



How to engage in social media: A Dell perspective

By Rishi Dave

Democratizing forces of social media are transforming the way enterprises worldwide do business. Discover how Dell is engaging employees and customers through social networking initiatives that can reinvigorate business in dynamic, innovative ways.



Monitoring social media

Dell launched the Social Media Listening Command Center to establish an operational hub for monitoring social media conversations worldwide that mention Dell to track and understand information. View the official opening of the command center in this video.

bit.ly/fc61Xn

Social media outlets are increasingly demonstrating their powerful impact in social, technological, economic, and political spheres. The potential impact of social media on business entities and other organizations is no less dramatic. Organizations that successfully address the challenges of engaging in social media can strengthen brand awareness, enhance customer relationships, gain valuable feedback, and utilize strategies to increase revenues.

With a new generation of workers entering the workforce, bringing advanced technologies and expectations with them, organizations can now encourage and cultivate participation in social media while addressing its challenges. Enterprise management teams face the dual task of empowering employees to connect with customers and influencers through social media and putting a governance model in place to help mitigate the risk inherent in unleashing an initiative that supports such a broad range of voices.

Understanding the promise and the reality of social media

Although social media relies on modern technologies, it can be a medium that fosters a sense of intimacy, satisfaction, and loyalty among customers and employees. Social media enables organizations to establish and sustain the sense of a close-knit community but on a grand scale.

Since entering the blogosphere in 2006, Dell integrated social media into its core

communications and marketing strategies, and re-envisioned the organization as a social and adaptive enterprise. Today, social media efforts at Dell support key business goals, such as helping reduce costs, increase revenues, and improve customer satisfaction. As an integral part of any organization, the broad impact of social media is transforming everything from hiring practices and product design approaches to IT and human resources policies (see Figure 1). By discovering multiple routes to building an effective social media practice, Dell has distilled its experience into seven steps that organizations can take to execute social media effectively.

Step 1: Defining strategy

Organizations can begin by determining business goals—whether to increase brand awareness, sponsor product innovation, or look for ways to improve customer satisfaction. They can then define the audience in terms of whom to target, where they go for information, and what type of content they want. Organizations can also identify the key opportunities for engagement and find the people within the organization who can provide the required content.

Step 2: Identifying and listening to existing conversations

Listening is critical in any relationship. Conversations on social media networks, on video sharing sites, and in other online

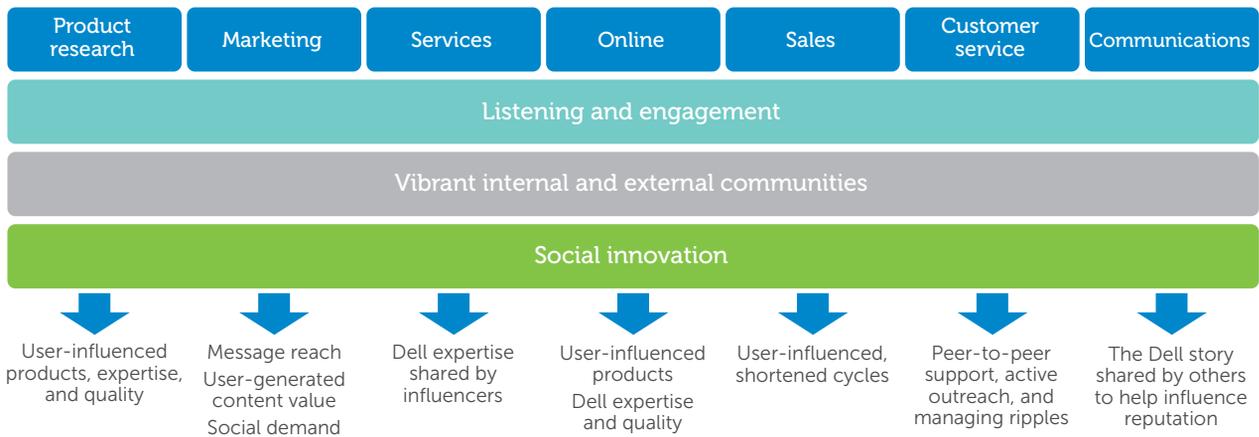


Figure 1. Broad impact of social media across organizations

communities can offer tremendous insight. By listening to those conversations, particular departments within the organization, such as sales and marketing teams, can gain an understanding of how a brand is perceived and what customers want. Product and research teams can receive direct feedback. Support teams can understand top-of-mind issues. Human resource managers can find well-suited candidates for available positions. Public relations teams can take action to thwart the spread of potentially damaging rumors (for information on a Dell initiative for listening to social media conversations, see the sidebar, “Analyzing conversation: The Dell Social Media Listening Command Center”).

Step 3: Encouraging internal organizations to participate

To maximize the value of online conversations, business groups must do more than listen—they must participate. Mobilizing individuals from across the enterprise is critical. Simply deputizing a few team members cannot work because not enough of them are available to handle the thousands of conversations, and they likely do not have the subject matter expertise required to participate in depth with an authentic, credible voice.

The powerful customer-facing evangelists within an organization are not necessarily the people with management-level titles. Anyone in the organization—whether a product engineer, marketer, or support person—can have an engaging online personality, a keen understanding of the competitive marketplace, or the skill to help a customer solve a problem. Many employees might be ready and willing to listen and engage in social media on behalf of the organization, but allowing untrained employees to speak on behalf of the organization carries risk. Organizations looking to take social

media efforts to the next level while minimizing risk should establish policies and centralized governance based on the following approaches:

- **Set policies:** Successful social media policies can provide guidance without being overly restrictive. Policies must be flexible to evolve when new platforms, applications, and scenarios emerge.
- **Train employees:** Organizations should provide an overview of social media principles and corporate policies, and train employees to use organization-authorized tools. Internal conferences also can be held to share best practices.

Analyzing conversation: The Dell Social Media Listening Command Center

As part of its effort to listen to social media conversations, Dell launched the Social Media Listening Command Center, a global operational hub for monitoring the tens of thousands of online posts and tweets about Dell every day. Through this hub, Dell can organize and analyze information according to topics, sentiment, share of voice, geography, and trends. Ultimately, the goal is to route information to the appropriate people within the Dell organization. For more information about the Dell Social Media Listening Command Center, visit dell.to/gyGDz7.



Embracing social media: The impact to IT

IT organizations confronting the prospect of an enterprise-wide embrace of social media should avoid enacting overly restrictive policies governing which devices employees can use or what social media content they can access. Many employees are increasingly bringing their own devices to the workplace and working outside of business hours from a variety of locations. A pragmatic approach helps mitigate risk and support the use of social media for achieving business goals based on the following points:

- Launch training and education programs to give employees guidance about legal and regulatory risks and appropriate ways of engaging on behalf of the organization.
- Integrate social media into collaboration, communication planning, and the organization's road map. Identify other integration points such as customer relationship management (CRM) systems.
- Build a core competency in managing consumer devices and applications at an organization-wide level. Dedicate a team to managing those devices and applications, and realign resources to support it.
- Evaluate and monitor the changing landscape of vendors, platforms, applications, and devices.
- Ensure that business units are aligned with the social commerce architecture, investment categories, and their scope. And establish continual feedback loops with the business units as well as integrating those loops with business intelligence data.

- **Create a centralized team:** Creating a centralized social media team can be an effective method for establishing best practices, tools, and processes. Separate teams within different groups can then execute social media strategies to work toward specific goals. These teams can provide representatives to participate in cross-functional councils that ensure strategies are aligned across the organization (see Figure 2).

To sustain engagement in social media, organizations can integrate processes that encourage enterprise-wide participation, including offering incentives for employee performance, creating friendly competitions, and encouraging executives to lead by example.

Step 4: Cultivating conversations and communities

Organizations should participate in existing conversations. Participation may be on large sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, or SlideShare, or can be on smaller online forums and communities in a particular space—even with individual bloggers who are highly credible and influential.

Organizations can also create new conversations and communities where they make sense. For example, Dell launched EnterpriseEfficiency.com, a sponsored site for IT executives that features daily, topical blogs written by a variety of contributors across the industry and Dell executives. This site helps Dell gain significant insights into a group of end users whose habits, interests, and requirements would be hard to analyze in forums engaging a broad audience.

Creating communities and facilitating conversations helps cultivate informative participation. For example, Dell launched its customer-facing IdeaStorm community in 2007. Nearly four years later, Dell has received more than 15,000 product ideas, leading to more than 400 implementations.

In some cases, organizations can benefit from targeting specific subsets of their audience. For example, Dell created targeted communities designed to speak to small and medium businesses (SMBs) and to enterprise-level participants in addition to communities meant for broad audiences. Organizations should also consider whether other audiences can be reached. Communities within the organization can offer tremendous opportunities to connect directly with employees; Dell launched the internal EmployeeStorm community to encourage brainstorming among its employees and to date has received more than 6,000 ideas.

Step 5: Providing incentives for participant content

Simple engagement models can be powerful incentives. Setting up a ratings and reviews system on an organization Web site can be one way to encourage content sharing from outside

resources. Dell hosts product forums in which participants share an average of 150 reviews on products and services per day. This authentic, user-generated content can educate other end users about products. Organizations should consider rewarding participants with points, badges, or other recognition systems for providing and sharing great content. Top content creators can be rewarded, and the brand acquires positive content that can be shared across the Web to help bolster traffic and enhance search engine rankings.

Step 6: Measuring success and adjusting the strategy

The whole point of an organization's social media efforts, of course, is to address pragmatically fundamental business goals. Organizations need quantifiable insight into how online engagement with customers can improve the key value drivers of their business. They should look at the links between customer behavior in social media and revenue both offline and online.

Critical factors such as revenue, costs, loyalty, product innovation, and brand reputation are also important to measure. Soft factors matter as well, such as customer feedback and comments on social media interactions. As organizations analyze their metrics, whether the social media campaign is effectively helping the business becomes clear. If it is not clear, the strategy may require some adjustments, which is OK. Trial and error is part of the process.

Step 7: Engaging IT as a social media enabler

Some IT infrastructures might require substantial upgrades or modifications to accommodate the tremendous data volumes, billions of worldwide communication endpoints, and computing form factors that can result from engaging social media at the enterprise level (for more information on the impact of social media for IT organizations, see the sidebar, "Embracing social media: The impact to IT"). Social media engagement can spur IT to implement virtualization, cloud computing, flexible computing, network convergence, and other approaches

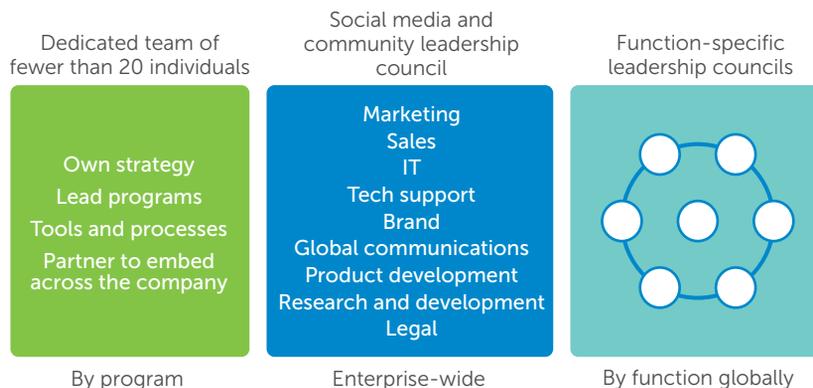


Figure 2. Engagement through a centralized team to establish a social media hub for best practices, tools, and processes

that help increase IT flexibility, scalability, and efficiency.

Reaping the benefits of social media

Social media offers tremendous potential to help organizations intensify relationships with customers, gather feedback, and strengthen brand awareness. To fully capitalize on the potential of social media, organizations can take an approach that begins by defining objectives and listening to existing conversations, and then establishing the processes and mobilizing the right individuals across the organization to participate. Organizations can also work with their Dell account representatives to arrange a visit to one of the Dell Executive Briefing Centers (EBCs) for a briefing on social media. By empowering employees to engage on behalf of the organization, social media efforts can deliver substantial, measurable business benefits. **PS**



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