Utilizing Social Media and Networking for Accurate Contact Management: Contrasting the Push/pull Methods of Data Research and Maintenance

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Member information maintenance from Web 2.0 social media utilization versus traditional methods was shown to be as much as 4 times more accurate. Social media members were willing to spend 2.3 times longer engaged in surveys. Members of social media sites displayed community involvement and concern that exceeded those not involved with the social media. Social media members pushing information to database managers resulted in 80% of social media member information being updated. The use of a pull method of information with non-members yielded 4.1% of non-member information being updated. When calculated using total membership, social media members constituted 30% of total database updates, non-members constituted 2.8%.

Keywords: Web 2.0, Social networks, Facebook, LinkedIn, Database management,

INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges with contact management and customer retention is maintaining accurate information. Many organizations use a pull method of information management. The pull method consists of employing an individual or firm to collect data using traditional methods such as phone survey, email, or snail mail. In these methods the customer of organizational member is contacted and the information is asked of them in a manner that is outside their daily routines or customary norms. The key contribution of this research is the examination of the accuracy of the push method that utilizes social media, specifically LinkedIn and Facebook, compared to a more traditional pull based database. Members typically use LinkedIn for employment and business connections and regularly update their contact information. Web based methods of gathering data offer a more accurate way of data collection that exceeds other methods (Couper, 2008). In contrast to the pull method, the social media site has become more of a push source of data where members are not prompted to update but feel compelled to let others know about recent changes in their profiles. The member is pushing the information to the organization in the daily use and updating of the social media site.

In addition to this increased accuracy and efficiency of information, the social media site provides a sense of community. This was tested when we contacted members to survey them for additional information. An analysis of the member willingness to give addition information when they had accounts on LinkedIn and Facebook vs. those only available through the more traditional database exposed the depth to which the social media sites and web 2.0 applications make information gathering and contact management substantially more thorough; this is confirmed through literature (Dellarocas, 2003). Through our research we examined contacts who utilize LinkedIn and Facebook and compared them to traditional data collection methods. We noticed significant differences in the accuracy between the two types of databases. When used in a direct manner with existing contacts, surveys using web based social media are significantly more efficient and the push of information from members is much more accurate and timely. It is also noted that the loss of client contact over time is greatly reduced, resulting in a larger member base that could be monetized in future organizational campaigns.