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# Why Most Companies Fail at Social Media -- Understanding the Three C's

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Every business knows about social media, and many businesses have some sort of social media presence - but very few have implemented a comprehensive and successful social media strategy that maximizes benefits and mitigates risks. Why is this? The answer is simple: the three "Cs."

Most businesses take an approach to social media that is often too narrow. They are far too worried about Content and not focused enough on Context and Conditions.

They view social media solely based on Facebook or Twitter Content, which they believe is just a marketing, PR and website function. But to be truly successful, social media needs to be implemented at the senior level and trickle down into the DNA of the entire organization as a core competence.

Senior leaders must understand the Context of the environment in which social media operates. This means understanding their industry, their competition and their internal environment. Then they must be responsible for creating the Conditions necessary for its successful implementation in their organization.

Of course, Facebook and Twitter will be an integral part of any good strategy, but having spent decades as a business executive implementing technology into organizations, I see a need for a

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more holistic approach in today's business community.

After all, social media is an ever-changing world of opportunities. Remember MySpace or Friendster? In a short time they have faded and given way to dozens of other useful platforms, such as Pinterest, LinkedIn and Salesforce.com. Capturing this evolution is the key to a winning social media project.

Having a holistic approach will maximize opportunities, eliminate risk and overcome the main obstacles which are, believe it or not, usually people problems, and not technological problems.

People problems can often be hidden from view, much like how an iceberg has 90 percent of its context hidden from view. These invisible constraints can be the most difficult to deal with relating to attitudes, skills, written and unwritten rules and codes of conduct.

Business leaders thus need to create a set of Conditions that will make the entire process a success. They need a step-by-step formula, derived by asking themselves questions such as: How does this help achieve my business goals? What are the benefits and how do I manage the risks? How do I write a social company-wide media policy, enforce it and update it? How do I get everybody on the same page?

Below are 10 overarching tips that will help business leaders understand the three C's and succeed in social media:

- **Get with the Program:** Social media is here to stay. Think of how far it has come in the last five years and then imagine where it will be in the next five. Embrace it or be left behind.
- **Be the Architect, Be the Leader:** As the CEO or leader you need to create a vision of what social media looks like for your entire organization -- just like an architect has a model of the building that he is going to construct. Really support social media at the senior level not just the people that look after your web site.
- **Understand the Culture and Mindset:** Defense contractors, for instance, will have more of a closed culture because of the nature of their business as compared to a company with a Silicon Valley feel to it. Opening a company's culture is perhaps the greatest challenge a CEO faces. Banning social media is not a solution any longer, even autocratic political regimes have failed to do so, but using it within a conducive yet regulated cultural framework is the ideal response to the Internet revolution.
- **Create a Common Language:** This is crucial so that everyone company-wide knows their part and what they are trying to achieve. Create a common language so that everyone can participate in the discussion, not a just a few experts who know the jargon.
- **Achieve Your Business Goals:** Create social media goals in the context of how they will achieve the business goals. The organizational goal could be to increase the repeat customer percentage in order to increase revenue by X percent. Another goal could be to have a more effective customer relationship management strategy. You need to develop the social media strategy to support your goals.
- **Understand ALL the Benefits:** Most view social media as a way to interact directly with customers. In addition to that function, there are other business opportunities that can benefit your company both internally and externally through communication, collaboration, collective intelligence and community opportunities.
- **Avoid the Dangers of the Dark Side:** Social media can open a company up to danger and risk including security issues, PR issues and HR issues. While these risks are very real, it is essential not to let them inhibit progress. Social media is too important in global culture. The key is to develop a sound social media policy that identifies the risks and mitigates them.
- **Craft a Strong Social Media Policy:** Work with legal and social media experts to develop a safe and effective social media policy that makes clear what is and is not acceptable. This will protect the organization and the employees while maximizing benefits and mitigating risks. Just because a policy is written does not mean it will be followed. Many "unwritten" rules will take shape and the company needs to be vigilant and continuously reshape policy to match what is happening "on the ground."
- **Have a Step-by-step Formula:** A winning social media strategy will be one that is adaptable, implemented step-by-step and is an ongoing model within the context of the organization that sets the right conditions for successful implementation.

• **Time:** Rome was not built in a day, and the same goes with social media. Time is the most significant cost. Implementing a social media project hastily may bring more problems than benefits, which is why CEOs need to weight the time factor properly and make sure the project is carefully studied before and during its application.

You can read more from Steve at [www.SocialMediaInBusiness.com](http://www.SocialMediaInBusiness.com).

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