

Social Media Forum – Thatcham, 16 June 2011

Summary

- This was the second social media forum organised by MIPAA and the range of issues discussed has evolved noticeably since the first took place in September 2010.
- In addition to topics raised by the 20 attendees at the event, questions and input was included via Twitter using the hashtag: #MIPAA
- This overview is a ‘cut-out-and-keep’ commentary, rather than a full transcript –you need to attend to get the full story!

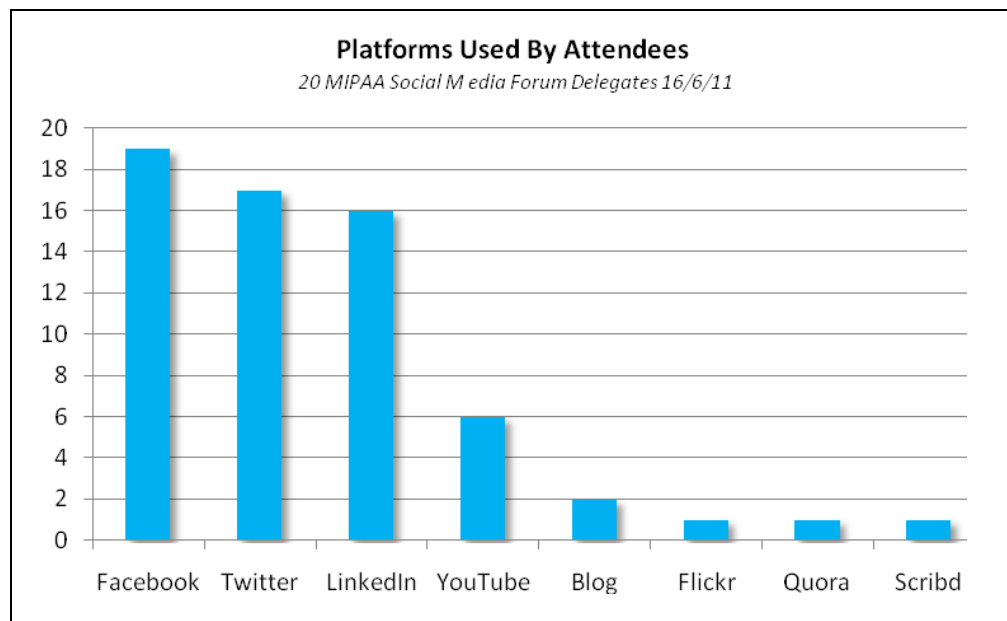
NB: Special thanks to MIPAA member Iain Wallace for hosting the event at Thatcham – in the middle of the ‘Triple Focus’ event

2010 key topics	2011 key topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining social media • It’s about listening, not just broadcasting • Who owns SM in the business • How SM supports traditional PR • How Freelance media use SM • Company use versus personal use • Organisations should have a person engaging not a ‘business’ • Lots of followers/connections does not equal influence • Only become actively involved when the company is ready to engage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing information – what works, what doesn’t • Integrating SM activity across the company (national v head office) • Best practice and sharing experience • Measuring influence of SM users • Engaging with the traditional media through SM • Role of SM in PR – tactical tool or embedded activity • Benefits of using SM as part of the communications mix • Identifying SM trends

Attendees

Laura Hardy	Continental Tyres	Marc Mustard	PFPR Communications
Debbie Chennells	Ford	Joanne Davis	Porsche
Oliver Rowe	Ford	John Rawlings	VW
Christopher Foster	Market Engineering	Kate Thompson	VW
Al Clarke	MIPAA	Paul Buckett	VW
Heather Yaxley	MIPAA	Dan Strong	Auto Express
Shona Smith	Mitsubishi	Kyle Fortune	Car Enthusiast
Vanessa Nalder	Mitsubishi	Shane O'Donaghue	Car Enthusiast
Scott Willsher	Mitsubishi	Debbie Wood	Fleet News
Dave Rogers	Motor Codes	Tristan Young	Wheel Ideas/Business Car

Which social media platforms are being used (no data recorded at 2010 SM Forum)?



Managing information flow

- Social media encompasses lots of different platforms where different things can be done in different ways.
- Information does not have to be complicated or expensive to produce; often the simple things work best provided they interest others.
- It was felt acceptable to offer corporate information as part of a mix – eg videos, text, images
- Overt, commercial, sales-oriented messages received a big NO – inappropriate for SM
- ‘Behind the scenes’ material is well received – and humanises the brand
- Too much repetition of information – eg Re-Tweets (RT) across accounts and platforms can become irritating and lead to Un-Follows
- Links to information across platforms (eg Tweeting about news on Facebook) is generally OK
- If you do not have sufficient information, it was felt acceptable to add value to your community with links to other (relevant) information, to maintain presence and engagement
- The use of an alias or “dummy” account was suggested as a way of encouraging debate and comments – transparency in doing so was recommended.

Customer care policies

- It was recognised that any social media presence is likely to generate some negative response
- It was suggested that not all such comments should receive an official response (not everyone may be looking for a response), and it may be better to engage/resolve issues offline initially.
- Address valid, genuine points with an open, credible reply
- It is better to show resolution of an issue than delete negative comments as a blanket policy – this loses credibility and can stimulate more negative attention
- Those who are particularly aggressive or repeatedly negative are likely to be isolated by others especially if they do not have a legitimate point to make
- Look to establish a site policy (eg in Facebook) to detail what is acceptable and what is not in terms of comment – explain what/if/how/why/when comments may be removed or someone blocked/un-Followed
- Creating a particular area or account (eg tab on a Facebook site or separate Twitter account) where customer care issues can be discussed, managed and avoids mixing topics elsewhere.

- A comment rating system (as per Trip Advisor) can help provide balance enabling readers to see the relevance/score of comments
- Adding new, relevant information avoids a negative comment being the first seen by new visitors.

Social media and events

- The use of social media on events is increasing and there are some things that can be done to aide those attending:
 - Propose a hashtag that can be used in Tweets by everyone attending (eg #MIPAA)
 - Promote the hashtag in advance and monitor it during and after the event
 - Obtain Twitter details from those attending
 - Clarify embargo regulations in respect of SM activity in advance – media do not consider mentioning they are attending an event to be breaking an embargo
- The first priority of media is to direct attention to their own site with any coverage rather than any links to company material
- It is felt acceptable for companies to RT and link to reviews in media outlets and it was understood that they will focus on the most positive reviews

Global reach of information

- It was recognised that SM information (including press releases) has global reach and will be read, commented upon and shared outside the UK – and vice versa.
- Global companies seem to lack convergence or cohesion in use of SM across countries
- Local culture, custom and practice create some SM challenges. For example, certain countries provide more information online than others and national differences in product/ services can become apparent or cause confusion if misreported.
- Social media cannot be controlled, but can be managed
- The issue of integrating national/global activities via social media has not been resolved by most companies, but SM highlights the need for greater dialogue and coordination.

Business integration of social media

- Different approaches were discussed and it was felt the best approach was to involve a champion/reference person for each area of a business (eg PR, marketing, customer care, etc).
- A cross-functional SM project team enables regular dialogue, sharing of responsibilities and collaboration on generating and managing engagement in SM and resolving any issues arising.
- PR was felt to have a unique competency and experience in managing dialogic communications that should be shared with other functions.
- Those with PR experience are adapt at thinking through and managing consequences, knowing how to respond immediately to a variety of issues and draw on media experience in how others are likely to talk about and engage with companies.

Measuring influence

- Methods such as Peer Index and Klout were discussed and their methodologies considered.
- No-one was using these to determine the influence of others.
- Comparison with methods of identifying who was influential in mainstream media was raised and it was noted that although online options offer a data-driven assessment, these can be “gamed” and do not necessarily identify who is relevant and influential for your story/brand.
- There was debate over the value of SM both for media and PR practitioners. It was agreed this was difficult to assess and that it was easy to devote considerable time and effort without much apparent return. Nevertheless, it was agreed to be an area that cannot be ignored.