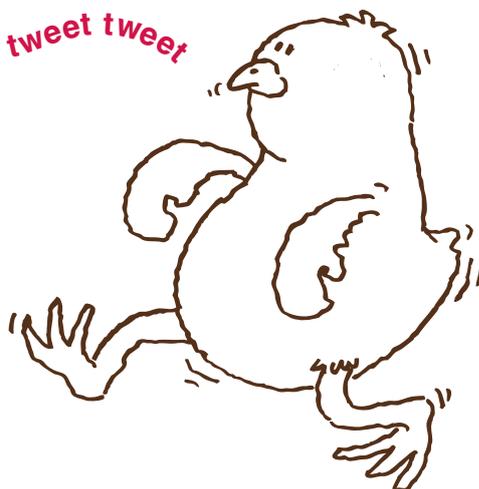
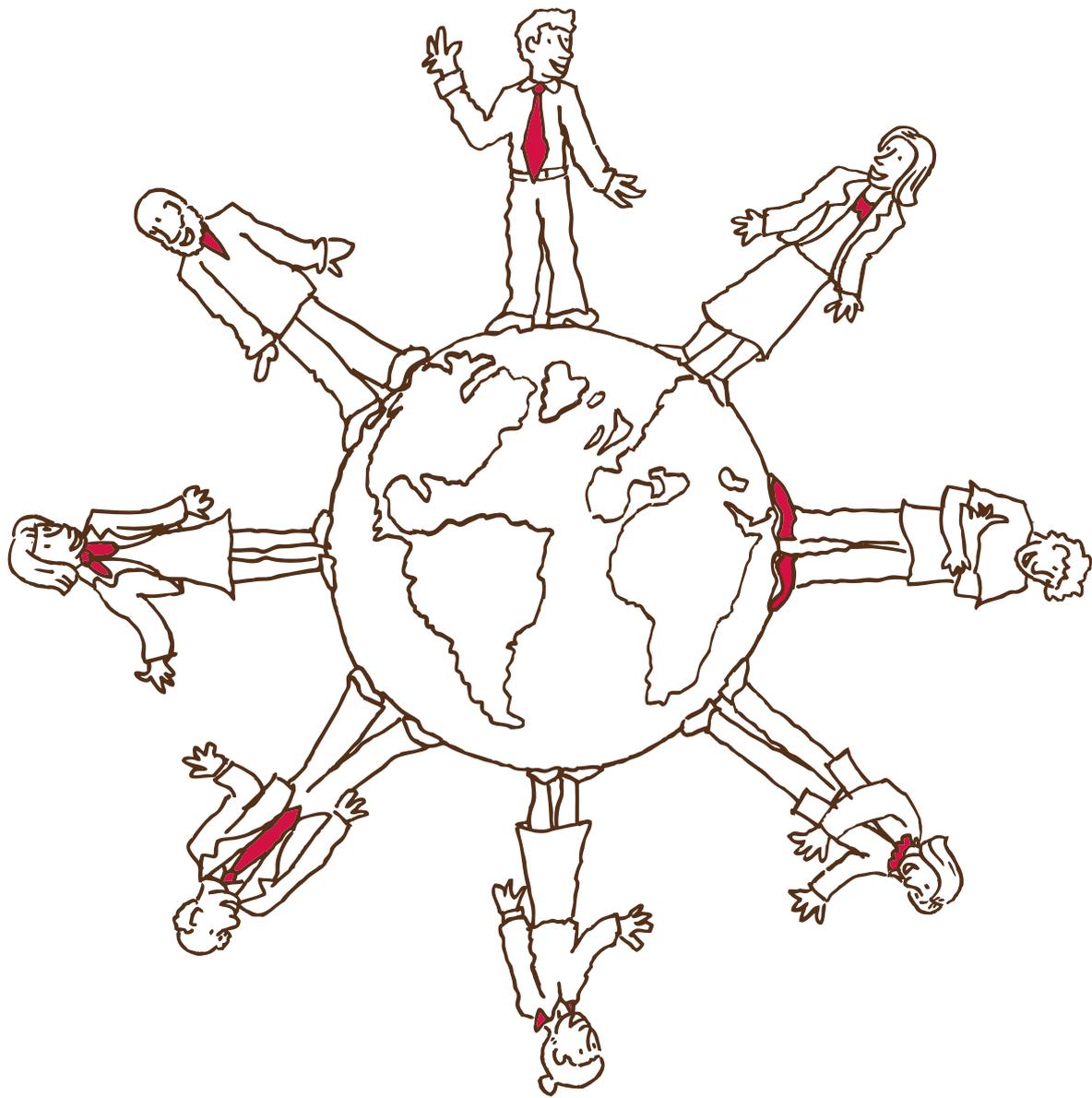


**If you want to
walk the walk,
talk the talk**

tweet tweet tweet





Introduction

Social media – it's big, it's clever and it's here to stay. It has revolutionised how people communicate. "Social media's a totally new world..." said Richard Cole, chairman of the department of advertising, public relations and retailing at Michigan State University. "...and it's happened really fast."

Fast? Supersonic more like – it took radio 38 years to build an audience of 50 million, terrestrial TV took 13 years. Facebook built an audience of 100 million in a miniscule 9 months¹

Social media is all about conversations; it's democratic, collective and immediate. Compare this to email, for example, the stalwart of workplace communication. As one blogger on socialcast.com commented, social media "can help organisations solve many of the problems that email has helped create, letting knowledge flow freely."²

It's obviously not without its pitfalls. Loose twitter talk, for example, can make real tweets out of companies. One PR exec recently insulted the home city of her client on twitter while ironically travelling there to advise them on using social media:

"True confession but I'm in one of those towns where I scratch my head and say, 'I would die if I had to live here,'" wrote the PR. The comment was picked up by bloggers and the story was widely distributed throughout the public relations community. Whoops.

Badly judged comments aside, social media in the workplace is not just about allowing your employees to update their facebook status or to spend their lunch breaks watching a couple of videos on youtube. If understood and managed properly, it can improve your communication with and amongst employees inside your business as well as engaging your customers outside.

¹ "Network Interference" Reed Smith, June 2010

² Socialcast.com "Social networks spur the demise of email in the workplace" June 2010

Outside

Social media in all its variants is an important additional media channel, providing new and exciting touch points for brands to engage with customers. According to Reed Smith in “Network Interference”, their white paper on the legal implications of social media, almost two thirds of businesses say they intend to spend more on social media in the coming year.

Some brands are seamlessly joining up new and traditional media. Take the Wispa relaunch, for example. As a perfect example of the power of the consumer in the new media space, a facebook campaign from Wispa fans convinced Cadbury to resurrect the brand. Cadbury agreed. The relaunch ad campaign created tapped into the passion and enthusiasm of the Wispa lobbyists, asking fans to help them in the creation of the TV spot. Consumers were directed to a specially created website to offer their help. The ad was, of course, put up by Cadbury on youtube.

“The return of Wispa has been driven by the passion of its fans. The [new] campaign has been born out of a desire to allow fans to continue to be part of the brand and will be a major step in driving consumer engagement beyond the initial relaunch.”

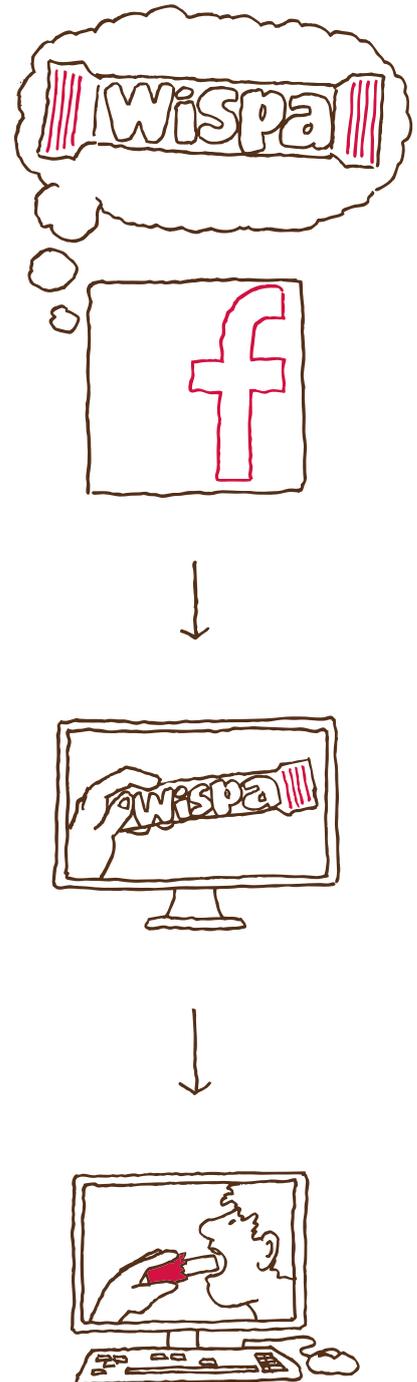
Phil Rumbol, Marketing Director Cadbury Britain and Ireland.

See the ad at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyjzAQ1U2oM>

Coco-Cola goes one step further, using fans as advocates in the broadcast space. Their spot features ‘Dusty and Michael’, the two fans who started Coca-Cola’s facebook page thanking Coke’s 5.7 million facebook fans – one at a time.

Some brands however, stumble around more awkwardly in the social media space, social media appearing to have been shoe-horned into the media mix in a way that lacks credibility or relevance to the target market, a tick box exercise. Want to interact with “Sharon” online to share her story of what happened next after she bit into a ginger nut with her super new sticky dentures anyone? Didn’t think so!

As Nils Leonard, Executive Creative Director, Grey London said in Campaign recently “Let’s all stop trying to bolt social media onto the work we’re writing.”³



³ Campaign magazine, 23 July 2010

Inside

So, maybe you've got your little chatty ducks in a row and have sorted out your consumer social media strategy. How about inside your business – for employees and other intermediaries? Give a little freedom to allow your staff to shake their tail feathers online in their downtime and you could find they turn into your online brand ambassadors. Employees who live the brand feel high levels of engagement at work and are the best possible advocates to consumers and prospective employees alike.

More powerfully though, if social media is about communities, collaboration and user-generated content then it's the perfect tool to encourage employees to engage with the brand and each other in the workplace. Done well it will go a long way to creating a more positive corporate culture as well as being a fantastic way of problem solving and idea generating.

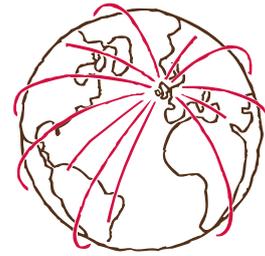
Company intranets have been around for ages. All too often though (with a few notable exceptions – First Direct we salute you) they are boring, corporate and stuffy information providers, lacking in tone and warmth.

Allowing your employees to talk to each other through your own social media channel frees them from email and corporate intranets and allows them to share knowledge, experiences and learning in a familiar and comfortable environment.



A problem shared...

Particularly useful in larger organisations, it can be used to solve work problems and answer questions by reaching out to hundreds of people in an instant. There's likely to be masses of untapped knowledge amongst employees in every department and at every level.



Idea generating

Research shows that giving employees autonomy is one of the key drivers of high levels of motivation, even more motivating than money.⁴ Using forums and blogs to share, debate and rate new ideas can help employees feel they are empowered to make things happen at work. Especially when they see the ideas become reality.



Creating community tribes

Social media provides the perfect tool to unite people from the same company who do similar jobs but may be in different offices, either in the same country or internationally. This works both from a work and social perspective – making new friends while sharing ideas and problem solving in a fun and stimulating way.



The relationship between a line manager and the person they manage is the most important relationship in any business. Employees don't quit their companies, they quit their bosses.⁵ If you want to raise standards of leadership across your organisation then how about developing a 'Manager' App for their phones? Imagine being able to bring all managers together sharing best practice, news and views, customer satisfaction stats, share prices – anything you want. You could even run entire reward and recognition schemes through them. Absolutely fantastic!

Generating and sharing content

Developing your own company channel for youtube is just one way of using the benefits of film for your internal communications. How about sharing films of your best brand ambassadors across the company? Or turning your staff into ad men (and women) for the day and getting them to create their own corporate spots. We've loads more ideas about this in our thought piece 'May the film be with you'.⁶



⁴ RSA Animate: Drive: "The surprising truth about what motivates us." Dan Pink, April 2010

⁵ See Woodreed's thought piece 'I love my manager' <http://www.woodreed.com/wood-chips/views>

⁶ 'May the film be with you' <http://www.woodreed.com/wood-chips/views>

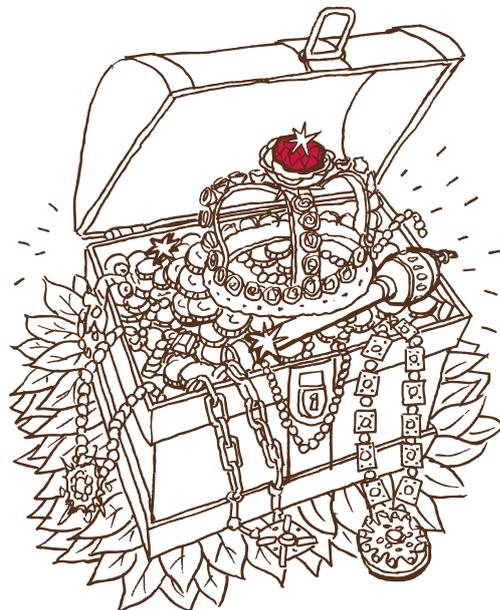
Discovering that social media's a hidden gem for a national treasure

Woodreed used social media as a core part of an internal communications campaign we created recently for The National Trust.

With 5,500 staff UK wide across 300 locations, they had a hard to reach audience both geographically and emotionally. Their corporate strategy was clear and focused; the challenge now was to shift employees' mindsets and behaviours to help the business achieve its objectives. Harnessing the power of social media we created open, easy, transparent channels of communication to get staff talking across the UK, sharing ideas and working together creatively finding solutions to problems. We also created areas online for employees sharing similar job roles and responsibilities to meet, bringing together people with shared interests, creating tribes of shared passions and interests. We also posted films of staff who were already living the brand in a positive way as shining examples of inspiration to the rest of the organisation. There was also an ideas forum where ideas were pitched and voted on. The best ideas became reality.

Social media is a powerful tool for business inside and out. Online communities at work can be powerful places of learning, discovery where businesses can engage and empower their employees, uniting and delighting them, entertaining and educating them.

We'd love to have a chat about ways of using social media to help communicate with your employees. Why not get in touch at www.woodreed.com, email hello@woodreed.com or call on 01892 515025?



We'd be really flattered if you want to use any of the material in this thought piece. The only thing we ask is that you credit us. If you decide you want to use it externally, then we'd be really grateful if you could have a little chat with us about it first.

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