

Social media: fad or fundamental?

From Friends Reunited and MySpace to Facebook and Twitter, social media has fundamentally changed the way we communicate forever.

But many people still believe it's a time-wasting device for bored teenagers, littered with LOLs and other textspeak, or a work avoidance tactic for desk-bound office workers.

And while idle chatter will always find a home in any social setting – real or virtual - social media means so much more to so many people in both private and professional capacities.

It is being used to recruit employees, disseminate news, pitch for business, promote new ideas and services and, importantly, as a customer service channel. Indeed, we are quickly reaching the point where businesses will be *expected* to have a presence on the major social networks.

The phenomenal growth in the use of social media means that:

- There are many more sources of information for people to access – and it is often the *first* source of information that people turn to
- Information can be passed on to literally thousands of other people in seconds
- People and businesses can produce and distribute information themselves, not just passively receive it from traditional forms of communications such as newspapers, radio and TV

The popularity of new generation mobile phones, effectively powerful mobile computers, is helping to further accelerate the use of social media. The power of the individual to communicate, broadcast, inform (and misinform) now knows no bounds.

And, as people are choosing to receive information via social media based on their allegiances, interests and concerns, it is becoming an extremely important means of communication for companies – both large and small – charities, and government bodies.

At Tribe, we keep an eye on how businesses and the public sector are using social media as a news service, for customer care, as a promotional tool, to build relationships with partners, customers and suppliers, and for real-time crisis communications. ([click here to read about social media and crisis communications.](#))

To help us we've recently invested in sophisticated software which 'listens in' to social media conversations – and allows us to drill down into the profiles of individuals, gauge the level of influence they have, identify trends in conversations and the type of language used to describe a product, person or company, and to respond quickly in a relevant way.

We've used it very successfully to help shift opinion about Norfolk for the World Class Norfolk campaign, and have shown Greene King landladies how to use Facebook and Twitter campaigns to get more women into their pubs.

To help you use social media for business Tribe runs 'Introduction to Social Media' workshops or we can give one to one tuition. For more information about these sessions, or if you simply want a no obligation chat, please get in touch.

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