Scaling the innovators

How one of the world’s “most buzzed about” brands refreshed its emotional connection with consumers by scaling a small yet mighty social media team across a large global organization.

Client’s challenge

Part multinational retailer with fast-growing cafes in overseas markets, part start-up with the ability to try out new ideas at a breakneck pace, this company understands the importance of social media in delivering a consistent global brand experience, one conversation at a time.

Through the dedicated efforts of a highly adept few, this company built an impressive and successful social presence despite having only a limited capacity to generate and share best practices throughout the organization.

Wanting to replicate their US colleagues’ social media success, the company’s regional marketers across the globe tried to follow suit—with limited success. Lacking formal guidance for delivering the brand through social media, they experimented by applying traditional marketing approaches, resulting in an erosion of the brand’s voice in the marketplace.

What was needed was a global team that knew how to best deliver the brand experience online, regardless of culture or location—tweet-by-tweet, post-by-post, visually and verbally.

Facing growing pressure for global markets to reap a return on investment with social media, company executives asked PwC to help scale the vital “tribal” knowledge of a few individuals out to a much larger, more dispersed set of global practitioners.
**PwC’s solution**

PwC worked closely with the company’s global digital marketing team to help enable a global team of brand representatives to project the brand confidently and competently, both in-market and across a wide portfolio of product categories.

Training would help only marginally—it wouldn’t solve the need to foster digital innovation. Even bringing in new senior hires with advanced digital skills wouldn’t necessarily address the challenge of how to scale the company’s brand promise across social channels. The solution had to incorporate a means of sharing the specific know-how of a few individuals across the organization by establishing, appropriately enough, an internal social network.

Having helped a variety of companies in both regulated and non-regulated industries establish leading social media practices, PwC believed that a “center of excellence” model—a very strong command-and-control structure with a highly rigorous process for approvals, compliance, and empowerment—would be the wrong way to go. This retailer took pride in possessing a flat, entrepreneurial corporate structure.

Instead, PwC recommended a more dynamic “community of practice” approach. This approach is designed to create value from knowledge that already exists within the company, by sharing leading practices and relevant experiences. Through co-creating and learning together, a community of practice establishes similar but varied standards across divergent locales.

PwC worked with the company’s social media leadership team to build a strategy and implementation plan for the community of practice launch, documenting processes, standards, and the team’s approach to social media execution into a global social media playbook. To bring the playbook to life, PwC developed a social media training curriculum with interactive activities. PwC also recommended technology platforms the team could use to enable global collaboration and sharing.

**Impact on client’s business**

After working closely with PwC to build its community of practice framework and implementation plan, global social media playbook, and social media training curriculum, this company grew its pool of skilled social media practitioners from a handful of individuals into a vibrant, growing community across the globe.

Impact was immediate and helped the social marketing group scale its concentrated skills, resulting in a material impact on the business. By making deeper emotional connections with its audience through consistent, personalized conversations on social media, the company has now earned the right to leverage its platform to offer special promotions. Today, millions of happy customers actively engage with the brand on social channels and take advantage of offers that drive foot traffic to the company’s retail cafes.
Where once the company could boast only a select few social innovators, there now thrives a community of practice that captures and shares ideas using the right tools in the right way against measurable standards—and which works together to supercharge both the company and its brand.

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