

The New Community Rules: Marketing on the Social Web

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Abstract

Book Review: The New Community Rules: Marketing on the Social Web by Tamar Weinberg

Keywords

Community Rules, Social Web, internet

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The New Community Rules: Marketing on the Social Web

Kelsey Hall

Book Title

The New Community Rules: Marketing on the Social Web

Author

Tamar Weinberg

Publisher

O'Reilly Media, Sebastopol, CA, 2009.

Additional Information

346 pages. \$24.99, paperback, ISBN 978-596-15681-7

The Internet has evolved from being a source of information to becoming a “social web” where individuals interact with peers through blogs, Twitter, social networks, wikis, and social news websites to gather information used to make well-researched choices. Tamar Weinberg wrote *The New Community Rules: Marketing on the Social Web* to provide readers with strategies for successfully marketing ideas and products using social media.

The book is divided into 12 chapters that discuss the following topics: social media marketing, goal setting for social media marketing campaigns, participating in social communities, blogging, twittering, joining social networks, answering informational social networks, using social bookmarking sites, writing for social news websites, using new media tactics, and packaging social media marketing tactics.

In the first chapter, the book defines the different types of social media and reviews concepts of social media marketing. The author explains that social media marketing strategies are different than traditional advertising tactics because companies no longer have control of their messages. Weinberg stresses that companies can use social media marketing to improve search engine results, increase traffic, increase brand awareness, and increase sales of products and services. Yet, companies cannot blindly enter social media marketing campaigns without good planning, marketing goals, participation, and a long-time commitment. Participation is necessary for building authentic relationships between a company and customers, which would be violated if social media tools were used to only

promote products. Weinberg writes “Heuer asserts that the best marketing minds are those who participate in the communities they service and don’t just aim to sell products directly to the people... Pitching products and services is an outdated tactic that will not be well received among individuals who have either grown tired of the same old marketing message strategies or who have gotten accustomed to the newer tactics of social media engagement” (p. 64).

Seven chapters provide background on social media tools, describe how the tools work, and explain how to use the tools for marketing campaigns. The sections about blogs and Twitter are written for an audience with little to no experience with using these tools. Even though blogs have existed for more than 10 years, Weinberg elaborates on the features and functionality of different blog platforms. Additionally, the author explains how the appearance and content are different for blog posts than traditional press releases that advertise services or products. She provides advice on writing corporate blog posts, especially writing headlines, using visual elements, linking to resources, using interviews, writing reviews of relevant products/services, and listening to readers. Weinberg could provide more case studies of good corporate blogs to better understand the advice for how to use blogs as a marketing tool. However, Weinberg’s advice is more detailed than tips published by Shama Hyder Kabani in *The Zen of Social Media Marketing*. Kabani only rehashes basic tips for writing blog posts, which are not detailed enough for novice users and too basic for existing bloggers.

The chapter on Twitter relates to the strategies presented in the book *Twitter Power*, particularly in how companies can use Twitter for marketing purposes. *Twitter Power* and Weinberg’s book both stress that successful Twitter users engage in building and facilitating relationships. More importantly, the most successful businesses use Twitter to monitor conversations and respond to tweets. For novice users, Weinberg does an excellent job in defining Twitter tools used by the Twitter community. The author explains how users can access Twitter through Seemic Desktop, TweetDeck, and TwitterFox instead of logging into Twitter directly. The book recommends three URL shorteners (cli.gs, TinyURL, bit.ly) since Twitter limits tweets to 140 characters. Marketers and academic researchers interested in Twitter can use the tools related to Twitter to learn about their account activity, number of followers, authority, reach, and influence.

The book is different from other social media and social media marketing books in that the author added information about the background and use of social bookmarking. Social bookmarking allows Internet users to store, organize, and share their bookmarks on the Internet. Even though Weinberg provides information on installing StumbleUpon, a social content discovery engine with bookmarking features, the instructions are vague for novice users. The author even claims that the bookmarking tool might be challenging if companies have social media marketing goals that focus on community involvement. However, marketers and teaching faculty could benefit from reading about Diigo, a social bookmarking network. Diigo allows registered users to access bookmarks from anywhere, search bookmark collections, write notes for a bookmarked page, highlight text in a bookmarked page, and share bookmarks with other users. Marketers could use this social media tool to share a blog or website with a group of Diigo users who have similar interests. Students could search their teacher’s bookmarking site to conduct research on a topic.

Weinberg includes case studies that describe how companies like Tyson Foods, Home Depot, Southwest Airlines, and Burger King have used social media to promote their products and services. Readers would learn how social media marketing campaigns are different than other types of marketing and receive ideas for what other companies can do. Each case study focuses on how a company has used one social media tool to develop issue awareness, improve customer relations, or create

brand awareness. As a textbook for teaching undergraduate or graduate students how to use social media marketing, the case studies would provide realistic situations that are written in clear, concise paragraphs. Agricultural communications practitioners could use the case studies as ideas for how to implement a social media marketing campaign that is effective in developing followers of the information. Specifically, the author uses a case study about Tyson Foods to show how the company found no social media tool that discussed its interest in national and local hunger relief efforts. Therefore, Tyson Foods launched its Tyson Foods Hunger Relief blog to share information with a community of individuals concerned about hunger relief and to create awareness of hunger problems.

The Tyson Foods case study provides an example for how agricultural communications practitioners could generate support for ideas, services, or products without using persuasive sales messages. Additionally, the Southwest Airlines case study would show how bloggers enjoyed reading personal stories about the airline employees. Since the United States has roughly 2% of its population directly employed in the agricultural industry, agricultural communications practitioners could write blog posts about the family farmers who provide food and clothing material for Americans. A social media marketing campaign using a blog could generate awareness and appreciation for the agricultural industry.

The author's credibility and knowledge can explain why the book can thoroughly cover many social media tools for marketing purposes. Weinberg is a writer and Internet marketing consultant who specializes in blogger outreach, social media, viral marketing, reputation management, and search engine marketing. She has served as the community support & advertising manager at Mashable since 2007. Additional social media marketing information can be found on her personal blog located at techipedia.com.

Overall, the book would be valuable for practitioners who want to learn how to more effectively and efficiently use social media for campaigns. The book is also useful as a reference since it includes endnotes for each chapter, a social media etiquette handbook, and a list of recommended books and blogroll.

About the Author

Kelsey Hall is an assistant professor of agricultural communication and journalism at Utah State University.