LiveWorld

How to Scale Social Media Programs & Maximize Value

What Procurement Professionals Need to Know

INTRODUCTION

Social channels, particularly Facebook and Twitter, have become customers' preferred contact points to laud and lambast companies. Consumers also cite social media as one of the most trustworthy sources of information: 70 percent of global online consumers always or sometimes take action on consumer opinions posted online, second only to recommendations from people they know. And social media has become the dominant venue for those recommendations as well.

However, when content is viewed out of context and can't be tended to on a 24/7 basis, companies – particularly Fortune 500 companies – suffer from poor brand image and even legal woes. Many major product categories, such as financial services and pharmaceuticals, come with regulatory or compliance needs that require around-the-clock management with a consistent workflow.

But Fortune 500 companies often approach social media with disjointed efforts. This includes implementing social media first and setting goals and strategy later, a lack of coordination across the social channels, an ad hoc workflow, and overreliance on software tools. The end results are waste, duplication of efforts, and unmanageable social media channels.

How can procurement professionals find efficiency and value on a global scale, without sacrificing the customer experience while still meeting the needs of each brand and region, but avoiding the wrath of regulators? Fortunately, scaled moderation programs exist to combine cutting-edge technology with the quality of human review to complement the time and tasks of internal teams while ensuring that brands prosper in a social environment and adhere to even the strictest of regulations. These services provide the most value to brands, scale cost-effectively, and limit liability.

Solving Common Challenges
That Hinder Efficiency & Effectiveness

Fortune 500 companies face a host of challenges with social media. If left unchecked, social media becomes detrimental to their brands. The best case scenario is that the brand will suffer as customers come to view it as indifferent to their needs and simply stop buying its products. But in the worst case scenario, the brand will be irreparably harmed, discrediting itself so badly that customers become advocates against the brand and for its competitors.

The Challenge

Protecting the brand in social media while ensuring a quality environment for customers that is consistent with the brand's values and image.

The Solution

Create a cultural model that provides context for values and behavior. The brand (using in-house people or social media specialist vendors) can then moderate the content to support the model while engaging customers to build a loyal set of brand advocates. The best way to think about social media is as the brand's online party for its customers: What kind of party is it? Is it edgy and modern for young people or reserved and knowledge-based for business professionals? Content and conversations need to align with the "theme" of the party and respond to it with humans, not technology.

While the right software can organize content and make human moderation more efficient, it doesn't replace the human touch – much like a robot server doesn't replace the party's host offering up a canapé and orchestrating stimulating conversations among the guests. Technology can't pick up on nuances or grasp unanticipated activity. This difference can often be the basis for understanding trends and catching potential problems early. Customers want to interact with humans, and that requires using people alongside technology to manage and moderate social media.

The Challenge

Scaling the management of user-generated content across social media channels while supporting the different needs of each brand, country or region, and project.

The Solution

Develop a standardized set of processes and designate preferred software platforms and vendors that can be used on a global scale. Ensure that the processes can be tailored to each group's specific needs; think of the processes as the stereo system and the tailoring as the specific music played at the party. This approach enables companies to scale program costs by leveraging volume discounts, sharing resources, and creating more efficient workflows.
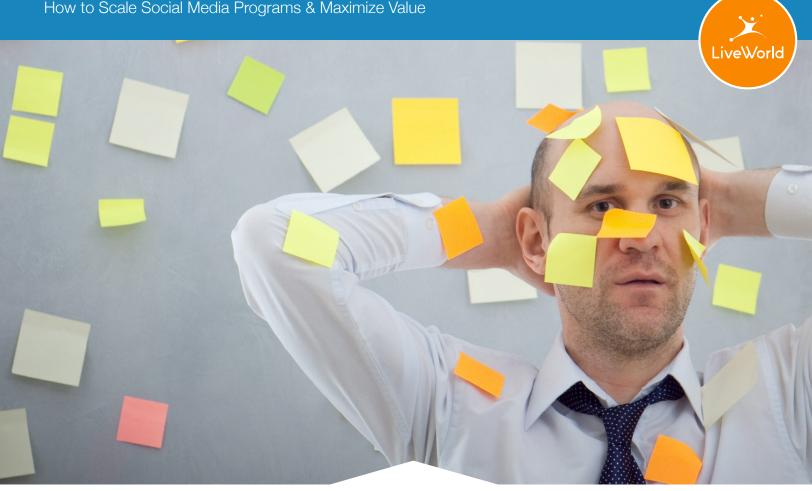

The Challenge

A tendency to start from scratch each time the company launches a new social media program.

The Solution

Utilize a template approach and standardize the startup process. Combine this with the scale model described above and education for groups throughout the company on the model itself, and it's possible to reduce the number of hours required for moderation startup per page, by in-house personnel and agencies, from 140 hours to 40 hours. Provide the groups with the templates and information of the details and approved vendors, along with corporate guidelines to define programs and avoid the possibility that the corporate legal, marketing, or purchasing departments will reject.

The Challenge

Harnessing multiple agencies, software vendors, and in-house teams for multiple departments and brands.

The Solution

Consolidate social media management and moderation to fewer partners. If you choose partners that can handle multiple departments and brands, while using the templates you've set up or templates they've assisted you in creating, then you can better scale your social media costs and still provide a consistent experience for customers. This eliminates duplicated efforts and creates efficiency, while still allowing smaller brands within the company to launch robust social media communities by taking advantage of scaled efficiencies generated by larger brands and multiple program participants.

Tips

While using fewer vendors can help cut costs, one-size-fits-all software tools do not. The best practice is to leverage a portfolio of tools that will change over time to meet changing business or social media needs. Ideally, standardize on a portfolio of tools (not just one) for leverage where appropriate, while allowing brands and regions flexibility to use different tools when needed.

Use a platform approach to services and process flow. As with tools, it's possible to select one or a few service providers and develop a standard set of global templates and process models that can be tailored to each brand, country, and project's needs. It's very important to use social media specialists capable of learning and acting in the voice of company and with the experience and skills to tailor that by brand, country and project.

The Challenge

In-house staff is so overwhelmed with the basics and day-to-day program maintenance that they can't work on big-picture strategy.

In-house staff doesn't need to be involved in the lower level tasks like moderation and basic listening. They understand the company's products, strategies, and people on a very deep level, which makes them much better suited to managing the integration of those things with the social media program and being involved in higher level engagement and relationship-driven activities. These are actually different thought processes that should be optimized with different people and workflows.

For example, some companies will hire an in-house community manager, train him on the brand, products, and social media channels, and find that his time is eaten up by screening user-generated content for guideline violations like spamming, profanity, political content, or competitor content. The community manager doesn't have time to work on strategies for engaging customers around product and customer stories or integrating social with the rest of the company. He also ends up being caught in the company model of not working on nights and weekends – but needing to work nights and weekends. Essentially, the community manager has become a bouncer when he was hired to be the D.J.

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WHAT TO LOOK FOR TO MAXIMIZE VALUE FOR THE BRAND AND ENTERPRISE

At this point, most companies are ready to ask for help. When looking for a partner to streamline digital and social programs and moderate channels, consider the following requirements:

1 A templatized process flow that ensures consistency of the corporation's values across programs while being flexible enough to support the differences required by each brand and country.

2 Transparency and deep integration from the partner, which provides more visibility and fosters cooperation with brand stakeholders.

3 Specialized teams with experience as moderators and management moderation at scale that maintains the brand's voice. This will provide the enterprise with value pricing and more "bang for the buck," as well as peace of mind that content is being handled in context.

4 24/7 coverage to ensure that nothing slips through the cracks in the wee hours of the morning, providing a human firewall that never sleeps, no matter which channel, brand, or country needs moderation.

5 Effective use of technology that enhances human effort and provides the ability to address the scale of consumer interactions, and prioritize them based on patterns and qualitative analysis.

6 A proven track record of developing and deploying scale models for global brands.

INTO ACTION: CONSUMER PACKAGED GOODS CASE STUDY

In this composite example based on real world cases, Acme has become the largest (and only) CPG company in the world by purchasing all other brands. Acme now faces the daunting task of integrating social media programs for disparate brands and geographies: skincare brands, pre-packaged foods, and personal care products. The company needs to scale its social media efforts but still respond to local customers and create and manage programs that resonate on a local level.

The solution partners chosen by Acme utilize a global moderation program, which includes a templatized process flow, trained human moderators, and specialized technology to assist with content review. As Acme starts social media programs, it's able to leverage the templatized startup process, which cuts startup time from 140 hours to 40 hours. The power moderation tools used by the service partner aggregate social content across pages into a single workflow, which allows the human moderators to easily review and flag content and conduct content moderation activities while escalating items to in-house community managers for engagement or problem resolution. The service partner and its program share labor hours across brands, use a streamlined process, and provide volume discounts, leading to substantial savings for Acme.

The service partner's software integrates all the user content into a single moderation workflow in real time, thus enabling the shared hours and scaling the program efficiently. Acme now has a consistent program with the flexibility necessary to meet the needs of different brands, countries, and projects. In-house community managers, meanwhile, can go home at night and on weekends to recharge their batteries, enabling them to focus on engagement and brand building.

About LiveWorld

Through services and software, LiveWorld empowers the largest companies in the world to deliver social customer experiences that deepen relationships between brands and customers. Our marketing, customer service, and insights solutions enable companies to maximize the potential of social media and online communities. LiveWorld services include strategy, campaign management, content moderation, customer engagement, social media analytics, and customer service. For over 19 years, LiveWorld has delivered services and software for moderation, engagement, customer service, and insight, enabling brands to manage social media and online community programs at scale. LiveWorld clients include the #1 brands in consumer packaged goods, retail, pharmaceutical, financial, and travel services. LiveWorld is headquartered in San Jose, California, with offices in New York City and Austin.

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