

Building a Social Voice

If baby boomers are Generation “us,” and Generation X is Generation “I,” then Generation Y can be considered Generation “all,” explained Marc Gobé (Emotional Branding) during the fall technical meeting of Women in Flavor and Fragrance Commerce. These distinct generations love different brands and have been defined by different media—baby boomers by television, Generation X by email and Internet search, and Generation Y by social media sharing. With apps providing a new creative platform and mobile phones providing ubiquitous distribution vehicles, there is now a “shop outside the shop,” as Gobé put it, in which “touching is important.” In this environment, he explained, brands must create trusting communities in order to monetize—branding is about reputation.

This technological and social change has been rapid, and not all brands have found it easy to humanize themselves in the service of brands and products. The solution Gobé prescribed was for brands in consumer and B-to-B arenas to “build a social voice.” Company culture is more interesting and engaging to consumers than products, he continued, and in this horizontal social economy, “old school” CEOs are seen by consumers/customers as “opaque.”

Gobé pointed to Twitter-engaged Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh as a prime example of a leader of a successful “contact” brand. (Of the social platform, Gobé advised, “People will find you, but you have to give back.”) This contact amplifies consumers’ experiences with brands; a brand must be a platform for connection.

How does one start? Gobé offered the following steps for his audience: 1) create the social voice on social networking platforms, 2) launch the effort internally to engage the organization and create dialogue, 3) create new collaboration processes within the organization to share the company’s social message throughout the organization, and 4) continuously engage new social media platforms to keep the connection alive.

Jake Nagle (Firmenich) expanded on the topic of digital and social media engagement, via his experience with OsMoz. The site has constantly evolved, said



Marc Gobé (Emotional Branding) and WFFC event organizer Helen Feygin (Intuiscent).



Keri Moliterno (Mast Global Beauty and Home) and Jake Nagle (Firmenich).

Nagle, as Web best practices have evolved. Today, the site’s blogs are marked by brevity to respect consumers’ time and attention, the interface has been simplified to embrace mobile users, and the site derives instant feedback on fragrances via consumer rankings and reviews. Each iteration of the site has come in “baby steps,” said Nagle, signaling an ongoing effort in optimization. Today, the design mantra must be easy, social, complete and innovative.

In launching OsMoz’s app, MyOsMoz, the company sought to tailor fragrance recommendations for users. The app also incorporates GPS functionality for easy location of fragrance retailers. Content can be added by consumers for customization and a barcode scanner can derive more information from product packaging.

While these projects are complete, Nagle noted the ongoing nature of electronic and social media. Once a project is finished, “the next step has to be taken.”

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