The CEO's Guide to Social Media
What Every CEO Needs to Know about Social Media

New digital technologies are not trends, fads, or only relevant to companies in the technology industry. Social media, cloud computing, and mobility are seismic shifts in the technology ecosystem and are as significant today as the introduction of the PC and internet were over the past two decades.

Social media is 1 of 3 technology areas that cannot be ignored
Three areas of technology that will unequivocally affect every business over the coming years are: social media, cloud computing, and mobility.

If your business (regardless of industry) has not yet accounted for how these technologies can or will affect you, you may be falling behind. If embraced, these technologies have the capability to reduce costs, increase efficiency, expand scale, and, ultimately, enhance profitability. If ignored, these technologies may put your company at a tremendous competitive disadvantage and unmitigated, unnecessary risk.

Social media not only provides direct marketing avenues, but also allows for better customer service, more control over public relations and increases collaboration among employees. Here is a quick guide to what every CEO needs to know about social media.

Social media is not just for social networking.
Do you have employees? Do you have customers? Do you do marketing or advertising of any sort? If you answered yes to any of these questions but have not embraced social media, you could be missing out on fundamental opportunities to improve your business.

Here are 4 ways every business can leverage social media:

1. Internal communication
   Long gone are the days of tedious and time-consuming e-mail exchanges and hours-long conference calls and meetings. Social media technology enables enterprises to collaborate and communicate in more effective and efficient ways than ever before.

   Many companies already use chat applications to help their employees communicate quickly and easily without having to send e-mails or pick up the phone. Business-focused social media applications take the idea of quicker communication and collaboration to the next level.

   What is Social Media?
   What is Social Media? What are Social Media Sites?
   This article explains what social media is and differentiates between the different kinds of social media websites: social news, wikis, social networking, social bookmarking, and social photo and video sharing.

   A New Definition of Social Media
   This blog, written by a Gartner researcher, outlines an in-depth study on the evolution of social media. The new definition given to social media is as follows, “At its foundation, social media is a set of technologies and channels targeted at forming and enabling a potentially massive community of participants to productively collaborate.”
Private social networks
The advent of public social networks in the consumer space have spawned ingenious applications that take the essence of what makes those applications great (easy messaging and conversations, status updates, content sharing, collaborative feedback, self-updated contact information) and turned them into incredibly useful business tools.

Applications like Salesforce.com's Chatter and Yammer have harnessed these tools as a part of business-focused applications.

The following example shows how any company can benefit from a private social network:

Scenario: Where’s Thomas?
You need to reach Thomas, an employee of yours, to see the status of a PowerPoint deck you want to use in a customer pitch.

Now: You call Thomas's office phone, only to get voicemail. You call his cell phone, but it also goes straight to voicemail. You e-mail him and get no reply. You try these over and over to no avail, only to get frustrated and angered, all without having the latest presentation you need. When you do finally reach Thomas, it will not be a pleasant conversation!

With a private social network: You visit Thomas's profile and see his latest status update: "Returning from client meeting in San Francisco. Land in NYC at 6:45pm." You check the project file you've been collaborating on through your private social network called "New Customer Pitch Deck." You see he uploaded the latest version at 9am this morning, with the comment "This deck is ready to go, boss!" You know where Thomas is. You have the deck you needed. All is right with the world.

With a private social network, you can communicate easily. You can see what each employee is doing at any time of the day. You can collaborate on projects and files with commentary, so you never lose track of what's going on and where people are.

There are also several other great online collaboration tools that have a subset of the features of a full private social network. They are great for project management and collaborative working. Examples of these are Basecamp, AtTask, and AceProject.

2. Customer Service
Your customers have shifted their communication and consumption habits, and it's important that you do the same. You need to be able to talk to your customers in the way that they prefer to communicate. Even if you are a B2B company, the end-users of your products or services are, in fact, people.
Customer service is an incredible use of social media. By using Twitter, you can communicate quickly and easily with customers who have questions or who are frustrated with your goods or services.

Twitter allows you to see all the places where customers mention you, and also allows them to message you directly to solve their problems. This accessibility can prevent communication gaps that lead to disgruntled and unhappy customers.

Companies like Dell, Comcast, Zappos, EMC, Microsoft and many more respond directly to customers through Twitter. This not only helps to give good customer service, but also helps to promote your company as a customer-focused brand that will and fix problems as soon as they start.

Twitter can also allow companies to assist customers with any product-related issues, or to recognize unhappy clients and work to fix their problems. An unhappy customer in the twitter-sphere can do damage to a company reputation. There are many customer-service use possibilities; Twitter helped a company named Twirll assist an unhappy customer, keep the customer from moving to a competitor, and creating strong brand loyalty with that customer as well.

Any company can use Twitter in this way to manage and assist customers – which is great for brand loyalty and customer-retention. Not to mention, having your customer service representatives on Twitter can help you to manage your reputation closely and address any negativity before it goes viral.

3. Brand Awareness and Content Marketing

Press releases and distributed content are costly, time consuming, and often ineffective. With the advent of social media, you can now promote your brand and distribute promotional content inexpensively and easily.

Editorial content that describes your company and its products is a phenomenally successful way to inform potential customers and to enhance existing customers’ satisfaction. Instead of issuing press releases or hiring a marketing firm to write an article about you in a trade publication, you can create friendly, first-person "blog-like" content and distribute it for free over your social media channels. Content like this is also great for search engine optimization (SEO), not to
mention company reputation and image management.

4. Personal Reputation and Industry Expertise

Not every company needs a celebrity CEO to help their brand, but being a CEO who is identified as an expert and thought leader in your industry has tremendous benefits.

By using social media channels, you can build your personal brand and reputation for the end goal of promoting your business and building your customers' trust in you. Many CEOs use channels like Twitter and Facebook to highlight relevant industry news and updates and to show that they are on top of any changes in their industry.

There are newly-popular expertise social networks, like Quora, where users answer questions on specific topics to build their personal reputation as experts in those areas. Though most CEOs are too busy to be active participants on discussion sites such as these, by following topics that relate to your business or industry, you can be notified when there is a conversation in which you would like to participate.

5. Public Relations

Multi-channel communication is an approach that has proven to be successful time and again. Now, multi-channel communication includes social media as a distinct and powerful channel that provides for direct interactions with individuals and not just passive ones. You can truly communicate with your audience and customers, not just send communications to them.

By being active on social networks, you can handle public relations situations quickly and easily. If there is a debacle of any sort, you can be on top of the story by making immediate posts. You don't have to issue press releases to get your news heard. For example, look at Taco Bell’s public relations and litigation nightmare in early 2011. When a lawsuit alleged that Taco Bell’s products only contain 88 percent beef, the fast food chain was blasted with negative publicity.

Taco Bell used social media to mitigate the controversy and to defend itself. Instead of remaining silent, or issuing a press release, Taco Bell took the bull by the horns and began a search engine marketing campaign. Web-surfers were immediately taken to Taco Bell’s point of view – including nutritional facts – instead of negative stories from the other side.

Company president, Greg Creed, published an official Youtube video and the company promoted online an offer for a free taco so that customers could test the meat for themselves.

By taking widespread and proactive action that engaged customers, Taco Bell was able to save its reputation.
The reality is that social media is becoming ubiquitous. In fact, IBM has deemed social technology to be so important for the future of business that the company has shifted focus from ‘social media’ to ‘social business.’

Social media is more than just Facebook and its uses are more complex than meets the eye. A company can change the way its employees work together, control its public image, and get to know its customers all through the use of social media applications. Complex organizations are becoming increasingly aware that social technologies are changing the face of business, and that these strategies will be integral to future successes.

Any company can benefit from adopting social media technologies; it’s just a matter of finding the right fit.

7 Takeaways from IBM’s Senior Manager of Digital and Social Strategy:

1. Social media will be dwarfed by social business – social media is more than a marketing tool, it is a way to run your business.
2. People do business with people, not companies – social technology emphasizes the human relationship.
3. Your employees need to be digital citizens, too – you’ll need to train your employees in these new processes.
4. Your company should start small when it comes to social technologies.
5. You can use social tools to promote good business.
6. Email creates silos in work efforts instead of fostering collaboration.
7. It’s okay to fail as long as you do it quickly – that way you won’t be too invested in a failed venture.

Read the complete article >
Join peer CEOs at the
CEOtech Summit: The CEO's Role in Harnessing Emerging Technology
Including Mobility, Social Media, and the Cloud

Stanford Graduate School of Business Knight Management Center
Palo Alto, CA
October 18–19, 2011

- Learn how emerging mobile, cloud, social media and analytic technologies may alter your business model and what existing or new competitors may do.

- See which technologies can improve your customer relationships, employee engagement, operational efficiency, sales and marketing effectiveness and other key business functions.

- Hear about pitfalls to avoid from peer CEOs who have already traveled these paths.

- Meet, connect and brainstorm with fellow CEOs committed to innovation.

Learn more about CEOtech >>

Use Event Code GUIDE2 for $200 off on the event registration fee.