

# Listen, learn and "out-care"

 By [Mark Schefermann](#)

5 Jun 2013

When the internet first came about, it was a static, one-way communication channel. Social media has changed this dynamic completely - the internet is now a content creating machine that empowers dialogue and sharing. We have all essentially turned into [#digitaljunkies](#), sharing and consuming content every minute of every day. (video)

Social media provides consumers with a voice, no matter where they are located or who they are - they can now have an opinion and be heard by brands and others that might be listening.

## Thank You Economy

When it comes to social media and social marketing, I would have to say that I was most inspired by Gary Vaynerchuk or better known as [@Garyvee](#), the author of "[The Thank You Economy](#)" (I highly recommend this to anyone working in the social media space). Through his own experience he writes about how brands should use social media to their advantage by truly listening to their customers and by offering exceptional customer experiences through these channels.

Vaynerchuk says in his book: "A lot of companies resist building a Facebook wall, blogging, or starting a Twitter or YouTube account because an irate customer might post negative comments. So what? Would you prefer that the customer

post them somewhere else where you have absolutely no way to reply? Or somewhere you can't even find? If you're that afraid of your customer, you might want to take a closer look at how you're doing business."

"Embarking on one-to-one customer engagement offers significant long-term rewards, but the company will also experience immediate benefits - greater brand awareness, stronger brand loyalty, increased word of mouth, improved understanding of customer needs, and better, faster consumer feedback - and suffer very few drawbacks, if any."

## **Survey in the market 24/7**

Many brands don't realise that they now have the ability to listen to their consumers like never before. It is like having a survey in the market every day, 24/7, 365 days a year. It's honest conversations from customers and it doesn't cost a cent.

Brands can now gain insights into what consumers think about their brand, their products, competitor brands and products and industries in general. These can provide invaluable insights into business strategies, product development and service enhancements.

The sad reality is that many brands make use of ORM tools like [Radian 6](#) and [Brands Eye](#), yet very few effectively use the insights obtained. In order to truly tap into the value that these tools have to offer one should have a dedicated team that analyses all the data captured on a daily basis, translating it into relevant data for business strategies.

## Listening

[We Feel Fine](#) is possibly one of the best examples of how powerful the web and social media can be in terms of "listening". We Feel Fine came up with a concept to see what people around the world are feeling at any point in time and then try to correlate it back to different things like weather, seasons etc. to see what influences people's emotions.

The concept behind it is quite simple, they created software similar to ORM (online reputation management) tools whereby it searches the web and social media for specific keywords, in this case "feel". They then took all this data and created a dynamic and interactive website experience where users can filter the results and choose the way they wish to visualise the data.

Now imagine creating something like this for your businesses, except you would use all the keywords relevant to your industry, products or services. Suddenly you would be able to perform a real-time SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis and identify gaps in the market and problematic areas within your own business.

**A glimpse into the future: Business is social**

Consumers have more power than ever before and they want to be heard, it's time for brands to "out-care" and become "customer companies".

## ABOUT MARK SCHEFERMANN

My knowledge and enthusiasm for the digital world enables me to think creatively and challenge briefs. My passion is strategy and showing how digital can open new opportunities for clients. Well conceived digital strategies and campaigns will push brands ever forward in the consciousness of their audiences and lead to long lasting adoption, advocacy and allow them to forge individual relationships with their audiences.

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