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By Joel Davis, agency:2

For brands to be accepted within communities they need to add value to the debate or chat. For some brands this means being a thought leader and being useful by sharing knowledge. For others it might be more about facilitating leisure time. In either case, the more a brand is able to help its audience to spend their time or waste their time, the more social capital it can gain.

How we attribute KUDOS in communities

Knowledgeable and Useful / If a brand's activity is deemed useful, users will respond by positively ranking their comments and thanking them. If brands are not adding value they could be banned.

Desirable / The number of visitors from a forum, along with any feedback on the postings, are some of the clearest indications of whether the activity is thought 'Desirable'.

Open / Ironically, 'Open' can be measured by looking at instances in forums where brands have been banned or where they get flamed and become the unhappy recipients of a disproportionate amount of negative comment.

Shareable / By understanding where traffic originates and its volume over time brands can get an idea of the reach that their contributions achieve as well as the speed with which they spread. There are a variety of tools to help track this, including internal data such as the site's own web logs as well as third party solutions such as **Hitwise** and **Nielsen BuzzMetrics**.

Social Media Value: Measuring and optimising activity in forums

We can only manage what we can measure; this includes brands' involvement in online communities. To date, there has not been an agreed way to calculate the ROI on social media community activity. To address this, agency:2 have created and actively use a dashboard that monitors brands' social media programmes and calculates the Social Media Comment Value of such activity.

The main components for calculating the Social Media Comment Value of each post in descending order of importance are:

1. **Search Ranking**
(using the Google page rank as a guide)
2. **Hyper link**
(i.e. does the post have an active link to the brand's destination)
3. **A measure of how targeted the audience is**
(purely subjective)
4. **The nature of any feedback**
(positive, neutral or negative)
5. **Thread Popularity**
(measuring the volume of traffic and the nature of activity, i.e. do users just visit the thread or do they actually add to it)
6. **A depreciation of the posting over time**
(to acknowledge the user perception that the older the post the less useful it might be)

Each component has a different value weighting based on impact. Once the figures are plugged in we get the Social Media Comment Value and the all-important ROI calculation of a post and hence the overall campaign.

The Social Media Comment Value acts as a key part of the social media dashboard. The dashboard also includes a monthly look at the views and interaction directly associated with the activity, competitive share of voice and an overview of the percentage of traffic social media sites contribute to the total referral traffic.

These trends along with the Social Media Comment Value calculation can give marketers the measurement tools needed to manage their commenting campaigns in forums, chat rooms and blogs.

Joel Davis is CEO of social media agency agency:2
www.agency2.co.uk