



## Social Media in Strategic Management

Social Media Champions – Drivers and Sophistication Process of Social Media Strategic Management

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### Article information:

**To cite this document:** Lukasz M. Bochenek Sam Blili . "Social Media Champions – Drivers and Sophistication Process of Social Media Strategic Management" *In Social Media in Strategic Management*. Published online: 11 Sep 2014; 143-167.

Permanent link to this document:

[http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1877-6361\(2013\)0000011012](http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1877-6361(2013)0000011012)

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## Chapter 8

# Social Media Champions — Drivers and Sophistication Process of Social Media Strategic Management

Lukasz M. Bochenek and Sam Blili

### Abstract

*Purpose* — This chapter presents results of a qualitative study among European champions in social media management. It aims to describe a strategic process and its implications for social media strategic management.

*Methodology/approach* — The chapter is based on four in-depth case studies involving both primary and secondary data analysis and interviews.

*Findings* — Social media management is governed by similar principles as corporate communication management. However, there is an important role of personal preferences of senior executives for an effectiveness of the strategic process.

*Practical implications* — The model allows describing the social media management in the multinational companies. Organizational learning process drawn in this chapter can be directly applied in the multinational companies from various industries.

*Social implications* — Social media create an environment in which established actors need to learn how to communicate socially. Sophistication of the tools requires sophistication of the strategies and processes.

*Originality/value of chapter* — This chapter analyzes companies from various industries which are considered successful in social media strategic management. It creates a model which is applicable in various industries. It provides also insights into social media strategies from the research among social media global leaders.

**Keywords:** Social media; sophistication; organizational learning; corporate communication

## Introduction

“Social Network” — the movie, “You” as a person of the year of TIME magazine — social media are clearly present in the current media discourse. They are an element of everyday life and part of pop culture. They enter into the collective imagination as a “revolution” in the way people communicate and in the way organizations communicate and act. That illusion leads to the creation of the single ecosystems in business and research. But are the social media really a new world, a paradise of interaction which can be analyzed as a system *per se*? Is it not about strategies which integrate multiple stakeholders? Is the question of social media impact on business complicated, simple, or just complex?

Surely, social media create a new environment in which companies can interact directly with their stakeholders and customers. These interactions can contribute to building of the intangible assets of companies (corporate reputation). Reputation helps to create networks of supporters (advocacy) which transfers to third party endorsement. However, this is a process clearly similar to corporate communication (CC) management. Social media are not an asset as defined by research (Gibb & Bili, 2012). Social media are a tool which is used in construction of (social) reputation and this reputation is an intangible asset (IA) of the corporation.

This chapter presents a preliminary scan of literature about social media management and highlights some of the research tendencies. It combines the state of art of social media research with the model of CC strategic management to create a conceptual model of a strategic management process in social media management. The model is then applied in the analysis of four case studies — European companies leading on social media. The companies analyzed are from different sectors: banking, air transportation, luxury, and infrastructure. The theoretical sampling allowed the showcasing of different strategies applied by companies in their management of social media activities.

## State of Art — Social Media Management

Social media has been studied as a new means of communication for the businesses. These studies included the analyses of the use of social media and the interaction with customers/consumers (Heller Barid & Parasnis, 2010). There were few studies analyzing the strategic implications of the use of these new tools for overall CC management. The participatory potential of social media was assessed from the point of view of the end user (Cammaerts, 2008). Engagement with the brand and the cause were parts of the same participatory ecosystem (Heinonen, 2011). Studies on NGOs' communications focused on the creation of networks and advocates (Harvey, Steward, & Ewing, 2011). The question of social media as word of mouth (WOM) draws a new area for marketing studies (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009).

International businesses use social media for marketing, HR, and communications (Liang & Scammon, 2011; Mills, 2012). Focus on the interaction with end users gave insights into the interactions which occur between institutional actors and consumers

(Meek, 2011). This allows to draw the patterns in the engagement models between the actors (i.e., in case of use of YouTube by the social movements) (Meek, 2011). The managerial implications of this phenomenon draw potential for more direct communication in the corporate context (Heinonen, 2011). This relation is also managed inside the organizations. Social media are a part of internal communications toolkit and can transform employee communication as shown on an early example of Sun Microsystem (Barker, 2008).

The management of CC becomes crucially affected by social and technological changes (Terblanche, 2011). Studies have focused on the presence of political actors in the social media. This tendency in research was in line with the media discourse which analyzed the impact of social media on the election choices of voters. The 2008 US campaign and victory of Barack Obama encouraged other politicians to be present on social media. The study “Twitter use by US congress” which analyzed the communications patterns of Congressmen on Twitter is one of the examples (Golbeck, Grimes, & Rogers, 2010). It studied the types of Tweets on a sample of 6000 messages. It concluded that Twitter does not improve either transparency or knowledge on political action. It is rather used as a self-promotion tool with the majority of Tweets belonging to the information category (53%) followed by location/activity (27%). Also, 44% of Tweets contained links to other websites, congressmen’s personal websites, and news media outlets. The research led to the conclusion that Twitter was more used to inform and promote political programs and not to increase transparency of decision-making processes. Nevertheless, it improved the direct dialogue with voters (Golbeck et al., 2010).

Twitter is not used by politicians and organizations to create a new quality of communication. Rather, it offers an additional tool to social actors to communicate and create networks. Online groups constitute an interesting field for marketing research as they offer a large amount of data which is relatively easily accessible. The information on composition and behavior can be easily retrieved through data mining techniques (Barbier, Tang, & Liu, 2011; Ripberger, 2011). The research looked for a proxy to predict the offline behavior of group members in the “real world.” Internet may be also used to measure public attentiveness to events and overall social trends (Ripberger, 2011). Trend measurement is another level on which CC can build momentum for messaging (i.e., by using priming techniques). One hundred and forty signs to send a corporate message seem to be little, but the potential for externalization and directing traffic to a corporate website and content cannot be underestimated. Moreover, studies show that the messages with negative sentiment spread faster on social media and Twitter in particular. In consequence, monitoring and corporate reputation management of these channels remains top priority (Thelwall, Buckley, & Paltoglou, 2011). The engagement of the public is streamed in CC activities — especially in corporate messaging. The messages developed frequently take the form of stories via “storytelling” techniques (Salmon, 2007). This connection built with key stakeholders and public contributes to building trust and construction of network groups (Angel & Sexsmith, 2011). The marketers use other Twitter-like tools at a different level depending on their target groups and scope of operations (Kwon & Sung, 2011). At the same time even blogs

which are not always considered as social media are alternative CC channels (Kenix, 2009).

These online communities need to be managed at the strategic level as they are a source of current trends (Miller, Fabian, & Lin, 2009). Therefore, the social media can be used by organizations as the listening tools to discover the trends in their constituencies and among their stakeholders (Miller et al., 2009). These facts were first understood by politicians who were early adopters of social media communications techniques (Terblanche, 2011). Indeed, the social media provide an opportunity to develop bespoke communications strategies to the groups which are otherwise difficult to address through traditional channels. Liang and Scammon provided an overview of a potential usage of the social media in tailored health communication (2011). Indeed, social media provide an opportunity to use WOM marketing as the spread of viral messages is instant (Jansen et al., 2009). However, there is a need to take into consideration the drivers of the spread of information. They are behavioral and depend on the users' backgrounds and message contents (Harvey et al., 2011). Moreover, initial engagement doesn't mean loyalty and continuous engagement. Therefore, the question of community management becomes crucial (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

The communications crisis related to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is one of the excellent examples of how social media creates a new level of activism and engagement (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011). The potential impacts of crisis on corporate performance (Fearn-Banks, 2011) demand a more holistic approach in which reputation-building is managed on all organizational levels. The need for 24-hour responsiveness moves CC to the strategic level. In fact, web and social media can be very useful tools for crisis communications. They can be also a real threat if mismanaged (Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008). The management of social media needs to be executed at a high level which elevates the strategic role of CC to the board-level function (Maon, Lindgreen, & Swaen, 2010). Creativity is frequently associated with the notion of User Generated Content. It is considered as a constitutive sign of a new model of social engagement. The instant sharing of information via posting and hyperlinks increases the level of soft engagement (Porter, Donthu, MacElroy, & Wydra, 2011). Social media play therefore a core role in crisis communications management. The channels are incorporated to the overall crisis communications strategies (Veil, Buehner, & Pakenchar, 2011). That subscribes to the many-to-many logics which are driven by the constant search for selection of information (Breakenridge, 2008). The amount of the knowledge available underlines the role of the tools and techniques used in the selection of the content. Selection of this content is driven by the personality of the users (among other socioeconomic factors). Therefore, the amount of information and the content touching the company does not necessarily mean the same high amount of awareness of the existence of this content (Pagani, Hofacker, & Goldsmith, 2011).

CC is the organizational unit which manages corporate reputation. Social media are one of the tools used by CC. Therefore, the organizational learning of CC management and its governance system has a strong impact on social media strategic management. As social media are part of CC and marketing management, they are

subject of the same corporate rules on spending and reporting. The question of Return on Investment (ROI) in social media has been studied in both scientific and professional publications (Fisher, 2009). However, most of the articles try to assess social media ROI in the closed ecosystem, not taking into consideration external factors which influence the numbers (Nair, 2011).

Social media allow organizations to interact with their stakeholders directly. However, a scale of this interaction has been discussed as well as the drivers of engagement (Cammaerts, 2008). It is important to stress the role of external factors, for example, brand sustainability, which impact the engagement levels (Briggs, 2010). Moreover, the relationships established on social media need to be managed both online and offline (Ang, 2011). One of the drivers of engagement is sustainability and there is a need for CSR integration into social media strategic management (Waddock & McIntosh, 2011). This management is crucial in the understanding of customers and gives communicational and business insights (Paasovaara, Luomala, Pohjanheimo, & Sandell, 2012).

## Toward a Conceptual Model of Social Media Sophistication

The literature overview led to the conceptual model of social media sophistication. The drivers of the social media management include:

- **Importance of the brand for the operations** — the companies which are strongly dependent on the brands in their operations (i.e., FMCG) are more likely to invest in advance CC campaigns and social media (Briggs, 2010).
- **Risks of crises in the industry** — the high risk of crisis would likely impact corporate listening behaviors. Social media trends can be used as early warning systems (Efron, 2011; Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008).
- **Customer type** — B2c companies are likely to reach out to their customers through social media. B2b companies would more likely target their key stakeholders (Plangger, 2012; Robertson, McQuilken, & Kandampully, 2012; Sharma et al., 2011).
- **Organizational culture and CSR program** — companies which are more open to disclosure have more developed communication cultures. They are more likely to use new communicational tools. CSR programs are one of the information programs which provide content for social communication and marketing (Sweetser, 2010; Waddock & McIntosh, 2011).
- **Internationalization of the operations** — global companies would use social media to address customers and stakeholders in various countries using social media as an effective communication tool.

The drivers of social media management influence the sophistication process. The sophistication criteria are influenced by proposals of CC management (Argenti, 2006) (Table 1).

The sophistication process leads to social media results where the output measures include interaction level (i.e., number of likes, discussions, replies on social media channels) and the externalization of communication (i.e., number of shares, number of people Tweeting about the company, or talking about the company).

The drivers of social media management are similar to those identified for CC management. Therefore, they impact the sophistication process of channel management and outcomes which are related to reputational measures. The outcomes here include brand reputation (which can be measured by sentiment value on social media)

Table 1: Sophistication factors and process in social media strategic management.

	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Description</b>
Operational level	Social media awareness	Presence and integration of the social media in the corporate communication operations.
	Social media sophistication	Level of the usage of the platforms. Cross-platform integration of the corporate communication messages.
	Social media staff	Responsiveness on the channels. Presence of the social media staff on the channels. Level of the personalization of the social media messages on the channels.
	Social media integration across the channels	Cross-referencing of the channels. Integration of the social media channels across the corporate communication platforms. Integration of the corporate messaging on the social media platforms.
	Maturity of the usage of social media	Level of presence on the platforms. The establishment of the practices. Time of the uninterrupted presence on the respective social media platforms.
Strategic level	Strategy of social media management	Level of strategic consideration of the social media management. Internal rollout of the social media programs.
	Social media gravity center	Importance of the social media tools for the cross organizational communications programs. The valuation of the community for marketing and strategy.
Network level	Social media networks	Networks of stakeholders in which company participates.

and third party endorsement, in other words advocacy (i.e., number of positive posts, blogs, Tweets related to the brand).

## Hypothesis — Propositions

The theory review leads to three propositions which will be assessed in the case studies:

**Proposition 1.** Drivers of social media strategic management directly impact the sophistication process.

The sophistication process (actual behaviors of companies) depends directly on the business context in which they operate. The general trend in marketing which requires companies to embrace social media is the first driver of social media efforts (Angel & Sexsmith, 2011). Companies establish their social media strategies because “everyone does it,” or because they don’t want to risk not being there (Heinonen, 2011). The role of the brand for operations and its impact on competitiveness is the second driver impacting the sophistication process (*ibid.*). It defines how the company is present on social media. For example, multinationals from the FMCG sector manage multiple accounts branded at the product level while banks focus on their corporate channels (Grefe & Sonnac, 2008). The risk of crisis in the industry is another driver impacting the sophistication process of social media management (Veil et al., 2011). Companies from industries more exposed to a crisis have a more advanced presence on the social media channels. Also, consumer type (b2b vs. b2c) defines the level of social media presence and its strategic valuation (Plangger, 2011). At the micro level, the organizational culture (i.e., internal openness) defines the framework for the social media sophistication process (Heinonen, 2011). The CSR strategy also defines the sophistication process of social media strategic management.

**Proposition 2.** The sophistication process of social media strategic management impacts the performance.

Sophistication of the social media practices impacts social media performance. The operational sophistication impacts the output results. More advanced usage of applications and social media tools leads to an increased size of the community (Angel & Sexsmith, 2011; Plangger, 2011). The strategic valuation of social media and use of the network contribute to the outcome results of the social media strategic management (Heller Barid & Parasnis, 2010). The strategic approach helps to achieve direct ROI from the social media activities (*ibid.*).

**Proposition 3.** The context in which company operates (drivers) directly impacts social media performance.

Social media are part of overall communicational efforts of companies (Grefe & Sonnac, 2008). Trends and online trends can make some companies more “attractive” for users (Barbier et al., 2011). The drivers impact also a social media performance. The size of the community of the company depends on the industry in which the company operates (Plangger, 2011). It is actually based on the need of that community to receive information from and about the company (*ibid.*). The customer type b2b versus b2c impacts the output results. B2b companies tend to have smaller social media communities. The brand also drives the performance results of social media activities. The companies with stronger brands have bigger communities (Grefe & Sonnac, 2008). Corporate culture defines the interaction between the company and its stakeholders and in consequence its social media performance (*ibid.*) (Figure 1).

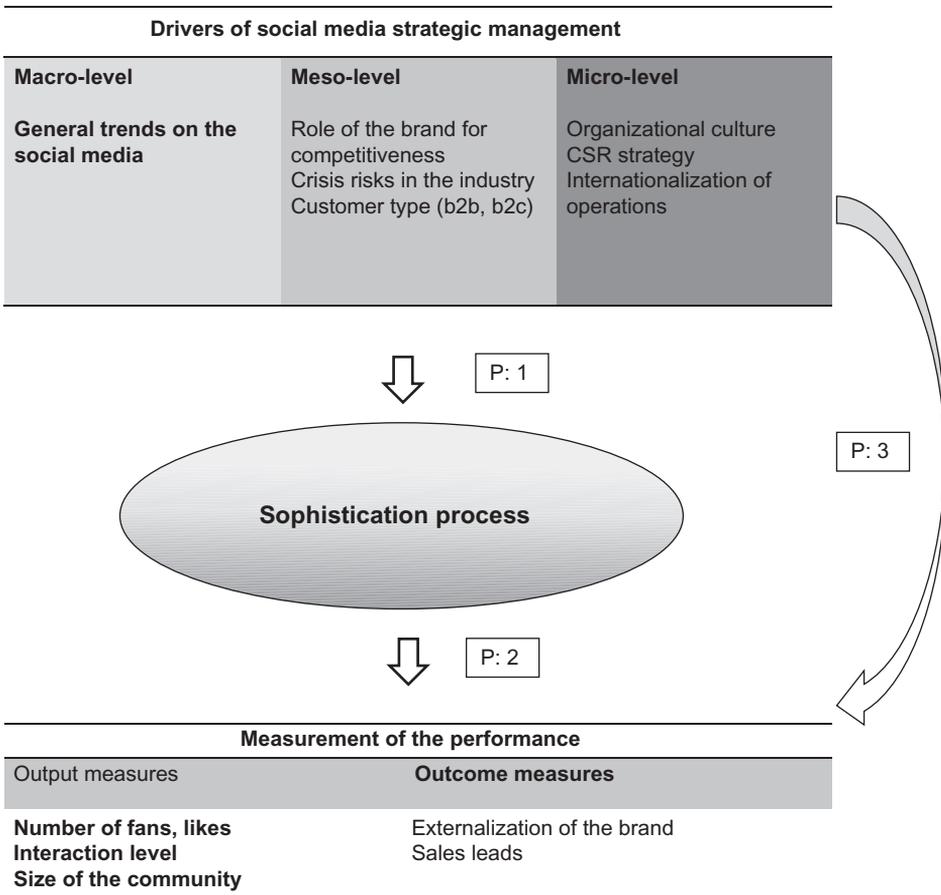


Figure 1: Social media strategic management process.

## Methods

### *The Research Study*

The design of the methodology of the research is inspired by the methodological proposals of Hamilton and her study on entrepreneurial learning (Hamilton, 2011). It draws also from Bezençon and Blili's proposals for case study analyses of the fair trade behaviors of Swiss companies (Bezençon & Blili, 2009).

The study involved social media channels analysis of 60 Swiss-based companies. To identify practices and learning networks we also analyzed the channels of 100 NGOs and 50 IGOs.

This initial overview allowed the identification of learning profiles and matching corporate behaviors. Four European companies have been identified to showcase the learning patterns in the case studies.

It is important to stress that the analysis and observations presented in this chapter are but one interpretation of the empirical material with no intention to generalize the findings (Hamilton, 2010). Rather the empirical data offers some tentative support for the theoretical propositions of the situated learning patterns and profiles (Hamilton, 2010).

### *The Sample*

The sampling of this study is theoretical rather than random to clearly illustrate corporate behavioral patterns (Yin, 2003).

A purposive sample is determined by the experience of the processes being studied that any particular individual or group may be able to draw upon (Hamilton, 2010). The companies are therefore selected based on their ability to illustrate the practices and "lead" the category. The companies are in that approach playing the role of "experiential experts" (Morse, 1995). This approach allows the identification of advanced practices and strategies. It also allows comparing the internal strategies which are behind observed operations.

The selection process, although based on theoretical sampling, also included elements of "maximum variety sampling" in selecting a heterogeneous sample (Hamilton, 2010; Morse, 1995). The choice of companies from different sectors was purposive and aimed to allow the drawing of some strategic propositions based on different industry experiences.

### *Case Studies*

The analysis is based on the case studies which showcase the "leading" European companies in social media management. The operations of the companies on the channels (corporate website, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Flickr) have been analyzed. In the next step, in-depth personal interviews have been

conducted with representatives of the companies. The interviewees were responsible for the social media operations within their respective companies. The final case studies have been sent for validation to avoid any potential misinterpretation.

## **Analysis**

### ***Swiss International Airlines — Community Driver***

The company is a wholly owned subsidiary of Lufthansa AG. The company is the biggest airline in Switzerland. SWISS is present on the most common social media channels and was one of the early adopters in Switzerland. The company has a fan base of over 125,000 fans on Facebook, 32,000 followers on global Twitter (US account with 1900 and CH account with 4700 followers).

**Snapshot of strategy.** SWISS uses social media for CCs, marketing, recruitment, CRM. The last part dedicated to CRM is now rapidly growing and playing more important role. The social media manager is situated in the marketing department. However, the company represents a structural model of a “department of one” which coordinates the activities across the company and geographies. The guiding principles of the company are interaction with the community and transparency. The latter is valued to the point that the company has a policy of not deleting negative and even harsh comments posted by its fans on social media channels. The company “tries” different channels and has a policy of internal learning which also means learning from its errors.

Social media is a learning process. We learn from failures as well. Luckily, our senior management is open to social media and allows us to try different platforms. Thanks to that we know where to put the effort. Christian Lüdi — Community Manager Swiss Int. Airlines

The turning point for SWISS’ social media efforts can be defined as the moment of eruption of the volcano in Iceland in 2010. The company acknowledged the role of social media in crisis situation and used social media channels to update its customers and stakeholders about the developments of the situation.

**Awareness of social media.** The social media are used by the company throughout the organization. Twitter is mainly used for CRM. Facebook and YouTube are considered more in terms of a marketing channel to push corporate advertising and build brand awareness. The company also uses social media to support HR activities, that is, talent acquisition. It also communicates via social media with its employees which makes social media a channel for internal communication.

**Social media sophistication.** The company uses the applications and other available tools to manage its social media channels. SWISS creates dedicated content for social media. Actually, the social media activities started when SWISS created an advertising spot and was willing to push it through additional channels to the

customers. Therefore, the company decided to enter into the social media sphere. The company follows the trends on social media in order to build dialogue with its stakeholders and customers. Nevertheless, the trend search is based more on manual activities of the channel manager as the company does not use monitoring tools.

**Social media staff.** SWISS' social media efforts are led by one coordinator working in the marketing department. He coordinates the activities of the company in the corporate channels in terms of content and responsiveness. The current social media manager is the person who started social media efforts for the company. He actually progressed from a short-term trainee to a social media manager. It can be claimed that the sophistication and maturity of the tools ran parallel to the learning process of the community manager.

Different social media channels become tools for various organizational departments. Twitter is managed by the CRM team which handles requests. FlyerTalk (the portal for frequent travelers) is managed by the person working on the Customer Care Team within the organization. In the company, there are around 10 people "working on" social media, but only one person who is 100% dedicated to social media activities.

**Social media maturity.** SWISS has been present on social media from 2009. It actually started in the early stages when benchmarking on the local market was not possible. The company embraces new tools and channels using the principle of "try and test." Accounts on the platforms are established by the social media manager. After some time, they are handed over to the department which deals directly with the issues related to the platforms. For example, the activities of the company on FlyerTalk were started by the social media manager and then handed over to the CRM of the Customer Care Team. The step of "handing over" requires training for the individuals who start talking on behalf of the company on the social media channel.

**Social media integration.** Social media are integrated into the overall marketing and communications strategies of the company. They are also integrated into the crisis procedures as additional communications channels. CRM is also present in social media on the principle of 24/7 responsiveness which really makes them an additional channel for communication with stakeholders. Social media are also integrated in the communication activities of the HR and other departments. They play a crucial role around business milestones of the company, such as launching new routes. At these moments, senior executives including the CEO are involved.

**Social media strategic level.** Social media are a part of SWISS' marketing and business strategy. The resources allocated to the social media *per se* are limited, but these activities benefit from the interest of senior management. Social media activities and results are reported to the executive board on a biannual basis. Internally, there is a social media guideline which shows employees the benefits and threats related to social media. Nevertheless, social media training is limited to those who actually play

an active role on social media. The CRM department is trained on the usage of Twitter; the CRM Customer Care specialist is trained on usage of FlyerTalk, etc.

**Social media gravity center.** Social media are a part of all the marketing efforts of the company. All the campaigns managed by the company have a social media content. The composition of the fan base with the majority of fans based in the home market allows the targeting of campaigns. Some of them are geo-targeted on Facebook.

**Social media network.** SWISS considers customers as the most important stakeholders on social media channels. The principle of network is egalitarian and fans are considered as equal irrespective of business volume brought to SWISS:

It doesn't matter whether someone is a HON circle member, or one time flier. The posts of both need to be addressed in the same way. Btw I don't have access to frequent flyer programme data.  
Christian Lüdi — Community Manager Swiss Int. Airlines

On the other hand, the company has more reservations about the idea of partnerships on social media for content.

Once we posted Lufthansa picture on our wall and got criticized. The argument was that you wouldn't post pictures of your mother on Facebook which is somehow true and well describing the principle. Christian Lüdi — Community Manager Swiss Int. Airlines

**Internal valuation of social media.** Social media activities are regularly reported to the executive board. High appreciation of social media is confirmed in crisis situations. These channels allow direct response to customers and the addressing of potential issues or concerns. Social media activities kicked off during the ash cloud crisis, when in spring 2010 air traffic in Europe was limited. They allowed a direct dialogue with passengers and instant information about new developments. From that moment onwards social media has become a key element of crisis communications plans and trainings. Two elements have been identified as key factors for the internal valuation of social media:

- Crisis mitigation and crisis communication
- Brand awareness building

**Measurement of social media activities.** SWISS uses a community as a key measurement unit for its social media activities. The principal elements are:

- Network composition
- Interaction level
- Sentiment in the posts

Nevertheless, the company doesn't use advanced ROI frameworks for social media measurement. It considers the tools more in terms of community and brand awareness building than in terms of a direct sales channel which would be measured by sales leads.

**Key successes.** The company considers the level of interaction within its community as a key success of social media strategy. It is not driven by the number of people “liking,” or “following the company.” It is rather the regularity and level of interactions which are considered as successes. On the other hand, the launch of social media activities in 2009 with the movie directed by Marc Forster was an early success of the strategy. Later, all the information directly addressed to the passengers in crisis situations is considered as a success.

***Observation 1:** Creativity and community are the drivers of the social media strategic management. The organizational structures and procedures need to “catch up” with the developments of the tools.*

### ***Warsaw Chopin Airport***

The airport belongs to the state-owned company PPL which manages different airports in Poland. The company has been actively present on social media since 2010 and uses them both for institutional and customer-oriented communication. It has over 15,000 fans on Facebook and is present on all the main social media channels.

**Snapshot of strategy.** The company uses social media for brand awareness, crisis communication, and mitigation, as well as marketing activities. Crisis communication is based on CRM, but not limited to it. Chopin Airport embraces social media at the operational, strategic, and network levels. The network level is executed for example through joint promotion actions undertaken with the shops situated on its premises.

Every day we start with a weather forecast and a picture taken at the airport. That brings us close to the customers from the early moment. In the choice of a picture we try to have in mind the plane spotters and from time to time surprise them. Sylwester Puczen — Public Relations & Social Media Specialist

**Awareness of social media.** Social media are used by the company throughout the organization. The company uses social media as tools for external communication. The use for internal communication and internal team-building is rather limited. Warsaw Chopin Airport praises itself for having an uninterrupted presence on all the channels.

We didn't have to pull off from any channel. That is something we are really happy about. Radosław Żuk — Public Relations Bureau Director

**Social media sophistication.** The company uses the tools (and external providers) for brand monitoring on the social media. It uses the channels to monitor the trends and brand sentiment. It develops channel-specific applications, for example, a game for Facebook. Communication on the social media is adapted to the channels in terms of both content and language. The company replies to all posts and criticisms on the social media. It has a policy of never deleting the content as it could be considered as censorship.

We never delete anything with exception of advertisement of third parties on our channels. We also reply and comment on fans' remarks as long as the person is accepting the rational arguments. Radosław Żuk — Public Relations Bureau Director

**Social media staff.** The social media team is led by a Community Manager who works 100% on social media. The Community Manager is situated in the PR department and reports to the Director of PR, who in turn reports to the General Director of the enterprise. There is no social media team *per se*. However, there is an internal “community of champions” — people who spontaneously contribute to the social media activities of the company. They provide the content as well as expertise to enhance the company’s activities.

**Social media maturity.** The company has been using social media since 2010 and uses all the channels. It includes also the thematic discussion forums where the Community Manager and Spokesperson lurk actively and reply to all the comments. The social media is present in marketing activities as well as in crisis procedures and communication.

**Social media integration.** Social media are integrated into the marketing and PR activities of the company. All the marketing initiatives have a social media angle. They are also integrated into the media relations and community communications strategies.

**Social media strategic level.** Social media are considered as strategic for the communications strategy of the company. The social media team is led by a Community Manager and composed by ad hoc experts from other business units. However, the process is not yet formalized. The reporting line to the senior management of the company also shows a high strategic consideration of social media within the company.

**Social media gravity center.** The social media are at the center of all marketing and communication activities of the company. All the promotional activities need to have a social approach which guarantees an appropriate amount of content as well as relevance for social media channels. However, the company does not really use social media for its cross-departmental activities, that is, recruitment.

**Social media network.** Chopin Airport uses social media (more and more) for marketing and communication activities in the travel network. It runs the campaigns together with the airlines and shops present at the airport. It also maintains the dialogue with experts and journalists using social media channels. The organizational learning is therefore externalized and based on the network knowledge aggregation.

**Internal valuation of the social media.** Social media activities are valued by the senior management of the company. Activities and results are reported to the executive team. Management shares its reflections about social media and has a generally

positive attitude toward these activities. This positive attitude is reinforced by industry awards gathered by company for its social media efforts. The main areas of activities for social media are:

- Crisis mitigation and crisis communication
- Brand awareness building

**Measurement of social media activities.** The company measures its social media activities. Nevertheless, it is much more focused on outcome results than output ones. The following elements are considered as the most important for social media activities:

- Network composition (balance between customers and fans)
- Interaction level
- Sentiment in the posts

Nevertheless, the company does not use advanced ROI frameworks for social media measurement. It considers the tools more in terms of community and brand awareness building than as a direct sales channel which would be measured by sales leads.

**Key successes.** The company considers its overall social media results as a success. It also sees the impact of social media on passengers' communication. During any irregularities due to the weather, etc., the social media are the source of information for passengers. Overall, the company is constantly present on all the channels on which it started its activities.

***Observation 2:** Social media can be effectively used to support business operations events in the case of smaller players. The strategy and network composition drive the success of these activities.*

### ***Credit Suisse — Toward Framework of a Business Strategy***

Credit Suisse is present on the social media channels. However, it seems that its social media strategy is focused more on the retail consumer than other business units. Therefore, its Facebook operations are more sophisticated than on the other platforms. The company uses some application and interactive features. However, the main focus of social media operations is on promotion of its marketing communications and campaign support.

**Snapshot of strategy.** Credit Suisse has a strategic approach to the social media. The company actually sees the concrete business benefits from its social media activities which are beyond reputation management.

Benchmarking with other banks shows that relationship management via social media can bring direct business benefits. Having this proof and tangible results to present to management about

how social media can impact your business goals enables you to enter a discussion on the topic at a different level. Simon Vögli — Community Manager, Credit Suisse

At the same time, senior management of Credit Suisse supports the communicational policy of “being where our customers are.” That means social media as well. The company includes successively more communicational materials to the social media. CSR content is the one which is supposed to play more important role in the future.

**Awareness of social media.** Social media community is perceived as an asset of the company.

It actually started with the principle that we want to be where our customers are. Since our customers are also on social media, we decided to evaluate what kind of added value we could generate for our stakeholders on the social web. Simon Vögli — Community Manager, Credit Suisse

Social media is still managed within the company by a “community of champions” which exchanges the information and content. It is still considered as a channel for “push” communication where the dialogue with fans is limited (also due to the legal restrictions).

We then started to evaluate how we could strategically leverage social media externally and internally. Based on this evaluation we formalized our approach and decided to focus on a few key priorities. Simon Vögli — Community Manager, Credit Suisse

The company doesn’t have a social media policy *per se* yet. It has a policy related to electronic communication which restricts the usage of the brand and social media at a workplace.

**Social media sophistication.** Credit Suisse uses the applications and other interactive features of the social media. It creates dedicated content for social media especially around its sponsorship campaigns with Roger Federer. Moreover, the company uses social media monitoring tools to see the trends in its community and especially subjects of conversations between the stakeholders as well as to benchmark with the competitors. Social media are also used for the industry trend analysis. The actual management of the social media is also executed by a dedicated tool which allows controlling and scheduling the postings. The company uses one tool for monitoring and trend analysis and another for account management, handling of approval processes, and for the posting of content.

**Social media staff.** The company will establish a dedicated social media team in fall 2012. Till now, social media has been managed by one coordinator who spent 30% of the work time on the issues related to social media. However, the content is fed by different departments in which there are “subject matter experts.” Their role is to provide information and content for the social media and function as point of contacts in case of any questions or comments.

**Social media integration.** Social media are integrated in the communications activities across the brand and across business units. They currently play an important role in the HR communications and recruitment. There is a dedicated career account on Facebook which is co-managed by HR and CCs. The company continues to evaluate opportunities internally and externally and implements them on a case by case basis. One of these cases was the creation of a twitter channel dedicated to the Asia Pacific region.

The initiatives are assessed at a centralized level, the internal Social Media Competence Center, which consists of members from all strategically important business and support areas.

**Social media maturity.** The company started using social media end of 2009. First, the approach was to secure the presence of the company in the social sphere, create a so-called social media footprint. Then, social media became a part of the marketing strategies. Furthermore the company defined three areas where it sees potential and opportunities: communications/brand awareness, recruitment, and sales. The integration of the sales in the social media processes builds strategic level of social media management. Focus is more directed toward ROI and business returns from these activities. Growing maturity required also formalization of the processes and construction of a separate team. This team will be dedicated solely to social media management.

**Social media strategic level.** Social media are currently managed by CC department; however, the strategic buildup and the evaluation is coordinated with different units all across the bank: CCs, IT, Legal and Compliance, Business Units such as Private Banking, Investment Banking, Asset Management

The separate unit for social media management is created. The bank considers social media as a place “where customers are.” Therefore, the bank’s obligation is to be present there and communicate with them. This strategic consideration leads to formalization of the internal processes and increased role of ROI in the reporting of social media activities. The formalization of the processes as well as creation of the dedicated team elevates social media into the strategic level within the organization.

**Social media gravity center.** Social media play an important role in the marketing and CC strategies of the bank. They are also used as a tool for HR communications. The consideration of the usage of social media in the sales processes leads to increase in the gravity. Coordination will be managed by a centralized “Social Media Competence Center,” a team that will consist of members of different business areas such as IT, Legal and Compliance, and Communications. The management of the actual activities will be done directly within the business units.

There is still limited consideration of the usage of social media in the product offerings, but the company already implemented a specific Facebook presence for its offering targeted to students and youth called Viva (only in Switzerland). All the activities depend also on the legal framework which, considering there are a lot of

questions to be answered, remains a large part of the process. Actually, the current legal framework limits the rollout of social media.

**Social media network.** Credit Suisse uses the network of partners and stakeholders in its social media communication especially at the level of CSR activities and sponsorship. Nonetheless, the network usage is limited to the posting of common messages. Respective social media channels are “umbrellas of content” for all the stakeholders. However, there is certain level of targeting to the defined groups of stakeholders. Therefore, Facebook is directed to the bank’s customers; Twitter to journalists and analysts; dedicated accounts target potential employees and recent graduates.

**Internal valuation of the social media.** Social media are valued within the company. The process of valuation is rather bottom-up since it’s often the business that sees and evaluates the opportunities and then makes the business case to the senior management.

It is also a reverse process where the employees join the community on social media and provide the suggestions and additional content. The following aspects are key areas in which Credit Suisse sees the potential for social media activities:

- Brand awareness
- Recruitment
- Sales

**Measurement of the social media activities.** The measurement of social media moved from the output measures (number of likes, etc.) toward more outcome results (brand perception, ROI framework). Sophistication of the tools and sophistication of the business units required advanced KPI framework. It is based on the principle of reporting of the outcomes from investments made.

**Key successes.** The company considers the level of engagement in its community as a key success. Credit Suisse was also featured by Facebook as a best practice case study for one of its campaigns.

**Observation 3:** *Social media to be strategic needs to be measured in terms of ROI. The successful strategies look at the business usage of these tools which is beyond brand awareness building. This secures strategic consideration and support from the top management.*

### **Hublot — Socially Compatible**

Social media and especially Twitter are the future. In a busy environment, there is a need to be concise and straight to the point and Twitter with its 140 characters is all about it. It responds to an existing social need to which we need to adapt. This is why Twitter is so powerful. Jean-Claude Biver — Chairman of Hublot

Hublot is not a typical company in the luxury industry. Its internal organization is based on flat structures which have clear reporting lines, but create a culture of consensus. It also has a strongly enforced policy of “open doors” which reflects its

openness and the internal valuation of each employee. These elements of corporate culture are reflected in all the company's operations and strategies, and notably in social media.

We are not managed as a typical luxury goods company. We don't create too many structures. We are very open. Jean-Claude Biver — Chairman of Hublot

The company's philosophy is reflected in the overall marketing approach and marketing strategies. The Chairman of the company is personally involved in communication with the customers: "if you send in any place of the world an e-mail to info@hulot it comes to my mailbox" (Jean-Claude Biver). And he is involved at the same level in the development and management of the company's social media strategy.

**Snapshot of strategy.** The company's strategy for marketing, communication, and social media is content driven. Hublot started to use social features and user-generated content even before the social media became a focus in marketing.

We needed content for our website. If there is nothing new on the website, you will not return. So, we created an on-line video portal which presented our activities. We were the first early in 2005. Jean-Claude Biver — Chairman of Hublot

This platform, as well as the site "Hublot Nation," are the social platforms owned by the company. The company uses also regular social media channels (i.e., Facebook, Twitter) at the global and regional levels. It has the content adapted linguistically and culturally to the users in different geographic locations.

**Awareness of social media.** Hublot is fully aware of the importance of social media for marketing and operations in general. The company perceives social media benefits beyond brand awareness and community management. It sees the impact of them on marketing, CRM, external/internal communication, and HR. Corporate awareness is built through openness and lack of internal regulations related to social media. There are no policies that formalize the process for individuals (though there is a policy for corporate use of the channels).

If you have too many policies, you kill social media internally. Social media is not about policies, is about being individual, transparent and open. Jean-Claude Biver — Chairman of Hublot

**Social media sophistication.** The company uses all social media channels. The messages are targeted to the respective stakeholder groups. It uses applications and all available features which are embedded in the platforms. Moreover, the company has created its own channels which provide the content for overall social media activities. It provides fans with a whole customer journey which even includes offline interaction and direct contact to the top management of the company.

**Social media staff.** Hublot has a community manager who is placed in the company's marketing team. Also, other employees are encouraged to be active on social media and act as Hublot's ambassadors. Nevertheless, the key person in the

social media efforts is Hublot's Chairman. He has been active on social media from its early stages and drives a big portion of company's social media efforts.

I'm not active enough though. I need to be more active. Now, I'm 3 to 5 hours per day on-line, I should be available 20 hours. If you compare me with someone who is sleeping, I'm active, but I'm active enough. Jean-Claude Biver — Chairman of Hublot

**Social media integration.** Hublot integrates social media into other channels of communication (i.e., website). It also integrates them throughout the organization. Different business areas use social media to support their communication. Indeed, social media is a tool which is fully integrated throughout the company.

**Social media maturity.** The company started using social media, or rather social features even before the big "social media platforms" were launched. The company has a clear content strategy for social media which forces internal innovation and constant reinvention of the channels. However, the company considers the current stage of social media development as a "stone age" of social media. It perceives a need for constant innovation of the channels as they are constantly evolving.

**Social media strategic level.** Social media activities are driven personally by the Chairman of the company. The Chairman not only drives a strategic vision of the social media activities, but also personally posts and interacts with fans/followers. This level of engagement places social media as a key managerial concern within the company. However, the management of social media is not based on the top-down structure; it is rather embedded in the company's flat managerial structures.

**Social media gravity center.** Social media are in the center of Hublot's marketing strategy. All the activities of the company are communicated through social media channels. However, the internal gravity center of social media is the employees and not the communication structure. The employees are supposed to be active on social media networks and get involved both internally and externally. Moreover, social media are used as a tool for marketing, as well as for other business functions including HR and internal communication.

### **Social media network**

On social media the company can't talk and communicate only about itself. Also, Hublot is not only about watches. It is about a certain "art de vie" which we share with our customers. This is why we communicate about our partners and common initiatives regularly. That also provides the content. Jean-Claude Biver — Chairman of Hublot

Hublot considers social media as a constant interaction with fans/followers. Therefore, it provides content on a daily basis on each channel. It also provides the content of its partners. Partners are considered part of Hublot's identity; therefore, the network plays a crucial role in the brand's social media strategy.

**Internal valuation of the social media.** Hublot appreciates social media as a key tool in the enterprise's strategy. The tool is not designed only for promotion and marketing. Actually, the aspect of interaction and community opinion plays the most important role in the internal valuation of social media.

**Measurement of social media activities.** The company uses external tools to see the dynamic of interactions and growth within its community and reviews them on a regular, monthly basis. The framework is focused on growth and community rather than on precise measures of conversion, sales lead, etc. Measurement is focused on growth which builds brand awareness and brand appreciation. There are no set KPIs for social media activities.

**Key successes.** Hublot considers as a success the constant growth of its community and a growing number of visits. The measurement of performance is based on the interaction level within the community and with the brand. Hublot's biggest success is the fact that there has never been a decrease of social media results. The second quoted success is the fact that both the social media channels and the operations of the company constantly reflect its identity.

***Observation 4:** Top management's involvement and personal agenda influence the corporate adaptation of social media. Internal organization and corporate culture can be the drivers for an internal rollout of a social media strategy.*

## Discussion

Analyzed companies differ in size and scope of activities. However, all of them have successful strategies in social media management. Identified drivers of social media management have been confirmed in all of the companies. They lead to a sophistication process which places them among the leaders in their respective industries. The management of social media is thus a strategic concern which moves beyond operations (Plangger, 2011). The organizational learning process leads to the formalization of processes and the integration of social media into the enterprise's strategic framework (*ibid.*). It leads to the establishment of social media policies and training procedures. These steps mitigate the risks of crises coming from the social media (Veil et al., 2011).

It is important to add that the study suggests an additional driver which can be even more crucial for social media strategies. It is the attitude of the senior management toward social media. All of the analyzed companies benefit from the positive attitude of senior management toward the learning of social media and their management. The strategic approach is shaped by the senior management's vision of the enterprise. This defines the measurement framework. And the measurement framework also defines the sophistication process. Therefore, the additional observation has to be added: *the measurement framework defined by the senior*

*management directly influences the sophistication process of social media strategic management as it is in the case of external and internal communications.*

## **Conclusions**

Social media create a framework in which big companies as well as smaller ones need to learn. This social learning allows them to build relationships with their key stakeholders but also to obtain direct business benefits. The case studies show four companies. Each of them is successful in business operations and gains recognition for its social media efforts. They present four different corporate behaviors. SWISS International Airlines learns at the operational level. It uses a portfolio of available applications and successfully engages with stakeholders. The stakeholders are here defined mainly as customers. The company considers social media as a marketing tool and addresses the community with the corresponding messaging. Warsaw Chopin Airport is a state-owned company which manages the biggest airport hub in Poland. It uses social media at the strategic level (despite its relatively small size and local scope of operations). Its representatives are on each relevant channel and interact with fans and stakeholders. It also uses its own activities to promote its partners (especially the airlines flying from the port and shops present on its premises). Credit Suisse creates a strategic framework which will allow the company to be active on social media. It is important especially in the context of highly regulated environment in which company operates. Social media are embedded in the greater marketing strategy and reported in terms of business benefits. Hublot has a “totally social” marketing strategy. The company uses social media to build its community, maintain dialogue with customers and stakeholders, and drive sales. Hublot was in many aspects the pioneer: in UGC usage in marketing, in social media usage, and in community engagement at the top management level. The company refers to its network to build content spread corporate messages.

Four companies: different sizes, different scopes of operation, different industries — they all learn socially and use social media to strengthen the organization and build business benefits. Their learning patterns are different; however, their strategies gain recognition in the industry and bring tangible benefits for the organizations.

## **Further Research**

This chapter proposed case studies of four companies to illustrate the learning process and learning aggregation in social media. It shows that social media are beyond being a tool. They actually allow companies to bring CC to a strategic level. They also allow the measurement and monitoring of the value of corporate reputation. It would be interesting to study a larger sample of companies in order to see the learning patterns and profiles of social media strategic management at the statistically important level.

Such study would generate knowledge of the social learning processes across industries and across different geographic regions.

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