

Pillars of Social Media



PR with LIF™

Social media is an essential LIF™ style communications tool

allowing a company or a brand to make personal connections with its customers. It's a living, breathing landscape across the web that touches hundreds of millions of people every moment of every day, in a place and at a time that is convenient for them. There is no doubt, social media is **changing the way companies interact** with their stakeholders. The JSH&A's Pillars of Social Media – the tenets we believe form the foundation of this dynamic universe – serve as a guide to all communications initiatives.

Community

Your enthusiasts are out there. They're fans of your product, evangelists of your brand. And there's strength in numbers.

Use social media to build a global community providing **a forum for fans** to gather, talk, share and discuss their experiences, questions, and observations. If customers are using the web to find information about your business, to talk about you, or to buy from you, they will be eager for your company to connect and engage in the conversation.

Online communities – whether on a blog or a forum, perhaps a photo sharing site – create a personal, more **intimate relationship between a business and its stakeholders**. When you take the further step to connect enthusiasts with each other, you'll not only find new advocates, but you'll encourage your customers to come back to engage with each other – and your company - again and again. The research is clear - fans bring new fans to the party.

Conversation

It's a new, **connected, interactive world** where everyone has a voice and can be heard. Companies can no longer shout their messages into the void and wait to be heard. Communication works best when there is a paradigm shift from "broadcasting" out to a two-way, interactive conversation between the company and its various stakeholders.

Those who know and love your business want to talk with you and about you. Those who don't know you or those who may know you but don't prefer your brand – or worse, disapprove or dislike your brand and/or products – they also need to **be engaged in a forthright discussion**. Conversation about your brand is happening online whether you're a part of it or not. Participating in the discussion to clarify issues, present facts and positions and generating new directions for discussion is a far more effective strategy than turning off the channel or shutting down the pipeline.

Listening is a pillar of good conversation, too. Businesses that converse well **learn to listen** to their communities. Your community wants to know that you are listening and that you hear them.

There are a multitude of channels for listening to the online conversation and for creating dynamic, engaged dialogue with your stakeholders. What you learn from this engaged community can **add exponential value** to your business, and create lasting relationships with your customers.



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Credibility

Open, transparent businesses engender trust with their customers and communities. In today's instant information society, businesses that are not transparent are assumed to have reason to hide. While previously businesses could create and control brand and corporate messages, they must now **be "forum" focused.**

The web has broken down the barriers. The online community is creating brand assets both for you, and in spite of you. Videos on *YouTube*. Photos on *Flickr*. Blog posts complimenting or criticizing your customer service. Podcasts by brand enthusiasts talking about your products. In reality, **your brand is owned now by the community** as much as it is by your company.

Smart companies are embracing this sea change and learning to work with their customers to redefine brands according to consumer relevance and need. Enlist online enthusiasts to serve as ambassadors for your brand and raise the bar for **brand collaboration and trust.**

Your **stakeholders are your greatest assets.** By listening to them, building relationships, and allowing them to participate in building your business, you demonstrate the value of their input, insights and opinions as a critical piece of your success.