

15 QUESTIONS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

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From the Author of

What Happened To Advertising? What Would Gossage Do?

15 Questions About Social Media

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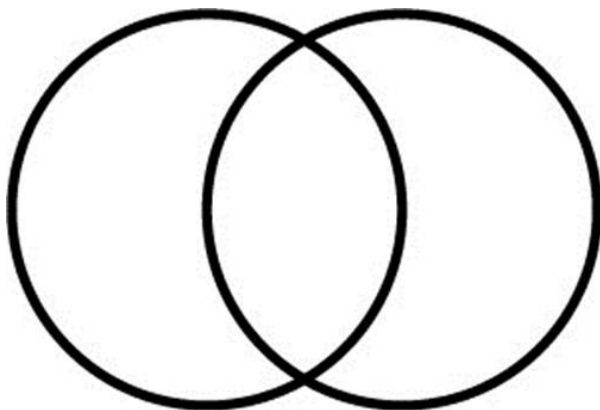
THE 15 QUESTIONS

1. WHAT ARE SOCIAL NETWORKS?
2. WHAT ARE SOCIAL MEDIA?
3. WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING?
4. ARE COMPANIES DOING IT RIGHT?
5. WHY ARE COMPANIES SENDING PEOPLE OVER TO SOCIAL MEDIA?
6. DOES IT MAKE SENSE?
7. DO PEOPLE REALLY WANT TO ENGAGE WITH BRANDS?
8. DO COMPANIES REALLY WANT TO ENGAGE WITH THEIR CUSTOMERS? ..
9. ARE SOCIAL MEDIA USEFUL FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE?
10. WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A FACEBOOK “LIKE”?.....
11. WHAT DOES “EARNED MEDIA” MEAN?
12. WHAT IS “ORGANIC REACH”?
13. IS THE FREE LUNCH OVER?
14. WHAT HAPPENS NOW?
15. WHAT IS THE DUMBEST SOCIAL MEDIA STUNT EVER?

Happy 90th birthday,
Nonna Elena!

- Milano, January 22, 2016

INTRO



Does all the hype surrounding social media make sense?

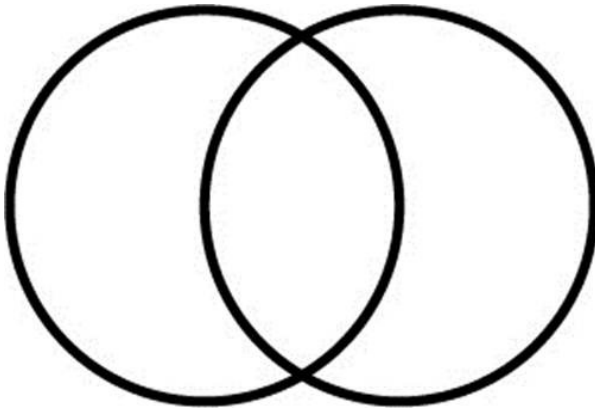
Isn't it time that somebody tried to deconstruct all this bullshit?

What are social media? Are they the same websites we used to call social networks? Why did we start calling them social media? What is social media marketing? Are companies doing it right? Does it make sense to send your website visitors to Twitter and Facebook?

Do people really want to "engage" with brands? Do companies really want to have "conversations" with their customers?

What is the value of a Facebook "like"? What is "organic reach"? What happens now that the free lunch is over?

1. WHAT ARE SOCIAL NETWORKS?



A new type of website.

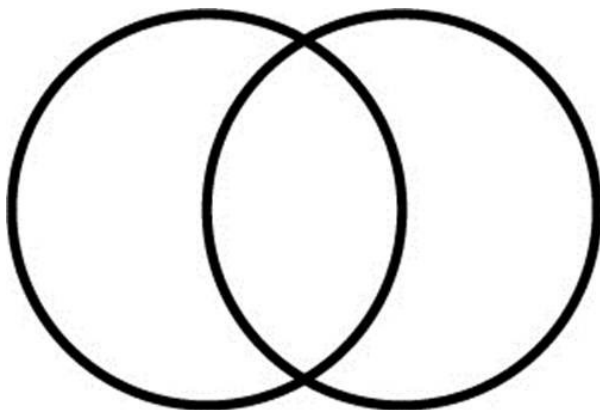
Or just a new word?

"Community" was the word used to describe The WELL and later GeoCities. "Web2.0" – coined by O'Reilly to launch a conference and the idea that the web was back after the Bubble – was used for the first generation of "new" services, like Flickr, del.icio.us and Last.fm.

But when Friendster, MySpace and then Facebook and Twitter came along, they were all immediately called "social networks".

The notion of social networks comes from Academia. In the 1920s, the idea that the world was "shrinking" due to the ever-increasing connectedness of human beings became popular. The Hungarian Frigyes Karinthy [\[1\]](#) went a step further and said that any two individuals could be connected through at most five acquaintances – hence the famous 6 degrees of separation – starting from their "social network".

2. WHAT ARE SOCIAL MEDIA?



Social media are what social networks start being called the moment investors start thinking about how to recoup the money they invested in these ventures.

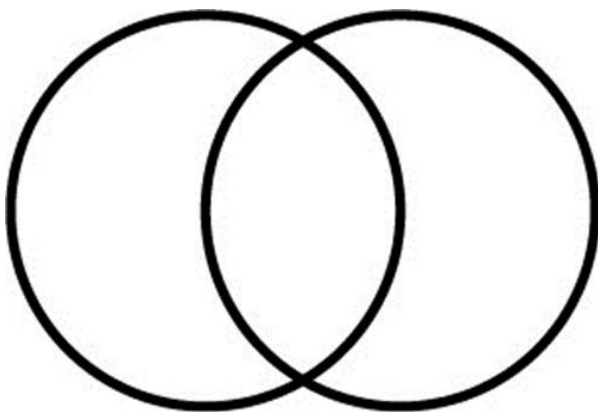
Please bear in mind that the term “media” is not neutral.

First, it implies the idea that everything (“content”, as they call it) is created – even if it were created by users, in which case they call it “user-generated content” (UGC) – so that it will be “monetised”, rather than “just for fun”.

Second, it implies the long-held idea that every place is a place where companies are welcome, even if that were not the case. It implies ads or, in any case, paying for visibility of some kind.

This is exactly where social media are headed: adland.

3. WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING?

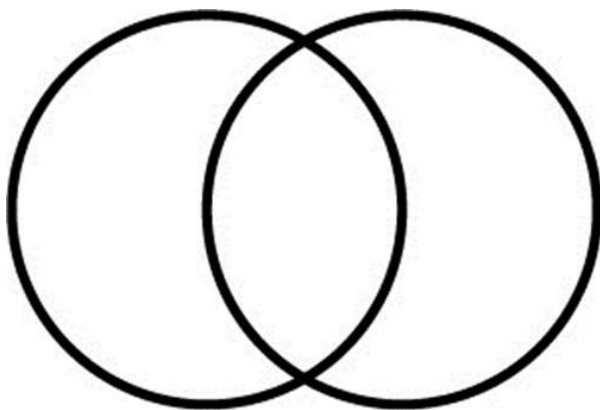


According to Wikipedia, social media marketing is: "The process of gaining website traffic or attention through social media sites, with efforts aimed at creating content that attracts interest and encourages readers to share it with their friends across their social networks". That would make a lot of sense, wouldn't it? [\[2\]](#)

Be interesting! Share useful information. Have an original point of view. Don't lie. Admit your faults and your shortcomings. Recognise that there's life beyond whatever your product does. Especially if it's toothpaste or mayonnaise.

Do these things and, if you're lucky, people will talk about you and spread the word. Oh, if only it were that simple! It is, or at least it could be. But look around, and it's quite clear that there's not a lot of that going on.

4. ARE COMPANIES DOING IT RIGHT?



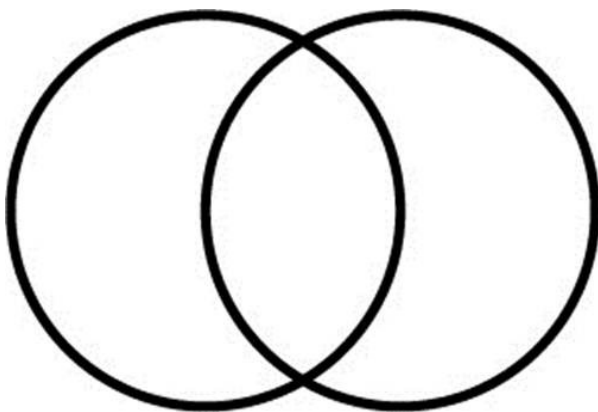
No, they're not.

I see exactly the opposite of what Wikipedia calls social media marketing.

Not companies earning traffic to their websites because they do interesting things that eventually get shared on social media, but rather companies that send their customers away from their websites and over to Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and Pinterest and Vimeo and Vine etc.

But obsessively telling people who are visiting your website "We're on Facebook" or "Follow us on Twitter" must be the dumbest thing of the decade. They're already on your website. Why send them away? Does anyone in marketing really think that their big and boring companies will magically look cool and hip on social media?

5. WHY ARE COMPANIES SENDING PEOPLE OVER TO SOCIAL MEDIA?



First, because most companies don't like their customers, whom they usually call "consumers", and don't want them bumming around on their web properties, leaving comments or asking questions on their pixel-perfect websites. [\[3\]](#)

Second, because most companies are boring and would have a hard time doing social media marketing as described by Wikipedia, i.e. in being interesting and getting their customers to spread the word about them.

Third, because of the hype cycle: they're told that it's a new world, that things will never be the same again, that it's land-grabbing time, and that you need to get in early and make a killing. The same nonsense we heard when the pundits were extolling the wonders of the New Economy, in case you forgot. Which you probably did. [\[4\]](#)