recent survey of Internet users, [Brandweek](#) reported that 31% of respondents said they used social networking sites to gain information on companies and products, and 20% have discussed brands in social networking forums, after seeing them advertised elsewhere.

Success Stories

So what, exactly, is the great Twitter promise? Well, according to Twitter, the medium’s conversational tone lets you build relationships with customers, it makes you more accessible to constituents, and it shrinks the emotional distance between you and your customers.



Twitter claims its conversational tone lets you build relationships, makes you more accessible, and shrinks the distance between you and your customers.

Case studies, published on Twitter’s site, offer proof. A spokesman for JetBlue says Twitter helps his company maintain customer relations. Australian winemaker Teusner Wines uses Twitter to get feedback from customers. And Dell, Best Buy, Levis, Pepsi, and American Apparel all join Twitter’s song of praise for Twitter.

Perspective

I have an advantage over Gen X marketing managers: I’ve raised teenagers. So when someone comes to me with the argument “But Dad, everybody’s doing it!” I’m just not moved. Particularly, when I’m in the B2B world and Twitter’s success stories are all B2C!

Pete Blackshaw, EVP of Strategic Services at NM Incite, a Nielsen/McKinsey company, warns about getting caught up in the hype. Blackshaw urges marketers to “get back to boring,” lest we lose sight of the fundamentals like trust, customer relations, emotions, feedback, listening, patience and leadership. From a B2B perspective, I would have to agree.

Before venturing into social marketing, let’s make sure our other marketing efforts are in place and working well. Let’s remember to carefully define our brands, develop robust but achievable marketing plans, and refocus our corporate cultures on customer-centered, brand-positive behaviors.



If you are marketing to CEOs of major corporations, Twitter may not be your best investment.

Then, let’s see what we can do with YouTube (whose links can be easily embedded in existing email campaigns and viewed directly from any desktop – no membership required). Let’s look into Facebook (a community of 500 million users averaging 130 linked friends and representing 700 billion minutes of activity monthly). And then, if we’re still looking for ways to deplete our bankrolls, let’s join the Twitter experiment.

One Miley at a Time

Time alone will tell whether Twitter is the vanguard in a sweeping overhaul of the way people communicate or just the latest in a series of failed social experiments that allow participants to self-identify based on their absolute self-absorption. [deliberately extreme viewpoints] ...Though I would venture a guess that a larger percentage of Miley Cyrus Fan Club members tweet than Wall Street Journal readers – so if you are marketing to CEOs of major corporations, Twitter may not be your best investment.

Heck, even Miley has become disillusioned with Twitter. “It’s kinda stupid,” Miley told Letterman on the June 17 Late Show, “cause I’m like you can’t complain about like, ‘Oh I don’t have a private life! And I’m so upset paparazzi are following me!’ if you’re going to tell them where you’re going.”

Sheer genius!

About the Author: Michael Zimmerman is Senior Marketing Strategist at MarketPoint LLC, a consulting firm providing honest, insightful and effective brand and marketing services for business-to-business, education, and non-profit organizations. Visit www.yourmarketpoint.com to learn more.



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