

03/03/10 - Definitely dudish: Mark Schumann IABC in Amsterdam on social media



Hey there. Last week, Mark Schumann (more about him [here](#) and his [blog](#)), Chair of the International Association of Business Communicators, visited the Dutch Chapter to give his spin on social media. I've been a member of the [IABC](#) a couple of years now. It's a global organisation with more than 15,000 members in 70 countries. And I'm getting more actively involved recently. Will keep you posted. Meanwhile, Mark's talk, which was really relaxed thanks to his conversational and rather dudish style, was packed full of insights from his years of experience in branding and communications for such global organisations as ExxonMobil, Yahoo, American Express, Cathay Pacific and...well, you get the idea.

I've made a summary of Mark's talk and added a key learning for each section.

In his opening, Mark made the point that mass communications were built on control. Controlling the message. Fine tuning a single razor sharp proposition for

mass markets. And here, organisations need to acknowledge that there has been a fundamental change.

A single proposition for a mass market will simply not cut it anymore. Everyone from critics, fans, consumers plays a role in shaping your brand proposition. And organisations today need to acknowledge that change, and cede control accordingly.

He went on to say that the conversations that influence your brand, conversations from these same critics, fans and consumers, are already out there! They always have been. Over the garden fence. In the supermarket. Over a beer. In many ways, the only difference with social media is in the scale, share of voice and influence they now have on brands. But what a difference!

Finishing his opening Mark noted that if you want to have influence in social media, organisations need to first learn how to cede (the illusion of!) control and learn how to have real conversations. And so for the core of the talk...

Insight

Mark highlighted the point that engaging in social media should always be based on insights into your audience. This is not another pure broadcast medium. Organisations should first try to understand how consumers make decisions. How they are influenced. How they make choices between you and your competitors.

Key learning: *starting by listening is the best way to gain insights.*

Access to brand experience

Brand touch-points today are not only single, isolated mass media channels like in the good old days. Instead, consumers, critics and fans can access multiple brand touchpoints across many channels. Across many media. Consumers today can access your brand not only in print or TV but in a video, website, newsletter, a pdf, on a comparison site, a review site, a blog and much more.

Key learning: *being aware of the full social media environment is a ?must' if organisations are to manage their social media marketing well.*

Business results

Eyeballs. Reach. Pass on rate. For years we have been seduced by mass media

marketing measures. And many of these people tell us that that social media cannot be measured. This is a myth. But we do need to reconsider what we measure, and how.

Key learning: tie your social media efforts to clear business outcomes. If appropriate, tie it to sales. To the bottom line.

Craft

This part of Mark's talk is especially interesting to business communicators. In Mark's words "social media forces us to reinvent ourselves." Traditional journalistic skills alone are no longer enough.

Communicators in organisations today need to consider how they will facilitate genuine conversations, build Trust, generate influence with consumers. Internally communicators need to find their feet with a new role of helping others understand the environment.

Key learning: the role of the business communicator has changed. There are a great number of new skills to learn. The question is, will you step up?

Mark closed his great talk by making two points.

He referred to the fact that it is also important for organisation to not only drive change, but clearly establish what they want to stay the same. To quote Ghandi: "I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any." Sound advice.

And finally, before beers in an Amsterdam local, Mark mentioned that not taking yourself too seriously is a great move. Be humble. Both as communicators. And as brands.

Thanks the visit and an inspiring talk, Mark! Definitely dudish.

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