

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PARTNERS

Word of Mouth: Public or Private?

Considering the actions of many of today's "media savvy" companies – those regularly reported as active on the most popular public social networks - one might conclude that the only word of mouth that matters is the opinions circulating **publicly** online. Maintain a healthy relationship with that handful of one's customers who are: the most active bloggers, the key Tweeters, and/or those customers with the largest Facebook fan bases, and some would say you've done your job. This accolade reinforces today's fascination with publicly shared opinions; especially those shared on the newer online social communities.

Not so fast – This just in

We've tracked the channels for word of mouth over the last decade, and it's not as one-sided as conventional wisdom would have it. For example, two years ago it was reported that a full 92% of word of mouth "conversations" actually occur offline; in private interactions; not online! Yesterday's news you say? Well, consider a Nielsen Company August 2010 report: *While Americans may be spending a lot of time online, they are also increasing cellphone activity. The average American female now talks over 850 cell-minutes a month while the average male is spending over 660 cell-minutes each month.* [We classify cellphone conversations as **private** interactions.] This devotion to personal conversations doesn't appear to be headed toward extinction. Seventy-five percent of 12-17-year-olds (up from 45% in 2004) now own cellphones and are building lifetime habits of conducting private conversations. These teens, as well as 18-24 and even 25-34 year olds not only talk privately (632, 981 and 952 cell-minutes respectively per month) but they also text one another. Nielsen figures show the teens sending 90+ text messages every day, the 18-24 year olds sending 43 per day and the 25-34 year olds averaging approximately 20 per day (a 'mere' 592 text messages each month).

Who's Saying What?

We've learned that a respectable proportion of private word of mouth includes comments about brands and companies. But current discussions of this content treat it as inviolate. Because countless studies show that comments about brands and companies are predominated by negative information, one dares not leave the content of these messages to chance! To combat this, brands need to stimulate more positive word of mouth.

Understanding the triggers of word of mouth, Customer Experience Partners has developed a unique tool called **Identifying & Arming Customer Advocates**. It isolates individual customers who are most motivated to communicate positively about a brand, provides them with "stories" to tell and creates opportunities to communicate. The result? More positive word of mouth. To learn more, visit our website: www.customerexperiencepartners.com or call us to discuss.

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