

## The social media alter ego

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In less than 140 characters, Avinash Kaushik summed up the biggest problem in social media with a single tweet...*"Social media is like teen sex, Everyone wants to do it. No one actually knows how. When finally done, there's surprise it's not better."*

Avinash, I wish you were wrong. I'm tired of watching marketers dive feet first into the social media deep end with no swim trunks on. This isn't like us. We're not supposed to be the people who waste time and money figuring it out as we go. We're supposed to be the people who strategize, measure, refine and produce. So why are we behaving this way?

Maybe our problem is that social media is so new, smart and sexy. Without standards, we act out-of-character -- like when we meet people with these traits. We try to talk but say the wrong things. We spend too much money on them. We make regretful mistakes.

It's time for marketers to snap out of it and return to the responsible people who we are supposed to be - the ROI people. When we use social media wisely, it can be productive and profitable. Here's how.

**Use it to listen.** Social media is more than *a place to build something*. It's one of the richest, untapped data sources accessible today. Where else can you find up-to-the-second audience insights based on millions of conversations? Every second, social tells us exactly what our audience is thinking and what we can do to win their business. Priceless.

**Use it to respond.** Social media is more than a place to *push a marketing message*. Here, your audience is talking about your brand and competitors. Say something back. Start a dialog, like in any other service channel. You can save existing customers and win new ones too.

**Use it to drive action.** Social media is more than a place to *create award-winning campaigns*. It's a place to get customers to do something... affordably. Use social, for example, to augment online media buys. Get qualified leads who are responding to your relationship, not your one-off communication.

