

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PARTNERS

## How Online Chat Misrepresents Total Word of Mouth



It's probably no surprise that small businesses are embracing Facebook, Twitter and now Groupon to drive their marketing. And what are their goals? A recent study tells us their primary use of online channels is lead generation. But what would you think is the second leading use? According to a study by Adology (presented by eMarketer), small businesses are using online channels to "Monitor what is being said about their businesses"!

From our point of view, that's a short-sighted view! Let us explain why.

Listening to customers and monitoring their feedback *is* very important. But the way one listens is critical. If a manager believes that by monitoring a few of the most popular blogs or customer review sites that he/she is gaining an objective and fully representative view of how customers feel about her and what is being said about him in the marketplace, he/she is making a big mistake!

Why? Because online chat and posts are only a small part of the total "word of mouth" about a brand or company. Last September, a study in Adweek reported that among teens the **vast majority of word of mouth takes place either face-to-face (75%) or by phone (10%)**. Only 13% of teen chat occurred online. A study two years earlier from Keller Fay presented strikingly similar findings with offline word of mouth accounting for 92% of conversations (75% face to face; 17% phone), versus email, IM/text messaging and chatroom/blogs accounting for only 7%. That study further reported that **of-line communication** remained the predominant mode of word of mouth across all age groups (ranging from 80% among the youngest group to 97% among the oldest).

In other words, monitoring online sites and responding to individual problems and questions is now a necessity. But confining one's review to only online communications is a huge mistake since online accounts for only a fraction of total word of mouth. A fraction that can be badly skewed by a small group of customers.

For more about the way to gain a more representative and objective view of what is being said about your brand, and more importantly what you can do about it, call **Customer Experience Partners** or visit our website:

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

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EXPERIENCE  
PARTNERS**

P.O. Box 574  
Allendale, NJ 07401  
Phone: 203-655-0090  
Email: [pruden-vavra@customerexperiencepartners.com](mailto:pruden-vavra@customerexperiencepartners.com)

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