

Conversational Media

A Marketing Primer

What is Conversational Media? It's the evolution of formal, "packaged goods media" from mainstream media companies into more informal, author- and consumer-driven products. Sites like Newsvine.com (news), Boing Boing (culture), Dooce (women's interest), and Left Lane News (auto) encourage dialog, iteration, integrity, and community values.

So how might one market in Conversational Media? Conversational Marketing engages, rather than dictates, invites rather than demands, listens as much as talks. So how does one execute a marketing campaign that is conversational? Conversations are humanity's highest art form, and the best conversations are those where all parties are engaged, informed, and valued.

1. **Identify where your brand communities are.**

- ◆ Conversational media is everywhere, but finding sites with scale, quality, and safety is paramount. Find the sites that work for your brands (FM can certainly help here!)

2. **Follow the Leader.**

- ◆ Conversational media sites usually have a leader - a person or persons who lead the conversation and exemplify the social mores of the site. You know what your brand goals are; engage the leader(s) of CM sites to get their perspective on joining the conversations they lead.

3. **Ask not what the customer can do for you, ask what you can do for the customer.**

- ◆ When you engage, don't ask what you can sell the customer, ask what you can do to add value to that customer's life. A conversation is an exchange of value between parties. What value do you bring? Focus on that, and the brand loyalty (and sales) will follow.

4. **The medium is the message.**

- ◆ Use your media plan and your creative to invite your customer into a valuable conversation (for examples, see FM's example deck). Be prepared to have that conversation (This is something of an unnatural act for marketers used to create perfect 30 second spots and then moving on.)

5. **Create a Brand Beacon.**

- ◆ Your media plan and marketing assets can capture the ongoing conversation and create a living "beacon" for your brand that continues your work beyond your plan, through search and viral word of mouth.

6. **Brands Are Conversations...**

- ◆ ...and conversations require response, nuance, reaction, and revision. Don't start a conversation you're not prepared to continue - and follow up on when your customer gives you good input. Brands are conversations, after all.