



# An interview with Guy Kawasaki and Walmart

Amy Lamparske, director of Digital Communications for Walmart

One in a series of interviews, brought to you by Dell, between Guy Kawasaki, former Chief Evangelist of Apple and author of *Enchantment*, and corporate social media innovators.

**Guy Kawasaki:** Can you start off by giving us the gist of how Walmart is using social media?

**Amy Lamparske:** We're a very data-driven company, and we're doing a lot of work listening and engaging, not just in our marketing and human resource teams, but also from a corporate reputation standpoint in our PR group. There are a variety of groups using it, and we all have different goals, but we're very active in the space now and we're continuing to invest more, as well as build a case for new resources and roles throughout the company.

**Guy Kawasaki:** How many people are behind the @Walmart Twitter account?

**Amy Lamparske:** About 20 overall; social media extends throughout my whole team. There are a lot of folks who have access — they might not always have a reason to engage but they join conversations where appropriate.

**Guy Kawasaki:** What kind of software are you using to monitor mentions of Walmart?

**Amy Lamparske:** We use Radian6 on a daily basis for monitoring and we also work closely with Converseon to understand conversation trends. With a brand like Walmart there's an enormous amount of volume, so it's helpful to have the data pulled together in a way that really makes sense and it's not just ... a one-off mention, it's "X percentage is based on customer service" so we know what to focus on.

**Guy Kawasaki:** This is a dashboard report? How often do you get it?

**Amy Lamparske:** We monitor on a daily basis, and my hope is to mine the data on a quarterly basis. We monitor not only the share of voice but the sentiment as well as engagement. We're also in process of launching a real-time dashboard to demonstrate what is being said at any given moment.

**Guy Kawasaki:** Is this something you would point to in order to see sentiment rising or falling because of events like your recently-blocked class action lawsuit?

**Amy Lamparske:** It's normal to see short-term changes in sentiment around high-visibility events as the one you mentioned, but sentiment is just one data point that has to be understood in a context. From a measurement standpoint, we're in the process of building out a framework that helps us understand what the value in this space is beyond followers and Likes. We're trying to find the ideal way of marrying the almighty ROI with return on relationships — a true deep understanding of how our engagement with the community impacts our business.

**Guy Kawasaki:** Are you able to provide some kind of ROI measurements?

**Amy Lamparske:** We do measure it and experience positive ROI, although I'm not able to elaborate.

**Guy Kawasaki:** Do you have any great anecdotes about how Walmart saved a life through social media?

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Is it now a **must-have** for companies to **connect with their customers?**

**Amy Lamparske:** There are a lot of good stories about people reaching out to us on daily basis. One of the good things is what we saw in Joplin, Missouri, recently, where a lot of people were in need after the tornado and we were able to allocate \$1 million towards relief efforts. There were a lot of Walmart associates that we couldn't locate through traditional means that we were able to find through Twitter. We tweeted an 800 number for associates to call us, and we also reached out through different channels to get the word out about what we were providing. I don't know if we saved any lives, but hopefully we provided some relief.

**Guy Kawasaki:** Do you believe at this point that social media is no longer an experiment; it's ingrained in the sales and support psyche of Walmart?

**Amy Lamparske:** Social media is the way business works these days; it's how we operate as a company. We are entering a phase in which social media stops being the "new shiny object" and becomes an established business function — and that brings new challenges that come with scale. Over time, it's only going to become more and more integrated throughout our business, very similar to how Sam Walton ran his business by being in the stores, listening and talking to his customers and associates.

**Guy Kawasaki:** So five years from now what do you think social media at Walmart will be like?

**Amy Lamparske:** Retail is evolving fast because our customers' lives and behaviors are evolving fast. Everyday we're learning more and more about our customers and their preferences, so hopefully we'll get to a point where we can provide a more customized approach throughout the shopping experience, both in the store and online.

We're going to know a lot more about them and this will help us provide easier experiences and integrate social so that when people are really happy about something that they purchased, they can share with their friends. We just acquired an e-commerce company called Kosmix and we invested in a Chinese ecommerce firm called Yihaodian. We're doing some interesting things in retail that will involve integrating social media and ecommerce.

**Guy Kawasaki:** And this is from a big-box store?

**Amy Lamparske:** Yes, that's where we're going with social media. One piece of our business is the online portion. At Walmart, the customer is always number one; we strive to provide the best experience both online and in our brick-and-mortar locations.

**Guy Kawasaki:** Do you believe that social media has helped you with the analog offline business?

**Amy Lamparske:** Absolutely. We see content on our Facebook wall driving traffic into the store.

**Guy Kawasaki:** How do you know that social media drove foot traffic into a store?

**Amy Lamparske:** We're measuring.

**Guy Kawasaki:** But you are convinced that a Facebook update or a tweet will drive foot-sales into a store.

**Amy Lamparske:** Yes, and I think part of the challenge is building the community first. Once you build the community, you can experience enough of an impact, but driving in-store visits is part of the work we're doing. To your point, Walmart.com is a smaller piece of our business, but it's also where we're growing very fast.

