

Seven blunders brand managers make

To ensure you can keep track of all mentions online it is important to choose a reliable Social CRM product. Here is how...

Choosing new technology is a difficult task. Hence, the aim of this article is to educate digital marketers, service delivery folks, CMOs, CIOs and other stakeholders of the typical blunders that prevent marketers from choosing the best Social CRM (SCRM) for their brand. These are as follows:

Choose and use

Employing a tool which does not use Twitter's Firehose: There are two kinds of products out there, one that uses the Twitter Search API, which is equivalent to going onto twitter.com and to its search option and typing something in. In doing this, you don't get all the tweets which match that search, you only get some of the recent tweets. Essentially it is not a very comprehensive way of searching. Some SCRM tools in the market use this at the back end as it's free but it doesn't give you a full and comprehensive search result. For a brand this can be quite dangerous as you won't know whether all tweets are being captured, and you don't want to take the risk of missing important tweets by customers. Instead, use a tool which is integrated with Twitter's Firehose, which is essentially the API or supply of all the tweets. When you put in a search query on Twitter's Firehose, you can be assured that you will get all the relevant tweets for your brand. Depending on the category, 60 to 70 per cent of all online mentions are available on Twitter for most brands and therefore the importance of this capability cannot be underestimated.

Forgetting to check if the tool can handle direct messages: While we are on the topic of Twitter, there are times when brands realise far too late that they're using a tool that doesn't have the ability to reply to direct messages (DM). That means that each time somebody tweets and you tell them to DM their number to you, you can't access it through your SCRM and you have to manually check your Twitter account and look for the direct message; this can prove quite arduous. This is a problem with not only Twitter but with Facebook as well. A lot of tools allow you to capture mentions from other social media as well, but many do not do the first and most obvious and simple thing: to integrate direct messages, bringing them out, and make them visible on your social CRM. As you would know, most brands would like to take the conversation from the public sphere

of social networks into a somewhat private sphere, and the best way to do this is through direct messages with the customer. Therefore, the ability to handle DMs is vital.

Integrate all feedback

Not ensuring that the SCRM product can handle multiple social networking forums on one platform: There are products out there that can handle only Facebook and Twitter without giving marketers access to some of the other social networking forums, such as LinkedIn, YouTube or forums such as TripAdvisor etc. They might also not handle Indian consumer complaints forums, and several other web portals out there which are also important because your customers make their pre-purchase decisions there. For marketers, the objective should be to get that one single platform through which you can pretty much track all your online mentions which include not just social but all other mentions.

Not insisting on a strong ticketing mechanism: Most social CRM out there are able to show a live stream or live feed of all brand mentions. And the agents within the company can directly interact with some of these mentions. However, one of the things which brands often miss out on is the tool's ability to ticket. Without a solid ticketing ability in addition to the conversation view, it is extremely difficult for the customer service/ brand team to actually be able to take action on all the mentions systemically, resulting in a chaotic experience for both the brand and the customer.

Additionally, it's only with a ticketing mechanism that it becomes possible to track metrics such as resolution rate, average resolution time, and the actual experience of the customer instead of vanity metrics like "response time".

This ticketing capability is at times overlooked because SCRM purchase is done by marketing, and customer service may not have been looped into the buying decision, which on its part would most likely raise this requirement.

Not thinking through the various API integration possibilities: When choosing a Social CRM, one of the things which becomes obvious is that integrating Social CRM with internal CRM, which is what the API integration does, can maximise the return on investment on this whole online conversation management process. Every social interaction online with the customer through SCRM should become part of the internal CRM as well. When a brand keeps accumulating social profiling data for each of its customers, this way it leads to better and targeted marketing messages to those

customers. Some brands only realise too late in the day that the software of their choosing is unable to integrate with their internal CRM. API integration has many permutations and combinations and is a time consuming and costly endeavour, but it is well worth the investment as brands who've done it acknowledge its success rate.

Don't check ability to capture duplicate mentions: A quirk we all share as Indians is that a customer will go and write a complaint on Facebook, Twitter and other available platforms. A brand has no way of knowing that this is the same customer. In the Indian context we find a lot of marketers complain that this is not taken care of by most of the international SCRM products. This is where the ticketing ability is an asset. In essence, once you have a unique identifier for a customer from one platform, do check if your tool is able to identify him across all platforms and presents an aggregate customer view for your team to take action on.

Sharpen focus

Looking for a jack-of-all-trades system, instead of pure play SCRM: A good SCRM product is what it says it is – a product that helps brands manage relationships one-on-one with existing customers. It helps them track, respond and resolve all customer complaints across the web while leveraging their internal repository of customer information. It isn't a product meant to handle online or social media campaigns, or determine the best media advertising mix or target content plan. Marketers who opt for a product that claims to conflate all marketing solutions and functionality into one product will miss out on the depth of functionality that specialised products have on offer.

Smart marketers will factor in the above considerations so they have the best product on board. In 2015, it will be worth getting this right.