



Guest Blogger Jeff Hilimire: 1to1toMany Marketing

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One-to-one marketing: the ability to reach an individual rather than a segment, and the ultimate goal of every marketer. Marketing to a segment of one is such a difficult feat to attain that there are entire magazines, conferences, websites, and blogs dedicated to it. And thanks to the age of the Internet, reaching a consumer directly and personalizing that experience has had a major revitalization.

However, all that is changing rapidly. It would seem the Internet has been the best friend of the one-to-one marketer, but now is making one-to-one marketing less relevant on a daily basis. Over the past few years the evolution of the Internet has created a new social connectivity, allowing people to not only get personalized content when, where and how they want it, but also to share that content and their experiences with their friends and connections.

Sharing behavior is easily the fastest-growing activity on the Web. According to Universal McCann, more than 60 percent of Internet users worldwide have created a social network profile. In fact, more than 350 million people are using Facebook alone. That's more than the entire population of the United States.

What this means for marketers is that in today's world, you aren't marketing to a person, but rather to a person *and* their collective network. I call this **1to1toMany Marketing**. Your customers are now another extension of media for your company. And, today, a form of media that people actually trust. Even one bad experience with an influential customer, and suddenly you've got 300 to 500 people that you have to repair the damage with, and that's only if those people don't spread the word.

However, there's also a massive upside for marketers who can take advantage of 1to1toMany marketing. You're able to forge a deeper relationship with your customers, build trust and loyalty, and ultimately create brand evangelists.

It can be overwhelming trying to wrap your head around social and what it would mean to begin entering the space. To help overcome this hurdle, we've established a five-step process to getting started in social marketing.

Listen. Before you do anything else, listen to the chatter -- what people are already saying about your brand, your industry, and your competitors. Observe where they're saying it and to whom. This is the most important step, as it helps you really understand how to begin a social relationship with your customers.

Find your voice. In the social world, your voice is your brand. Before you start this journey, it's important to decide what your brand would *sound* like if it actually talked to people -- because, soon, it will.

Build the channels. At this point, it's time to create the spaces where your brand will live. These should be mediums that your customers are either already using heavily or are moving toward. At the moment, at least, these channels are likely to include Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Join the conversation. By this time, you have your channel built and you're ready to start interacting with customers. Be prepared for anything. You might be looking at social as a way to drive more sales or generate awareness, but, at first, your customers might have something else in mind. You might find that your customers are looking for a way to vent about your latest product. And, that's OK. Actually, it's great, because it provides a mechanism for your business to improve. Plus, they're almost definitely venting in other places, so you might as well join the conversation.

Measure. Without engagement and measurement you can't be successful in a space as fluid and dynamic as digital and social marketing. It's critical to always assess your social strategy. Flexibility is essential.

Companies that embrace the notion of 1to1toMany will find themselves in a great position for success in the social space - and beyond. Because 1to1toMany is about building influence as much as it is about building relationships, brands can't ignore "the network" carried by their customers. Those who act swiftly and diligently win.

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