

Does Your Company Have Plans to Build its 'Digital Hotel'?

The New Era of Online Communities

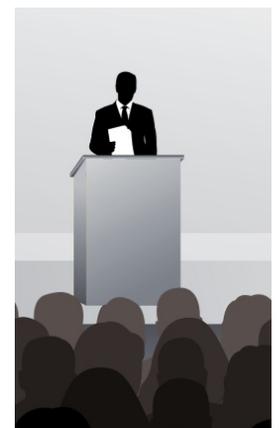


With disintermediation on the rise, and with more and more customers demanding digital access to companies, there is no better way to welcome your end-customers than to invite them into your 'digital hotel'. This concept is made possible by the powerful social media community software available in today's market, which allows you to easily segment content by any number of criteria. You can think of these communities as digital hotels that can be architected in any number of ways, but generally consist of three key meeting places: private, digital meeting rooms located on the upper floors of the hotel, public meeting rooms for presentations and seminars, and a lounge/bar area located on the ground floor of the hotel.

Private, Digital Meeting Rooms: Since private, digital rooms are built using social media community tools, there is no limit to the number of rooms that can be created. In one situation, Company A created 1,400 private rooms, one for each customer. Customers use their private room to meet with Company A's sales engineers and field service personnel to discuss ongoing business issues. When needed, Company A brings in specialists to join the digital conversation like distributors or subject matter experts (SMEs) from their company or the industry. These rooms also are where the Annual Operational plan for each customer gets created with their Sales Engineer. The annual operational plan forms for each customer are available in their digital room and are pre-filled with relevant operational data. The Sales Engineer and customer fill out the current year's goals, metrics, and action items, notifying all group members when a change is made until the plan is finalized. Past year plans, and other critical documents, are also stored in the room where everyone can access them.

These private rooms also host on-going conversations between members of the group where product or service questions can be answered, order status reported, suggestions can be made and discussed, and an on-going history of these discussions can be stored. In all these digital rooms, conversations are private and encrypted such that what gets done in the room stays in the room.

Public Meeting Rooms: These are areas where companies can showcase their thought leadership by sharing presentations, webinars, training materials and other intellectual property. These rooms may be open to everyone staying in the hotel, or just a subset based on industry, interests, role, etc. Company B uses public meeting rooms that are open only to distributors and employees to hold peer-to-peer discussions around how to





address a challenging sales opportunity or share best practices on a particular sales process. Members have a chance to ask questions, share their knowledge, and gain valuable tips for improving their business.

Lounge/Bar Area: When discussion has finished in the private rooms, and assuming the customers, distributors, SMEs and/or sales reps have the time, they take the ‘digital elevator’ down to the ground floor where they join others who simply want to grab a drink and exchange ideas with their colleagues. Customers can join a digital forum, take a digital quiz or poll, ask questions digitally to their peers, share success stories, participate in community activities to earn points that allow them to earn merchandise, and more. It is typically in the lounge/bar area that customer loyalty and advocacy get built. We all like to have a drink with friends, and by having meaningful discussions or just goofing off with our friends, we enhance our customer experience with the company sponsoring the digital hotel.

Does this scenario sound real or far-fetched? In fact, this scenario is not only real, but it is happening with many companies today. These companies realize that while traditional media is important, e.g., face-to-face sales calls or telephone calls, increasingly many of their customers and distributors have grown up in a digital world and have come to expect an outstanding digital experience from their suppliers. While customers and buyers chat with one another in their private digital meeting room or in the lounge/bar area, the company sponsoring the digital hotel respectfully listens to what these customers and distributors are saying thereby enabling the company to serve up an even better customer experience, or better products and services.

The impact of the digital hotel?

- Leads get nurtured more quickly (<https://www.destinationcrm.com/Articles/Columns-Departments/Customer-Experience/5-Reasons-Why-Branded-Communities-Are-Your-Best-Lead-Nurturing-Platform-127052.aspx>).
- Customer satisfaction ratings, such as Net Promoter Score, increase.
- Customers become advocates for your company’s products and services.
- Distributors sell more product and provide better service.
- Your company learns by listening carefully to what your customers are saying to you and to their peers, and this ‘social insight’ then is stored in the Customer Profile section of your CRM system.
- Most importantly, new sales result from customer participation in the private, digital rooms as well as in the public lounge/bar area.

We have measured the impact of social media communities on new sales and the results show a consistent growth in revenues.

If you wish to stay alive in today’s digital deluge, where customer and buyers increasingly demand digital access, now is the time to put on your construction hat, grab a shovel, and begin to build your digital hotel!



Why ISM?

ISM creates and implements Social Media Community strategies that leverage both public communities (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) and private communities to drive new sales, enhance marketing impact, and quickly resolve customer-service issues.

We have built private, branded communities for global, best-in-class companies, including ExxonMobil, Heinz-Kraft, AAA and others. Our proven approach includes working with our clients to ensure the community's strategy is driven by businesses objectives and member needs, and aligns with existing people, processes and systems. We ensure that these communities tightly integrate with all other customer-centric activities to ensure maximum customer engagement. We also provide on-going moderation support and community administration services.

The results have been astounding:

- 90% of community members would recommend products to others.
- 56% more business from distributors belonging to one private community.
- 36% more business from customers that are private community members.

We are uniquely positioned to make this difference through:

- More than 3 decades of thought leadership and experience
- Proven implementation methodologies and support
- A metrics-based approach to driving successful outcomes
- 100% objectivity from all technology vendors & implementation partners

An engagement model that utilizes seasoned executives, not mid-to-lower tier staff

- A history of success with world-class, global B2B and B2C organizations
- The ability to help you at any stage of your Emerging Technologies journey including design, vendor selection and implementation of new technologies AND/OR the re-engineering of legacy systems.

For additional information about our Social Media Community Strategy services, call (301) 656-8448, or e-mail us at sales@ismguide.com

To learn more visit the ISM website <https://ismguide.com/integrated-strategies-3/social-media-communities-strategy/>