

Social Media: The Holy Grail of Integrated Marketing

Written by

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For years, there has been talk about the creation of a truly integrated marketing strategy. Integrated marketing has become this elusive ideal, generating discussion over whether integration truly exists. Although some agencies have seen some progress, it seems like the potential for true integration has arisen in some of the most commonly used technology today: social media.

When people talk about integrated marketing they are essentially referring to a combined strategy of advertising, marketing, and public relations used to reach their target audience in the most effective way possible. It's like when you're boxing (which I've recently taken up) and you get a good jab in, following it up with a cross will maximize the success of both punches. Marketing is similar in that the most effective campaigns are those that reach people through a number of different media—audio, video, print, web, and direct mail.

I recently came across a post on [Brandstorming](#), the blog of Durbin Media, an interactive marketing firm based here in St. Louis, entitled “Social Media, or Integrated Marketing”.... Where to begin with this? I think it would be most appropriate for me to say that I would respectfully like to challenge some of their views. One does not have to choose between social media or integrated marketing because they are one in the same. What other ways have marketing professionals found to successfully integrate one-to-one marketing, mass marketing, and direct marketing other than through social media.

Since the birth of the idea of integrated marketing we have seen multi-national agencies try and fail to successfully pull various disciplines together because each team has remained focused on their own areas of expertise. With the creation of social media, we’re witnessing the coming of age of true integrated marketing. Social media is integrated marketing at its core – you have websites with audio, video, direct messaging capabilities, and mass messaging capabilities right there at your fingertips. Elana Anderson, vice president of product marketing and strategy at Unica Corp, published an article in 2008 which listed what she considered to be the “[Five Fundamentals of Integrated Marketing](#).” Her list included the following points:

- Integrated marketing starts with the customer;
- Integrated marketing emphasizes customer processes;

- Integrated marketing transcends campaigns;
- Integrated marketing requires interaction and dialogue;
- Integrated marketing is a fusion of sales, marketing, and service.

I challenge you to tell me how social media does not meet all of these qualifications.

Social media is integrated marketing in disguise, and the best part is that it is so manageable. It is a do-it-yourself integrated marketing platform that is best implemented by the people closest to the message. The age of integrated marketing is finally here, but traditional agencies will be shut out if they're not careful because social media favors those companies that are doing it for themselves rather than having big agencies do it for them.

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