

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of a wooden surface, showing the natural grain and texture of the wood in shades of brown and tan.

The Call of Social Media

CONSUMER GLOBAL SOCIAL MEDIA

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Deutsche Telekom has been using social media both to build its brand and improve customer service.

Social media has revolutionised media consumption and consumer behaviour. In Germany, 60% of people online already use social media sites like studiVZ, Twitter and Facebook.

This transformation has challenged conventional communication models. Marketers know they need to be where consumers are but many struggle to generate real benefits.

A recent survey – conducted by Social Media Examiner – found that 92% of marketers in Germany cited Facebook as their number one social media tool with 84% saying Twitter was of high importance for their company.

But it's not just the marketing department that's had to get to grips with a revolution. The range of company functions that can profit from social media extends from marketing to sales to customer support and beyond.

One brand that does seem to be thriving on these complex platforms is Deutsche Telekom, Germany's leading telecommunications provider. It's using social media to build both brand equity and benefit customers.

Two new initiatives in particular highlight the company's attempts to get to grips with the real benefits of social media.

A recent campaign entitled "Telekom Million Voices", featuring German singer Thomas D, invited everyone to join the biggest online choir in history. Launched using TV advertising as well as radio and social media it encouraged consumers to film themselves, with selected performances used as part of the campaign.

Another example of Telekom's ambitions in this area is new customer service channel @Telekom_hilft. This enables the company to interact via Twitter, Facebook as well as via <http://www.telekom-hilft.de> and more traditional call centres. Consumers can write their questions and opinions on Telekom_hilft-channels and get near real-time feedback from Deutsche Telekom's social media team.

We sat down with the initiators of Million Voices, Jürgen Wermuth, Head of Online Marketing and Social Media Telekom Deutschland, Volker Krön, Senior Manager Online and Social Media Marketing Telekom Deutschland, and the leader of the Telekom_hilft strategy, Andreas Bock, Head of Social Media Management Sales and Service Telekom Deutschland, to ask them about their approach to social media.

Q: How do you think communications has changed with the rise of social media platforms?

Jürgen Wermuth: With social media communication has become more direct. Both parties – companies and customers – gain a lot of advantages. Not only can customers and

companies talk to each other in a more direct way, but companies can also learn more about what customers think of their products. If a company learns to use this information in the right way, it can be of great value.

Q: How do you utilise social media as a gateway to consumers?

Andreas Bock: We chose a multichannel strategy to address our different target groups in the most appropriate way. Our Million Voices campaign and our customer service via “Telekom hilft” are good examples for this. While the customers can experience professional customer support via “Telekom hilft” channels, they can experience the brand, as well as quality of our products and network via the Million Voices campaign.

Q: How do you value social media benefits across different departments?

Volker Krön: We have established different information circles to align activities internally, share our experience and co-ordinate our communication. The idea is to ensure that all the company’s messages work together.

Q: How are you spreading social media expertise through your company?

JW: Deutsche Telekom has established a company-wide Enterprise 2.0 project, controlled by an office called Center of Excellence. Within this project we implement the company’s social media strategy, develop social media guidelines and share best practice efforts. Included on the working group are representatives from all departments that are engaged in 2.0 activities such as marketing, communications, HR, customer service and IT.

Q: What is the long-term impact of social media campaigns like Million Voices for Deutsche Telekom?

JW: The Million Voices campaign was designed to demonstrate the high quality of Deutsche Telekom’s mobile and fixed line network whilst giving consumer a chance to experience this quality in a highly emotional way. In general, social media and participatory campaigns perfectly express our brand claim “Life is for sharing” and create a dialogue, not

only between Deutsche Telekom and our customers, but also between customers.

Successful campaigns therefore have the potential to turn customers into long-term brand ambassadors.

Q: How do you assess the value of a social media campaign like Million Voices for Telekom?

VK: The assessment of social media campaigns takes into account two main factors. On the one hand, we have a lot of quantitative data such as fan numbers, video views or uploads, comments, likes, tweets and blog entries that can be measured quite precisely. This data expresses coverage and a degree of interactivity. On the other hand we also monitor the tonality of comments as a qualitative factor. In combination these two measures give us a very good picture how successful campaigns are.

Q: What metric is used as a benchmark for social media campaigns? Do you put a value on each fan?

JW: There is no comprehensive and widely accepted model for benchmarking owned and earned media in the social web. We expect such models to be developed in the next 12 months. Until then, we are using media equivalence calculations to define our Social Media ROI .

Q: How would you describe Telekom`s engagement in social media? Is Telekom just a sender brand or is it even more than that?

AB: We want to improve our customers' experience. Therefore we are trying to establish a dialogue with our customers and prospects to develop sustainable and valuable relationships. We also want to empower our existing customers to become loyal customers and brand advocates.

Q: How many people are responsible for customer support via Twitter and Facebook?

AB: We have 13 full-time employees who translate into 34 “faces to the customer”, because the team members work across several teams to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience.

Q: What are the crucial skills you need to be part of Telekom`s Twitter and Facebook team?

AB: The core competency is an excellent knowledge of our products and services and the enthusiasm to explore this new kind of conversation with customers. Customer service colleagues must be able to express themselves adequately in the context of Twitter and Facebook.

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