Introduction to Principles of Sport Communication, Marketing, and Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Sport touches people’s lives in unique ways, so it should come as no surprise that communicating about and marketing sport through social media also require unique approaches. Robert Tuchman, author of *The 100 Sporting Events You Must See Live: An Insider’s Guide to Creating the Sports Experience of a Lifetime*, writes about the unique ability of sport to bring people together: “There is no greater camaraderie than sitting in a section of fans that bleed the same team colors . . . cultural differences become meaningless . . . there are no differences in ethnicity, income level, or age . . . we are united in cheering, jeering, and just enjoying the sporting event” (Tuchman, 2009, pp. 1–3).

Sport consumption is a special form of consumption distinguished by both the intensity of emotions and by the heightened level of self-definition found among followers. Kahle and Close (2011) describe the association many fans feel toward the teams they support, combined with sport’s inherently competitive nature, that meld to produce strong emotions among fans. As ESPN’s Kieran Darcy once said, “For a sports fan, visiting Notre
Dame for a football weekend is like a pilgrimage, like going to Lourdes, or Jerusalem, or Mecca and Medina” (Kahle & Close, p. 132).

Beyond the social and emotional aspects, sport is a unique product because:

- Each game, match, or competition has its own outcome. Since the outcome of a sporting event is not known ahead of time, people cannot control the product.
- Although people tend to support winning teams and retract from losing teams, demand fluctuates throughout the season.
- There are intangible, ephemeral, and subjective aspects of sports, which make events very personal in nature.
- Since there are no “inventories” of games or tickets after-the-fact, sports are considered very perishable. Once the game or event is over, the focus moves to the next game or event, and, in many cases, people are left only with a memory.
- Sport organizations often compete against each other in some ways while cooperating in other ways.
- Sport is often consumed at the very same time it is produced.

Sport as an agent for bringing people together and as a unique product means that it is an industry where social media can have a dramatic impact on communication and marketing. The use of social media as marketing and communication tools opens up new types of personal communication between the organization and the consumer. Whether it is individuals re-tweeting athletes’ tweets or teams communicating via posts on blogs, in the era of social media it is incumbent upon sport managers to understand the technology and its resulting impact.

According to Joe Favorito (2011), a strategic communications consultant, ideal candidates for social media positions have extraordinary communication skills (in both the online and traditional environments), speak a second language, understand the global environment, are charismatic in nature, are team players, and are capable of communicating the company’s values to a global audience as well as contributing new ideas to enhance the brand of the sport organization.

**EVOLUTION OF SPORT COMMUNICATION**

As the mainstream media has changed, so too has the sport media. Schultz, Caskey, and Esherick (2010) say there has been a shift from sport media, “controlling production and distribution of
content; deciding the what, when, and where of audience consumption” to media “fueled by new technology and defined by interactivity, audience fragmentation and empowerment, and instantaneous access” (p. 1). Let’s look at how we got from a top-down model of communication to a more shared one.

The Old Model of Sport Communication

Although there is no exact moment cited as the beginning of mass media coverage of sport, 1849 marked the first telegraph coverage of championship boxing (Sowell, 2008). Match coverage, combined with the historical events surrounding industrialization, urbanization, and the growth of education, date the old model of communication all the way back to the 1850s (Schultz, Caskey, & Esherick, 2010).

In this communication model, the “media” referred first to newspapers and magazines, and then radio and television; these were the only viable means of accessing the athletes, games, events, and news related to sport. Content and publicity, including news about athletes, sport organizations, events, and games, were distributed to mass audiences exclusively via media outlets. Feedback from the audience to the media was limited, and no feedback went directly from the audience to sport organizations. Media controlled the flow of all information, meaning they were in charge of setting the agenda. This enabled the media to exert a significant influence on public perception through the control, filtering, and shaping of media content (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). During this early period of coverage by the mass media, sport and the media benefited financially from the arrangement. Negative stories were less likely to surface. Athletes and events received necessary publicity to promote economic growth. As sport gained popularity, content and distribution rights became more valuable, and the fees for the distribution of sporting events and products skyrocketed. Money increased the economic power and prestige of sports (both individuals and organizations). In addition, reporters and athletes developed lasting friendships and relationships that impacted the flow of information to the public in both positive and negative ways (Schultz, Caskey, & Esherick, 2010).

The New Model of Sport Communication (1990s–Present)

The traditional communication model in which the media had a monopoly and could dictate the what, when, and how of distributing sport began to change when Home Box Office (HBO) began airing
boxing matches in the 1970s. This was followed by satellite programming that allowed people to watch games live without waiting for the taped versions of the events to be shown on their local stations (Federal Communications Commission, 2005).

The technologies of home computers, Internet, satellite television, and digital transmissions created two immediate impacts for sport communication: (1) the power of traditional mass media decreased as fans benefited from multiple consumption options, such as live streaming and satellite radio, and (2) the sport audience became empowered as never before to consume sporting events as they desired instead of only as made available by the media (Schultz, Caskey, & Esherick, 2010). In fact, social media has expanded the “coverage” of sport to all the time as people talk about teams, players, and organizations twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Professionals in the field of sport must understand that they always, at all hours of the day, represent the organization they work for and that the personal/professional line cannot easily be separated in the global arena of social media (Favorito, 2011).

Perhaps the most important effect of these technologies, however, has been greater audience empowerment: Individuals use technologies to become actual participants in the sport communication process. Furthermore, fans have started to challenge the mainstream media by creating and distributing content independent from them. Through the use of social media and the Internet, individuals are able to create and comment on content in the world of sport at any time. When a story emerges (or sometimes is even unconfirmed), people post messages on blogs, Twitter, or message boards. These stories quickly gain traction without being published in a mainstream news outlet. Even major news outlets and television shows are now using social media to take polls and gather comments about stories to show on the bottom of the screen to enable greater levels of participation amongst viewers.

As Exhibit 2.1 illustrates, the coverage of a sport story in the modern communication model depends upon the intricate flow between the media and audience. According to sport media professionals at Sports Media Challenge (SMC), the shift has gone from a time when communication/marketing professionals would put out materials based upon what they wanted to discuss or what they felt the public wanted to hear to now, when it is more of “a conversation, where the fans get to say what they want to talk about and get to direct where the marketing focus needs to be” (Garner, Patrick, Barrett, & Lane, 2010). In fact, this is idea is further illustrated in Exhibit 2.2, with Brian Solis depicting the various cogs in the social consumer machine.
EXHIBIT 2.1 Coverage of a sports story in modern communication model.


EXHIBIT 2.2 The roles of the social consumer.

How social media has intensified the need for crisis management—and made it easier

The ever-increasing access to news and information has intensified the need for sport organizations to deal with crisis situations through a variety of media outlets, including social media. Whether a sudden crisis occurs or an ongoing issue continues for months despite the best efforts of management, the organization must address the situation; it cannot be ignored. It does not matter if the issue involves a player’s off-field behavior or customer complaints with far-reaching implications; the best advice for all crisis situations is to respond quickly. Regardless of the crisis or the method selected to communicate with the public, sport professionals should avoid obfuscating the issues. Furthermore, retaliation and pontification both tend to increase the tensions and delay resolution. Confrontations and lawsuits should be avoided, if possible, because they keep controversies in the forefront of the public’s consciousness. The best course of action is to provide a consistent message via all appropriate channels in both the social media arena as well as traditional news outlets. Take advantage of the ability to provide accurate and timely information, especially since social media creates an effective way of distributing messages to interested parties.

In addition, organizations need to be proactive in closely monitoring their athletes, coaches, and employees to stay on top of emerging stories. There really is no excuse for a complete surprise when information is brewing in the press or social media. In fact, many types of online tools exist to help monitor your brand, including Google Alerts, a service that allows you to receive notifications if new search queries related to words or phrases of your choosing appear on Google. If negative postings are hurting your company’s image, address it with polite, corrective statements and appropriate comments. Use your official blog, website, and other social media outlets to convey the correct information. Furthermore, have policies and procedures in place ahead of time that outline how your organization will handle crisis situations. This includes knowing who the company spokesperson is in the event of an emergency, training key personnel on crisis management, anticipating potential problems, and developing specific plans to handle a crisis situation. Be prepared!

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF SPORT MARKETING

Not only has social media affected sport communication, it has also impacted the marketing of sport. While definitions vary, most define sport marketing as “all activities designed to meet the needs and wants of sport consumers through exchange processes” (Mullin, 2007, p. 9). As this suggests, sport marketing centers on the consumer
Sport marketing includes both marketing the sport and marketing through sport. Marketing the sport focuses on the actual team, game, sport, sport service, or product. For example, organizations such as the National Football League (NFL), the National Basketball Association (NBA), and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) have all created television commercials promoting their respective sports and teams. One NFL television advertisement from the 2010 season included the tag line, “You want the NFL, come to the NFL... buynfltickets.com.” The advertisement promoted the sale of tickets to all 32 NFL teams, and the commercial showed a variety of sports fans, teams, and logos.

Marketing through sport, on the other hand, refers to using sports to promote a specific good or product. This occurs when a non-sport-related company markets themselves by aligning with a sport organization, event, or brand. For example, DirecTV created a variety of commercials that focused on the rivalry of certain NFL teams (Redskins versus Cowboys, Dolphins versus Patriots, etc.) in order
to promote the NFL Sunday Ticket, which is exclusively available through DirecTV.

The growth of the social media and ongoing advances in technology have created unique, powerful, and intriguing opportunities for marketing sport and for marketing through sport, some of which are illustrated in Exhibit 2.3 (enlarge and study in detail on www.the

EXHIBIT 2.3  The Conversation Prism.

The Conversation Prism

As stated previously, social media enables conversations between organizations and consumers. Organizations now have an opportunity to engage in communication, collaboration, education, and/or entertainment with customers, prospective customers, employees, and other stakeholders (people who are affected by a company’s decisions in some way). Each stakeholder network has the capacity to influence its members. If that influence can be converted into a desired outcome or action, then the organization has obtained a valuable resource to be used in any marketing campaign. Keep in mind that the most powerful form of marketing is still word of mouth. As a result, it is imperative to cultivate stakeholders and use them to positively impact a marketing campaign. The next logical step is to direct these conversations, networks, and actions in such a way as to generate action on the part of each network. If people have positive experiences at an event, the next step is for them to invite friends to attend in the future; the result will be increased ticket sales over time.

*Make a plan and see it through.* One of the biggest mistakes sport organizations make when implementing a social media campaign is that they invest money and effort into it and expect a quick result, especially in terms of ticket sales. When the organization does not see the anticipated result quickly enough, its tendency is to switch to a different tactic. Organizations with a more long-term strategy (longer than six-month increments) generally have stronger social media campaigns and results (Favorito, 2011).

Sport organizations, especially smaller ones, usually do not have the expertise to implement a thorough campaign designed to maximize information technology; however, companies and computer software programs exist for that purpose. For example, the Chicago Fire, a major league soccer (MLS) team, uses the web-based client enablement platform offered by FIPPEX. According to the company, FIPPEX enables organizations to “gather critical intelligence, seamlessly interact with customers, and enhance . . . sales and marketing initiatives [by providing] businesses the power to move beyond passive relationship management to active communications.” Read more about the benefits associated with this collaboration in the box on the next page.

Businesses and entrepreneurs are just beginning to see ways in which traditional marketing techniques may be supplemented, improved upon, and even replaced to turn social media interactions into meaningful marketing results. But underneath the new vocabulary, applications, and tools, marketing with social media should be based on time-tested fundamentals of business and marketing. Success depends upon:
1. Understanding and participating in the evolving marketplace.
2. Clearly communicating your message to the right people.
3. Assessing the effectiveness of your work.
4. Constantly revising, adapting, and updating your plans.

Marketing with social media, however, also requires transforming traditional marketing techniques to include other ways of approaching the marketing mix—relationship marketing and persuasion marketing.

How the Chicago Fire engages season ticket holders all season long

HANK STEINBRECHER
President of Touchline Consulting and Chairman of Synthetic Turf Association

“After several meetings with the Chicago Fire and members of FIPPEX it was clear the platform would enable the Fire to reach out to customers in new and innovative ways. More specifically, the system prompts the sport organization to have constant dialogue with clients and gives the franchise a wealth of information about the consumers, which in turn may be used to generate improved customer service. Let me share with you one way this has changed the way things are done in Chicago. As a premier season ticket holder, I would annually receive correspondence from the organization in the form of an invoice for the upcoming season. Now with this device it is a two-way communication. I receive a letter acknowledging me as a valued customer and am given information about a special link to the organization. Once I activate my personal link, I get a message indicating the organization knows my season ticket is up for renewal. In the message, if I click on the highlighted link up pops a video from the President of the Chicago Fire inviting me to renew. Before the first game, I get another message with a video from the coach talking about what to expect from our first opponent. After the first game, I get a message saying they hope I enjoyed the match and it includes a link to a video containing the event’s wrap up by the team captain. There is even a place for me to ask questions. As a follow-up communication, I receive a message from the coach saying, you asked about this topic, here’s your answer. As a high paying customer, I’m certainly more impressed by these sets of communications than by simply getting an invoice in the mail each year! This two-way communication device creates intimacy between the customer and the brand. In fact, by collecting information and creating web pages, emails, and other specific communications the Chicago Fire is able to build relationships with customers and brand loyalty in new and meaningful ways.”

Source: Steinbrecher, H. Personal communication, June 7, 2011.
From the 4 P’s to the 4 C’s of Marketing

Traditionally, professionals have relied on the four P’s of the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion) for making marketing decisions and preparing their marketing plans. However, these elements do not reflect the two-way communication possible through social media, which incorporates true feedback from the consumer to the business. In today’s world of social networking, two-way communication has become an important part of marketing. To reflect this, University of North Carolina’s Robert Lauterborn suggests a transformation of the four P’s of marketing to the four C’s of marketing: (1) the product becomes what the consumer wants and needs, (2) the price becomes the cost of satisfying that want or need, (3) the place becomes convenience of buying, and (4) promotion becomes communication (Lauterborn, 1990). The following discussion of the four C’s shows how to transform marketing strategy planning from a focus on a one-way process to two-way communication that utilizes social media.

From product to consumer wants and needs

Too often organizations create products, groups of products, or benefits and force them to work for consumers. If there is no want or need for a product or service, however, it cannot be sold. Or, if a consumer wants only a portion of the product or service, he or she will be forced to upsize or forgo the purchase without having a way to communicate to the organization. One of the main reasons why social media is so effective is due to the two-way communication it encourages. If organizations listen to what their consumers are saying (their wants and needs), they can develop better products and services for them. According to sport marketing professionals, some of the companies that are experiencing success with social media campaigns are the ones that are truly listening to their customers, even if it is in the form of complaints formally voiced on Twitter or consumers griping via social media forums. In fact, some of the more proactive companies utilize social media specifically to improve customer service and help with product development (Garner et al., 2010). If the sport organization effectively uses the Internet and data mining for information, it can create targeted communications with fans and build brand loyalty. Although the use of computer software packages and consulting companies may be limited to those organizations willing to invest in a collaborative partnership, the ideas and concepts may be adapted and used on a smaller scale by any organization or individual willing to do some data collection.
The concept is simple. Based upon formal and informal surveys (including comments in forums and chat rooms), the sport organization can collect information about the consumers and follow-up using a variety of digital mediums. If a fan identifies his favorite player, the organization can send an email with a link to a special message from that player talking about an upcoming game and a link to buy tickets. The email can also invite him to follow the player on Twitter or like his/her official Facebook page. Subsequent posts on social media platforms can offer special prices on games, discounts on concessions, or special access to team merchandise. Alternatively, post-game surveys, emails, or polls can generate comments from fans on a myriad of topics ranging from the cleanliness of the restrooms to the entertainment provided before the game. Once the organization addresses the issues revealed in the surveys, a new opportunity exists to reach out to the consumer, share information, and invite them back again. This type of ongoing, two-way communication builds brand loyalty and creates a more positive relationship between the consumer and the organization than the old style of one-way communication (Steinbrecher, 2011).

Another example of an organization using social media to meet the wants and needs of the consumers involves fantasy leagues. In 2010, the National Football League took fantasy football to the next level. The NFL incorporated video highlights into the leagues so participants can watch actual footage as they follow their players.

*From price to cost to satisfy*

Price is the amount of money a consumer pays for a product or service, such as $75.00 for a ticket, $4.50 for a hot dog, or $50.00 for greens fees. The consumer’s *cost to satisfy* takes into account a number of other variables such as time, distance, or other activities consumers could be doing instead of buying the product or service. While it is imperative that sport marketers keep in mind the variables that matter to consumers when creating prices, consumers must also understand the myriad of influences on sport marketers when setting prices. A delicate balance between keeping the cost high enough for the business to be viable and low enough to ensure it is not prohibitive for consumers must always be maintained.

*From place to convenience to buy*

Place implies a fixed location where consumers go to purchase or consume goods and/or services. In the sport industry, the place could be the stadi-
um/arena, gym, golf course, etc. These places have specific purposes; for example, games are played in stadiums, fields, gyms, courses, or courts, so they can’t be readily moved or changed to accommodate customers.

Convenience, on the other hand, focuses on the consumers’ involvement in a product or service. How can we make it more convenient for them to purchase or use our product? Can we make our sport product more available to consumers at home? For example, with the introduction of the Sirius/XM Sunday Drive, listeners can pay to have access to all NFL broadcasts in their home and cars as well as on their mobile devices. Football is not the only sport to offer solutions to the place vs. convenience issue, given the channels devoted to Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Hockey League (NHL), and even college sports. In fact, Notre Dame fans can download a free app for the iPhone that features live video of all seven home games, live scoring updates, video on demand clips, Twitter updates, and blog information.

Promotion to communication

Promotion is a one-way message. The organization is telling consumers “look at what we want you to buy.” Communication, however, is

The Diadora campaign

Diadora, the Italian soccer apparel company, provided a real case study situation to a group of college students as a social marketing campaign for one of their specific products. The goal of the project was to develop, create, and maintain an online social media network for one of the company’s independent licensees—Golden Viking Sports, LLC.

Students created a marketing plan for the development of the social media network. Great care and planning went into the creation of the Facebook and Twitter accounts. They conducted research on Diadora’s competitors, such as Reebok, Puma, Adidas, Nike, Umbro, and Under Armour, to determine which tactics would be useful in the distribution of the new accounts. They developed a plan that showcased the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of each of the company’s social media networks, with an emphasis on their distribution methods. They found that the most important tactic was making others aware of the network, because without followers you cannot distribute a successful social media marketing campaign to your target audiences. It reinforced the importance of clearly communicating your message to the right people (Wampler, Johnston, Heasley, & Newman, 2011).
interactive; it gives consumers a way to voice their thoughts, both good and bad. As stated earlier, organizations must be willing to hear the bad as well as the good.

There also needs to be multiple channels for two-way communication, including phone, email, and social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. An example of a two-way communication model is the development of ESPN’s television show *SportsNation*, where viewers vote and give their opinion on over a dozen daily topics. The show encourages viewers to interact via multiple channels such as polls, Twitter, Facebook, chat rooms, forums, archives, and even widgets.

Promotion is also now a two-way communication in a manner discussed earlier: When companies encourage consumers to create ads, offer feedback on ads, and take part in marketing campaigns in other ways, those consumers value that their voices are being heard and reflected back to them.

As sport organizations embrace Lauterborn’s fourth C and shift focus to interactive communication with consumers, marketing is likely to become more effective.

**Relationship Marketing**

Relationship marketing was originally defined as “attracting, maintaining and enhancing customer relationships” (Berry, 1983). In a general sense, relationship marketing refers to marketing strategies that take place over time and are designed to establish and maintain a profitable, long-term relationship with a customer (Novo, n.d.). While researchers and theorists debate the names and stages of each phase of relationship marketing, the concept may be simplified into:

1. An initial interaction.
2. A series of follow-up communications that are assessed in terms of the value added to the customer.

Berry (1995) suggests five strategies to develop relationships: create a core service, customize to the individual, augment with extra services, attract customers via price, and encourage employees to provide good customer service. Ultimately, these strategies result in the customer continuing or terminating his/her relationship with the company, organization, or individual. Social media professionals suggest always adding value to official communications by providing unique or exclusive information unavailable elsewhere in order to solidify customer loyalty and promote continued relationships (Garner et al., 2010).
Relationship marketing inherently requires sport professionals to

- understand the types of communication tools available within both traditional marketing plans as well as in the constantly changing arena of social media.
- know when and how to use the various methods effectively.
- be able to clearly communicate a consistent message to the intended audience.
- effectively assess and revise one’s marketing plans.

In addition, keep in mind the unique nature of sports, including their intangible, ephemeral, and subjective aspects, which make events very personal, as well as the perishable nature of sports, which forces people to move on to the next game or event as soon as the current one ends. As a result, it is imperative that sport organizations find creative ways to extend the life of each sporting event and to create meaningful ways for the organization to continue communicating with the consumer.

In addition to the kinds of social media interactions previously mentioned, one of the most crucial methods of building relationships with consumers is through the use of mobile devices. Whether a team sends live updates via text message or offers fans the opportunity to stream games, organizations must provide customers with the ability to stay connected to the team or event even when they cannot attend. Using mobile technology applications such as Banjo, Foursquare, and others (to be covered later in the book) are additional methods to involve fans and drive revenue to your organization or even to your sponsoring organizations. Fans can get discounts by checking into various locations in and around the stadium. Attendees can check in at spots created to highlight events taking place before, during, and after the game. Creative uses of location-based games are great ways to show sponsoring organizations the effectiveness of their sponsorship and generate interest in products and services. At the same time, the interactive nature of the technology combined with the online incentives encourages repeat business and loyalty to the participating organizations.

Two theories that are helpful in understanding how to build relationships with customers via social media are social penetration theory and engagement theory.

**Social penetration theory**

As individuals share and contribute to the social media landscape they inevitably interact with other individuals and develop online relation-
European sport organizations’ use of mobile devices

European sport organizations got a jump on U.S. organizations when it came to using mobile devices. For example, the NBA is a global brand but the New York Knicks are not. However, in Europe, Manchester United is a global brand. As a result, perhaps out of necessity, organizations such as Manchester United have learned to communicate better with the various demographics within their fan base. In fact, their texts are often bilingual; their efforts are global in nature in order to reach fans across the world; and they are adept in modifying their messages to fit the cultural attitudes and beliefs of fans. For example, Manchester United actually reaches out to fans in Bangladesh, Beijing, Singapore, etc., using text messaging and other mediums whereas teams in the United States are much more narrowly focused in sending out team messages en masse (Favorito, 2011).

Some sport organizations in Europe and in the United States use smartphones to increase concession sales. The average time a person spends conducting a transaction at the concession stand is at least 49 seconds, in addition to time spent waiting in line. Once at the counter, a person places an order, is rung up on the register, pays for the items, obtains a receipt (and change if necessary), takes the purchased items and leaves, all in 49 seconds. The transaction of a fan who places an order using a smartphone while watching the game and going up to the concession stand, scanning the phone, hearing a beep indicating payment was made, and taking the items may take as few as 15 seconds. This could translate into a three-fold increase of concession stand sales and provide a more pleasant overall game experience for the fan. It also enables the organization to keep track of who made a purchase, what time it was made, how much the individual spent, what the person bought, etc.—all invaluable information that can be used in a comprehensive marketing plan for the future (Steinbrecher, 2011).

ships. Social penetration theory focuses on the various stages people experience when sharing with others and provides a framework for how relationships develop: orientation of interaction, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange stages.

Orientation of interaction. According to Smith’s interpretation of Altman and Taylor’s work on social penetration (n.d.), this first stage consists of people sharing in small parts. At this point, relationships tend to be somewhat superficial in nature. When a customer begins interacting with a website, it is not uncommon for him/her to simply browse the site, read the posts, and examine the information in a detached manner.
Exploratory affective exchange. This second stage is when people begin to let down their guard and share more personal information as they get to know one another. At this point, a consumer may decide to provide his/her contact information, create a profile, and post basic comments in chat rooms or forums.

Affective exchange. This is a transition period that reflects individuals deciding which relationships are important and warrant continued development. Once a person begins exploring the social media arena he/she often evaluates a variety of sources and participates in many discussion groups. Over time, people tend to scale back their participation to the few sites about which they feel most passionate or with which they have created the strongest bonds.

Stable exchange. This final stage is the highest level in social penetration theory; it is where intimacy is achieved and relationships strengthen. This often culminates in people becoming regular contributors to blogs, or even creating their own sites and linking back to the organization via the detailed persona they have now established (Smith, n.d.). This concept reinforces the ideas mentioned in relationship to the Chicago Fire and FIPPEX software in the box on p. 32. “It is all about the number of touches an organization has with clients and the relationships that are built with key clients and customers” (Steinbrecher, 2011).

Sport organizations must be cognizant of the four stages people progress through as they participate in social media forums. Just as face-to-face relationships take time to develop and grow, so do online interactions. According to representatives of Sports Media Challenge, a company that provides media and communication training, one of the pitfalls of social media occurs when people forget they must be patient, be consistent, and communicate over time in order to build a community, amass a significant following, and earn the trust of those in their online community. This means if you have an event to promote, be sure to promote it early, build up momentum, talk about it consistently online before the event, during the event, and after the event (Garner et al., 2010). Organizations that are customer friendly and offer online help or the ability to communicate with a live person will be able to create, maintain, and benefit from long-term customers. Taking time to plan and develop a site and cultivate relationships is part of the successful social media campaign. It is imperative to know your goals, be
realistic in your expectations, and “under sell and over deliver” (Favorito, 2011). One of the benefits of encouraging open communication between customers and the organization is the level of feedback it creates. The two-way communication provides sport organizations with many opportunities to improve on services and experiences, which yields brand loyalty and even increased sales.

**Engagement theory**

Customer engagement is essential to building relationships and is based upon the repeated interactions between the organization and the customer. Each time the customer is engaged, the emotional, psychological, or physical investment is strengthened between the consumer and the brand (Chaffey, 2007). Consistent with engagement theory, a successful social media campaign entices customers to interact repeatedly. Consultant Joe Favorito advises, however, that social media campaigns should engage the correct people in the process; “I’d rather have the right 2,000 people targeted than the wrong 200,000 people” (Favorito, 2011). Statistics and data should be collected to help evaluate and assess a social media campaign. Data may be collected and analyzed through a variety of web-based tools, which are discussed further in Chapter 9. It is important to note that such measurements include the number of times a person visits a site, the length of time spent on a web page, the number of logins made, and the pathways selected to view web pages.

As your social media campaign grows over time, professionals warn of becoming too overwhelmed with the enormity of an all-encompassing project. To combat this pitfall, periodically reevaluate each platform, method, or vehicle used in the campaign to assess whether or not it is meeting the overall goals and engaging customers. If a channel is not generating the expected results, consider dropping it and focusing on another venue that is working. There is no need to use every social media tool just for the sake of using it; be strategic in managing your resources.

**Persuasion Marketing**

Persuasion refers to the process by which people use messages to influence others, to change their mindsets, or get people to act (McGaan, 2010). Simply stated, persuasion marketing is designed to get people to take action. Whether the marketer wants to sell tickets to a game or obtain a sponsorship agreement, the ultimate goal is to trigger a
According to McGaan (2010), the foundation of persuasion marketing is the Rational Model of Persuasion. This theory asserts that a person’s beliefs (what he/she believes is true or false) added to the individual’s values (what he/she thinks is good or bad) and motives (the person’s self-interests) will result in specific attitudes (a person’s like or dislike), which translate into relatively predictable behaviors (the person’s action). To clarify, think of it as a mathematical formula like this:

\[ \text{Beliefs} + \text{Values/Motives} = \text{Attitudes} \rightarrow \text{Behavior} \]

The key to effectively persuading an individual is to understand the beliefs and values that form the person’s attitude toward the given subject. Before a social media campaign can effectively be planned, the organization must have information about the audience and about the organization and its products or services. This is an area that needs improvement in the sport industry, given that few organizations are currently asking their fans enough questions to understand their beliefs and values and to determine their attitudes, which form their behaviors (Favorito, 2011).

Once the sport organization has this information, a marketing professional can then attempt to mold a person’s beliefs, values, or attitudes in a particular direction in order to get the person to act favorably toward a specific campaign. In fact, by providing information through a variety of channels to targeted individuals, marketers hope to entice consumers to spend their time, money, and resources within their organization. Persuasion marketing is not necessarily a quick process. In fact, in order to be successful, a marketing campaign must be presented strategically, with repeated exposure to the intended audiences until the message becomes understood, recognized, and accepted. Only then will most people be willing to take action consistent with the marketing campaign’s expectations (Hill, n.d.; Virzi, 2011).

An example of utilizing the persuasion theory in sport marketing was the “Basketball Never Stops” ad campaign by Nike. According to Nike, the campaign included a social media campaign with a dedicated Facebook page and Twitter hashtag encouraging fans to “join together to keep the spirit of the game alive throughout the lockout.” Nike used persuasion marketing to promote basketball across a variety of age groups with the goal of focusing attention on the sport in general and Nike products in particular. As is generally the case, the persuasion theory technique attempts to influence consumer behavior and result in sales for the company. Sport organizations and professionals
must remember that successful social media campaigns take time to create, plan, and implement. Research must be conducted to clearly identify the target audience and to understand their pervasive beliefs, values, motives, and attitudes. Messages must be crafted and delivered repeatedly to reach individuals and gain acceptance before the desired actions and outcomes can be achieved.

CONCLUSION

In order to understand the unique aspects of the sport product and the sport industry, sport marketers must spend time learning about the consumers of sport. Our electronic society enables sport marketers to tap into a variety of sources using social media tools. Organizations can create Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, consumer polls, and many other tools to engage with consumers regarding their products and services. The two-way nature of social media gives the sport marketing professional a variety of avenues to remain in constant contact with the consumers and therefore, promptly respond to all concerns. As a result, sport professionals can and should provide excellent customer service all of the time to sport industry participants.

It is incumbent upon sport professionals to recognize the ways in which social media impacts sport communication and marketing. Efforts to communicate, collaborate, educate, and entertain should be included as part of the sport marketing campaign for individual athletes, sports teams, sports leagues, sport organizations, and educational institutions at all levels. Furthermore, marketing plans must stay current through constant evaluation and updating of the sport organization’s or individual’s online presence. Feedback from consumers must be taken into account and addressed quickly and appropriately. Moving from the old concept of the 4P’s in marketing to the newer 4C’s version (outlined earlier in this chapter) will enable sport marketers a basic framework from which to operate.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What makes the sport industry and their products unique?
2. How does social media impact sport marketing?
3. What communication strategies should be used by sport marketing professionals to optimize social media tools?
4. What are the four stages of the social penetration theory? Think of a website or sport team where you believe you have reached the final stage. Explain how you moved through the four stages to get there.

5. Provide two recent examples of specific instances where you think social media tools were successfully used in the marketing plan of a sport product or service.

REFERENCES


