

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PARTNERS

Too Late! You've Lost Control of Your Brand!



While some smug marketers may still regale their CEOs with stories of their stewardship of their brand's image, signs on the horizon say they've likely lost control (perhaps without even knowing it)! A recently reported study from [Cone Research's Online Influence Trend Tracker](#) sheds additional light. Cone reports that:

- 80% of consumers report having changed their minds about purchasing a *recommended* product or service based on negative information they found online (up from 68% of consumers who said the same in 2010).
- 87% of consumers reported that positive information they read online reinforced a decision to purchase a product or service *recommended* to them (compared to 80% in 2010).

The references to "online information" suggest that company-controlled outlets (websites, Facebook pages and Twitter feeds, etc.) still wield some influence. But by the numbers of entries it seems that the tsunami of online statements and opinions from countless thousands of consumers washes aside marketers' efforts into a shallow tidal pool. Observers are now claiming that despite the efforts of corporate marketers, by sheer volume alone, consumers have "taken control" of the image of 'most' brands.

Where Did the Original Recommendation Originate?

Perhaps lost in all the headlines proclaiming the growing impact of online media is one key word: "**recommended**". Yes, consumers are going online to validate planned purchase decisions, but they are typically doing so after having received a *personal recommendation*; most likely offline from a friend, neighbor, relative, co-worker, or perhaps even a complete stranger. So, "Yes", all that public, online-word of mouth is having a huge impact on confirmation or rejection of what they thought might be a good product or service to buy. But it's the private word of mouth (offline and online - through phone conversations, face-to-face conversations, emails, and text messages) that's still driving the awareness, consideration, and purchase in the first place!

Marketers Still Have a Chance

It's not that marketers should pack their bags and give up the battle. Rather marketers need to allocate more of their communications resources in the direction of their *existing customers*. We've long maintained that companies tend to overlook the potential influence of their current customers as "brand ambassadors" - we call them **everyday advocates**. Marketers need to not only help customers 1.) have more to say; they also need to 2.) prepare and encourage those customers to find opportunities to voice their opinions about a brand -- to build consumer preference, and then prepare the consumer to act.

To learn more about how corporations and other organizations can **Identify and Arm** their best potential *customer advocates*, contact us :

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