

## Lands' End Embraces Social Media in Service Culture



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Guest post and recap by SMB member Doug Tangwall of [End Result Marketing](#)

*Would you ignore a ringing phone?*

The first six words spoken at *Lands' End Speaks Out on Social Media* sum up the company's approach to social conversation: Customer service transcends communication technologies.

You might wonder how a clothing retailer headquartered—as its website states— “in the middle of a 40-acre cornfield in rural Wisconsin” is using social media. I know I did.

And, as it turns out more than 150 business professionals in Madison did too. The sold-out event, sponsored by Social Media Breakfast-Madison, featured strategies, examples and advice from [Eric Gohs](#), Lands' End senior manager of social media and mobile marketing.



### Satisfy the Customer

For nearly 50 years, [Lands' End](#) has earned a reputation for going the extra mile to please customers and during that time its business model has evolved from store to catalog to website—and today the company even takes orders within Facebook. So, in some ways, social media is the equivalent of yesterday's telephone.

However, Gohs says social media is different because Lands' End enters as a guest of customers and is “playing in their space.” He adds that fun is part of the equation, but staff must respect this role in all social interactions.

In exchange for “liking” the company, Lands' End seeks to give its followers a feeling of “insider access,” which means they are “not just pushing content” but giving customers a voice, providing discounts unique to Facebook fans, garnering product reviews and evaluations, and featuring real people and messages from key staff. Gohs says he “hides” contacts that post too often and is conscious of the quantity and quality of the company's outreach. Accordingly, he says they reserve social sharing widgets for content that is especially newsworthy.

The social media staff even crafted a 140-character mission statement that could fit in a Twitter feed:

*Cultivate relationships, amplify fun, voice & reward loyalty by creating compelling, shareable content through simple interactions and tools*

## **Learn Early and Often**

For a service-oriented business, social feedback offers vast opportunities to learn and improve. Gohs says,

*“Social media is a megaphone that amplifies strengths and flaws. What customers share about what they like and don’t like is gold for us.”*

Every morning the *Cup ‘o Customer*—an actual customer quote from the previous day—is sent to all staff. Social media is even covered as part of the orientation process for new hires.

With over 509,000 Facebook fans on the main page, Land’s End can preview upcoming products in a “very public and very fast focus group.” This yields insights for marketers, creative staff, and even provides a gauge for the purchasing department. The company’s website has also logged more than 100,000 product reviews from customers.

Lands’ End conducts many social media experiments. Gohs says the company tries to limit exposure, measure and adjust before rolling out larger initiatives.

## **Plan Well and Work Hard**

Gohs says both customers and Lands’ End should receive a return on investment from social media efforts, and its social goals reflect this intent:

- Reward loyalty
- Share stories
- Thank staff and customers
- Build “social credibility” through charitable acts
- Showcase real people
- Educate (for example, how to tie a scarf to look like the model in the catalog)
- Recycle valuable content
- Entertain
- Surprise and delight
- Convert social interactions to sales

But much of this “fun” is the result of planning, talent and fortitude. Gohs highlighted a herculean effort that made Lands’ End the number-one US trend on CyberMonday, the biggest day of shopping for online retailers. Months of planning and preparation plus a dedicated team that ran a 12-hour social media marathon earned the company 32,000 tweets with 32 million impressions in a 24-hour period.

*Bottom line: I learned what lies at Lands’ End: a Sea of Social Opportunities*

Doug Tangwall is founder of End Result Marketing, a company that specializes in nurture marketing and applied social media.