UNTANGLING THE SOCIAL WEB:
HOW-TO GUIDES

PARTS 6 AND 7: **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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integer

PARTS 6 AND 7: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Socializing in today's world has increasingly become a series of digital interactions via the likes of Twitter®, Facebook and LinkedIn®. Businesses can no longer stay competitive solely through traditional media channels such as print and TV. Businesses need to be where their audiences are communicating, socializing and seeking information—the social web.

Though the social web is new for some, being social is not a new phenomenon. Humans are programmed to socialize, connect and share.[1] Shoppers use the social web to plan trips, obtain advice, share their experiences and post business/product reviews (good or bad). Prospective employees use the social web to seek out job positions and learn more about a company, while current employees share their opinions and achievements. Interactions happen in real time, and people expect to be able to communicate with businesses in this way.

The online world is moving rapidly, and brands and retailers need to understand the social networking landscape, its users, how it impacts the business' role and presence in the market and how it can affect the space.

To help businesses navigate and enter the social web, the Coca-Cola® Retailing Research Council (CCRRC) of North America partnered with The Integer Group® to produce a seven-part series on the social web that outlines the landscape. The series concludes with Parts 6 and 7, strategic how-to guides for entering the space and addressing some common business questions such as how to constructively engage in the social web and how to measure success.

Parts 6 and 7 provide the entire retail community with the foundational knowledge to establish successful external and internal social web strategies through a four-step process. The task becomes approachable by following a path of four steps:

1. *Define your role and goals*

2. *Set up your social world*

3. *Engage*

4. *Assess and evolve*

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[1]   CCRRC/The Integer Group. (2012, February). Untangling the Social Web: Insights for Users, Brands and Retailers, Part 2: Identifying the Allure of Social Networking: Traits, Behaviors and Motivators.

About Step 1—Define Your Role and Goals

The first step in establishing a successful external or internal strategy is to define your role and goals to create your social web vision. Begin articulating your business identity by rethinking your mission and values through the lens of the social web. In the case of an internal strategy, use the same lens of the social web to rethink your HR mission and values. It is important to consider all departments in your company when making these assessments to ensure that your social identity complements your overall business identity.
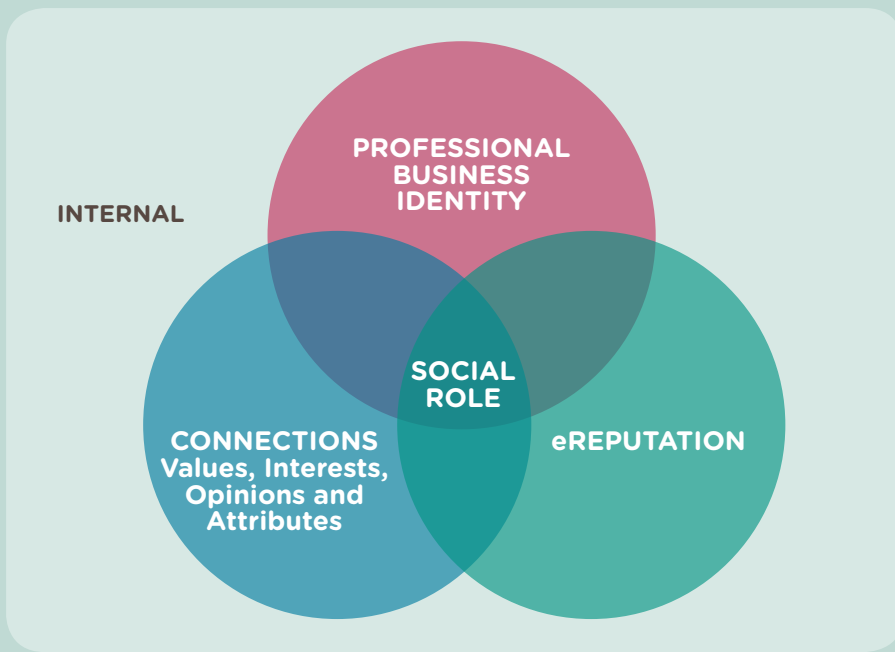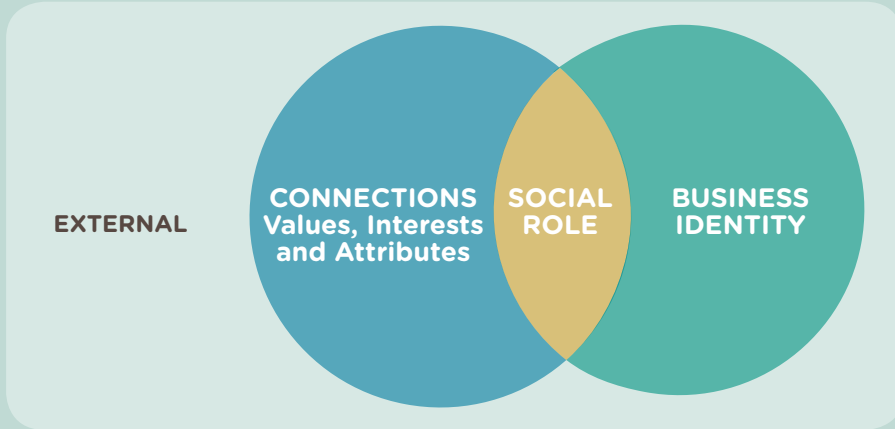
Next, listen and learn. It is important to consider both your current social connections and your prospective connections consisting of your competition and connections not affiliated with your industry. Look in to monitoring these conversations with both broad and narrow listening tools. It is vital to know other people's perceptions of your business and company culture to develop a successful external-facing business strategy and internal engagement/recruitment strategy.

Third, it's about deepening your knowledge via secondary research for your external strategy. Parts 1–5 of Untangling the Social Web provide foundational trends and knowledge about the social web, its users and trends. Organizations like Mashable™ and Nielsen® Wire provide daily news and frequent reports on the social web free of charge. In the case of your internal strategy, it's about getting to know your professional connections. This can be done by conducting some form of primary research among your current employees and skimming the social web content among your prospective employees to get a read on how to continue building connections and attract talent on the web.

Fourth, identify your social role. This is different for external versus internal (or professional) strategies:

Finding Your Social Role

Your social role is the sweet spot where your identity as a business overlaps with values, attributes and interests of your connections.

EXTERNAL

CONNECTIONS
Values, Interests
and Attributes

SOCIAL
ROLE

BUSINESS
IDENTITY

INTERNAL

PROFESSIONAL
BUSINESS
IDENTITY

SOCIAL
ROLE

CONNECTIONS
Values, Interests,
Opinions and
Attributes

eREPUTATION

After your social role has been established, it's time to narrow your sights and identify a social web objective. Different objectives will exist for different territories within your business. For external, consider the different objectives needed for sales, customer service, marketing and brand building. In the case of internal, it is important to look into objectives for employee culture, employee/ company relations, recruiting and business perceptions.
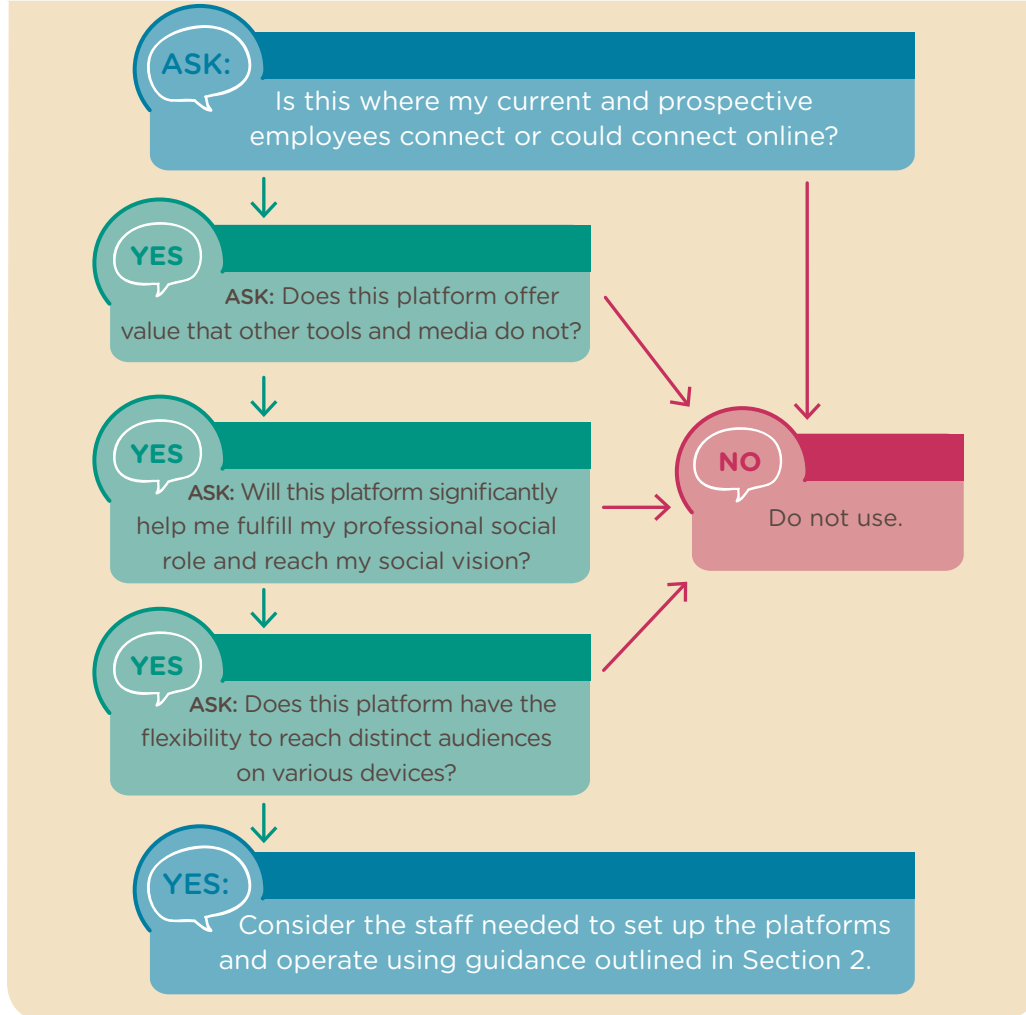
Finally, envision success and how you're going to track it. Knowing how to gauge success is the final piece needed for developing a holistic web vision. Here, we outline the four dimensions of success: interest, influence, engagement and activation. Once you have worked through each dimension, capture all the elements of your social web vision as if it were a new mission statement. Keep it on hand for your company so that, as you progress in your strategic development, you can stay on track.

About Step 2—Set Up Your Social World

Once you have a strategy for success on the social web, it's time to identify platforms, assess resources and position your business for successful engagement. Begin by determining where social fits in with your overall communication strategies. In the case of external, there is paid, earned and owned media to consider. Social web strategies should focus on using owned media to generate earned media. Generally speaking, paid media does not offer the level of credibility that it once held. Shoppers are now more skeptical of paid media and are starting to increasingly rely on recommendations from friends and word-of-mouth referrals as sources, both of which social is prime to provide. However, as the social web continues to evolve, paid media could become a more compelling force for amplification. In the case of internal, it's time to set up an infrastructure and process for executing your internal social media strategy. This can be done through the use of traditional HR tools (email, phone etc.), social tools (LinkedIn, Twitter etc.) or social benefits (e.g., encouraging two-way conversations).

Next, it's time to pick appropriate social platforms. In the first section, you used listening research to identify the online behaviors of your current and prospective connections. Use these insights as a starting place for choosing your platforms. Just because there are many platforms does not mean you need to be present on all of them. Feedback from Integer's social media expert panel indicates that it is better to use one platform well than to participate on all platforms poorly. If and when you participate on multiple platforms, make it easy for connectors to know where they can engage with you. To help guide your decision-making process, we have included a platform decision-selection tree. *(NOTE: The tree included here is from the internal how-to guide; it differs slightly for external.)*

Platform Selection Decision Tree[2]

ASK: Is this where my current and prospective employees connect or could connect online?

YES → **ASK:** Does this platform offer value that other tools and media do not?

YES → **ASK:** Will this platform significantly help me fulfill my professional social role and reach my social vision?

YES → **ASK:** Does this platform have the flexibility to reach distinct audiences on various devices?

YES: Consider the staff needed to set up the platforms and operate using guidance outlined in Section 2.

NO → Do not use.

Now, it's time to set up your social platforms. Although setting up a LinkedIn profile or Facebook page might seem cut and dried, our panel of social media experts suggests that you take time to set up each platform properly to maximize success. Tips to keep in mind as you build your platforms include creating a clear and recognizable name for yourself, determining a photo or logo that will best represent your brand and ensuring that all of your pages are interconnected. Ensure that each platform can "talk to" the others and update based on your other sites/profiles. For your internal strategy, it's vital to keep in mind the rules and regulations set forth by employment-law agencies such as the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and government entities such as the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

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2   Debra Askanase. (2011, July 1). Social Media Decision Trees: When to Dive Deeper. Message Posted: www.communityorganizer20.com/2011/07/01/social-media-decision-trees-when-to-dive-deeper/

The next step in this section differs when it comes to external versus internal strategies. In the case of external, you need to assess your staffing capabilities and needs. Though it is difficult to predict the success or the outcome of your activity on a given platform, what you can control are the resources that will and can help guide your efforts, navigate crises and lead you to success in the long run. And the most valuable resource for your social web strategy is your staff. Consider hiring several staff members to operate and monitor the social strategy. Integer's social media experts say it is essential to have several staff members who can do this (be they company employees and/or staff hired to work on your behalf via a third party). Ample staffing ensures that operations run smoothly when any individual takes leave.

For internal, it's vital to account for legal and adjust your policies accordingly at this point. Here, we outline tips for updating company policies. A few considerations include how to deal with confidential or proprietary information, tailoring the policy to meet the needs of your culture and making that policy tangible for employees. After legal has been considered, it's time to assess your staffing capabilities and needs to manage recruitment and internal social communication. Social media experts within HR recommend that all HR employees be versed in social but that only a few trusted people "own" the company's professional social voice. This helps with consistency and efficiency.

You must establish your social voice—the tone, syntax and style in which you bring your social role to life in the social web. Above all, the voice must be approachable and transparent. So, whether it comes from your mascot, your CEO or your employees, your voice must make people want to engage and it must add value in some way. Regardless of what you sell, you need to be prepared to have real conversations. In the words of one expert respondent:

> "It's a media for real connections and real dialogue. Brands need to be prepared to have real conversations. Don't overthink, just jump in and be genuine."

Last, for your internal strategy, it's time to train and inform your employees. When implementing and training your staff, make it fun, approachable and invitational. Staff will be more likely to adopt it if it's an exciting addition versus strict rules. A few ways you can approach this include training videos, trickling down information from senior management or using a grassroots approach by seeking out your social media key players (early advocates) within the business to start using your social platforms while adhering to the new guidelines.

About Step 3—Engage

Step three consists of engaging with your audience by creating and exchanging content. Begin by familiarizing yourself with the rules of the road, keeping in mind that your goals and approach might differ slightly for internal vs. external:

- **ENGAGE LIKE A PEER**—Successful conversations require that you participate as a peer. Eileen Brown of The Social Customer explains, quite simply, the reason why peer-to-peer engagement works so well: "We tend to identify more strongly with people like us. We love those who are like ourselves. We identify with them."[3]

- **BE AUTHENTIC**—Authenticity is the key to resonating with your connections. They're savvy and can smell marketing speak a mile away. Remember to listen as much as you talk.

- **BE TRANSPARENT**—Along with the rise of rapid information availability comes easy access to how things are made, how much they can cost elsewhere, where they come from and how aligned a business is to what it stands for. Be open with your connections, and address issues as they come up in real time.

- **BE SHAREABLE**—Always have an easy button for your connections that makes sharing one click away.

- **HAVE A PLAN (BUT BE FLEXIBLE)**—Develop a content calendar. Having a varied editorial mix will help keep your connections engaged and attract new connections.

- **LISTEN AND RESPOND**—This is critical when it comes to building strong relationships and connections. When it comes to handling negative content, the panel of experts interviewed for this study suggest responding to those with true issues or concerns vs. those who are simply venting.

- **BE APPROACHABLE**—Put a face behind your brand. Have recruiting employees sign posts and responses to candidates with their names; for example, Brian@Retailer ABC Recruiting versus just Retailer ABC.[4]

- **BE CONSISTENT**—Social has a watchful eye; it is mostly public and is out there for your current and ex-employees and potential candidates to see. During an expert interview, one business said that a company should have a united voice and ensure that everyone knows the goals and what is happening. Establishing these goals and having a united voice prior to engaging are important to staying authentic and original within the space.[4]

The second phase of engagement is activating your social role. For external, this consists of using promotional content, value-add content and localized content to appropriately reach your shoppers. Measures must also be taken to ensure that your customer service department is set up to communicate via social media platforms. For internal, your social role is activated through adding

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3   Eileen Brown. Online Peer Influence and Its Effect on Engagement. Retrieved from http://thesocialcustomer.com/eileenb/38681/online-peer-influence-and-its-effect-engagement

4   The Integer Group. (2012). Expert Interviews.

value (with separate content for the workplace, recruitment, employee advocacy and employee culture) and localizing messages and social content.

About Step 4—Assess and Evolve

Step 4 consists of three steps to help you understand social media metrics and translate them into measures that will help you gauge success. Because measurements differ somewhat for external versus internal strategies, we've outlined each measurement below.

External: How to Define and Measure Success

- **TRANSLATE THE DATA**—Refer back to the four dimensions of success here (interest, influence, engagement and activation) to establish basic ROI measures for each. This is about establishing a measurement structure to refer back to; for example, possible ROI measures for activation include buy-now activation, tracked coupons and links to ecommerce platforms.

- **THE "HOW TO" OF MEASURING**—Always start by asking yourself: Are we trying to understand the impact of a short-term program or the collective influence our social efforts have had over a period of time? To illustrate a breadth of approaches and techniques to determine success, there are three lead models to look at: social engagement to create immediate action, social engagement to support a brand and social engagement to build and measure one-on-one relationships with users.

- **EVOLVE SOCIAL EFFORTS**—The most critical element for measuring efforts in the social web is evolution. The very nature of the social web is organic. It will not stand still; how shoppers view it and use it will continue to change. Because this is a technology-driven environment, new tools will develop constantly. As a result, measurement needs to be seen both as a tool for evaluating success and as a device for constant calibration.

Internal: How to Define and Measure Success

- **TRANSLATE THE DATA**—Even though professional social networking continues to rise, the majority of activity on the social web remains personal, making it a challenge to measure your professional impact. By looking at the underlying user intent behind each metric, you can translate the meaning of actions and connect them to your objectives. For example, we can again refer back to the four dimensions of success (interest, influence, engagement and activation) and establish ROI measures for each. For example, measures for activation include resume submissions, traffic to

careers page, personal messages and LinkedIn recommendations.

- **MEASURING SUCCESS VS. MEASURING ACTIVITY**—Social measurement is a puzzle that many businesses and social media gurus are still trying to solve. There are many measurements, but the confusion often lies in how to effectively measure success vs. activity. From a professional standpoint, there are three primary reasons to enter the social web that can be used to assess success in the space: building your eReputation, driving recruitment and enhancing employee relations.

- **EVOLVE SOCIAL EFFORTS**—The very nature of the social web is organic. It will not stand still; how people view it and use it will continue to change. Further, because this is a technology-driven environment, new tools will develop constantly. Therefore, the most critical element of success on the social web is evolution and measurement needs to be seen not only as a tool for evaluating success, but also as a device for constant calibration.

To download Parts 6 and 7 (or Parts 1–5) of the series, visit the CCRRC website or Integer's Shopperculture.com (listed under other studies).

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

For this project, a combination of primary and secondary research was used to build a strategic framework, best practices and how-to tips for readers wanting to hone in on an external social web strategy.

We used findings from Parts 1–5 of Untangling the Social Web to set the stage for strategic thought. But to fully understand strategic consideration in this rapidly evolving space, we sought input from a variety of social media experts across various disciplines both inside and outside the retail/grocery industry.

About the Expert Interviews

- In addition to leveraging social media, digital and media experts within The Integer Group® and the TBWA\® network, we conducted interviews with 40 industry participants including internal community/social media managers, external digital strategists/agencies, marketing executives as well as HR executives, social recruitment managers and talent-acquisition executives.

- Ten experts were sourced through Guidepoint Global®, an international primary research firm offering phone consultations with experts relevant to your research objectives. The remaining experts were sourced through council members.

Input from experts was then teamed with secondary research to build a holistic viewpoint. Secondary resources included subscription-based resources such as Forrester® and Experian® Simmons as well as publicly available information from social networks, industry blogs and news sites. Tracking industry blogs/news as well as eRetailer and brick-and-mortar retailer activity on social networks provided us with real-time insights and examples of engagement and marketing in the social web.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

About the Coca-Cola Retailing Research Council of North America

The Coca-Cola Retailing Research Council of North America (www.ccrrc.org) conducts studies on issues that help retailers respond to the changing marketplace. The unique value of these studies rests with the fact that retailers define the objective and the scope of each project and "own" the process through the release of the study and dissemination to the broader retail community.

Members of the eighth Coca-Cola Retailing Research Council of North America:

- *David Ball, Ball's Food Stores Inc.*
- *Jonathan Berger, The Consumer Goods Forum*
- *Chris Coborn, Coborn's Inc.*
- *Mike Donnelly, The Kroger Co.*
- *Randy Edeker, Hy-Vee, Inc.*
- *Cathy Green Burns, Food Lion LLC*
- *Jerry Golub, Price Chopper Supermarkets*
- *Mark Irby, Publix Super Markets*
- *Jay Lawrence, MAL Enterprises, Inc.*

- *John Lucot, Giant Eagle, Inc.*
- *Tim Mason, Tesco U.S.*
- *Jason Potter, Sobeys*
- *Leslie Sarasin, Food Marketing Institute*
- *Carlos Smith, Bodega Latina Corporation*
- *J.K. Symancyk, Meijer Inc.*
- *Todd Vasos, Dollar General Corporation*
- *Lauri Youngquist, Knowlan's Super Markets, Inc.*

About The Integer Group—@IntegerGroup

The Integer Group (www.integer.com) is one of the world's largest retail, promotional and shopper marketing agencies and a key member of the TBWA\ Marketing Services portfolio. The Integer Group resides At the Intersection of Branding and Selling® and creates strategic marketing solutions for clients in categories that include beverage, packaged goods, telecommunications, fast food, home and shelter and power sports. Join Integer in a conversation on shopping culture and brand strategy at www.shopperculture.com or on Twitter @shopperculture.

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