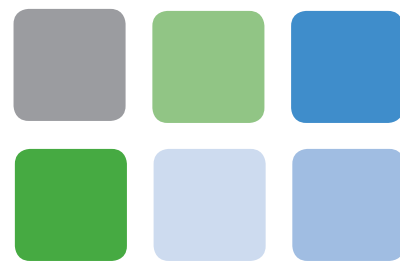




MANAGING THE CUSTOMER CONVERSATION

DRIVE BETTER RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS





MANAGING THE CUSTOMER CONVERSATION

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MANAGING THE CUSTOMER CONVERSATION

The business world has changed rapidly in recent years. Economic factors of late have made a significant mark on the market place, and as the Internet and the World Wide Web continue to evolve so have the habits and practices of consumers. The rise of online social networking has given birth to an entirely new forum in which consumers communicate and commiserate, while the struggling economy drives increasingly frugal buying habits. These factors cannot be overlooked in terms of their impact to your brand equity and the effect to the profitability of your company.

CONSUMER POWER SHIFT

In the past, companies controlled their brand by communicating to their customers via their advertising, packaging and product presentation. Customers made buying decisions based upon media campaigns, marketing brochures and company web content. They might have asked a neighbor or a friend, but their decision making process was limited to mostly company controlled messages. As a result, companies were in control of the flow of information to customers and to a large extent the general perception associated with their brand.

But today, a power shift is in motion that has dramatically changed how customers evaluate products and services. Consumers no longer rely solely on the messages they receive from company-controlled marketing content or the limited opinions they get from their friends and neighbors, instead they go to the World Wide Web and get the opinion of millions in order to formulate purchasing opinions, review the opinions of other customers, and purchase online without leaving the comfort of their computer.

This consumer shift -- bringing power to the people -- can dramatically impact your brand equity if you are not actively managing the "customer conversation." This shift in the market place began several years ago with the advent of online retailers like Amazon and others which gave customers the ability to evaluate products independently, post reviews online, and make buying decisions based on the feedback of other customers. A five star rating and favorable comments compel customers to buy, while negative reviews often send consumers elsewhere.

This consumer control has continued to gain momentum with the exponential growth of web forums like ePinions and CNET and social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace and Twitter. Whereas word-of-mouth was once limited to casual feedback over coffee or an informal chat at the office water cooler, customer experiences and perceptions are now shared world wide amongst a multitude of visitors to blogs, web forums, chat rooms and product review sites.

As a result, companies are no longer in control of their brand -- the consumer is. Social networking has made it easier to share perceptions freely, anonymously and without geographic boundaries, and economic conditions have forced consumers to be ever more fastidious in researching the experiences of other customers before they buy. In our wired world, what customers say online can have a significant and immediate impact on your brand equity. If it's positive you win; if it's negative: beware.

The rise of online social networking has given birth to an entirely new forum in which our customers communicate. As a result, companies are no longer in control of their brand -- the consumer is.

Exponential Impact

Stacks of statistics from varying sources validate the impact of the exponential growth of online social networking. According to compete.com, a leading web analytics company focused on the analysis of consumers' online behavior, nearly 1.2 billion people visit Facebook each month. MySpace is not far behind with over 800 million visits each month. Twitter, the relative newcomer, has over 54 million hits each month and users blog in an environment akin to a global party line.

The conversations and feedback shared in this social networking environment can make or break consumer perception of your products and services. A favorable endorsement can bolster your brand, while product complaints or negative comments about service quickly erode your brand equity.

Top 25 Social Networks Re-Rank

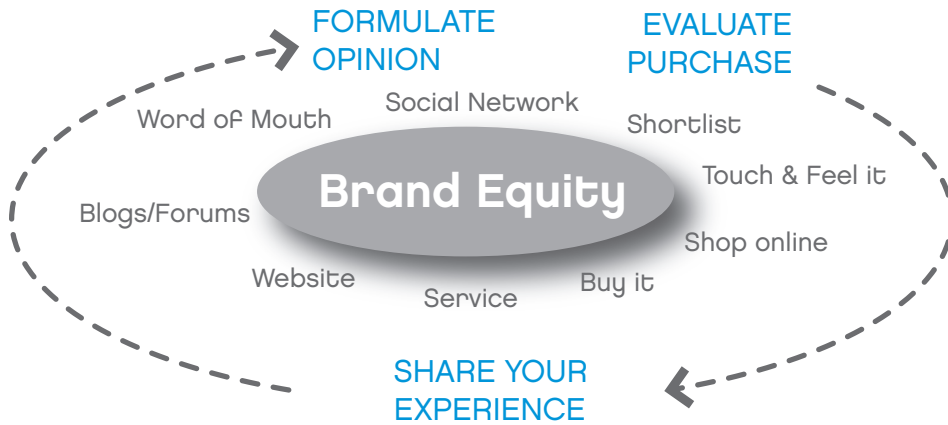
(Ranked by Monthly Visits, Jan '09)



Rank	Site	UV	Monthly Visits	Previous Rank
1	facebook.com	68,557,534	1,191,373,339	2
2	myspace.com	58,555,800	810,153,536	1
3	twitter.com	5,979,052	54,218,731	22
4	fixster.com	7,645,423	53,389,974	16
5	linkedin.com	11,274,160	42,744,438	9
6	tagged.com	4,448,915	39,630,927	10
7	classmates.com	17,296,524	35,219,210	3
8	myyearbook.com	3,312,898	33,121,821	4
9	livejournal.com	4,720,720	25,221,354	6
10	imeem.com	9,047,491	22,993,608	13
11	reunion.com	13,704,990	20,278,100	11
12	ning.com	5,673,549	19,511,682	23
13	blackplanet.com	1,530,329	10,173,342	7
14	bebo.com	2,997,929	9,849,137	5
15	hi5.com	2,398,323	9,416,265	8
16	yuku.com	1,317,551	9,358,966	21
17	cafemom.com	1,647,336	8,586,261	19
18	friendster.com	1,568,439	7,279,050	14
19	xanga.com	1,831,376	7,009,577	20
20	360.yahoo.com	1,499,057	5,199,702	12
21	orkut.com	494,464	5,081,235	15
22	urbanchat.com	329,041	2,961,250	24
23	fubar.com	452,090	2,170,315	17
24	asiantown.net	81,245	1,118,245	25
25	tickle.com	96,155	109,492	18

TAKING CONTROL OF THE CONVERSATION

One customer post on a blog or social networking site can literally influence hundreds of thousands of potential customers with one comment. If the feedback is negative, the potential effect on your brand equity is a triple-fold – lose a customer, lose the recommendation of a group, and lose the opportunity to get on a future customer's shortlist for evaluation. On the other hand, positive feedback regarding your customers' experience can bolster your brand and promote your products and services to a world wide customer base. As a result, it is imperative that companies understand and manage the effect on brand equity – both positive and negative – working to mitigate the undesirable effects while promoting goodwill amongst online customer advocates.



Internal Customer Conversations

How can you mitigate the potential negative effect on your brand equity and promote and foster positive customer “buzz”? One critical step is to understand and manage the “customer conversations” that are within the internal control of your organization. These include conversations via your company call center, corporate e-mail, chat sessions, marketing surveys and in-person interactions. By evaluating and managing these interactions in a more holistic fashion you can mitigate the impact of any negative sentiments before those impressions enter the broader world of the web and social networking outside your control. You will also be in better position to encourage more vocal and enthusiastic customer advocates online.

Internal customer conversations are rarely managed by a single department or entity and first responders across e-mail, call centers and satisfaction surveys come from a varied pool of people. As a result, each customer interaction is managed by different stakeholders – marketing departments, customer service organizations, sales teams, and more – with widely differing agendas and objectives.

When a customer places a call to a customer service agent, for example, that interaction is managed by the customer service team; not the marketing team or the product development team. This disparate ownership can bring rise to a divide between the customer conversation and the people within your company who may benefit the most from participating in and understanding that customer experience. Since a call center is focused primarily on operational motives (e.g., first call resolution, call duration, etc.) and less about the ultimate customer satisfaction with a product or service, the separation can lead to a dangerous disconnect. The same holds true for communication conducted over e-mail, chat, via surveys and in person.

Managing the Customer Conversation.....Over Silos of Information



Web:
Conversations with other customers



Social Media:
Conversations with other customers



Surveys:
Conversations with Marketing or CS



Support Calls:
Conversations with support



Emails:
Conversations with support, sales, execs...



Salesforce:
Conversations with sales



It is not uncommon for organizations to focus on providing excellent customer service, but if any one of these communication channels breaks down it can spark a dangerous cycle that leads to exponentially more risk due to the external conversations now present online via social networking. Building up these communication channels and monitoring and analyzing these conversations can result in a better service experience for your customers and can lead to a more consistent and compelling online reputation which enhances brand recognition and customer loyalty. Companies that manage these conversations by the first responder in a more holistic stand to benefit as a result.

External Customer Conversations

Another important way to mitigate risk to your brand equity and foster customer advocacy is to understand customer conversations that are outside of your control. External conversations on blogs, consumer review sites and via social networking are not controlled your company; they are controlled by the community. And while many organizations carefully monitor how quickly they respond to an internal customer inquiry, very few monitor or understand the external conversations that take place in response to the level of service that they provide or the experience customers have using their products.

Buying decisions are often made by research online. The ubiquity of the Internet and access to search engines like Google are motivating people to self-serve. How often have you “Googled” a product or service only to find a negatives reviews or a bad “rap” by bloggers that drove your decision to look elsewhere? Conversely, have there been times when researching a product that you were easily convinced to buy due to the overwhelmingly positive feedback found online? If companies do not actively monitor and understand both the internal and external conversations about their products and services they will be less able to respond and adjust appropriately to protect brand equity. In short, companies must “get on board” or be left behind.

One customer post on a blog or social networking site can literally influence hundreds of thousands of potential customers with one comment.

TAKING ACTION

So how can you take the action you need to take to listen and act on these customer conversations? Of course, you should listen when they talk directly to you via emails, service interactions and surveys so you can react fast and solve the problem at hand. At the same time, you also need to monitor and act on what is out there online.

Attensity offers a variety of products and services to address these opportunities and risks by providing a way to listen to your customers when they talk to you and about you online. Our applications enable you to track these discussions and take action. You can interject immediately and mitigate negative exposure when discussions head the wrong way. You can drive a positive outcome when customers ask you directly for help. We provide an application suite that enables you to report on sentiment and issues, drive deeper analytics into root cause, alert appropriate business owners when specific problems come-up, communicate across the organization through dashboards and respond to customers in a rapid and personable way. The application also provides you with a view of churn indicators and helps you understand how your company is performing relative to your competition. This gives you the ability to draw a connection between each of your internal customer conversations as well as the dialogue that is ongoing external to your organization. Attensity solutions can, in real time, monitor all of the information in a unified solution that can report on customer sentiment across all of these channels and give you invaluable information not only about how they feel about your products and services, but also find the “why” behind their issues.



Monitoring and managing these customer conversations is critically important in protecting and fostering brand equity, and in making sure that when customers are formulating their opinions and establishing their buying decisions that your products and services survive the evaluation process and a purchase is a result. Understanding how all of your people are responding, as well as how your customers are responding to you, provides tremendous insight and the ability to change processes and improve customer satisfaction. And while it is impossible to control external social networking conversations, understanding what the sentiments of what is said gives you the ability to respond effectively to protect and grow your brand equity by tailoring your processes to ensure the best service and products.

Attensity's innovative analytical platform aggregates all of these data sources and processes the information so you can use it as a corporate advantage. But we don't stop there; we also provide the tools to automate and enable actionable responses within the supporting processes within your organization related to delivering the service and optimizing products.

VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

Attensity Voice of the Customer (VOC) is powerful analytics software that enables you to rapidly and accurately analyze customer feedback given directly to you in e-mails, services notes or survey responses, and other inbound sources. You are kept up-to-date on customer sentiment, issues, requests, and requirements. Potential for attrition is tracked and comparisons to your competition give you an edge.

Users access VOC via a standard web browser, so business analysts, quality and service personnel, and executives can easily make use of powerful customer insights. The system automatically extracts information found in various forms of unstructured customer feedback and transforms those facts into data that can be queried, analyzed and reported on. The newly structured feedback is then fused with existing structured data like customer segment, product identifiers or specific survey scores so that everything can be analyzed in the context of your business. Dashboards, reports and an ad hoc query tool enable analysts to uncover issues, identify trends and analyze customer sentiment.

VOC is offered as both an installed and as an on-demand hosted solution where no installation is required. These options provide your team with immediate access to valuable customer data that can drive critical business decisions around products, services and customers.

What can VOC do to protect and enhance your brand equity? What if your executives could have a window into all customer comments and feedback, so they can prioritize, optimize and proactively respond to real customer issues that impact your brand? What if your employees could have a window into your customers' needs and wants, respond to those real-world concerns, and create a network of customer advocates online? What if your product innovation and quality teams could know early whether a product was in jeopardy or causing customer dissatisfaction and they knew why and what to do about it?

Attensity delivers the power of sophisticated data and semantic analytics in this easy-to-use business application by collecting, organizing and leveraging customer feedback. This allows you to maximize customer relationships and create customer advocates with a strong lifetime relationship.

Voice of the Customer analytics enable you to rapidly and accurately analyze customer feedback given directly to you in e-mails, services notes or survey responses, and enables you to take action on this data to drive customer loyalty.



MARKET VOICE

Attensity Market Voice enables organizations to rapidly and accurately understand and analyze the market buzz found online in web forums, blogs and product reviews. This consumer generated media includes valuable information about products, services, issues and general customer sentiment.

Users access Market Voice through the same easy-to-use interface as VOC, but now the point-of-view generated online is a part of the analysis. Market Voice is optimized for analyzing customer feedback online and automatically pushes intelligence to your business and support teams in the form of alerts, dashboards and reports. The system feeds directly into Attensity Voice of the Customer and enables side-by-side analysis of internal customer feedback in e-mails, surveys, service notes and chats sessions. As a result, you gain critical insights into sentiment about how consumers feel about your company, products, services, marketing messages, and positioning. You can identify emerging issues as well as their root cause, and proactively take action to remedy them.

Market Voice also helps you get an early view on how new product introductions are doing by understanding initial reactions and opinions related to your products and marketing programs. This allows you to identify what customers say is wrong with your products, feed this instructive information back into your product development team, and take immediate action to improve the satisfaction of customers.

Powerful competitive analysis is part of this solution as well, helping you understand how customers feel about your competitors, both in general and relative to you. By identifying issues with your competitors and tracking competitive data points (e.g., price, new product introductions, etc) you gain a distinctive edge in the market place. Market Voice unlocks the riches consumer generated media and allows you to use it to your competitive advantage.

Market Voice unlocks the riches consumer generated media and allows you to use it to your competitive advantage.

AUTOMATED RESPONSE MANAGEMENT

Customer loyalty and brand equity quickly erode if consumers feel that a company does not care about their feedback or is unresponsive to their questions and concerns. Attensity Automated Response Management is a valuable behind-the-scenes tool that provides your customers with quick, informed and personable response to their e-mail, web forms, faxes, letters, and phone calls.

Most current response solutions are not designed to manage the multitude of high volume customer communications that companies must manage, many of which end up in anonymous inboxes such as support@yourco.com. The result is a huge backlog of unanswered or lost inquiries and disgruntled customers who will opt to voice their dissatisfaction on blogs and social networking sites.

Automated Response Management streamlines response to high volumes of incoming messages by automatically classifying, clustering, and searching unstructured text, and then interpreting messages with unprecedented accuracy. Our patented Advanced Pattern Recognition (APR) technology treats every message as a transaction, then assigns, documents, records, and archives everything - from the first contact to the last response. It can even trigger advanced business processes such as outgoing message queuing or routing, and automates the management of unique, high-value, time-sensitive communications.

This enterprise-class software helps you protect and bolster your brand equity by enabling you to gain control over your communications response systems, mine the intelligence residing in your incoming unstructured customer communications data, and increase visibility into customer communication in real time.

Automated Response Management provides your customers with quick, informed and personable responses to their e-mail, web forms, faxes, letters, and phone calls.



E-SERVICE SUITE

The Attensity E-Service Suite helps organizations better manage their customer conversations by providing service teams with the kind of relevant knowledge required to better serve customers. The solution puts service intelligence at your fingertips and enables companies to leverage information from a wide variety of sources such as expert forums, documentation and FAQs to find the correct answer to a customer's query quickly and consistently over any contact channel (e.g. telephone, e-mail, fax, letters, web and in person).

The robust architecture and framework of Attensity E-Service gives you the ability to manage and monitor access rights, collect and analyze feedback, log user actions, and perform extensive reporting. Open interfaces make it possible to integrate third-party systems, such as ERP, order management, customer relationship management, and other data sources.

Dynamic decision trees guide service personnel to a question-answer script that automatically takes into account the description of the problem in natural language terms and the customer's own context. A knowledge repository stores and organizes information from solution descriptions, customer e-mails, expert forums, FAQs, databases, and other documents. This enables your service personnel to more effectively gather and use information to share with other employees, customers and partners. Finally, the intelligent search module allows users to use familiar keyword search algorithms to find relevant service literature, solution descriptions or manuals, or to be directed to the right decision tree for problem analysis.

E-Service Suite provides service teams with the kind of relevant knowledge from various sources required to better serve customers.

MOVING FORWARD WITH ATTENSITY

Business is built on conversations. These customer, partner and employee conversations are captured in e-mail, call notes, letters, surveys, forums and other social media, and more. Attensity enables you to use these conversations to drive better relationships with your customers – transforming them into loyal advocates of your business.

Contact us today to find out more about how Attensity delivers the power of sophisticated data and semantic analytics in an integrated suite of easy-to-use business applications, allowing business leaders, customer support personnel and customers to get relevant and actionable answers fast.

Call toll free at (800) 721-0560 or visit www.Attensity.com today.

Attensity provides business user applications that generate value from unstructured data. Its comprehensive family of solutions leverages semantic analytics to enable knowledge management professionals, business leaders, customer support personnel and customers to interpret and manage an organization's unstructured data to get relevant and actionable answers — fast. Our award-winning software is in use by more than 250 of the Global 1000 and by large government agencies to deliver powerful insights, enhance operational efficiency, reduce risk exposure, and increase customer satisfaction. With more than 500 installations worldwide, Attensity services customers from multiple offices in the U.S. and Europe. For more information visit www.Attensity.com.

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