

Chapter 8

Use of Social Network for Business in Public Relations

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ABSTRACT

Before the development of the Internet, there were only a few major media outlets that organizations could use to reach their target audiences. Subsequently, public relations practitioners were able to carefully control all forms of communication. The arrival of new media in the past few years has posed an array of new opportunities but also threats. The public has developed a need to access news and information practically before it exists, and so there is a growing desire to find out what's new via social network sites. With the introduction of social networks, business organizations should identify those social networks representing their target audiences; they should control and participate in them. This chapter describes basic characteristics of social networks and their role for public relations.

INTRODUCTION

People often associate social networks with socialization and interconnection of a group of people with similar interests. Social networking is becoming inevitable part of life and work on the field of communication. It represents communication channels for active communication with users with the help the companies to follow new trends. Social networks are especially appropri-

ate for the increase brand awareness, recognition of a company and its offer, for the improvement of customer relationship and for creation of new groups of users. To achieve those goals it is necessary to analyze current conditions and create corporate communication strategy. The organization must carefully combine and coordinate different strategies, tactics, messages, and communication channels for the creation of the message to be clear and impressive to users. And most importantly,

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this message must be shared and recommended to friends and acquaintances by users.

Communication is at the heart of the management of relationships with stakeholders. The organization develops and forms its relationships with different publics through communication. Organizations inform customers of new products and prices, remind them of their existing offerings, and attempt to favourably influence their perceptions by using various communication tools. Likewise, organizations communicate with various other stakeholders, such as employees, government, suppliers, intermediaries and investors, in their attempts to manage relationships for mutual benefit. Until recently the nature of this communication has tended mostly to be unidirectional and simple. The Internet is changing the nature of an organization's communication with its stakeholders in ways that are unprecedented. Stakeholder communication will no longer be unidirectional, and as stakeholders increasingly communicate with each other (either about or not about the organization, as the case may be) this communication becomes infinitely more complex. Public relations becomes more than the management of effective communication with stakeholders – it evolves to become the management of communication between stakeholders as well (Van der Merwe *et al.*, 2005).

The definition of a news release has also expanded. The press release is no longer exclusively a media relations tool; now, with the Internet's search capabilities, consider it a direct to-consumer online page of Web content. This sea change for news releases means that consumers now access releases simultaneously with journalists. This has important implications for news release content, style and format (Croft, 2008).

The initial period of Internet was characterized by the Internet user who had in relation to the Website completely passive role - the visitor. The user read and accepted only what firms or individuals offered on their Web sites. With the development of new services, arising of programming language,

Internet connections, the growth of these users are becoming more curious, difficult, important and active. The dialogue and the relationship began to emerge between the site and its visitors. In addition to the establishing two-way communication, social networking allows users to add comments, participate in forums, add pictures and videos on the Web site, assessing the author's contributions and content, integrating with other site visitors, sharing opinions and building a network of contacts (Skrt, 2007).

Social networking is a way of communicating and making friends online. There are various popular networking sites and if they are used effectively it can produce a positive image for the business. Social networks mean that there are Web sites where people can find and connect with each other and can have an impact on a specific target public. The advantages of building social networks as a tool of public relations for the organization are the following. Social networks can increase the production of content by user organizations. Also, social networks can help to set up the systems feedback, create members of online social networks and can allow sharing interests and may begin to build relationships. Organizations can build a company brand or its product brand with Facebook and LinkedIn profiles or a Twitter account. Through these entities organizations could benefit consistent and efficient corporate communications (Hozjan, 2010).

In the literature social networks is often mentioned as the essential factor for business success and has been given considerable attention. This article challenges this view by pointing out positive effects of social networks on reaching success in the field of public relations in general.

The methodology used in this paper refers to a review of basic literature in the field of public relations, review of the literature in the field of the Internet as a social space and social networks. We will use secondary data sources.

Our contribution consists of three sections. In the first section we introduce the concept of

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