

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PARTNERS, LLC

## Private + Public Word of Mouth



Customer centricity preaches aligning one's business and products/services with one's customers' desires and needs. In the past marketing research initiatives (including, but not limited to) customer satisfaction surveys; comment card programs and shopper intercept interviews have been used to collect the required insights. But, these processes have been expensive and skeptics have questioned if they fairly represent the vast number of unsurveyed customers.

The recent growth of the *public social media* (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) has seemingly "revolutionized" the monitoring process. Now customers can voluntarily express their satisfactions and dissatisfactions with business organizations, replacing the surveys of yesterday. Companies have greeted the "view" the social media offer as a "gift"....one that's free; without obligation; and captured without any marketing research. But while the accessibility of word of mouth has greatly increased, it's not without its problems.

The first problem is the visibility of customer feedback logged in the public social media. When negative word of mouth is posted an infinite number of other customers are impacted. A personal issue suddenly becomes public. A second problem is customers' expectations. Recent studies, including one from Conversocial, remind us that when customers post a question or a problem **they expect a response** – and they expect it fast. **Yet more than 60% aren't getting a response** because proper monitoring of and timely response to customers' unhappy posts has proven more expensive than imagined.

But, a more important issue (one reminiscent of the criticisms leveled at the traditional marketing research initiatives) is just how representative is publicly posted word of mouth? In several of our previous emailers we've pointed out that public word of mouth is only a fraction of total word of mouth. A current study from Microsoft reiterates this message with a finding that **90% of word of mouth takes place offline** in what we call the *private social media* (text messaging, phone calls, emails, and face-to-face conversations). Is the tonality and are the themes conveyed in the *private* social media representative of those in *public* social media? We're willing to bet there are some considerable differences – which means that audits of only the public social media are probably misleading corporate responses.

Marketers really owe it to their brands to monitor total word of mouth. That means auditing the public social media and conducting some marketing research to sample private social media activity. Those who aren't: 1) can't identify the key strengths they could be leveraging and critical problems they need to fix, 2) don't really understand whether word of mouth is helping their business grow or 'poisoning the well' for the future, 3) can't know how their word of mouth compares to the word of mouth of their competitors, and 4) lack a process to quantify whether the money they are spending to stimulate additional word of mouth is delivering positive results. But they could.

To learn about quantifying your **total** word of mouth using the Customer Experience Partners **Buzz Barometer™**, contact us:

[yavra@customerexperiencepartners.com](mailto:yavra@customerexperiencepartners.com) or [pruden@customerexperiencepartners.com](mailto:pruden@customerexperiencepartners.com).

CUSTOMER  
EXPERIENCE  
PARTNERS,  
LLC

DOUG PRUDEN—TERRY VAVRA

[www.customerexperiencepartners.com](http://www.customerexperiencepartners.com)

P.O. Box 574  
Allendale, NJ 07401  
Phone: 203-655-0090

Unsubscribe: [unsubscribe@customerexperiencepartners.com](mailto:unsubscribe@customerexperiencepartners.com)

Copyright 2012