

Chapter 29

Improving Customer Relations With Social Listening: A Case Study of an American Academic Library

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ABSTRACT

Strategic social media plays a crucial role in contemporary customer relationship management (CRM); however, the best practices for social CRM are still being discovered and established. The ever-changing nature of social media challenges the ability to establish benchmarks; nonetheless, this article captures and shares actions, insights, and experiences of using social media for CRM. This case study examines how an academic library at a mid-size American university located in northeast Florida uses social media to engage in social listening and to enhance CRM. In particular, the social listening practices of this library are highlighted in relation to how they influence and potentially improve CRM. By exploring the practices of this single institution, attempts are made to better understand how academic libraries engage with customers using social media as a CRM tool and ideas for future research in the realm of social media and CRM practices are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, social media has revolutionized the way in which organizations engage with customers. As a result, social media platforms are becoming increasingly popular tools for customer relationship management (CRM). Given the ever-changing nature of social media, it can be difficult to establish guidelines and best practices for social media CRM. As such, this original case study presents

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how an American academic library uses social media towards CRM practices. Since 2009, the Thomas G. Carpenter Library at the University of North Florida (UNF) in Jacksonville has worked strategically to establish and develop an effective and interactive social media presence. This article presents a case study of the library's use of social media, while focusing on the role of social listening to improve social media CRM. This study responds to two research questions: (1) How does an American academic library utilize social listening toward CRM strategy? and (2) How does an American academic library engage in CRM using social media? Upon addressing these questions based on the practices of the UNF academic library, opportunities for future research regarding social listening as a social media CRM strategy are posed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social Media's Role in Academic Libraries

According to a recent study published by Pew Research Center, 74% of individuals who have utilized a library or bookmobile in the past year are social media users (Rainie, 2016). On a daily basis, half a billion tweets emerge on Twitter and a good portion of these include interactions between businesses and customers. Not surprisingly, online customer interactions grew 70% between 2013 and 2014 (Coen, 2016). For these reasons, understanding the role of social media within the realm of academic libraries is increasingly important, especially as social media continue to evolve.

In 2005, when social media was still in its infancy, the term "Library 2.0" was coined by Michael Casey, author of the blog *LibraryCrunch*. By linking libraries to the technology-driven Web 2.0, web-based tools such as social media effectively give "library users a participatory role in the services libraries offer and the way they are used" (Casey, 2010). While the number of users on social media continues to grow, libraries now have a presence on Facebook, Twitter and other websites in order to easily reach their constituents online (Palmer, 2014). Academic libraries in particular have developed a strong social media presence in order to reach students, most of whom are traditional students in the 18-22 age range and fervent users of social media. In order to reach customers and communicate the worth of library resources, academic libraries have adopted social media as a cost-effective way to connect with users and promote library value (Gaha & Hall, 2015).

Through their online presence, academic librarians can move away from the physical service desk and literacy instruction models and engage directly with their students (Palmer, 2014). Non-physical methods of outreach and instruction became necessary as academic libraries saw growing trends of lighter foot traffic and fewer requests for research assistance. As Gaha and Hall (2015) point out, with the ubiquitous presence of Google and other online search engines, "libraries are no longer the first stop for information" for tech savvy students (p. 49). Most libraries therefore use social media for outreach, marketing and promotion purposes. Library promotion has become vitally important due to a disconnect between what services a library offers and what its users perceive it offers (Thomsett-Scott, 2014). The online presence allows libraries to broadcast announcements and promote resources, although this often leads to a mirror of what is already displayed on the organization's website (Young & Rossmann, 2015).

According to King (2015) libraries share content that is centered around the library itself: "what's happening at the library, what will happen, and what recently happened" (p. 10). Libraries of all types (academic, public, school, special, etc.) are prevalent on both Facebook and Twitter, if only because of

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