

Paul Gillin

SECRETS OF
SOCIAL
MEDIA
MARKETING

How to Use Online Conversations
and Customer Communities to
Turbo-Charge Your Business!

With a foreword from Larry Weber,
founder of The Weber Group and W2Group

By the Author of the Best-Selling The New Influencers!

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Our favorite
part of the
whole book...

Making the Case

“The more in control we are, the more out of touch we become. But the more willing we are to let go a little, the more we’re finding we get in touch with consumers.”

—A. G. Lafley, CEO, Procter & Gamble, in a speech to the
Association of National Advertisers

Fiskars, a maker of high-quality scissors and crafting tools, was frustrated by the low emotional connection its customers had with the brand in the United States. The nearly 400-year-old Finnish company made some of the world’s finest cutting tools. Its orange-handled scissors (a pair of which is on exhibit in the Museum of Modern Art) were a favorite of crafters and the emerging cult of scrapbooking enthusiasts. Yet research showed that while people were aware of the Fiskars brand, there was no passion surrounding the products. The timing was bad: Big box retailers were beginning to draw down their selection of crafting supplies. Shelf space would become harder to find.

Fiskars had to shift its distribution toward specialty retailers. The company knew the old adage that people don’t buy drill bits; they buy holes. Fiskars knew that marketing scissors would be less effective than marketing what people do with scissors. It seized on scrapbooking, a popular hobby of preserving family history through decorated albums, as its target.

Conventional wisdom held that Baby Boomer moms were the most enthusiastic scrapbooking segment, but Fiskars wanted to test this assumption by analyzing online conversations. It hired the identity strategy company [Brains on Fire](#), which enlisted the conversation mining company [Umbria](#) to validate the strategy.

Umbria monitored scrapbooking discussions and used text and language analysis to discover who was talking. The results surprised

everyone. The analysis determined that younger women—the so-called Generation Y—were actually more passionate scrapbookers than Baby Boomers. The Fiskars strategy was revamped to engage that group. Brains on Fire conceived of an exclusive community of scrapbookers to be led by four part-time, paid enthusiasts who exemplified the members' passion for the craft. Members—called Fiskateers—knew they were involved in a two-way relationship which encouraged them to share their passion with one another. The four lead Fiskateers were taught how to keep up the conversational momentum.

Exclusivity was important. Members had to apply to become a Fiskateer. The leads were equipped with samples and literature and encouraged to visit local craft shops to help merchants sell scrapbooking supplies—but as enthusiasts rather than as sales reps. An online community was set up for the Fiskateers to exchange ideas and designs.

Response to the promotion exceeded Fiskars' expectations by orders of magnitude. About 200 women were expected to apply; more than 4,200 had become members as of mid-2008. The Fiskateers proved to be so passionate about their hobby that Fiskars staged events solely for group members. The four lead Fiskateers maintained a blog devoted to family, crafts, and everyday life. Some of their entries sparked hundreds of comments.

The bottom line: Within a year, sales of Fiskars supplies in stores that had been visited by a Fiskateer more than tripled. Online mentions of Fiskars products increased six-fold. Engineers in the U.S. headquarters began calling themselves "Fiskaneers." The influence of the scrapbooking enthusiasts convinced the conservative company to take its product line in directions it never before conceived, including the introduction of designer scissors with skull and crossbones on the blades. In short, the Fiskateers transformed Fiskars.

The Fiskars story embodies the best of what social media can accomplish on several levels. It started with listening to online conversations to develop a segmentation strategy. It continued with communities built around shared enthusiasm and conversation. It turned a team of a few thousand unpaid customers into a national field marketing

force. And, it transformed the culture of one of the oldest companies in the Western world.

If a company founded in 1649 can do this, so can you.

If you're reading this book, you've probably already bought into the idea that social media has some marketing value for your organization. Maybe you monitored some blogs or customer review sites and have witnessed people discussing your company and its products. You know that these people can be powerful advocates for you and that word-of-mouth marketing can spread a message more quickly and convincingly than conventional advertising.

Most marketers already understand this, at least at some level, but most also harbor some skepticism. The newness and unpredictability of the medium is scary, and measuring results is still more art than science. They also face resistance from higher-ups who think that conversation marketing is a flash in the pan or who simply can't adapt themselves to the atmosphere of trust, transparency, and two-way communications that this new world requires. The older higher-up people are, the more cynical they're likely to be. There's also a good chance that you report to them.

That's why this chapter will be devoted to making the case for social media in your organization. We'll start by looking at the most common objections and then present just some of the wealth of new statistical evidence that indicates the marketing profession is changing forever.

I'll state my biases up front. I spent more than 25 years in the publishing business, two-thirds of that time putting printed words on paper. So I understand conventional media pretty well. My specialty was technology, so I've also seen more than my share of fads. I've watched momentous change in which new markets emerged and venerable companies collapsed with blinding speed. Disruptive change can have cataclysmic results.

The growth and acceptance of the Web as a means to disseminate information has been nothing short of astounding. Many experts now predict that the Internet will become the world's largest advertising medium within the next three to five years. That means that the Internet will have gone from infancy to market dominance in just 17 years. In contrast, television took nearly 40 years to reach two-thirds of American homes.

Social media has given voice to millions of ordinary citizens who can now relate their experiences and opinions to a global audience at little or no cost. This is not a fad. People don't abandon technologies that make it easier for them to communicate. The sooner marketers dive in and begin experimenting with these new channels, the more success they'll have. In the chapters that follow, I'll try to offer you advice and examples from the early adopters that will help you focus your efforts and avoid mistakes.

I'm not one of those zealots who wants to convince you to abandon traditional marketing. Broadcast and print advertising, direct marketing, events, and other tried-and-true channels will have value long into the future. However, all the evidence points to these traditional media becoming less important over time, as the power to publish is distributed to you and me. The age of broadcast is nearly over and we must prepare ourselves for the new reality of small, highly focused communities.