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Aliza Sherman
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by Aliza Sherman and Danielle Elliott Smith

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About the Authors

Aliza Sherman is a pioneer and visionary in the web industry who travels the world to speak to diverse audiences about the Internet, social media, mobile marketing, new technologies and applications, entrepreneurship, and women's issues. She founded the first woman-owned, full-service Internet company — Cybergrrl, Inc. — and the first global organization for women — Webgrrls International. A serial entrepreneur, she also started one of the first social media marketing agencies and one of the first mobile marketing consultancies. *Newsweek* named Aliza one of the “Top 50 People Who Matter Most on the Internet” for her early Internet work, and *Fast Company* named her one of the “Most Powerful Women in Technology.” She is the author of ten books, most of them about business and the Internet. She and Danielle co-authored the book *MOM, Incorporated*.

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Dedication

From Aliza Sherman: To my loving family: Greg, my Renaissance man husband, and Noa Grace, 6, who now knows why Mommy had her nose in a computer — again.

From Danielle Elliott Smith: To my extraordinary husband, Jeff, for holding my hand throughout this process. I couldn't have done it without you. I'm one lucky girl. And to my sweet small people — Punky and Coop — thank you for inspiring me to live my passion and for proving to me that I truly *can* do both: be your mom and live this dream. I'm grateful for you every day.

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Introduction

You've probably heard that "business as usual" is no more. The way that people communicate, market, and sell has changed dramatically since the advent of social media marketing. We're here to tell you that even though the tools are new and different — and seem to change regularly — you can definitely find out how to master them.

Every step of the way, we coauthors emphasize the best practices of online marketing, customer service, and genuine human communication. As a business owner, you benefit from knowing not only how Internet tools work but also how people use them and how you can leverage them to better reach the customers and prospects who matter the most to you and your business.

About This Book

Social Media Engagement For Dummies starts by shedding light on the fundamental principles of social media engagement — the ingredients that put the *social* in social media marketing. Effective social media engagement (or SME, as we often refer to it throughout this book) should provide tangible and measurable results for your business and boost your bottom line.

By mastering the techniques in this book, you strengthen your connections with potential customers. But don't stop there: Convert potential customers to actual customers, and then use SME tactics to turn customers into active and passionate evangelists for your company.

This book is a practical, hands-on guide to social media engagement, and we speak from experience. We don't only consult and teach others to engage well via social media — we also benefit daily as business owners ourselves, by avidly using social networks and social media tools and platforms. We use these tools to communicate our messages to our respective audiences and to connect with the people who read, listen to, and watch what we publish online.

We build relationships with our audiences and truly care about them. In turn, we are humbled to see that our audiences trust us and respond positively to what we say and do online. We are confident that you, too, can benefit from social media engagement.

Here are some of the things you can do with the information in this book:

- ✔ Understand and apply the elements of social media engagement.
- ✔ Find out how to plan ahead for engagement.
- ✔ Determine which social media tools are right for you.
- ✔ Effectively incorporate engagement into your social media campaigns.
- ✔ Measure your social media engagement efforts.

Social Media Engagement For Dummies isn't meant to sound technical or geeky. We take a down-to-earth approach to the technology and provide a lot of explanations and examples so that you can immediately incorporate SME strategies and tactics into your online marketing efforts. We're results-oriented, and we know you are, too.

Foolish Assumptions

We do our best to be clear and detailed in our explanations of suggested tools and tactics. We assume, however, that you have a basic understanding of several ingredients:

- ✔ You have more than entry-level knowledge of the Internet.
- ✔ You have a website and you know what a blog is, even if you don't personally blog.
- ✔ You're aware of, and familiar with, some of the most popular social networks.
- ✔ You have at least one social networking account for your business.
- ✔ You're engaging in forms of online marketing and even social media marketing, and you're looking to increase the effectiveness of those efforts.
- ✔ You know that your participation is the key to successful social media engagement.
- ✔ More than anything, you value your customers — you want to bring more customers to your business, and you want to turn all your customers into enthusiasts.

Conventions Used in This Book

To be consistent, we use these common *For Dummies* conventions:

- ✓ The first time we use a new term, we define it and *italicize* it.
- ✓ When we tell you to type something (in a box or a field, for example), we put it in **bold**.
- ✓ When we mention a website, a network, a platform, or an online application, we provide the URL for your convenience.
- ✓ When we provide a URL, it looks like this: `www.dummies.com`.

What You Don't Have to Read

You don't have to read this book sequentially, and you don't even have to read all its sections in any particular chapter. You can skip sidebars and read only the material that helps you complete the task at hand, or you can start by reading only the sidebars, to access information that you can apply immediately to your social media engagement efforts.

How This Book Is Organized

Social Media Engagement For Dummies is split into six parts. Think of the earlier parts of the book as introductions to theories, concepts, and tools; think of the latter parts as plans for turning concepts into actions. In this section, we briefly describe what you'll find in each part.

Part I: The Basics of Social Media Engagement

We start this book with an overview of social media engagement, from understanding the concepts to using the tools. Part I begins by justifying your investment in social media engagement and explaining the concepts. We explain measurement and the value of engaging, and we introduce a variety of online tools for implementing social media engagement tactics.

Part II: Exploring the Elements of Social Media Engagement

Moving beyond the basics, Part II delves more deeply into the concepts of social media engagement, including building trust and credibility, creating connections, and understanding the importance of being present in social networking. We explain how to start, and participate in, online conversations and drive interactions that help you achieve your business goals.

Part III: Examining the Basic Engagement Tools

In Part III, we review online communications tools that you may already use and others that you may not be using yet. We outline how to use these tools — from the more traditional e-mail, forums, blogs, and websites to Facebook and Twitter — specifically for social media engagement.

Part IV: Engaging Through Additional Social Channels

We don't stop with the popular social networks covered in Part III; in Part IV, we look at a few up-and-coming networks that are changing the way people engage online. We break down the ways that Pinterest, LinkedIn, Google+, and location-based networks (such as Foursquare and Instagram) provide opportunities for engagement in more ways that drive results.

Part V: Leveraging Audio and Video for Engagement

We'd be remiss not to mention multimedia options for social media engagement. In Part V, we cover ways to use audio and video to capture your audience's attention and encourage interactions. We cap this part with a close look at YouTube features that facilitate engagement.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

In typical *For Dummies* fashion, this book includes The Part of Tens to give you quick-reference guides to social media engagement. First, we fill you in

on common social media engagement mistakes that you definitely want to avoid. We finish this part with the stories of ten businesses that use social media engagement tactics successfully.

Icons Used in This Book

What's a *For Dummies* book without icons to point you to helpful information that's sure to help you along your way? In this section, we briefly describe each icon we use in this book.



The Tip icon points out helpful information that's likely to make your job easier.



This icon marks an interesting, useful fact that you may want to remember for later use.



The Warning icon highlights pitfalls you should avoid. With this icon, we're telling you to pay attention and proceed with caution.



When you see this icon, you know that there's technical information nearby. If you're not feeling technically minded, you can skip it.

Where to Go from Here

Like any *For Dummies* book, this one is written to ensure that you can dive into any section at any time and find useful information. Parts I and II offer an introduction to theories, concepts, and tools; Parts III, IV, and V lay out distinct road maps for turning concepts into actions. Don't hesitate to skip around this book and refer to it often as a step-by-step guide to completing a task or simply as a refresher. Use the table of contents to find the chapters that can serve you immediately, such as a specific social network, or check the index to key in on a particular concept or task.

Occasionally, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., has updates to its technology books. If this book has technical updates, they'll be posted at www.dummies.com/go/socialmediaengagementfdupdates.

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Social Media Engagement For Dummies

Part I

The Basics of Social Media Engagement



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In this part . . .

- ✔ Find out about the goals of social media engagement and why they matter.
- ✔ Gain insights into the impact and value of engaging via social media.
- ✔ Get a handle on the variety of online tools that you can use to engage effectively with your audience.

Chapter 1

Explaining the Why, Who, and How of Social Media Engagement

In This Chapter

- ▶ Recognizing the benefits of social media engagement
 - ▶ Identifying the many roles of social media
 - ▶ Deciding how your organization can best use social media
-

Social media engagement (SME) is the “stuff that happens” during your social media marketing campaigns. SME is an essential part of social media marketing. If you don’t connect with others in social networks — and if they don’t respond to you — you don’t have engagement. Without engagement, you’re simply broadcasting messages that fall on deaf ears. Nobody wants that to happen, right?

In this chapter, we help you start thinking about SME, including the benefits of engaging with customers. We outline who participates in SME. **Hint:** It isn’t just you. We also introduce concepts that explain how SME happens — or how it should happen — if you’re using best practices.

If you’re being thoughtful about the way you communicate with — and connect with — others online, you’ll have greater success in reaching customers via SME. But first you need to understand what it is, how it works, and what your role is in making it happen.

Seeking the Benefits of Social Media Engagement

When will it ever end? Technology changes constantly and so quickly that it feels like the moment you gain a new skill or figure out how to use a new online tool, everything changes again and your newly acquired skills seem obsolete. Let’s face it: Social media engagement seems to change daily.

Simply put, social media engagement (often abbreviated as SME) is the process by which online communications and the content you post online help you build connections with other people within online communities. Social media engagement involves the use of the tools of social media — social networks, for example — to build relationships with others that, ideally, result in some kind of reaction, interaction, or action.

You may be wondering why you should consider using SME. Maybe you're satisfied with your current marketing strategies that involve concrete numbers and set dollar amounts. Maybe you're buying advertising in traditional media such as print, television, or radio and even though you've witnessed its declining effectiveness over the years, it's what you know.

Maybe you're committed to advertising online with banner ads, skyscraper ads, and interstitial (*pop-up*) ads. Sure, the number of click-throughs on your ads has declined, but you chalk it up to people being busy with publishing their own content and being too distracted by Facebook and Twitter activity to pay attention the way they used to do.

You might even be concerned about losing control of your content or copyrights. Nobody fully controls information that's published online. SME acknowledges and encourages not only the consumption of the information you put out there but also lets others interpret, remix (by adding their own ideas), and share it. You can still protect your copyrights and trademarks in social media as you have been doing over the past several years on the Internet. But in SME, you want people to spread your message, and you need to let them do it in their own ways.

Let's face it: This isn't your grandparents' marketing campaign. The world of marketing online as you once knew it has changed drastically since social networks entered the scene, and it's changing even as you read this chapter.

Keeping up with changing consumer needs

Today's consumers are using the Internet for both personal and professional activities, and they're savvier than ever about the way companies like yours are trying to reach them. Though they're inundated and overwhelmed by blatant advertising that tries to pull at their attention, they now tune out most ads, especially the ones that aren't relevant to them.

Finding out how your customers use the Internet

To reach today's consumers online, you must understand how they use the Internet, which sites they visit online, what they're looking for, and how they behave. Spend time pinpointing your ideal customer's online habits. A study in 2012 by Experian shows that more than 91 percent of adults who go online use social networks regularly:

<http://go.experian.com/forms/experian-digital-marketer-2012>

That number is up from 65 percent from earlier in the year, as reported by Pew Internet Research in April 2012:

<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Digital-differences/Main-Report/Internet-activities-Those-already-online-are-doing-more.aspx>

Your customers and your prospects want you to be available to them whenever they go online. Just as they expect a search engine to give them instant results for information they're seeking, consumers who go online to search for your company expect that you'll have not only a website but also a presence on at least one of their favorite social networks.



Add social media icons representing the social networks where your company is present and participating, including links directly to each network so that visitors to your website can connect with you in the way they prefer. In Figure 1-1, you can see that The Gap embeds social media icons in the footer of its website so that they appear on every page.

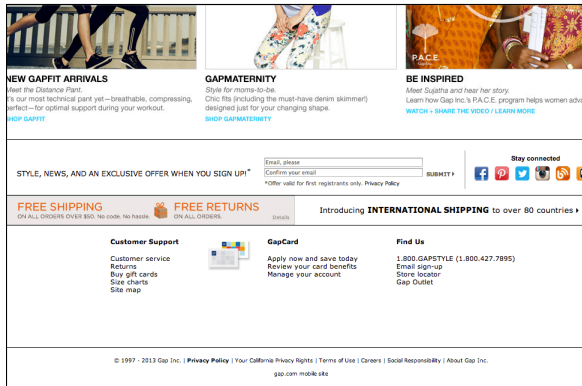


Figure 1-1:
Typical social media icons on a website.

Knowing what customers want from you

Today's consumer takes their expectations a step further than when they were limited in how they could respond to companies marketing to them: They expect you to

- **Hear them when they praise you:** People willingly post both positive and negative statements publicly about you, your products, services, or company on their favorite social networks. You need to listen.

- ✔ **Respond quickly:** If someone comments about a company online, that person expects a response — and may instantly receive responses from *their* friends, fans, and followers. You want to be part of that conversation.
- ✔ **Provide a forum for them:** Calling a 1-800 customer service line is no longer the way consumers want to ask questions, air grievances, or lavish praise on a company. Your presence on a social network can provide customers with a new way to communicate with you. We realize that it may seem intimidating, but they want to communicate with you publicly.
- ✔ **Offer communications choices:** Consumers want multiple options for connecting with you. Offer them a variety of options based on their preferences.

In short, the very people whom you're trying to reach — your *target market* — are expecting you to be present in major social networks and not only to lurk there but also to be ready to interact with them.

Humanizing your brand in the marketplace

You may have heard the word *authentic* tossed around in blog posts, articles, workshops, or lectures as an important aspect of social media engagement. We understand the term to mean *real*, as in genuine, honest, and transparent rather than fake, overly commercial, insincere, or shady. We state it this way: Be human.

“Of course, I'm human,” you say. “And so is my team. We're *all* human.” We know that you're human; however, you need to be human in social networks. Don't subscribe to a regimented formula, set stringent restrictions, or automate every possible action to avoid investing the time and effort it takes to truly engage — and to be engaging — in social networks with your following.

Putting faces to names

Being human in social media engagement starts with people, involves people, and ends with people. No social network functions without people who love to use it connecting with other people through it. For example, the cable television company Charter posts customer service hours on Twitter and shows the people behind the brand. Figure 1-2 shows how Charter features a photograph of its social media specialist (whose Twitter handle is @CharterAbby) as its Twitter icon and a photograph of its customer service team on its Twitter page to come across as friendly and approachable.