



Stakeholder Networking:

The means to
synchronize teams,
stay on message &
manage outreach



driving great brands

The means to synchronize teams, stay on message and manage media outreach.

Introduction

The volume and reach of conversations and story telling is expanding exponentially. The explosive growth of Facebook, MySpace and Feedburner would suggest that individuals are building out their own stakeholder communications networks around subjects and topics of direct interest to them. Traditional media outlets, PR firms, startup companies and established brands are sorting out how to embrace these new networks to enhance their position amongst members or bring these stories back to traditional media outlets. Regardless of why these networks have formed, the sheer number of conversations about today's leading brands has increased dramatically. Within Facebook, both BMW and the GOP have well over five hundred groups that are talking about their experiences, impressions and perspectives. Filmmaker Michael Moore's 2007 movie, Sicko, has generated over three hundred groups and related events.

What does this mean to established brands? Definitely more communications opportunities, but also, an increase in threats to ones brand. Today's external stakeholder networks are empowered with increasingly sophisticated applications and personal communication devices. The speed at which these conversations can turn into media enquiries has been irrevocably changed. So much so, that Michael Moore has recently posted pitching tips and a call to action, which include calling the local media with personal stories that augment the momentum behind his movie.

What does this mean to established brands?

With such pervasive communicating and networking tools available to the public, what new tools have emerged to manage end-to-end communications within large, established brands? What application keeps the right set of spokespeople, subject matter experts and executives aligned and effectively synchronized? An entirely new method of managing communications and stakeholder relationships is long overdue. Much like today's social networking tools, today's business communicators need a software application that brings managing, monitoring and measuring into a unified, subject driven collaborative set of business processes. The application needs to pull new positioning updates, media clips and commentary and discussion threads from a broader base of users that have a vested interest in the subject at hand.

Social networking needs a counterpart within today's business world. Stakeholder networking has now come of age.

Today's Communications and Relationship Management Environment

The advent of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software brought an automated set of processes for managing prospects, engaging them with offers, booking their orders and supporting them after the sale. According to AMR Research, 12 Billion US dollars was spent on CRM business application software in 2006. This class of software aims to bring greater precision, more control, speed and cost savings to the bottom line. Ironically, these applications have no impact on communications and interactions with other important stakeholders such as journalists, analysts, government representatives, bloggers and social network conversations. As one would expect, business people have cobbled together a set of desktop tools, disjointed portals and processes to manage communications and corporate reputation.

Today's standardized email and desktop software comes with hidden costs and business risks, compounded by the speed at which information can be shared with external networks.

What applications and conventions have people turned to? For well over twenty years, corporate email, cell phones and desktop office software have been the tools of choice for PR professionals working alongside their spokespeople, subject matter experts and executives. Additional monitoring tools and online media directories have also been added to the mix. Today's office environment is largely standardized in terms of email and desktop software. These accepted tools lower barriers to collaboration and communication, but they come with hidden costs and risks that are compounded by the speed at which information is being shared within external stakeholder networks.

Alignment Challenges Facing Large Brands



Email Overloadus

Defined: having an email inbox overflowing with irrelevant messages and attachments that lack context, additional background information and priority

Each and every day, 55 billion email messages filter through the Internet and corporate networks. Using an email client as a communications project management system is ineffective, unproductive and introduces needless risk. When you consider the impact of distribution lists and peers wanting to copy you with FYI emails and news clips, we quickly lose track of important messages and context when we really need the information. This PUSH model of communication creates more messages, replies, additional threads to track, or worse, unread messages. When a journalist calls and you track down the latest positioning statement, how do you know if you are reading off the correct version? Better send another email, just to be sure!



Document Versionitis

Defined: having the wrong version of an important file at the inopportune time

This challenge is a natural consequence of using email or a file system as a central communications repository. Document attachments simply get out of date the moment they are sent out. Documents that are sent out for approval can lack context - if one is looking to approve a positioning statement or campaign message, how does the approver quickly track down background information, relevant monitoring notes, or a discussion thread on the topic at hand? They cannot. Approvers invariably generate a new thread of email looking for additional offline information. This ultimately generates more Email Overloadus!



Date Conflictus

Defined: not having visibility into upcoming media events, the agendas, participants, draft or final deliverables

With the appropriate technical support or authorized provider, one can eventually post media specific events to a shared calendar system. Usually, one simply resorts to calendar invitations through email client system. Planning for a media event is challenging enough. Before committing, team members need to check the expected PR volume on the planned release day or week in question. Who in the organization is tracking expected competitor announcements? How many other divisions are talking to the media on the planned release date? Information is simply offline or inaccessible. Finding information consumes valuable time and generates more Email Overloadus across the company. Communications people generally lack a holistic or real-time view into what media events are proposed or happening on a local, national or global scale.



Call Log Invisibilitus

Defined: not having visibility into media call details such as date, time, inquiry subject, media representative, employee and detailed called notes.

Imagine calling a friendly journalist or thought leader to test a pitch you are looking to refine. Your PR agency just completed a similar call, took detailed notes and emailed them to you. Thanks to Email Overloadus, you both misunderstood roles and outcomes. Today's desktop tools do not provide any form of call logging transparency that would inform you of who made a call to whom, what the subject was, what campaign or issue it was related to, what the feedback was, and what pending call may be needed to close the discussion. Similarly, there is no immediate way of knowing who in your organization an inbound journalist just spoke to. No amount of urgent email looking for call notes will solve this problem.

Today's accepted tools and established processes are simply not designed to keep up with an increasingly larger base of communications opportunities, threats and corporate scrutiny. Companies today are increasingly challenged to keep their global communications teams, spokespersons, subject matter experts and third party advisors aligned throughout the communications lifecycle. From inception through to measurement, there are simply too many messages, emails, attachments, cuts and pastes, and disjointed portals. In the aggregate, all of these tools, files and portals have ultimately lowered productivity and increased communications risk.

A new Communications and Stakeholder Relationship Management Process

What has been lacking is a unified communications and stakeholder relationship management application that can work across departments, divisions, addresses and organizational boundaries. In today's social networking gestalt, there has never been a better time to consider a new application designed to help monitor, manage and measure more communications opportunities and threats, while lowering risk.

Five years ago, dna13 introduced communications and stakeholder relationship management (SRM) software to Canada's largest public companies in the communications and banking sectors. These companies were drawn to its subject-centric communications management processes that could be mapped to their organizational dna. Since then, several multi-national companies such as Ernst & Young, Manulife and McDonald's have embraced dna13 software on a national and global scale.

Why embrace SRM and Stakeholder Networking?

Centralized Content

As previously noted, static files and emails introduce a set of productivity and accuracy challenges when managing campaigns, issues and associated media outreach. Using a centralized, online application powered by a secure database, means authorized users can access and update information from a single source, regardless of where they are in the world. From a productivity and accuracy perspective, a SRM solution offers:

- » up to the minute information on positioning, background information, media calls and emails, monitoring clips and commentary - all from a centralized and secure location at the click of a mouse;
- » complete and up-to-the-second transparency on media emails, calls and discussion notes that have been logged into the campaign or issue at hand;
- » corporate memory on campaigns and issues that resurface several quarters or years later.

Integrated Communications Management

An integrated SRM application includes all the tools, content and functions that enable communications management, media and Internet monitoring and measurement of results. Users need not log into several portals, applications and email to manage their campaigns and issues, monitor the environment and measure the reach, tonality and overall score of results. Since it also captures user activity, it also provides insight into trends that can help managers and executives justify additional investment, redirect strategy as required, and flag emerging issues to watch.

Leverage Your Geniuses

Outside of today's large organizations, there are smart people with vested interests linking up and communicating on topics and agendas that excite or concern them. Within organizations today, departmental silos, geographical distances and outdated tools prevent smart and creative people from harnessing each

other's perspective and creativity on communication campaigns and corporate issues. A SRM application provides the means to securely push the software out to business users, subject matter experts and executives who need to be collaborating in real time, much like people are doing within social networks. Third party consultants, focus groups and bloggers can also be brought into select projects to review and comment on positioning, backgrounders or survey questions.

Media monitoring has traditionally been conducted by a centralized team - the reality is there are internal employees and engaged PR agencies that are reading breaking stories the minute they are published. These people get near real time impressions on tonality and article prominence. Their perspective on the story is likely voiced over lunch or at the impromptu hallway meeting. Why not leverage such geniuses in real time? It would help the organization measure their media coverage faster than any single person or group. Capturing subject matter expert commentary streamlines an organization's learning, accelerates decision making and makes for better messaging around corporate campaigns and issues.

Conclusion

Highly focused groups are increasingly connecting themselves through the Internet via the blogosphere and social networks. Organizations that more efficiently synchronize subject matter experts, executives, creative thinkers and corporate spokespersons will be better positioned to meet the head on opportunities and threats associated with an increasingly connected society. dna13 has delivered an end-to-end, on demand software application that delivers communications and stakeholder relationship management. It provides the means to synchronize teams, keep people on message and manage media outreach.

Now is the time to leverage your geniuses in a secure, collaborative Stakeholder Networking forum. Find out more at dna13.com