



The social media strategy question?

By [Wendy Soucie](#) on June 14, 2011

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Social media strategy question: To build a social media strategy, or suffer the confusion of mindless tactical efforts, that is the question.



Over the past two years there has been a lot of education happening on social media – books, webinars, live presentations, videos, and podcasts. In the business to business (B2B) space, the education seems to be taking a longer learning curve. Not because there is more to learn, but because the businesses say they are looking at more proof of concept examples (and ROI). Social media strategy, content strategy and action plans are used interchangeably, but should they be? Are you confused over these terms yourself?

Ready to move forward yet?

Small and medium size companies, especially those in manufacturing, technical products and professional services, are now just gathering the troops to move forward with the social media channel. Still, the majority of businesses are approaching social media by looking at the tools first and trying to build a tactical strategy around the tool.

Or they are confusing a content strategy with a a social business strategy. While they are now planning blog subjects, tweets, LinkedIn updates and corporate approved news link sharing out 6 months and tracking mechanisms, they have not aligned the content to a business function that can improve how they work with customers better. They have not embraced a strategy around their business goals that will transform their organization through a cross-functional social media team (including customer and partner stakeholders). Even farther from nurturing customer relationships, they have not empowered their staff to be a unified customer service team nor allowed the greater community to be the amplifier of their message.

Social business strategy comes first



In an article on Social Media Examiner, [Rich Brooks, Flyte New Media interviewed Susan Gato](#), Senior Director of Web and New Media Strategies at CompTIA, said,

“You can’t have a social media strategy without a content strategy.”

I don’t think this is true at all. You must understand what content to create that will address goals, which existing business functions you can improve, and how your customer relationships will change. Which of course makes my case—social media business strategy comes first.

Even with social business leaders such as [Axel Schultze](#) and organizations like [Social Media Academy](#) teaching leadership and strategy, not enough organizations are taking this seriously and many are making the same mistakes over and over.

Does this sound familiar?

A company decides that they have to be in social media, they have anyone (often an intern – no disrespect intended) build a page and get to it. You can find these pages and profiles, where the activity lasted as long as the internship, or the first few posts due to lack of staff and management buy-in.

Some companies have a strong content strategy for the information they are sharing. They know the questions the audience is asking, they know where the audience is asking those questions and have joined those communities, they get comments and interaction on what they post, not to mention they even have gathered a variety of tools to measure and track their progress. The business clearly has the means to the end, but are lacking the end goal. That of transforming their organization to a social business with relationships with the audience. How can I tell? They have regular posts, they have how tos, case studies, view points, reviews, tool commentary, videos and interviews. All the right content around keywords and subject titles.

Your goal could be to improve one aspect of your business

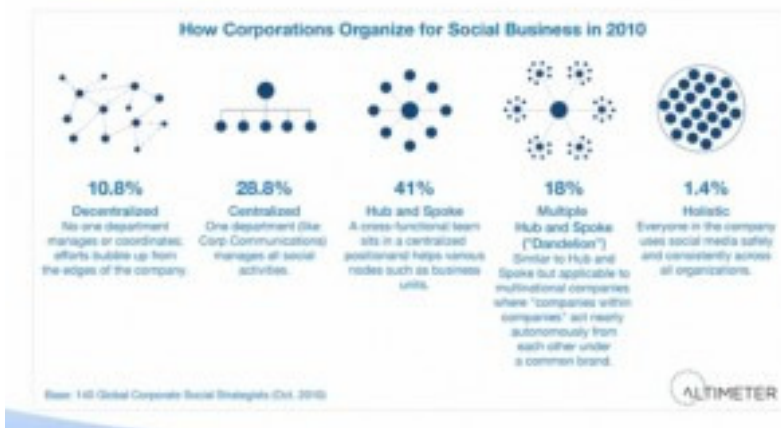
In a post listing [22 social media tactical tools](#), Peter Kim says

“I haven’t found a single company doing all of these today. Forget divining a big, meaningful business objective before getting started – you’ll end up in analysis paralysis. Just make sure you’re making an existing business function better and get started.” *Peter Kim*

The points to make note of is the need to find at least one business function that you can improve. To do that your social media strategy needs to align and recognize the business goal drivers. And secondly, a content strategy will make using one or more tools more effective and efficient.

Enterprise level adjusts to social business strategy

Programs mostly organize into Hub & Spoke and Centralized



Large enterprise (Fortune 1000) are regrouping as well. They might have started with a social media person/team that was in the marketing group for each division, but they are finding that each group started in slightly different directions with out a unified strategy across the corporation.[insert visual from forester/owang on organization for SM teams]

This leads to perhaps inconsistent messages, branded profiles. personal profiles, inconsistent brand messages across a platform and across the social media tools. If you look for them on Facebook, you can find multiple Facebook pages, managed by employees or by non employees. When problems escalate in the social space, people react via emotion and not with a plan to follow. And yes, they forgot to complete a social media policy.

They are moving from the left-side configuration of a social media function to the far right as they re-analyze success and failures. I think this is the right direction for organizations large and small.

Do you recognize your company or yourself in this description? Are you now ready to make that effort more strategic? Maybe it's time to regroup and work on a social business strategy to guide your progress.

Wendy Soucie provides clients a unique perspective on social business strategy across an organization. Wendy applies and follows specific social media strategy and methodologies for assessments, network growth, contribution, participation and execution. She is a certified social media strategist, [Social Media Academy](#) (Palo Alto, CA). She is an accomplished trainer and keynote personality speaker.

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