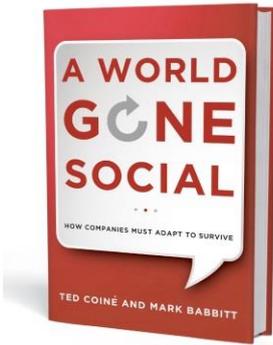

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***A World Gone Social***

Author: **Ted Coine and Mark Babbitt**

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Reviewer: ***Nazanin Mehrooz, PMP, CSM***

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Introduction to the Book

Social Media has changed the way many people communicate and is also impacting our economy with advertisement and testimonials. Survival of companies in a socially driven economy requires changes in ways some corporations respond to customer or employee concerns. Media visibility via social networks can magnify such issues quickly and impact profits if not quickly and adequately addressed. Visible communication addressing such concerns can improve trust, confidence and improved corporate branding. It can also result in more engaged and powerful networking capabilities to attract resources, build loyal consumer bases and tap into subject matter expertise at lower costs.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book is broken down into 4 sections:

Section 1 covers changes which are in play by moving away from the old-school leadership approach of message-controlling companies to customers and employees to the new social era where customers or employees are empowered by use of social media to change directions of operations and corporate strategies.

Section 2 covers the need to transition from a large to a smaller, nimble, engaged and self-sustaining team structure to survive the social age. Flat organizations with Ordinary People Extraordinary Network (OPEN) structures are the new trend which results in stronger personal relationships and a catalyst to change business models.

Section 3 covers ways to assess your current organizational culture and social presences as a baseline and how to build socially enabled teams, turning customers into ambassadors and cultivating passionate champions for your brand.

Section 4 covers what may be in store in the future for social businesses and how to measure the return on investment (ROI) for building them. The next steps for social media for general audiences and leaders are shared.

Highlights: What's New in this Book?

Utilizing social networks to building a more nimble and responsive organization is a rather new concept. It supports the thought process of flat organizations being more agile and adaptive. By utilization of social media, lower level employees can quickly reach out to C-level and above decision makers to share concerns, recommendations and provide subject matter expertise. This can results in an environment supporting leadership without authority and result in higher productivity from engaged and empowered employees.

Another new concept is how consumer are utilizing social media to gain power/support when other customer support methods fail to deliver adequate resolutions to their grievances. By broadcasting their experiences, they can quickly gain support of other consumers and result in a stronger united voice. This can result in redirecting future sales to competitors or mass boycotting of marketing strategies which are not in their favor. On a more positive note, Social media can aid in building sustaining confidence and trust with consumers.

Another new area was the “how-to” tips on being an effective social media executive. Chapter 10 is focused on how executives can build presence and locate resources in a timely manner and at lower costs than the traditional staffing approaches. Tips shared include how to avoid charlatans, gurus and ninjas by researching online history to gain more confidence in the authenticity of perspective subject matter experts.

Highlights: What I liked!

This book shares several comical examples of how an average person was able to make a difference in what they deeded as unacceptable customer service behavior. YouTube videos capturing guitars being thrown onto the cargo area of planes, tweets regarding inappropriate treatment of over-sized passengers, banks imposing unreasonable service fees are a few examples shared. What is impressive is how quickly these cases went viral and spiraled into corporate redirection of strategy and in some cases loss of market share.

I also liked the examples of how to handle customer relationship issues via social media and tips on building confidence and trust at a mass level. This is a powerful message and when handled effectively can be a very strategic approach towards organizational success and increase profits.

Shortfalls: What was Missing?

Finding the right balance to manage social media can be tricky. Often it requires a team and complications can occur. Governance rules, usage and legal implications of comments shared in social forums differ in each country. Also the impact of social media from the perspective of West, Europe, Middle East and the Far East can vary. This book approaches the situation from a western perspective, but doesn't adequately address social media limitations in other regions.

The authors advised that Generation Y are trend setters and most effective in the social media age. In gaming fields it may be the best investment to hire staff from this generation and utilize their talent of social media. Several other fields exist where savvy and experienced Baby Boomers and Generation X make up a larger percentage of experienced social leaders. There isn't much said about positive impacts and influences of these latter generations to the social age (other than their ability to fossilize more quickly).

Who might benefit from the Book?

This book can be beneficial to leaders, groups and individuals in and outside of an organization from many perspectives.

From a project perspective, the use of social media can foster improved communication among distributed teams and build stronger relationships and result in more cohesive teams. It provides a mechanism to document concerns, risks, solutions and effectiveness of a team.

From a consumer perspective, the use of social media can be a mechanism for getting visibility to concerns and improve chances to get the right level of attention to address it. For business owners, testimonials of positive or unhappy customers can significantly impact costs, profits and increase business networking opportunities.

For individuals who are interesting in raising awareness of social causes and visions, this book can provide some insight on using social media can be utilized to reach your goals.

Regardless of the perceptive, understanding how to use social media in an effective way can yield positive results; failure to manage it can result in negative implications.

Conclusion

The book provides a good perspective on the impact of social media on organizations. The trend of moving from old-school top-down command structure (which tends to be slow to strategic changes required in today's market) to a more flat and responsive organizational structure. Social media plays a vital part in allowing individuals at any level to raise ideas, concerns and receive subject matter expertise in a timely manner. Utilizing offerings on social media can also save on costs for businesses that are moving to a leaner flat resource structure. While this book may not offer a solution to address global limitations and implications, it does a good job of showing how social media can impact the masses inside and outside organizations.

A World Gone Social, by Ted Coine and Mark Babbitt, published by AMACOM; 2014, ISBN 978-0-8144-3326-3; 238 pages, hard cover. More at <http://www.amacombooks.org/book.cfm?isbn=9780814433263>

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Nazanin Mehrooz is a certified project manager and scrum master. Nazanin started her career as a software developer and transitioned to leading mid-size teams as a functional manager and (most currently) a senior project manager in Technology Services at BNSF. Her background includes managing a portfolio of 30+ projects with budgets exceeding 15 Million USD. Nazanin is an active volunteer for the PMI Dallas and Fort Worth Chapters in Texas, USA. Email: nazi_mehrooz@yahoo.com