

Partner & VP of Strategies, Warren Sukerne
Lift9



Lift9 is a social media consulting and research firm who engage and measure in social media.

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Website: <http://www.lift9.com/>
Twitter: [@lift9](#), [@warrenss](#)



"I am a passionate social media strategist who thrives on working with clients to strengthen their communities."

Warren Sukerne, Partner & VP of Strategies, Lift9

Lift9 is a research & brand analytics company focused on social media marketing data. Lift9 provides researchers, analytics & strategists who make relevant & useful the social media conversations related to your brand. It's not just about the social media listening & monitoring tools, it's also about the experienced people who make sense of the noise.

Q: Why do you think that there is such a differential between social media and sales?

WS: Great question to start. Sales is obviously more transactional whereas social media is more focused on engagement, relationship building and growth. Although ultimately a strong engagement and relationship can result in sales later down the stream. I think until you get there you should focus on interaction and strengthening bonds. A transactional activity like sales gets in the way and usually feels somewhat odd in a social environment. That's why I think it's not as fluid as an ecommerce transaction. I think over time

social media will certainly morph into a more transaction element. For example, you can see how Facebook is evolving with fan pages and activities and are pretty close to sales activities and the sales of virtual goods. Because fans want to engage or interact more with companies and they get rewarded with coupons and special offers. It's not too farfetched.

Q: What key benchmarks would you use for success criteria with a social media campaign?

WS: I think it really goes back to what the goals of the client or program are to start with, and based on those goals,

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setting up the appropriate benchmarks or KPIs to measure those goals. A real simple thing around awareness we would look to measure how many friends or follow activities have occurred, what the reach is and how much engagement has occurred. If it's something more dramatic than just an awareness campaign we would look at things in terms of how many conversations occurred, how many people came back and participated in the conversation.

So a lot of it really depends on the goals and objectives and then mapping those benchmarks or metrics to those goals and objectives. Clearly if the tactics aren't hitting the objectives then the program should be modified appropriately to do that. For instance, stimulate the conversation or use some stronger community moderation.

Q: What are the timelines that you would use to measure certain benchmarks?

WS: That's a good question. In the initiation phase you want to observe pretty closely and look at it on a weekly or even daily basis. As the program grows you can look at it at a longer time period and then compare period to period. See what new profiles are being added on a community profile. Just as importantly, are new conversations being started and how do you get people to engage once they've created a profile and really start to talk with each other about the brand (depending on what the objectives are).

Q: Where do you see gaps in the effectiveness of social media?

WS: I think it goes back to the goal setting in that we may focus on some of the wrong things because we didn't set the right goals up. The goal is not to have a million friends or followers, but to do some customer benchmarking in terms of what people think about the product in terms of a few different attributes or how do we compare to competitors? If we're not focused on the right metrics or activities you see gaps in measuring effectiveness and all it does is measure popularity which doesn't benefit anyone.

Q: How do "free" social media tools create value?

WS: That's a tough one. Some companies will try to create premium models and typically what happens is their tools are too weak or too rich. So as a result, they don't create much value because if they are too weak people try them and don't do much with it, so it's not a good bridge to the paid model. However, if they make the tools too robust or strong there is no motivation for a customer to graduate to the paid version.

The problem is the company has to support the premium version or free tool version yet there is no financial incentive for them to do a good job or succeed there. For instance, I've seen some tool companies that have 7,000 free customers and just a few hundred paid and the models don't work. I think the best example of some free tools or apps that create value are iPhone apps, where the app is free but you can buy some virtual goods to enhance the app experience. Or even a Facebook app, like FarmVille. The game is free to play but if you want to buy crops, equipment or tools you can use actual cash to enhance

your experience. You have a free tool that is really monetizing itself.

Q: Given the marketplace how do you create a valuable and strategic edge with so many messages driven at people?

WS: Social media gives us the opportunity to do this mythical one-to-one conversation or engagement. It's all predicated on finding the right target audience. Once you have found that right target audience or community it's having viable important content that resonates with that audience. Then that audience can pick up the content and the brand and make it their own. Once that occurs you have a strong fervent brand community and it can be very strategic for companies and campaigns where not only will the word of mouth help drive awareness and sales, but also provide feedback on how to improve the product and the brand. It goes back to most marketing endeavours, finding the right target audience and resonating with that group.

Q: What are three things that you should do with social media on a daily basis?

WS: That's another great question. One: See what people are saying about your company and your brand or individual or self. Two: What are they saying about the competition? Three: Based on those two responding appropriately; responding to your branded comments, but also on the competition. On a daily basis, seeing what is being said and responding appropriately and measuring those numbers. Why was there more or less conversation and what can we do to get more assuming that's relevant.

Q: What business processes should be connected with social media?

WS: There's been a lot of conversation about that in social media circles. The theorists will say that there shouldn't be any departments participating in social media. I believe you can have different functions having a role or connecting with social media. For instance, human resources from a recruitment standpoint works well. Customer facing departments like marketing, sales, PR and product management can also benefit. Engineering in terms of product development or manufacturing, hearing what works with the product and what doesn't, from a customer stand point, can certainly add value.

Any company function can participate and learn more from having integral customer conversations. I guess that could be scary if it's not done in a somewhat coordinated manor, because there's a lot of people focused on social media areas. It should be directed and managed. I think all company stakeholders can benefit from a social media conversation.

Q: What do you tell companies that don't let their employees use social media in house? Doesn't that stifle everyone's contribution?

WS: Yes, I think most definitely. What it suggests is that the company probably doesn't understand social media all that much, and as a result, is looking at it from a risk management perspective that it will waste time and won't be able to control it. As a result, it stifles everyone's contribution, but it also impacts morale and is a trust issue.

Companies who don't provide access to these tools are really saying that we don't trust you as an employee and that's certainly not good. What companies should do or what we tell companies is to set a framework or have a policy in place.

Obviously employees want to do the right thing and they don't want to just sit on Facebook all day at work, but there's value in participating in social media. So come up with some appropriate policies and guidelines, run some tests and role it out. Clarify what you can do, what you can't do, should talk about or shouldn't. As long as you give the employees the proper guidelines the benefit will definitely accrue to both company and employee.

It will be a much more trusting and collaborative place of work. So employees will be happy to not only participate in social media and talk about the company's strengths and the great things the company is doing. It really has to do with getting more comfortable with participating and allowing employees to carry the ball.

Q: Can you give us an example of a social media blunder?

WS: There are a lot of well documented cases. About a year ago there was a situation on Twitter with [Motrin Moms](#) where they launched a campaign over the weekend. They angered a lot of people because they were focused on new moms using baby holders. Some of the language used offended people as it was not conducive to new mothers and it was more of a fashionable thing. They launched this big campaign with videos and print and there was a groundswell of resistance over the weekend that Motrin

didn't really know about or didn't do anything about until the following Monday when there were hundreds and thousands of posts condemning them. They had to take their campaign down and cancel print ads, which was pretty expensive. Because they weren't listening to their constituency and they really hadn't thought it through.

Another popular example was [Domino's Pizza on YouTube](#). They had a horrible situation where a couple of people in a store in North Carolina were doing gross things to a pizza. When people saw it and they recognized that it was two crazy employees making their own video. The corporate response was weak and ineffective.

Domino's had the President, Patrick Doyle [reading something that condemned the activity](#) rather than using social media in a more positive way. The President was focused on simply explaining the cleanliness and hygiene to give you the best quality pizza etc. In hindsight, what they could have done differently was to go in and show them how it's done versus having some speech read. Over time different problems or blunders will surface, but companies are getting better at responding and monitoring what people say about their brand.

Q: How much time should you be dedicating to social media?

WS: That's a pretty broad question and it all depends on what you want to get out of it. It depends where you are at today and where you want to be. You could look at what you are doing on a daily basis fairly quickly in simply an hour or less. What are they saying about me or my competitor and then respond to a few. If you want to have a much

larger presence and be considered a leader you are going to have to put in more time. Write blog posts, answer on Twitter, videos etc and that could be pretty timely. It all depends on what the objectives are. There is a guy I know [Dave Evans](#), he wrote a great book called [Social Media Marketing: An Hour a Day](#). He breaks out different exercises and activities to get more familiar with it. But ultimately it's just an hour a day learning all these techniques.



About Warren Sukerne

Warren Sukerne is Partner and Vice President of Strategies at Lift9, a social media services firm specializing in social media analytics and research. With its research staff in Vietnam, Lift 9 provides its clients with actionable insights based on listening to the social web. Warren develops monitoring programs for marketers and implements listening best practices.

Warren is a highly motivated, high-energy, results oriented team player with fifteen plus years wide ranging leadership in digital relationship marketing and service business development. Excellent ability to innovate cutting edge strategies to traditional functional business needs. Highly competent in utilizing customer segmentation to increase revenues.

About Lift9

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About the International Internet Marketing Association

The International Internet Marketing Association started in 1998 to bring marketers, agencies and professionals together to discuss the capabilities and potential of Internet marketing. With over ten years of experience since our first event and our association remains focused on its original mandate – education. Each year, IIMA delivers a series of networking and speaking events hosted by subject matter experts, thought leaders, experts and panels of marketing practitioners. Each event has the same objectives:

- to provide insight into current and emerging practices in online marketing
- to deliver practical insights that are immediately relevant to your business
- to challenge participants to achieve greater levels of awareness of digital marketing
- to assist in the integration of digital marketing into your big picture marketing strategy

To engage you in the community of marketing and business practitioners passionate about the future of internet marketing. The meet-ups provide a theatre for the discussion of the trends, tools and technology shaping how marketing practitioners who are using the digital space to greater involvement with their publics. By providing a series of networking and educational events, IIMA creates an environment in which the trends, tools, opportunities and risks that are shaping how people interact with the online market place.

For more information about IIMA, go to: www.iimaonline.org

Contributors to this interview



James Laitinen, Director of IIMA – James is an entrepreneur at heart with a flair for technology and marketing. Burning the midnight oil turning ideas into reality, he often attempts intimidation tactics during games of Scrabble. Connect with James online via [@jlate](https://twitter.com/jlate)



Charity Robertson, Director of Communications IIMA - Charity is a marketing, advertising and human relations professional. While not creating marketing strategies or studying, Charity can be found chasing the sun to the nearest beach. She is currently residing in Yucca Valley, California. Connect with Charity online via [@charityswab](https://twitter.com/charityswab)



Ean Jackson, Director of Events IIMA- When not running a marathon or snowshoeing in gorgeous powder conditions, Ean helps us connect with professional speakers and industry experts to present to our membership. For speaking opportunities and events contact Ean online via [@eanjackson](https://twitter.com/eanjackson)



A special thank you to [@warrenswab](https://twitter.com/warrenswab) for his contribution and expertise contributing to this interview. We loved the opportunity to collaborate!