

## [“We’re Doing It Wrong”](#)

inspired by [Socialnomics](#), by [Erik Qualman](#)

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*"Build something from the user's viewpoint, not the company's viewpoint."*

*Socialnomics*, page 219

While there seem to be as many books out today on social media as there are so called "Social Media Experts", there is no denying that the social media era is very much upon us, and all of us - regardless of position or industry - should work to get a rudimentary understanding of the field at the very least. Which makes finding a book like *Socialnomics*, penned by Erik Qualman, an invaluable resource. *Socialnomics* is a book that speaks to the *Why* as much as it teaches the *What* and *How* of social media, giving even the least techie of us a solid foundation of understanding and simple set of tools to put social media to work; for ourselves and for our companies.

### **Golden Egg: We’re doing it wrong**

*"Its rapid ascent is due in large part to its ability to help people avoid information indigestion."*

*Socialnomics*, page 3

Without a strong understanding of how it works, I think it's easy to write off social media as "yet another marketing tool." As Qualman brilliantly shows, "marketing tool" is entirely the wrong way to think of social media. Yes, you can sell through social media, and yes, the myriad of tools - from Facebook and Twitter to lesser known platforms like Hi5, Orkut or Diaspora - can be harnessed and used effectively by marketing departments. But social media is so much more.

One of my favorite criticisms of social media is the derision around user's tweets. (Oddly, the example I get more often than not is related to cats. As in: "Why do I care if your cat rolled over in her sleep?").

Too many marketers (and professionals in general) focus on the **broadcast** part of social media; yet another way to push their content on the masses. Social media is not about the push. Heck, it's not even about the masses.

Because here's the reality:

- The value's **not** in the original broadcast (**Sally**: "my cat's having a bad dream").

If you're in the pet care business, the value is in **listening**, and **responding**.



- The value **starts** in the **response** to the broadcast.
  - **(Tim {company rep}):** "What kind of cat do you have?"
- The value **continues** in the dialogue that follows.
  - **Sally:** "Siamese, she's gorgeous!"
  - **Tim:** "I love Siamese! that fur can be pain to manage though, eh?"
- The ROI comes from **the invested relationship that builds as a result.**
  - **Sally:** "Totally! But I don't mind; she's worth it :) Do you have one?"
  - **Tim:** "We have a couple at the store here; next to the Birman, they're my fav!"
  - **Sally:** "What's a birman? I don't know that one."
  - **Tim:** "Oh, they're gorgeous! and beautiful personalities. You should totally come down and see them! Here's a pic of one we just got in... {link}"
  - **Sally:** "Ohh! So cute! I'd love to come see her. Where are you guys located?"

This is an intimate, personal way to connect with your customers - on their terms, and on topics they are personally interested in. It's a radical shift in thinking, and requires a totally new mindset to be harnessed effectively.

## **GEM #1:      Less Broadcasting**

*"Instead of providing consumers with a one-way communication stream, companies today need to focus on supplying something of value."*

*Socialnomics, page 49*

Tweeting "50% off cat food!" doesn't build a relationship. Showing a cat lover a cute picture of a new kitten however, does.

We've talked in past articles about the importance of customer experience in our new digital world. Competing against the Wal-Marts of the world, and the billion of other online retailers, you likely can't compete on price. Most of us are selling competitive products, so can't really compete on quality, either. Where we can compete (and win) is on **user experience**. And what cheaper, more effective way is there to start building an experience than to listen to and join online conversation?

As human beings, we have an innate desire to heard; to feel as though we're understood and considered. We don't want to be yelled at from a podium; we've had enough of that over the last 50 years. We're saturated with sell (all stocked up, thanks!) - we're looking for connection.

Where are your clients spending time online? What are they talking about, and how could you join the conversation by adding **real value**?



## GEM #2: Define it

"So many times companies fail to ask themselves, 'What does success look like?'"

*Socialnomics*, page 178

[Gary Vaynerchuk](#) once answered the question, "What's the ROI of social media?" with the memorable retort, "What's the ROI of your mother?" (As an aside: Gary's known for his "tweetable quotes"... which is a whole other lesson - keep your soundbites under 140 characters, and make it easy for people to share them online... which will happen more often if they're hilarious, as an FYI.)

Gary's response may sound flippant, but his point is this: dysfunctional families aside, most of us love our mothers unconditionally. While we can't put a dollar figure to the value she's added to our lives (nor should you... that would be weird), we are loyal to her and would do virtually anything for her. We have a **relationship** with our mothers.

Social media is about relationships. It's not about the quick sell, and it's not a "marketing tactic". We need to get our heads around this. Social media is not "yet another" anything - this is an entirely new way to interact with, and provide value for, your customer. So, while units of sale may be *one* aspect of tracking the value of social media, you're doing yourself and your company a great disservice if that's all you're focused on.

What about assigning your social media budget to your R&D (Research and development) department? Has there ever been a more honest, more robust market research opportunity? What do you normally spend on sample test groups?

What about thinking of your social media costs as an extension of your Customer Service, or PR efforts? Could you decrease call center costs by having someone available on twitter, or monitoring your Facebook page?

Having direct, immediate, unfettered two way communication with your customer (and potential customer) base, combined with a little ingenuity around how you're going to utilize it, is a fairly incredibly thing. The ROI on **that** could be unprecedented. It just takes a new way of thinking.

I like *Socialnomics* for its ease of access, the topical and valuable examples that Qualman provides, and the focus on *Why* social media is important. And, at the end of the day, that's all that matters anymore - the **why**. We have more content thrown at us each day than we could read in a month. We have more tools at our disposal than we could possibly use. While it's easy to feel overwhelmed, or to write it all off, it's important to remember that for everything we get bombarded with, so do our customers. Give them a break. **Listen** to what's important to them, and then give it to them. It's as easy (and as complex) as that. Whatever you do though, do something. As Trip Advisor CEO Steve Kaufer states "The quickest death in this new world is deliberation rather than doing." (*Socialnomics*, page 204)



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