IPA Social Works

O2

How O2 used social media to maintain customer satisfaction in a crisis

Agency: Face

Market context

O2 is one of the leading digital communications companies in the UK, with over 23 million customers.

Due to the competitive nature of the communications industry, and the ease with which people can switch providers, customer experience was considered to be the number one Key Performance Indicator (KPI) at O2 across all the company's units.

The brand realised earlier than many of its competitors that social media data was a valuable source of customer insight, and that social channels could help provide cost-effective customer service.

The company invested in social listening tools to monitor and understand messages across all social media channels. This measurement and analysis established that the brand's social media presence was having a positive effect on its customer satisfaction levels.

It also clarified internally how these conversations had particular relevance for 02 teams in customer service, PR & content, and business intelligence.

However, on 11-12 July 2012, O2's network went down, affecting over 10 million customers and causing many users to go onto social media to vent their concerns, frustration and anger about their inability to use their mobiles.

There were over 200,000 social mentions of the blackout from 11-19 July 2012, with celebrity influencers also commenting on the problem, adding to a high level of engagement in the topic. There was a growing call for compensation.

The event provided a test of the company's ability to listen to, and respond effectively to, its customers.

Business/marketing objectives

With its social media listening and CRM tools in place, O2 set out to track and respond to the comments on social media related to the July 2012 outage.

Its objectives were:

- to react with speed, empathy and humour to social conversations,

- keep customers updated on progress towards a solution,

- and improve overall sentiment towards the company.

Channel choice

O2 has a significant presence on the major social media channels of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.
The volume, tone and speed of comments on the outage that appeared on social media channels after 11 July made these channels the natural environment for the brand's response.

Channel strategy

The strategy, which encompassed both PR and social, was to offer quick, clear and honest communication on the problem and the likely solution.

O2 teams were encouraged to use Facebook and Twitter to reply promptly to angry tweets from customers and respond in a way that was human, real and consistent with the brand's tone of voice.

Fig 1: Sample tweets from O2 during the outage.

Measurement

O2's internal dashboard for social media analytics allows the brand to track consumer conversations and then analyse the impact and reach of each mention as well as the size and composition of individual audiences (e.g. Twitter followers) versus those of O2's competitors, and the number and nature of influencer networks.

Its analysis was structured in three ways:

1. **By keywords:** tracking a topic or a brand.

2. **By audience:** tracking a set of users by demographics, location, interests and mapping the audience.

3. **By content:** tracking a piece of content (from a video to a press release), analysing how it travels through social media and who is sharing it and where.

Business results/benefits

During the outage, O2's social media team started getting a bit of buzz around Twitter, particularly for the responses that they were sending to the more colourful complaints. Instead of simply ignoring posts containing foul language, the team responded with witty messages that made their other customers giggle, and lightened the overall mood of the whole disaster. Often O2's responses were shared and retweeted rather than the original complaint.

The trend in tweets shifted from being mostly complaints, to compliments for the people working on the social customer service team for their funny Twitter responses.

The brand also received some positive press coverage for the way it handled the problem.

During the outage the number of O2 fans on Twitter and Facebook increased by approximately 30%.

O2's analysis has also established the benefits that its social media activity has generated on its customer service scores and also the business as a whole.

Social media is driving better customer experience and this translates into a stronger brand
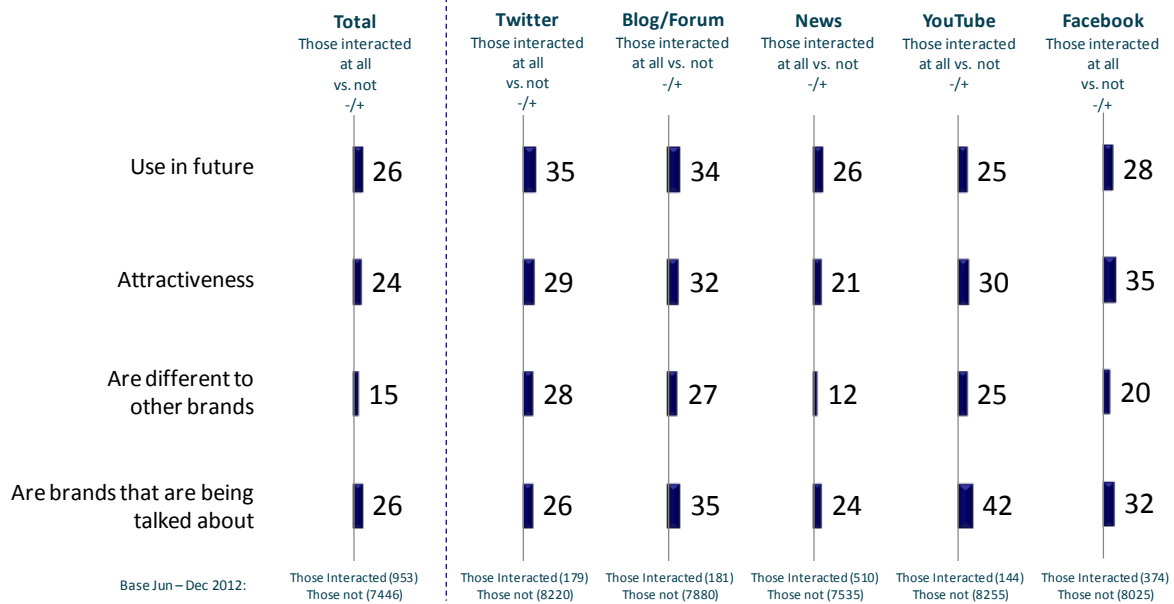
	Total Those interacted at all vs. not -/+	Twitter Those interacted at all vs. not -/+	Blog/Forum Those interacted at all vs. not -/+	News Those interacted at all vs. not -/+	YouTube Those interacted at all vs. not -/+	Facebook Those interacted at all vs. not -/+
Use in future	26	35	34	26	25	28
Attractiveness	24	29	32	21	30	35
Are different to other brands	15	28	27	12	25	20
Are brands that are being talked about	26	26	35	24	42	32
Base Jun – Dec 2012:	Those Interacted (953) Those not (7446)	Those Interacted (179) Those not (8220)	Those Interacted (181) Those not (7880)	Those Interacted (510) Those not (7535)	Those Interacted (144) Those not (8255)	Those Interacted (374) Those not (8025)

Fig 2: O2's research showed better perceptions of O2 among people who had interacted with it on social media. Source: Company presentation
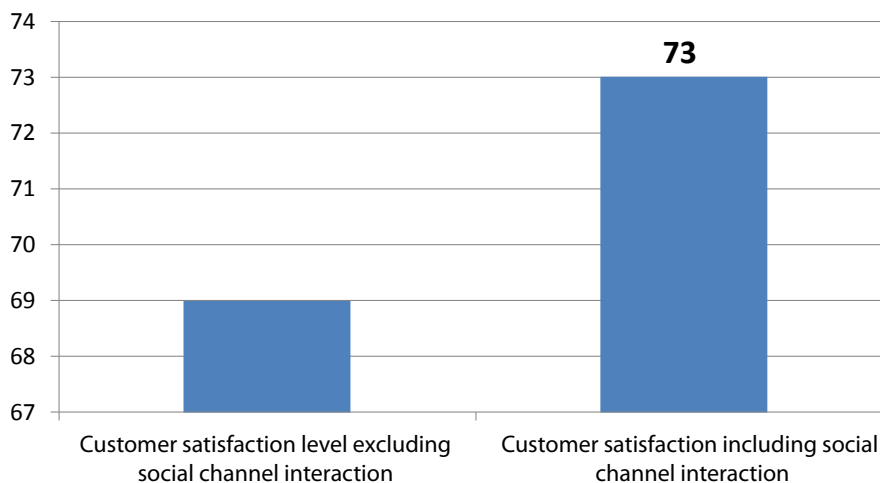
Fig 3: The impact of social media on customer satisfaction. Source: Company presentation.

Key learnings

- Know the landscape. A great customer experience begins with an in-depth knowledge of your customers and social media is a key part of that. Who do they engage with in social media? How do we rank compared to other brands they interact with? How do they like to be spoken to?

- Investigate the impact of social on KPIs beyond campaign engagement but don't limit yourself to the numbers. Social media insight is a qualitative skill so think beyond KPIs. You don't drive action from a dashboard.

- Think carefully about where social sits in your organisation. The best place for deriving insight might not be in the same place as great customer service.

- As social becomes ubiquitous in customers' worlds, so too must it pervade consumer insight. A joined up story is more effective at driving measurable action than a siloed one.

- The future is undoubtedly one dominated by social CRM. Experiment but in a transparent way. Without strong, customer-focused governance, there is a significant risk of alienating customers.

The Steering Group

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