



ACCORDING TO A REPORT BY MCKINSEY GLOBAL INSTITUTE THE UNTAPPED BUSINESS VALUE OF SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES IS \$1.3 TRILLION.

INVENTING BUSINESS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Businesses are increasingly taking the Social Media route to engage, listen and understand its customers. Hitherto limited to networking, it has thrown open opportunities and though it can't be the foundation of a business development, it nonetheless is reinventing the way business is done, today.

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When The Pope opened his Twitter account it created a flutter around the world. But it was just another sign of the power that Social Media has come to harness and hard to ignore for anyone.

Social networking sites are no longer ways to interact or keep in touch with friends. Facebook, Orkut, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+ etc. has opened up new avenues for business and marketing strategies are being drawn around it. With real time communication and low marketing budgets to support it, businesses are turning toward it by droves to harness its power and businesses are investing in newer ways to engage their customers. It has helped

do away with many geographical, mental and communicative borders.

Kaspersky says that Social Media is reaching approximately 80% of Web audience in India. If marketers need to reach the right set of target audience they need campaigns targeted towards the growing online and mobile populations.

"When it comes to B2C marketing, Social Media has the biggest impact in terms of lead generation, increase awareness and increasing your online or offline sales revenue. In fact it's playing a big role in building retail brands and attracting consumers. This media is cost effective and has a wider and strong reach. In India more than 50% population is under 25 years of age and they all use Social Media," says

Jagannath Patnaik, Director (Channel Sales), Kaspersky Lab – South Asia.

For those who are yet to enter the bandwagon, plans are afoot. Kobian, which has not yet entered in a big manner, says "shall be soon in a prominent space in 2013". Portronics is also increasingly chalking out plans to work on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Google Adwords is also something it uses very often to make its presence better.

Businesses are using Social Media as a platform to educate on new products launch, introduce new technologies, advertising, marketing, brand promotion, enhancing individual visibility and developing and maintaining contacts at the business level and even bridge good contacts, lead generation and boost



"SOCIAL MEDIA REQUIRES A LOT OF STRATEGY ON MULTIPLE LEVELS AND TIME-FRAMES. WE HAVE MARKETING ACTIVITIES SPECIALLY OUTLINED TO ENGAGE OUR COMMUNITY."

KHWAJA SAIFUDDIN, SR SALES DIRECTOR (SOUTH ASIA, MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA), WESTERN DIGITAL

online sales.

With a host of Social Media platform available from Flickr, Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogger, typepad etc., the preference differs from company to company. Take for example Kaspersky which apart from Facebook, Twitter and YouTube also employs informal groups (bloggers) for its marketing and sales functions primarily. "We think FB and informal group campaigns will give us ROI," reveals Patnaik.

Western Digital in India employs Facebook and Twitter primarily to engage its fans. For Portronics too Facebook, and LinkedIn are more popular for its business.

"Twitter is great for sharing updates and driving traffic to a blog. Owing to its full audio-visual capabilities and a significantly larger user base, Facebook is a much broader engagement platform compared to twitter for LG. Pinterest is perfect if a company has lots of great visuals to share with its target consumers. For our mobile communications vertical, we find Twitter to be the best tool to communicate with our consumers and run exciting contests in," reveals LK Gupta, VP (Marketing), LG India. "Twitter tends to also become a platform for grievance redressal a lot more than FB."

Some like Datamatics has created its own knowledge sharing platform. Varad Kamini, Head (Marketing Communications), Datamatics Global Services Ltd., says, "In addition to the engagements through Facebook, Twitter, Slide Share, You tube and LinkedIn, etc. we have also created knowledge sharing platform through our blogging corridor 'Techperiti.com'. Our in-house tool SENTIPede helps us monitor the positive/negative/neutral emotional potency during our digital engagement with wider audiences."

Neales uses FB, Twitter and LinkedIn for important company announcements and as an educating platform for the associated groups. LinkedIn and Facebook for hiring and Slideshare for elaborate sharing of content.

In the B2B space, LinkedIn has been Dell's platform of choice. For consumers, Facebook has been the primary platform for engagement. It also uses Twitter and Pinterest to reach out to consumers. "We're engaging with SMBs via a LinkedIn 'More Growth' community that consists of over 23,000+ members. We also have a CIO community on LinkedIn, to keep our engagement with the relevant target audience constant and consistent," informs P Krishnakumar, Executive Director, Marketing, Dell India.



"WE WORK TOWARDS ALIGNING OUR SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES WITH OUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY."

RAJAT SAHU, PRODUCT MARKETING MANAGER, INDIA & SAARC, TREND MICRO.

Dell's corporate blogs Direct2Dell was launched in 2006. Today, it remains a focal point for information about Dell's product, services and solutions, as well as Dell corporate news. It is the Company's key social site for Dell to connect with customers.

And businesses can't stop gushing about the rewards they are reaping. Last year during Diwali, Strontium Technology India had launched Design a Diwali USB Flash Drive on Facebook and claims to have witnessed overwhelming responses. On its latest phablet launch, the Optimus Vu, LG held a bloggers meet, "which generated lot of online buzz", it says.

Kaspersky's launched an introductory offer to promote the new version of Kaspersky Internet security and Kaspersky Antivirus aggressively in the Indian market, which was promoted via Facebook by its national distributor Sakri IT Solutions. "We got very good response. We have seen an increase of approximately 300% growth in the online sales during the promotion period. Sakri FB page likes had increased from 200 to 7000 likes. On an average there was 20% increase in the activation of licenses."

Reinventing Business

Social Media is reinventing, reshaping, redefining the way business is conducted. According to a report by McKinsey Global Institute the untapped business value of social technologies is \$1.3 trillion. Whoa! This is a big number and hard to ignore. And businesses are scrambling to climb the Social Media band wagon and tap into



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the consumer conversations and feedbacks to improve their brand image and bottom line.

"What is fantastic about Social Media is that a little effort spent there can go a long way, without the need of spending truckloads of money," says Gupta.

"Social networking can increase collaboration between teams, get work done more quickly; accelerate decision-making, problem resolution, and innovation. Social tools can enable employees to locate the right people, experts, communities, and content as well as croWestern Digital-source answers to specific questions, etc.," says Minhaj Zia, Director (Collaboration Sales), Cisco India & SAARC.

Social Media has broken down the barriers to communication. It has provided a way through which one can now interact with the end-consumers directly, which was not a case earlier. It also provides a platform where one can network with the vendors and partners also. It is the best way to get publicity without spending a lot.

Harish Rai, Assistant VP, Comguard Networks, notes, "In today's scenario Social Media has changed the way the business is conducted with many innovative and out of the box ideas to promote and build your brand. Plus few of the platforms also help us to build a professional network

which can further help us to leverage our brand presence."

Kamini opines, "Social Media psychologists and analysts delve into the mine of information available on various social platforms and make reports which form the basis of new products and services that companies invest in. So, it is definitely reinventing the way business is done."

With the advent of Social Media, Zyxel finds the penetration of its message regarding the product is deeper than the usage of mailers, calls, or SMS. There is also an instant feedback from the customers. Says Pinaki Chatterjee, Executive Director - Distribution Channel & Business Development, ZyXEL India, "We get to know how they are feeling about the product/services. We get queries and comments on various social networking portals which in turn helps us to understand the psychology of the customers. Social Media gives a personal touch in the process."

For Portronics, Social Media links it to youth of the today. It shortens the go-to-market strategy. For e.g. the hits for the Youtube video has a much better effect if the same is promoted via Facebook with respect to just keeping it on your webpage. It gives tremendous reach to the brand in reasonable time frame. "We would be spending on the Facebook advertising next year to further increase



the brand loyalty," informs Jasmeet Singh Sethi, Director, Portronics Digital Pvt. Ltd.

It has also become a channel for two-way instant communication between the end-customer and the company. "Social networks allow for better customer feedback and allow the company or brand to take control of how they are seen by the general public. Consumers and brands have the opportunity to converse and interact via Social Media," says Ajay Kogta, Country Manager, Indian Subcontinent, Strontium Technology.

Gupta sees the roles of magazines and newspapers slowly taking a back seat to pave the way for the less-known (but often as influential) bloggers. "Spreading the company's message through the use of blogs has now become the trend."

Since the very beginning, Nevaes has been focusing on the network security facets for emerging businesses. "Through the Social Media platform, Nevaes is educating the young players with the different aspects of security, establishing close two way relationship with the associated/interested groups; vendors, partners, customers, target customers etc," says Ravishankar, Co-Founder and CEO, Nevaes Networks.

While Sushmita Das, Country Manager- India,





"SOCIAL NETWORKING CAN INCREASE COLLABORATION BETWEEN TEAMS, GET WORK DONE MORE QUICKLY; ACCELERATE DECISION-MAKING, PROBLEM RESOLUTION, AND INNOVATION."

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Kobian Pte Ltd, says, "In traditional IT products, it has not yet become the game changer. But for lifestyle and telecom products the Social Media has redefined the way business is done."

Strategy

Any marketing campaign is only as good as its effectiveness in reaching the target audience. Marketers need to understand their target audience and use Social Media platforms to engage them rather than going for the overkill. This calls for a Social Media strategy.

"Having sheer presence across popular media sites is of little help, unless engagement is happening. And the only way to engage your customer, online or otherwise is by having deep understanding of their requirements, to know their pulse and constantly stimulate their needs; to have a grasp of their wants and be ready to be there for them at the right moment. In short to know exactly what ticks them and how," remarks Kamini.

As part of its Social Media strategy Kaspersky is planning to allocate 30% of its and distributors resources towards building and running Social Media campaigns. "We shall be working on medi-



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ums like FB, Twitter, LinkedIn and other informal Social Media groups such as blogger community and online forums. So it will be difficult to say which one will be most popular but I feel FB and informal groups will give us better advantage," says Patnaik.

Western Digital has an overall periodic plan in place which is tweaked to reflect current happenings. Khwaja Saifuddin, Sr. Sales Director (South Asia, Middle East and Africa), Western Digital, says, "Social Media requires a lot of strategy on multiple levels and time-frames. We have marketing activities specially outlined to engage our community in the form engaging apps and contests. We have planned campaigns to co-ordinate with physical launch of new products. We upload captivating pictures, videos, articles, puzzles and contests to engage our fans on the social platforms."

And Buffalo's Social Media strategy is towards building a strong community of tech and gadgets users and for that we are running campaigns on regular intervals. Contests are a popular feature that attracts much traction. "We are also building relationship with our consumers and partners through Social Media interaction so that we are able to know them better and provide our world class solutions and products," says Deepak

Deveshwar, Head-Retail & Consumer Business, Buffalo Inc., India.

Rajat Sahu, Product Marketing Manager, India & SAARC, Trend Micro, "We work towards aligning our Social Media activities with our customer experience strategy. Our strategy includes creating, managing and growing the company's support presence through community forums, blogs, social media sites and other strategically relevant online properties. Furthermore, identifying and analyzing issues, patterns and trends in customer insights and product feedback."

Flipside

However, the flipside is here too. This medium changes dramatically and instantaneously, and to always remain on top of it, demands continuously learn and re-visiting the strategy. "You need to have a dedicated team of young and passionate people who belong to this medium and relate to social pulse," feels Gupta.

The community page has to be monitored regularly to keep it engaging and relevant. But it's also time consuming, not to mention the problem it might create when customers start getting too many updates. "Customers may start ignoring our posts," remarks Chatterjee.

"Cost of the return on investment is a bigger



"WE GET QUERIES AND COMMENTS ON VARIOUS SOCIAL NETWORKING PORTALS WHICH IN TURN HELPS US TO UNDERSTAND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CUSTOMERS."

PINAKI CHATTERJEE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT), ZYXEL INDIA



"INFORMATION IS AN ASSET FOR ALL ENTERPRISES, COMPROMISE ON INFORMATION IS CHALLENGING ALONG WITH SECURITY!"

KAMAL SHARMA, GROUP CIO AND ITIM SBU HEAD, MINDLANCE

question today," says Sethi of Portronics. Agrees, Patnaik, "Major challenges are measuring the ROI, monitoring and investing in the growing Social Media presence. Still most of the companies invest in traditional ways of markets and allot limited funds for SMM. Integration of the Social Media strategies with the core marketing activities will definitely help in to overcome the current



"AMONG THE GENERAL SOCIAL SITES, FACEBOOK DOMINATES THE LANDSCAPE WITH SEVEN IN TEN SMBS USING SOCIAL MEDIA HAVING A FACEBOOK PROFILE."

SHRADHA SUMAN ROUT, RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, AMI-PARTNERS



"WE ARE EDUCATING THE YOUNG PLAYERS WITH THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF SECURITY, ESTABLISHING CLOSE TWO WAY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ASSOCIATED/INTERESTED GROUPS."

RAVISHANKAR, CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, NEVALES NETWORKS

challenges."

The medium has become so powerful that a single Tweet or a post on Facebook can make or break a company's image. As the platform is open to anybody it means it can also serve as a medium for expressing any grievance publicly.

Talking about Social Media and security in one breath sounds like an oxymoron. When we decide to put something on the platform with the sole purpose of getting eyeballs, where does security fit in? Even though the Social Media has its own security and privacy settings, but is it enough?

Kamini says, "Confidentiality and Social Media is like an oxymoron. Whatever we publish online has a sole intention of getting viewership and engagement. However, it is necessary to keep the security channels up so that these social accounts are not hacked leading to unwarranted embarrassments."

She further advises on establishing the best practices while using Social Media which can help organizations to minimize confidentiality and security risks involved.

Social networking sites often contain valuable features along with some features that should be blocked. Multiple layers of protection are now necessary. "Organisations must be able to detect, monitor and control application usage and traf-

fic at gateways and at endpoints. In addition, an association must be made between the application and the end user so that proper access rights can be assigned through a security policy," stresses Vishak Raman, Senior Regional Director, Fortinet, India & SAARC.

"Information is an asset for all enterprises, compromise on information is challenging along with security," says Kamal Sharma, Group CIO and ITIM SBU Head, Mindlance.

Dell has strict and comprehensive Social Media policies for its employees all over the world. "We ensure that there is no sharing of confidential company information or our customers' personally identifiable information. Having said that, we encourage all employees to be transparent and responsible while interacting on Social Media," Krishnakumar informs.

SMBs on Social Media

As per AMI's India Small & Medium Business Market Opportunity Assessment study, almost half the Indian SMBs agree that Social Media is one of the most important information sources for making technology purchase decisions apart from traditional mass media, IT-oriented print media, websites, search engines, referrals and trade associations.



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It further says that Indian small businesses primarily use Social Media for blogging activities, keeping in touch with business partners, advertising their business and marketing/sales activities. Whereas in the medium business segment (primarily those having 500-999 employees) more than 40% use Social Media as a hiring tool – to find and recruit new employees.

"Among the general social sites, Facebook dominates the landscape with seven in ten SMBs using Social Media having a Facebook profile. Monster and JobsAhead lead in professional sites while Twitter is the most popular site for blogs/microblogs," reveals Shradha Suman Rout, Research Associate, AMI-Partners.

Social Media provides SMBs them with an open platform to display their work and entice an audience, start conversations and gain feedback. It gets them visibility and more connections, as interconnectivity run strong on social networking sites. It is a very cost-effective solution to reach out to the widest possible audience, and has leveled the playing field for organizations with different budgets for advertising and marketing related activities. It also doubles up to be a touch-point for the consumer.

"For SMBs, the business they're planning to generate could be an outcome of product innovation, internal collaboration, community growth

or decrease in negative commentary on their brand. And all these functions could be performed via Social Media. That is the perspective SMBs should take, while thinking about Social Media ROI," says Krishnakumar.

"That said, two of the easiest, and most effective ways for small businesses to get engaged in Social Media is to blog and be active on Twitter. We have created guides for SMBs on how to do both via Dell's Facebook page," he suggests.

Deveshwar however suggests that before venturing on the Social Media space, SMBs should do a little homework on how they are going to use this platform for their brand awareness and marketing campaigns.

Kamini remarks that for SMBs, Social Media has opened up a phenomenal market, which hitherto was not tapped optimally. "I think, SMBs can leverage a lot through this medium. However to benefit from this medium, they will need to remember is that this medium can be best utilized only we listen to the VOC and engage with them, and not just push information."

She however feels that for SMBs to generate business on the social space, it is pivotal that they establish the brand on the correct forums and have a trust based relationship with their customers.

"SMBs can also leverage industry-specific net-



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DEEPAK DEVESHWAR, HEAD-RETAIL & CONSUMER BUSINESS, BUFFALO INC, INDIA

works and even create their own blogs to generate greater buzz about their business. All in all, SMBs should focus on developing a plan, execute, evaluate regularly and revise the plan if objectives are not being met, advises Suchita Vishnoi, Head Corporate Communications, Trend Micro.

For the SMBs a word of caution comes from Rout, "However, one needs to keep in mind the target audience. It is fruitful for e-tailing businesses to use this media. The same cannot be true across every industry, where clients may not be as internet friendly."

Finally...

Western Digital says it has a very active Facebook presence globally, with a community of close to 67,000 fans in India; and Dell Facebook page has over 4,157,540 followers on Facebook globally, of which more than 1,000,000, it informs are from India. There is no doubt on the popularity of Social Media and businesses definitely gain an edge over others but as Kamini puts it, "social networking should be used as a complement and not a replacement for the actual business strategy. More importantly, considering its reach and impact, it must be used responsibly". **SME**



"SOCIAL NETWORKS ALLOW FOR BETTER CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND ALLOW THE COMPANY OR BRAND TO TAKE CONTROL OF HOW THEY ARE SEEN BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC."

AJAY KOGTA, COUNTRY MANAGER, INDIAN SUBCONTINENT, STRONTIUM TECHNOLOGY