



Thinking About Social Media?
Think Clearly!



	Who	What	When	Where	Why	How	Comments
Attention							
Attraction							
Affinity							
Audience							
Action							
Measures							

By Jay Deragon 



5x6 Social Media Revenue Matrix

Jay Deragon
 with Irene Williams



We are inundated with information on a daily basis. Mind you, most of the information that we collect is that which we've invited. We set up Google alerts and a Google reader to gather the latest news on topics of relevance to our business. We follow select people on Twitter and are part of forums and groups on LinkedIn, Facebook and other networks.

Each day, our email folders fill up with Google alerts and news we've tagged. Our Google reader fills constantly with articles from sites we've found worthy of our attention. Our Tweetdeck pings with content from those we follow. We receive email messages with feeds from forums and group discussions. On top of all that, we get alerts of people wanting to connect, messages from contacts and friends leaving comments.

All of these "communications" ultimately vie for our attention. We may have invited most of it. Yet as the pings, tweets, alerts, diggs, comments and announcements continue 24/7, it's impossible for us to absorb it all. We have to decide who or what to listen to; we can only engage and respond to those things or people that know how to get our attention.

As challenging as it is for us individually to receive, process and gain value from incoming information, one wonders how people generating content for thousands of followers, friends, readers and connections can satisfy the demand for their attention and time. While all this social media stuff has significant potential, businesses and individuals cannot possibly engage everyone in everything.

Our Relationship To Information

Everyone has an affinity to information that is in alignment to their interests. Many have interest focused on learning the impact social media on business relationships within specific markets. We consume massive amounts of daily information hoping to synthesize perspectives, data and research; we are constantly learning what's going on on the fringes of change.

Not only do we love learning, we love to interpret and share new information. We are drawn to opportunities for reciprocal sharing of knowledge and exchange of perspectives and ideas. As a result, we are constantly building online relationships with people and organizations to find information that matches our interest, desires and planned actions. And because we take action by sharing what we've learned, people are drawn to connect with us. We all converge at the point of common interests and the desire for like information, and we take action by responding to those who capture our attention.

Which Comes First, The Relationship or The Information?

Amidst the proliferation of information we receive daily, we ultimately pay attention to the relevant information we receive from those with whom we have relationships. We're willing to 'listen' to the people, companies or organizations that have not only gotten us to take notice but have earned our trust through quality of content.

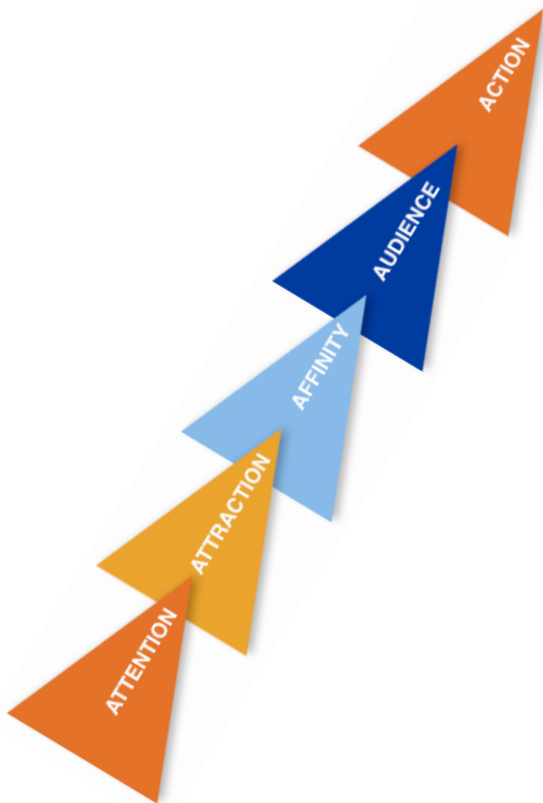
In order to provide someone with relevant information, we need to understand their interests and desires and surmise the actions they may be preparing to take. We build relationships by serving peoples' interests and desires with the appropriate information—quality content—that will enable them to take action. Relationships start at the point of sharing information that's relevant, valuable and of interest to the receiver.

Quality information is a gift that is likely to be well received, and thus it sparks an attraction that helps form an affinity—an instinctively positive response—by the receiver toward the sender. Subsequently, the sender—an individual, business or organization—can create the right audience of receivers.

Earning All A's

Therefore, your positive gain in helping people by offering them the right information is that you earn their attention long enough to create an attraction. The earned attraction helps to form an affinity to you. If you repeat the process to enough people, you can create an audience. Once you have a large enough audience, a certain percent of them will want to engage with you, your product or your service, and that is the beginning of innately valuable action. Serve your audience consistently and reliably, because you never know who in the audience will someday want to exchange value in the form of a transaction. As you know, there are countless others vying for the attention of your audience members. You must be a constant resource in order for relationships to take root and grow into true affinity and audience loyalty. From that point, you can reasonably anticipate repeat results.

It's the Five Elements of Social Media—attention, attraction, affinity, audience and action, and those who earn all A's will pass the course with flying colors and earn the right to a transaction.



Overcoming Information Overload

In this 'information age,' it's no feat to hit the point of information overload. As mentioned, we invite content into our inbox on a daily basis, through our various social networks and news feeds. Even then, the content providers must earn our attention to rise to the top of the information heap. Imagine the challenge of those providing content we did not invite to capture our mind. Good luck!

There is so much—too much—content fed to us, not only by those with whom we initiated contact but by the 'uninvited' as well. The real issue revealed in this information overload is the necessity for content providers to merit the time and the minds of their potential receivers. What content will grab attention and create attraction?

In my own experience as a recipient of information, the content that gets my attention is the content that makes me think. I'm drawn to topics that engage my brain, brought to me by people who consistently invite me to think. Conversely, I find reciprocal, positive response when I create content that demands receivers to mentally participate in the discussion.

Thinking is a powerful action. Anytime you intersect provocative content with a mind that's open to learning, great interaction is bound to happen. Let's face it. Anyone not open to learning is stuck in what they know, and that stale mindset doesn't lead to very interesting conversations.

Thinking people are drawn to thinking people; that's what makes the information exchange interesting and mutually beneficial.

How Does Your Mind Work?

So, how do thinking people think? Our brains are the center of our thoughts and emotions, both which are largely influenced by our past, present and anticipated experiences. King Solomon once said "as a man thinketh, so is he," indicating that that which we think about and believe shapes who we are and how we view the world we live in and the people we relate to. Now, through social media, we're enabled not only to be influenced, but to influence others by our "virtual experiences and the information we receive and send to the masses."

Some people and businesses look at all this social media stuff as a fad, no different than traditional marketing and messaging methods. The problem with that line of thought is that it disregards the vast differences between traditional and

INFORMATION
LOAD
(information overload)

social media. Traditional media has not engaged the masses like social media has. Social media brings the viewer, the reader, the receiver into relevant conversations about topics that interest them. Social media is predicated on interaction, a give and take and take and give between content provider and recipient.

Fundamentally, a conversation is an exchange of information between two or more people. Social technology exponentially widens the circle by enabling us to converse, to share information with thousands—even millions—of people. Whether a conversation occurs face to face or network to network, the dialogue is guided by the perception of those engaging in the interaction. Some people present their opinions as absolute truths and are clearly never inclined to change. Others engage in conversations with the aim of learning, indicating they've come to the conversation without preconceived notions and true openness—even though they are not devoid of the influence of their own experiences and emotions.

Whether we're locked into our opinions or open to new ideas is a matter of how our brains have adopted patterns of thought, and certainly, the adoption of thought pattern is typically ours to establish through our choices. If we approach life with the aim to continuously learn, without immovable adherence to past experiences, then our brains are free to process information openly rather than trying to fit information into set paradigms of belief.

When it comes to technological progression, we're all better off choosing to be open minded. Before the telephone who would have believed we could talk to others via a wire? Before broadcast television would we have believed that people from around the world could be seen and heard through a box?

Before the Internet, who would have believed information about anything and everything could be accessed via a little screen and a few clicks on a keyboard? Before Web 2.0, who would have believed that individuals could become 'the media,' connect with millions from around the world and purvey their own ideas and information? Who would have believed that finding knowledge and people could be so easy?

Few anticipated any of these changes would or could happen, yet they have occurred and are here to stay—until the next technological progression takes place. Yet there are still some people who've chosen to keep their brains in lock down and have not embraced the reality and importance of Web 2.0 and beyond.



Is Your Mind Open or Closed?

If we close our minds, we expect people to agree with our views of the world based on our experiences rather than theirs. Yet when we open our minds, we accept learning as an ongoing process of discovery. We don't have to sacrifice our own values in this process of learning about others' perspectives. We simply act on our desire to learn about ourselves and the world that affects us. In an era of significant change, having an open mind helps us make sense of the changes around us and allows us to find our place in the ever altering landscape of our lives.

Affinity: Creating Fans for Infinity

Affinity, in terms of sociology, refers to "kinship of spirit"—shared interests and other interpersonal commonalities. Affinity is characterized by high levels of sharing and interaction, usually in close groups often known as affinity groups. A group of devoted fans of a certain band or music artist would be an affinity group. Social affinity is generally defined as marriage to ideas, ideals and causes shared by a community of people and is often cause-related or issue-oriented.

Social affinity is useful in analyzing how individuals respond to the social issues of most concern to themselves. Social affinity is affected by variables, including factors regarding social location including spatial and temporal distance and proximity. These variables are indicative of the self-interest which permeates our culture. It's human nature to always ask "what about me?" in assessing what will gain our attention or become our affinity.

The social web thrives with millions of people forming affinities to other people, organizations, brands and ideas. Certainly, the impact self-interest in the development of social affinity in the context of social issues, along with our culture of individualism, is permeating the social web in tandem with the endless affinities being formed. Ironically, it's often in our self-interests to be part of a group; we're innately social beings motivated by the need to belong and to be heard, especially amongst those with whom we share common values and interests.

Albert Einstein once said "a human being is part of the whole called by us the Universe: a part limited by time and space." Social technology has now reduced the limitations of time and space. By joining in the online conversations, we are enabled to become part of a larger whole with just the click of a mouse, at any time of day or night, at any point on the globe.

Your Mind:
OPEN for
business

It's not just who you know.
It's who knows you.



People 'friend' people on Facebook, follow people on Twitter and connect with people throughout social networks based on an affinities of interest. Larger groups, or nodes, attract others with a common affinity given the profile and reach of the group in terms of size and audience. The larger a common group the greater the reach, both by one individual and the group as a whole. Being part of a group online can literally interlink people worldwide with a few strokes on a keyboard. Thanks to technology, we can all play bigger parts in context of the whole.

Word of Mouth to Click of Mouse: The New Brand Affinity



Brands representing everything we consume, from information to clothing and cars, seek to create an affinity to their markets of interested consumers. The 'market' is comprised of people fitting specific demographics, targeted by information that created attention, attraction and affinity. In the past, brands often pushed tricky information—attention grabbers—in attempts to create "affinity audiences." The idea was to draw attention, then implement tactics aimed at creating an attraction. From the results of the tactics, brands could potentially convert attention, attraction and affinity into an audience of converted buyers, motivated to take action in response to the marketing and communication efforts. And then, the brands hoped those converted buyers would spread the word, by word of mouth.

Prior to the social web, word of mouth commentary by consumers was limited by "time and space," as Einstein stated. In the old days, consumer influence was contained by the distance and space between consumers. Now there is no distance in space or limitations of time given the reach one individual has as a result of social technologies. We've gone from 'word of mouth' to 'click of mouse' to express our immediate pleasure or disappointment in brands, products or services. And just as there is no restraint of time or space, there's also no limit to the reach of our messages, comments and reports.

Just four years ago, my personal reach was limited to a few hundred people. As a result of my conversational activity on the web and presence throughout social platforms, I can now reach 1st degree connections in excess of 100,000 people and second degree connections exceeding 20 million!

The social web has empowered individuals and organizations to create new affinities, affinities to humans rather institutional commonalities. While people have interest in

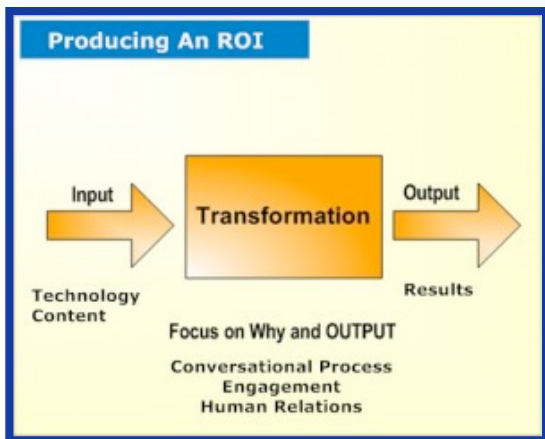
institutions and things, they are far more intrigued by other people with whom they form affinities of trust and shared values, all exchanged via the social web. And this value exchange is different from what brands historically proposed. The value is driven by personal affinity of experience and interest. Trust is established based on personal experiences, an exchange of information and observations of previous interactions, as well as the previous "social" behavior represented in the transparent virtual world of relationships. These new dynamics are not driven by marketing or PR tactics from institutions.

Once we individually and collectively learn how to create attention, attraction and affinity, then we develop a new audience ready to exchange value. Some of the value exchanges with an audience create immediate revenue opportunities, yet much of the exchange is about seeding the relationship for future value exchanges. Building affinity relationships takes time. However, the social web continues to collapse time and space. If you want a lasting, valuable relationship, strive to build a "human" rather than an "institutional affinity."

...In Front of a Live Virtual Audience!...

Nearly everyone is chasing, participating in or presenting to an audience. An audience may range in size from a couple of people to millions, and you may call them 'followers,' 'connections' or 'friends' within your preferred social networks. But unless your a monk under a vow of silence, you're engaging with and as part of audiences everyday. Having an audience fulfills many different purposes. Historically, businesses and organizations have chased audiences to attract them to propositions aimed at gaining or creating economic traction. There are numerous media and communication studies regarding the term "audience," models for reaching "audience" and its role in all kinds of mediated communication. These studies are ongoing and evolving, especially with the mass adoption of social media. The dynamics of "audiences" are changing in every way imaginable, from the methods of attracting and creating an affinity with them to their purposes and impact on commerce and culture.

The high adoption rate of convergent technology amongst the masses has changed the way media is accessed, and the world's largest companies and broadcasters are continually looking at and reviewing the way that they use these mediums to feed ever-hungry audiences the diet of information and communications they desire.



News items are always in demand from audiences all over the world, and the appetite for current event reporting will never cease. News items that were once only broadcast through scheduled programs on television and radio stations are now reported immediately and updated constantly through the technologies available. People (audiences) are also not only the receivers of news, but they have, through the use of convergent technologies, become news machines themselves.

Anyone in an audience has the ability and the forum to be a journalist. It's not uncommon for people on the street to witness a newsworthy event unfolding before their very eyes, document that event with their mobile devices and almost instantaneously upload their accounts to the Internet to share with the wide world. This ability is truly empowering, enabling all of us to broadcast stories that might otherwise be suppressed to a global audience.

Is The Audience Dynamic Changing?



Audiences will always seek—if not demand—the best possible experience when using the media to acquire information or entertainment. The human brain feeds off total experience—a compilation of sensory inputs, emotional connections and a host of intellectual and value-oriented mores that need to be satisfied. This demand for experiential excellence coupled with the expansive glut of media sources online is forcing the media and entertainment industries to push boundaries to merit and keep audience attention. However, there is a new industry emerging, it is the industry of “conversations”—initiated and ignited by people who were once only members of audiences—then spread to their connections, the new audience.

In today's world, we have the greatest selection of communication channels than at any other time in history. It's never been easier for the individual to create and reach an audience. Major media, both print and broadcast, are trying to figure out how to capture these new channels of communication, but the “new audience” is rejecting institutional media, its content and attempts to pull people into their audiences. The new audience pays attention to individuals who attract them to content and conversations that are centric to an affinity of information. The new audience trusts their connections and followers more than they do the traditional media regardless of the medium used. The new audience is actually the same audience from the past, but now empowered to create their own connections and content, shared with people they relate to personally, not institutionally.

This new dynamic has disrupted not only media industries but all business that has followed the stayed and stale institutional methods of creating audiences. Unless businesses learn the new way, they may lose their current audiences to the influence of the new audience. Or, more likely, they already have.

The New Version of Conversion

Every business and brand markets with the aim of converting a percentage of the audience into customers. To find what really inspires that transformation, marketers, and those who study marketing, have delved into research and testing on topics such as audience conversion, conversion optimization, audience screening, all while assessing these factors in correlation to the tactics and tricks of conversion.

The science of conversion changes over time, just as the market dynamics reflect changes in consumer behavior. With these changes come new models of conversion. Wikipedia defines the conversion model as a market research tool that measures attitudinal loyalty, typically referred to as “commitment” in advertising material. It is generally used to measure commitment to brands but can also be used to measure most forms of relationships.

Are The Models Changing?

The social web thrives because people create attention, attraction, affinity and an audience by relating to other people rather than relating to or with corporations, governments and institutions. People convert other people to make transactions when trust, integrity and relationships are built by an exchange of value in many different forms. It takes time to build those kind of relationships, but the root systems for them run deep, and loyalty is merely a fruit that comes as a result. Most worthwhile endeavors take time to come to fruition.

The New Rules of Engagement

Past tactics may have worked to a degree, but in the end, audiences were left disappointed, disconnected and disenchanted. There was over-promising and under-delivering. We learned to block telemarketing calls, disregard TV ads and tune out on messages we didn't invite in. Beyond the sales hype, there was no commitment, and eventually even the loyalty faded. The old days and the old tricks of the trade are just that—old. This is an entirely new day, and brands that embrace that fact are poised for immense and lasting success.



We've reviewed four of the five elements of social media—attention, attraction, affinity, audience—rather closely, and now it's time to round out the discussion with the allimportant last "A": action.

An action is brought on as a result of previous stimuli. Our mind and emotions are designed to react, or take action, based on prompts. When given a question, most people are give an answer. Likewise, one conversation usually leads to another. Over time, we learn from patterns of behavior what the expected responses are to others actions. When we don't like our own or others' actions, we either avoid those situations or try to change the anticipated outcomes.



You Must Get All "A's" to Make the Grade!

Consumers, empowered by the social web, are no longer prone to predictable reactions to old school marketing hype or calls to action. The growth of social media demonstrates the power of action in the form of conversations. Millions are watching these conversations and the subsequent actions are "engaging in the technology and the conversations.". No wonder most people trust the opinions or recommendations of people over brand messages.

Most brands have tried everything to get us to engage with the anticipated action being a transaction—a sale. Now the brands must learn to effectively change their own actions by understanding the four elements previously discussed if they want to create an environment that cultivates "actions" in the form of valuable transactions.

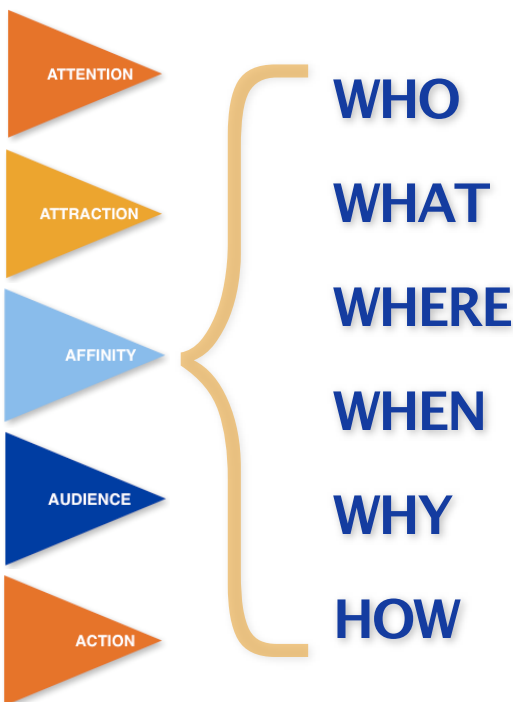
Find this hard to believe? Look at Zappos. That innovative company creates transactional action not from selling shoes but from delivering outstanding service. In other words, they get attention, attraction, affinity and audience by offering great service. The natural action from those who engage with Zappos is not only to take action by making a transaction, but to convey their positive experiences and share their affinity with peers in their networks. Good service and customer engagement doesn't merely beget sales (and repeat business from individuals), it naturally builds targeted audiences to grow sales exponentially.

When the 5 "A's" are in place for a business, the social web will work in its favor, as pleased consumers become brand advocates.

The 5 “A’s” Must Match Up With 6 Questions

Everyone seems to be asking a lot of questions about social media. Subsequently everyone has an opinion as to the answers to these very questions. The questions are all over the place from “how to produce results” to “what technology to use and how.” To say the least, there are hundreds of different answers to each question asked.

Business leaders typically jump into the use of social media expecting results. The results of using social media vary based on who is using it and for what purpose. Most commonly, the purposes are aimed at replicating results achieved through traditional marketing and public relations. The purpose for use is problematic to say the least. We hear of a few success stories, but the bulk of the results reveal failure to comprehend the systemic nature of communications. What once was a one-way channel to market a product, service or message has been flipped on its head because everything is now a two-way channel with significant reach and influence (see diagram).



Are You Asking the Right Questions?

Viewing social media as just another channel to “push” out messages is indicative of not comprehending the impact of two-way communications and the related influence on markets. Corporations do not comprehend that use of social media is more systemic in nature than merely thinking in terms of marketing. Failure to understand this means the market will easily and quickly reveal that which a business doesn’t comprehend or has failed to recognize.

So why is it so difficult for so many companies to successfully integrate social media? Marketer and New Media Pro Amy Mengel pinpoints key corporate misfires in her article [Five reasons corporations are failing at social media](#).

1. They can’t talk about anything broader than their own products
2. They listen to customers but don’t take any action
3. They aren’t calibrated internally with the technology
4. They’re not framing risk accurately
5. Their internal culture isn’t aligned for social media success

Mengel’s assessment is spot on. The point is that, unless an organization is strategically aligned with the market, it will definitely fail in its attempt to use social media for marketing and PR.

Organizational alignment is much different than the practice of marketing and PR. The market is no longer simply the end consumer; now the market encompasses everyone internally and externally. In other words "the market" is everyone who communicates anything to someone. In other words, the market is everyone!

The 5X6 Revenue Matrix

Thinking About Social Media?

Think Clearly!



	Who	What	When	Where	Why	How	Comments
Attention							
Attraction							
Affinity							
Audience							
Action							
Measures							

By Jay Deragon

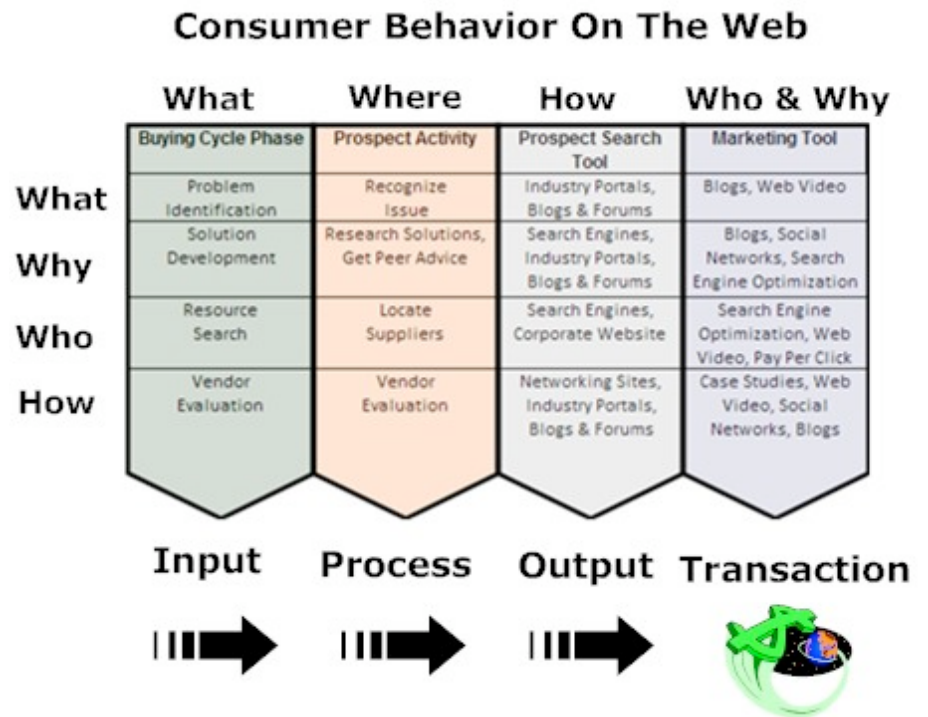


The success of any business is relative to finding and using answers to relevant questions about the business and how it can best serve a market. Given that the market now includes anyone and everyone within the chain of communications, everything that influences business success is now totally transparent to the entire market. Marketing and messaging is no longer isolated; it is now a reflection of the organizational quality and effectiveness of management. Before a business jumps into using social media they ought to ask:

1. Who is communicating what and why? What is our market hearing? Who is listening? It's everyone and everything!
2. What is influencing the quality of these communications, and what are the constraints and problematic issues? Your culture, your knowledge and your organizational quality!
3. Where are the markets which consume these communications? Everywhere!
4. When will we know the market's sentiment? Every moment if you are listening!

- Why do people care about communications? The freedom of speech has been and always will be an attraction and a powerful force of human nature.

As social media continues to fuel the influence of open and transparent communications, it will force organizations to think strategically about everything. Why? Communication touches and influences everything.



Organizational design, culture, strategy are all reflective of the quality of management thinking and skills. To effectively address these issues, businesses must have new knowledge from the outside. This knowledge domain is not the same domain as marketing and PR. The answers to “what, where, how, when, who and why” depend on the purpose of your business. Every business purpose is fueled by communications.

The word “directions” means several things, including: guidance or supervision of action or conduct, an explicit instruction, the line or course on which something is moving or is aimed to move or along which something is pointing or facing, a channel or [direct](#) course of thought or action, the art and technique of [directing](#) a group of people to accomplish an aim.

The marketplace is filled with thousands and thousands of individuals, organizations, products and services all claiming to help other people and organizations with directions on how to

use social media. The problem is that not all directions will take you to the place you want to go.

Where Do You Want to Go?

Many businesses jump into social media without knowing what they want to do, where they should do it, who do they want to reach, how will they reach them and why the market may choose to engage with them. Instead too many businesses simply look at social technology as just another channel to “push” out offerings hoping they will catch a few transactions.



The market fails to recognize that 96% of all online advertising doesn't get the audiences attention and thus no engagement is accomplished.

In order to get anywhere efficiently, people and businesses need to first know (gain knowledge) of where they want to go and how (by what methods) they will get there.

Now the marketplace of conversations is what attracts the masses to the medium. Why? Because conversations offer new knowledge, sharing with relevant and relative content that the market consumes and uses to create value for others. Today's road map of social media contains networks (roads to travel) and content (the vehicle) to take you where you can engage your market. However, like in the physical world, the quickest way to get somewhere isn't always the obvious route. Unless you've traveled the territory, the shortest routes won't always show up on your Google maps. Distance on the

internet is irrelevant. Time and productivity are elements you must know how to use in your favor.

Consider:

1. It is easy to build thousands of connections or followers but not so easy to build relevant and relative relationships unless you're providing content that is in context to your market's interest.
2. You can spend hours doing the wrong things, only to waste time and productivity.
3. You can write great content but if it isn't showing up where your market is, it won't produce the results you want.
4. How to use social media isn't about the technology, rather it is about where, when and what conversations add the most value to your market.
5. If you don't know why you're using social media, the effort is futile. A system without an aim produces nothing.
6. Understanding the lay of the land, the roadblocks, traps, traffic patterns, new roads and where they take you is something that requires knowledge and wisdom. Copying and following doesn't require either.



There Are No Quick Answers

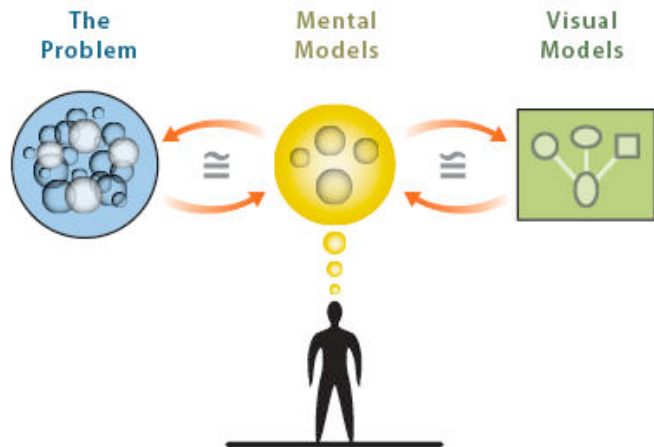
Most business leaders want quick answers. When it comes to effectively using social media to accomplish specific objectives to get where you want to go, there are no quick answers; there is only knowledge to either find or create an objective. You can find knowledge within the marketplace of conversations. You can also take existing knowledge and create new knowledge which in turn will pull the market to you. Either way it takes time, talent and knowledge to find the answers to the questions that relate to the directions you need to follow to get to where you want to go.

How many times have you been engaged in a discussion to "explain social media"? To effectively respond to that discussion requires explanation of the entire revolution of the internet and its present state. Try doing that, and you'll lose most people's attention.

It has been said that "a picture speak a thousand words." As a consultant I have always found that if you can provide a picture illustration and a simple story to explain something very complex, then you have helped a client understand something they need.

Based on the most common questions asked, I decided to provide pictures that hopefully convey the message and help people connect the dots. The illustrations and subsequent dialog are intended to explain why the web is critical for business success.

Think Clearly



The Story and The Illustrations

Everyone seeks solutions to problems. Problems represent opportunities for businesses whose products or services provide solutions to those problems. When people have a problem or desire to fulfill where do 95% of them go to find the solutions? They go to the web or to friends and family for advice and recommendations.

Every day of the year, there are over 250 million searches done on Google. In other words, people are looking for solutions that address a multitude of issues. The greatest library of solutions is the web. If a business is filed in the back of the library, it's not likely to be found.

If your solutions are hard to find or not in the mix at all, people will resolve their needs with competitive products or services. If your web presence is weak (not properly built), or, worse, if your content is anti-social, you'll not only be hard to find but considered clueless if found at all. Last but not least, if you are not engaging the market with relevant and relative conversations (content,) then those seeking solutions will not find your value because no one is discussing your business from peer to peer.

Thus, the critical path to commerce is to be found and regarded as a solution provider or an organization whose products and services people talk about. However, in order to do so you must understand what all this social stuff is about. Effectively using social media —the Internet—demands mind-sets and capabilities that previous management, marketing and advertising thought leadership would find unfamiliar and often counterintuitive.

David Gillespie writes: “If both the web and media are inherently social, and if business must have a presence online, then business must have a social element. To not have that is to forego both logic and opportunity.”

Now your challenge is figuring out the how, what, where and who you want to reach and providing them value they can use and share with others. The consumer market has shifted from mass media to media that provides the most meaningful value. Meaningful value is relational while traditional mass media is not. For your business to survive and compete, it must learn how to build relational value and use the Internet to propagate that value effectively.

“ If both the web and media are inherently social, and if business must have a presence online, then **business must have a social element.** To not have that is to forego both logic and opportunity.”

What Should You Do First?

The first step for any business is to learn and apply new thinking about its relationship with the markets it aims to serve, both internal and external. To learn, one must have relevant and relative data that provides insights as to how well your business relates to the market it is trying to serve. The illustration below outlines critical research that must be conducted in order for your organization to gain an understanding and learn the essential skills and thinking needed to better serve your market. In other words, first you must listen to and understand any market before you try to engage with it.

Without having the relevant data concerning how, where, who and what are your market's interest, needs and desires, you cannot effectively provide a reason as to why the market should pay attention to you.

Once you have this data and insight you can then begin to learn what meaningful value you can create for the market and give them that value for free. Use free to pull the market to a higher value proposition they will pay for. Giving free knowledge that is meaningful is considered valuable and relational.

If the knowledge you give is in context with your market's interest, then you just increased the probability of a

transaction—what you ultimately wanted. Today, you get what you want by giving others what they need—when they need it and enabling them to find it at the click of a mouse or from their friends. To not understand this truth is akin to saying “I don’t care how our market behaves.

Before engaging, think through the 5 A’s and consider the answers to the 6 questions as relates to each “A”. By doing so, you will begin to discover and learn how to execute an effective social media strategy that is, well, social. The outcomes will bring you more revenue than expected.

While the 5 A’s and related 6 questions are tactical guidelines



for effectively thinking about social media they cannot be efficiently used unless your strategy is in alignment with your intent. Intent is a strategic issues that must be thought out thoroughly because strategy drives tactics, initiatives and ultimately results.

The reality is that there are five strategic considerations for any organization. These include:

1. **Cultural Strategy:** A very deep and wide subject but in essence what is or what do you want your culture to embody? Open and fluid communications? Control and command environments? Collaboration across functional areas? Teamwork or silo efforts? Unless you know what the cultural situation is or what you want it to be you cannot address the restrains that inhibit relations, content (communications), distribution and ultimately people's actions internally and externally. Social media is nothing more than communications but

the related technology has enhanced the connectivity of communications and the subsequent outcomes, good bad and indifferent.

2. Relationship Strategy: Relationships, internal and external, are the essence of commerce, productivity and progress. Unless your environment enhances the relational efforts or people and their relevant knowledge you lose productivity, progress and ultimately commerce.
3. Content strategy: Content represents communications. Our economy, your economy and the entire global economy is built on communications. Communications is the economy. Unless the content of your communications, on-line and off, internal and external, are thought out, designed and executed effectively well you end up hurting your economy.
4. Distribution Strategy: Communications are distributed content in context with people's interest, needs and intent. Unless the right communications get to the right people at the right time and the right place you lose opportunity, productivity and the return on efforts to communicate. Distribution plays to the thinking of the 5 A's and 6 questions. That is if you take the time to think them through and test them constantly.
5. Actions: Ultimately the previous four strategic elements lead to actions people initiate or respond to. Businesses equate actions to revenue but revenue comes from enabling people to make the right choices that lead to an action, revenue. Revenue is driven by finding the right information at the right time and the right place (distribution). If the information provided isn't the right information then that is a content strategy issue. If the content isn't getting to the right people (relationships) then it becomes useless. An organization's culture either inhibits or enhances the connectivity of relationships, content (communications) and enables distributions effectively so people can act.

We could devote an entire white paper to the five strategies pyramid and probably will in the future. The primary objective of this paper is to layout the "tactical matrix" that drives revenue (actions) and the related strategies that impact the tactical matrix provided.

We hope this paper and its related content helps you and your organization "think" through the critical factors of success in a connected world driven by people and organizational intent.