

USING MULTIMEDIA TO AMP UP YOUR **SOCIAL ECHO**

WHITE PAPER

WHEN COMBINED WITH MULTIMEDIA, YOUR SOCIAL ECHO CAN PRODUCE A PROFOUNDLY DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR BRAND'S CUSTOMERS AND PROSPECTS, WITH MANY IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH, PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, SALES AND MORE.

Social networks are enabling a vast increase in consumer interactions. As people engage each other regarding the subjects – and brands – they know well or want to know better, the millions of conversations occurring daily (including 110 million tweets per day on Twitter alone¹) constitute a vast reservoir of opinion and insight that could never before be collected and analyzed.

Recently, PR Newswire coined the term “Social Echo”² to describe the powerful reverberation around brands that occurs through these conversations in the social networks and communities where people gather today.

In our view, a brand's Social Echo has enormous power to shape reputation, influence mass opinion and drive growth. Social Echo has equal – and perhaps even greater – power to stop a brand dead in its tracks.

Marketers and communicators who understand this are actively engaged in listening to their Social Echo and in finding ways to participate in the conversations that comprise their Social Echo. Importantly, they are also gleaning real-time insights to apply back to their brands in every area – customer care, product development, brand positioning and messaging, innovation and more.

VIDEO SEEN AS THE MOST POTENT “CONVERSATION STARTER”

In our ongoing efforts to understand Social Echo – and enable marketers to leverage its impact – PR Newswire recently conducted in-depth interviews with brand marketers.

Of note, these interviews reveal the particular power of multimedia to engage consumers and customers with your brand across social media channels.

VIDEO HAS GOTTEN TO THE PLACE WHERE IT IS THE CONVERSATION STARTER.

Kerry Morgan
Senior Vice President of
Marketing & Communications,
United Way of the National
Capital Area

And of all the multimedia content formats available, none is seen as more potent than video.

“Video has gotten to the place where it is the conversation starter,” says Kerry Morgan, Senior Vice President of Marketing and Communications for United Way of the National Capital Area.

Research supports Morgan’s comment. Video surpassed peer-to-peer file sharing during the third quarter of 2010 to become the largest category of broadband Internet traffic in the United States, at 26.2% of all traffic.³ The torrid growth of online video is only expected to continue. In November 2010, for example, comScore reported that more than 172 million Americans watched approximately 152.5 billion minutes of internet video.⁴

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, video and other forms of multimedia content have supercharged results for marketers who listen to and leverage their brand’s Social Echo.

In the case of Newell Rubbermaid’s Sharpie brand, the use of video led to extraordinary outcomes. In fact, Bert Dumars, Vice President, eBusiness and Interactive Marketing for Newell Rubbermaid, describes an outpouring of creative input from the community of Sharpie users, including an idea for a new product, that was a direct result of video content “injected” into social channels.

Other Newell Rubbermaid brands also have gained important insights through the use of video in social media, as well as through careful attention to their Social Echo.

LISTENING IS ALWAYS THE FIRST STEP

Multimedia aside, studying their brand’s Social Echo is fast becoming the critical first step for marketers developing or evolving their social media strategy.

“Listening to our Social Echo has been the bass-beat of our social programming strategy,” says Erin McAllister, Director of Digital Strategy and Marketing for Unisys Corporation. “It allows us to ground whatever approach we take in quantifiable data and gain better business intelligence.”

Lara Kretler, Vice President and Social Media Lead for Fahlgren Mortine

OUR VIDEOS MAY HAVE BEEN FUN AND INTERESTING, BUT THE **CREATIVITY AND ARTISTRY** OF WHAT THE USER COMMUNITY PRODUCED BLEW US AWAY.

Bert Dumars
Vice President, eBusiness and
Interactive Marketing,
Newell Rubbermaid

Public Relations, says listening in on a brand's Social Echo is the number-one source for social media strategy, "because not listening to the conversation that's already happening is equivalent to putting your head in the sand."

"The conversation is happening out there whether you are listening or not. If you listen, you have the chance to understand – and sway the tide if things are going the wrong way. There are just so many opportunities that can be taken advantage of by listening," Kretler says.

COLLECTIVELY, THE CUSTOMER IS SMARTER AND MORE CREATIVE

Perhaps no one has seen customer creativity emerge from their Social Echo better than the managers of Newell Rubbermaid's Sharpie brand.

Dumars describes how Sharpie seeded social media communities with videos showcasing creative use of Sharpie markers. "We showed how you could customize anything from your notebook computer to eyeglass frames and holiday ornaments – basically, you could buy lower-cost items and make them beautiful," Dumars says.

Then, the users took over. "Our videos may have been fun and interesting, but the creativity and artistry of what the user community produced blew us away," Dumars says.

Users posted photos and videos of, among other things, a white Lamborghini that had been covered in intricate black Sharpie designs and painted over in clear coat to protect them, and equally intricate artwork on Styrofoam cups – which the artist sells for between \$140 and \$540 apiece.

"We even had a high school couple who bought white outfits and used Sharpies to customize them for their prom," Dumars says.

As a result, Sharpie recently grew past 1.5 million Facebook friends and maintains vibrant communities on YouTube, twitter and flickr in addition to its own site and blog. Users are constantly bringing new artists and ideas to the surface of the community, which is able to remain freewheeling "because the Sharpie brand is so wide open," explains Dumars.

Combining video with social media has also proved potent for Hasbro's Nerf brand, with Nerf Nation videos popular on YouTube, Facebook and, video-comedy site, Funny Or Die.

USING MULTIMEDIA TO AMP UP YOUR SOCIAL ECHO

WHITE PAPER

Michele Litzky, President and Founder of Litzky Public Relations, which manages Nerf communications, was not surprised. “When you understand the Nerf consumer, it makes perfect sense. For them, it’s all about action; it’s all about having fun; they are eager to do demos and they’re eager to see demos,” Litzky explains.

She adds, “What’s great about the Nerf Nation, and what I love about social media, is we don’t have half a conversation. It’s a 24/7, two-way conversation. You know what works, and you know what doesn’t work, because they tell you.”

REALLY UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMERS – AND THEIR ‘PAIN POINTS’

By listening carefully to your brand’s Social Echo, you have access to a giant focus group that’s always ready for use.

In fact, Newell Rubbermaid’s new Sharpie Liquid Pencil, which became available in stores in September 2010, was conceived as a result of viewing a YouTube video that was brought to the attention of brand marketers by the Sharpie community.

“This boy was a self-described expert at how to replace lead in mechanical pencils, and he made a how-to video about it,” explains Dumars. “He went through this elaborate process, showing what you had to do and all the things that could go wrong – and it was a nightmare. In watching him do what he did, we saw all the problems and all the pitfalls. It was the equivalent of an ethnographic study in 3 minutes, without us paying a dime for it,” Dumars adds.

By imagining how to address the problems surfaced in that video, Sharpie engineers were able to develop an ink based on liquid graphite. That ink became the key ingredient in the Sharpie Liquid Pencil, which is essentially a pen that behaves as if it were a No. 2 pencil. Its output can even be erased for up to roughly three days, after which it becomes permanent.

“That video gave us an opportunity to leapfrog the competition,” says Dumars. “Although in this case the competition was us, because we make a lot of mechanical pencils through our Paper Mate brand,” he joked.

VIDEO IS THE ENTRY POINT INTO INTRODUCING THE STORE CONCEPT TO YOU WHETHER YOU'RE A BLOGGER, A REPORTER, OR A CUSTOMER.

Rob Borella
Senior Director, Marketing,
Giant Eagle

In PR Newswire's earlier paper, *Amplifying Your Social Echo*, early adopters of the concept showed how tapping into your Social Echo can bring valuable insights into customer needs, wants and issues that can help shape subsequent marketing messages, and even product development. Dumars, and others, show that tapping into your Social Echo via multimedia, particularly video, can ignite those insights.

STORIES THAT SCREAM FOR MULTIMEDIA

Many marketers telling their brand and product stories in social media have discovered that without multimedia, some stories simply cannot be told effectively.

One such marketer is Rob Borella, Senior Director, Marketing at Giant Eagle, a \$9 billion regional supermarket retailer. Though Giant Eagle has 220 supermarkets spread across its region, it has more recently developed and opened four Giant Eagle Market District locations, superstores that aim to create a unique food destination experience.

While most supermarkets that aim for a high-value experience price all products accordingly, "Market District will have a great price on Tide and Coke, yet we'll also be your store to find exotic items like boa and rattlesnake – and everything in between," says Borella. "We have tremendous prepared foods, in-store restaurants whose chefs have deep culinary background, and special events in the stores, often with real food celebrities," he adds.

Video, Borella determined, was the only way to get the Giant Eagle Market District story to a wide audience.

"Video is the entry point into introducing the store concept to you whether you're a blogger, a reporter, or a customer," Borella says. "It gives you a little taste of what the concept is all about, what you're going to see if you visit the store. It whets your appetite and gets you all excited."

Market District's video, distributed across digital and social channels via PR Newswire's ARC engagement platform, proved effective. In addition to blogs and media sites that picked up the story, "We had some great follow-on visibility from folks like Martha Stewart and Adam Richman, who went onto

USING MULTIMEDIA TO AMP UP YOUR SOCIAL ECHO

WHITE PAPER

their accounts and said if you are ever in Pittsburgh or Cleveland, you have got to check this out,” Borella says.

United Way’s Kerry Morgan also is pursuing video in social media to tell, or help shape, important stories.

For example, United Way filmed a roundtable discussion on issues in education and created a dozen excerpts focused on different themes and ideas that connected the issues directly to its Capital Area region. The videos were propagated through social media prior to screenings of the documentary *Waiting for Superman*, in order to influence audiences screening the film to focus in on those issues United Way considered most important. Morgan also used ARC to house and distribute its video clips and press releases.

Now, the non-profit’s staff is developing a library of videos of people telling stories about how United Way has assisted them. “When you hear and see those stories, it’s almost impossible not to have strong emotions that make you want to talk about it and tell a friend – to continue the dialog about it,” Morgan says.

“We will build on the idea that United Way is a brand that is going to show you the story, and let you respond to it and react to it, and give you a place and a space to do that,” Morgan says.

CONCLUSION

Insights from early adopters make clear that listening to your brand’s Social Echo is an immensely powerful marketing and public relations tool. Your Social Echo is better than research because it’s more authentic – based on real customers’ actual thoughts and behaviors.

But when combined with multimedia, your Social Echo becomes a far more powerful tool.

Interacting with your brand’s constituents in social media via multimedia, especially video, can produce a profoundly deep understanding of a brand’s customers and prospects, with many implications for research, product development, sales and more.

ABOUT CNW

CNW (Canada Newswire), connects organizations to relevant news and information consumers across the country and around the world. CNW is committed to providing integrated, intelligent communications and disclosure services that help clients work more efficiently and meet their objectives. In addition to newswire distribution, CNW offers webcast, video, photography, translation, regulatory filing services and MediaVantage, a web-based solution offering real-time media monitoring, communications workflow solutions and campaign measurement capability.

CNW is reinventing the newswire by giving clients the power to streamline their workload and combat a communications cycle that no longer has a clear beginning or end. With CNW's integrated communication services clients can create, collaborate, distribute, engage, monitor and analyze, allowing them to work more efficiently and meet their objectives.

This white paper was developed by PR Newswire (www.prnewswire.com), CNW's parent company.

SOURCES

- ¹ Data posted to Quora on January 4, 2011 by twitter Product Marketing Manager Pierre Legrain
- ² Amplifying Your Social Echo, PR Newswire, January 2011
- ³ Cisco Visual Networking Index: Usage Study, Cisco Systems, October 25, 2010
- ⁴ "comScore Releases November 2010 U.S. Online Video Rankings," comScore, December 16, 2010