

# The Executive's Guide to **ENTERPRISE SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY**

How Social Networks Are Radically  
Transforming Your Business

Foreword by  
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New York Times  
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*Trust Agents*



**DAVID B. THOMAS • MIKE BARLOW**



# **The Executive's Guide to Enterprise Social Media Strategy**

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*How Social Networks Are Radically  
Transforming Your Business*

**David B. Thomas**

**Mike Barlow**



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*For Jean and Conrad (a.k.a. The Mrs. and The Boy)*  
*and*  
*For Darlene, Janine, and Paul*





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# Contents

**Foreword**    **xiii**

**Preface**    **xv**

**Acknowledgments**    **xvii**

**Introduction** ..... **1**

    Country Village or Gleaming City?    2

    Beyond Disruptive    4

    Step Aside, Fred Taylor . . .    6

    Social Media or What?    6

    Why Now?    7

    So, What’s the Best Way to Skin a Mastodon?    8

    Questions You Should Be Prepared to Answer    10

    Critical Areas for Success    12

  

**Part I    The Grand Scheme of Things** ..... **15**

  

**Chapter 1    Speed, Scope, Complexity, Power,**  
    **and Potential** ..... **17**

    They Laughed at the Wright Brothers    19

    A World of New Challenges and Opportunities    21

    Getting a Firm Grasp on a Viral Phenomenon    21

    What’s the Hurry?    22

    Too Newfangled for You?    22

    A Very Cool Scenario    23

    Step Up and Meet the Millennial Generation    26

    Just What You Needed: Another “Convergence”    27

**Chapter 2 The New Mode of Production .....29**

- Social Media, Teamwork, and Collaboration 29
- Mapping Social Media to Results 33
- Accelerating Product Development 35
- Driving Knowledge into and across the Organization 37
- Crowd Sourcing . . . 38
- We're All Hackers Now 41

**Chapter 3 The Social Enterprise .....43**

- Forget Murphy's Law 43
- More Important Than *Money*? 44
- The Social Workforce 46
- Collaboration is the New Efficiency 47
- Social HR 48
- First Impressions Count 49
- The Train Is Leaving the Station 51
- The New Social Dimension 52
- Social CRM 53
- Social Leadership 55
- Making It Stick 57
- Legal Niceties 62
- High Speeds Need Seat Belts 63
- Take the Time to Write It Down 65

**Part II Building a Structure for Success .....67****Chapter 4 Get Everybody Together in the Same Room .....69**

- Invite the Practitioners, Not Just the Rulemakers 70
- Figure Out What's Important 71
- What Are Your Existing Goals? 72
- What Makes Sense in Your Industry? 73
- What Makes Sense in Your Company? 73
- How Can You Figure Out What Will Work for You? 74

**Chapter 5 Creating Social Media Guidelines.....75**

- Be Clear and Concise 76
- Guiding Principles for Social Media at SAS 76
- Include Dos as Well as Don'ts 77
- Include Examples 78
- Communicate as Often as Possible, in Every Channel You Have 79
- Spotlight Successes 80
- Lead by Example 81

**Chapter 6 Staffing and Structuring .....83**

- Where Does It Live? 85
- Hire or Designate? 86
- How Do You Structure for Social Media? 87
- How One Organization Pulls It Together 89
- Outsourcing the Roles 90

**Chapter 7 Listening, Measurement, Analytics, and ROI .....93**

- A Simple Listening Framework 94
- First, a Word from the Measurement Queen 95
- "Listen, Yes. But Think Bigger." 96
- The Five Kinds of Listening 98
- What Is Social Media Analytics? 101
- CareOne's Measurement Model 104
- Not a Simple Formula, but a Formula Nonetheless 106

**Chapter 8 The Keys to Success in Social Media.....113**

- It's Difficult in Its Simplicity 113
- Finding the Time to Do It 115
- A Simple Model 116
- Using All Your Channels 117
- Nine Easy Ways to Write a Blog Post 118

**Part III Putting Your Social Media Strategy to Work..... 121**

**Chapter 9 Marketing ..... 123**

From Strollers to Sharpies 125

From the Nursery to the Kitchen 128

Sharpie, Meet Lamborghini 129

Bert's Advice 130

**Chapter 10 Social Media for B2B..... 133**

B2B and Phonebooth-to-B 135

Taking an Integrated Approach at Cisco 137

**Chapter 11 Public Relations..... 141**

The Old Model of PR 142

The New Model of PR 143

Social Media PR at Mayo Clinic 144

Social Media in a Crisis 146

Greenpeace versus Nestlé 147

The Power of Parody 148

**Chapter 12 Sales..... 153**

Turning Twitter Connections into Sales Leads 158

A Debt of Gratitude 159

**Chapter 13 The Voice of the Customer..... 163**

Customer Service 163

Comcast Cares 164

Nothing Is Certain but Twitter and Taxes 165

Product Development 168

The Phone Is Ringing 170

**Chapter 14 Internal Communications ..... 173**

The "Virtual Water Cooler" 175

Social Media and Internal Communications at SAS 176

**Appendix: Intuit Social Communications Policy 179**

**Additional Resources 187**

**Recommended Reading 191**

**About the Authors 193**

**Index 195**



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# Foreword

**F**rankly, this book is too fun to cover anything to do with the enterprise.

You're never going to convince anyone in your company that this book is worthwhile, because it's actually useful, and it's interesting, and much more than this, it's engaging and funny (I mean, snicker and blurt out a little laugh funny), and as I once racked up over 16 years in the enterprise telecommunications world, I know that funny and engaging are illegal inside companies.

How are you ever going to convince an executive that learning from other people at other enterprise companies who successfully implemented social media tools into their workplace is worth anything? By interviewing people inside and outside the gray cubicle nation, Dave Thomas and Mike Barlow are ruining anyone's chance of thinking this book was just concocted out of nothing one day while waiting for their laundry to dry.

I don't know Mike Barlow very well. I'm sure he's nice, or at least types fast, because otherwise, why would you write a book with him? But I know Dave Thomas—sorry, David B. Thomas. I met him while he was working for America's "Best Company to Work For" (well, that's what *Fortune* said), which was a big enterprise company, where Dave brought enterprise social media into its fold. Because I don't know anything about Mike personally, I'll just say that he invented dolphins. Yes. That's right.

I have a burning passion for enterprise culture, or, rather, whenever I visit an enterprise, I get the terrible and irresistible urge to change most enterprise cultures, because I feel like the front door was a time machine, in some aspects, and I just want to help them

understand that the world outside has changed since the days of President Reagan. This book, such as it is, is a time machine set to forward, set to next.

In all seriousness, the book does what I'm doing here: It coats lots of really important subjects and lots of actionable advice in a little bit of humor, a little bit of well-turned phrase, and actually manages the impressive duty of keeping one's eyes open all the way to the end.

This is to say, it's NOT LIKE OTHER BOOKS ABOUT ENTERPRISE PROCESSES, CULTURE, AND TECHNOLOGY.

So, go ahead. Try to get this one explained away on your expense report. Oh wait. You're not allowed an expense report anymore. It's the future. You have to buy things out of your own pocket and hope that no one else in the building steals this book, because it's that good.

The worst part of all this is that if you've smirked even once while reading the foreword, you're probably more like Dave and Mike than you know. You're at least a little bit like me (except maybe you don't take your coffee black and maybe you don't have a bunch of Batman action figures on your bookshelf thingy). And you might actually value what Thomas and Barlow (doesn't that make them sound like private eyes?) have written.

I'm giving this book a bad review, for having 100 fewer pages than most books I'm forced to read. In fact, I'm going to pan it when it comes out in the mainstream, because, frankly, only people who want their enterprise to succeed will read it anyway, and they don't care what reviews say. They run in search of facts and details and useful, actionable information.

In fact, maybe this book is like *Fight Club*. Let's not talk about it. Let's keep it to ourselves and appear BRILLIANT to the bosses. You with me? Say nothing.

Shhhh.

Chris Brogan, *New York Times* bestselling coauthor  
of *Trust Agents*, and publisher of [chrisbrogan.com](http://chrisbrogan.com)



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# Preface

When this book was initially conceived, social media was still considered a relatively new phenomenon, and the main purpose of the book was to address the sense of skepticism expressed by many top executives about the value of social media in enterprise-level business environments.

In the few months between this initial conception and the launch of the book project, the notion that social media was some kind of trend or fad had pretty much vanished. It was replaced by a more palpable sense of awareness that social media was growing and evolving so rapidly that only a fool would purposely ignore it.

This heightened sense of astonishment pushed the book in a different direction, and the finished text you are reading reflects this shift in emphasis. The original book would have started at the 40,000-foot level and stayed there for the duration. This version of the book offers a much broader and more immediately practical view of the current state of corporate social media. Most important, it includes actionable advice that can be put to use by any company, right now.

*The Executive's Guide to Enterprise Social Media Strategy* is composed of three parts: Part I is a high-level strategic overview of the impact of newer social collaborative technologies on society, culture, and business. It serves as a prelude and a foundation for Parts II and III, which dive into the nitty-gritty tactical details of developing and managing successful corporate social media strategies. Parts II and III include summaries titled "What You Can Do Right Now" to help you get started and focus on the tactics that will have immediate value.

All three parts of the book are entertaining, useful, and intentionally provocative. Part I was written primarily by Mike Barlow, a

business journalist and management consultant. Parts II and III were written primarily by David B. Thomas, drawing on the nearly two years he spent developing social media strategy, policy, and training as social media manager at SAS. In creating the content for this book, both authors have drawn extensively from their own personal experiences and from stories, anecdotes, and information culled from numerous in-depth interviews conducted with various expert sources.

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# Acknowledgments

## DAVE

Almost every name you read in this book represents someone who went out of his or her way to talk to us and share what's working. One of the beautiful things about social media, at least here in late-2010, is how open and honest the practitioners are about what they're doing. The people helping to bring this revolution to the corporate world are doing it not just because they see a way to increase their profits but because they know that promoting a more open and honest philosophy and methodology of business communication can truly help make this a better world.

My thanks to all of them who shared so freely of their knowledge and ideas, including Lee Aase, John Bastone, LaSandra Brill, Jeff Cohen, Len Devanna, Bert Dumars, Craig Duncan, Jeanette Gibson, Nathan Gilliatt, Becky Graebe, Allison Green, Annette Green, Patty Hager, Shel Holtz, Nichole Kelly, Charlene Li, Chris Moody, Jeremiah Owyang, Katie Paine, Christopher S. Penn, Kirsten Watson, and Zena Weist.

Thanks to my SAS boss, Kelly LeVoyer, for her support and encouragement, and to the folks in my chain of command there who saw the value of this book, including SAS External Communications Director Pamela Meek and CMO (and blogger) Jim Davis.

My SAS colleague John Balla deserves a huge round of applause and maybe a big bottle of fancy olive oil for his help with the *Social Media Cookbook for Marketing*, some of which ended up in this book. John and his colleagues, ably led by Deb Orton, demonstrate every

day the perfect combination of level-headedness combined with a spirit of creativity and adventure that business folks need to make this stuff work.

Alison Bolen of SAS deserves a special mention as well. Even before I came to work there, she was showing people the value of these new communications channels. Working with her to bring these tools and techniques to fruition has been a joy. She has been an invaluable ally and sounding board (as well as a patient ear at those times when it wasn't such a joy).

I'd like to thank my friend and writing partner Mike Barlow for bringing me in to what was already a greenlighted book project with a great publisher like Wiley already on board. What more could a new author ask for (other than more hours in the day)? Mike taught me everything I know about writing a book. So if there's anything here you don't like, please take it up with him.

And finally, I'd like to thank my dad, David Thomas, career marketer and business leader, blogger, and author of *The Common Sense Manager*, for providing me with a lifelong example of how to be passionate about your work and the value of sharing that passion with others.

## MIKE

From my perspective, this book is largely a work of journalism. As a result, I am indebted to my sources for sharing their time, knowledge, and wisdom so generously.

I could not have written my parts of the book without the active cooperation and participation of John Bastone, Steven Bailey, Matthew Chamberlin, Kendall Collins, Ginger Conlon, Kelly Feller, Christopher Gatewood, Paul Greenberg, Jamie Grenney, Winnie Ko, Brent Leary, Eugene Lee, Liza Emin Levitt, Christopher Lynch, Britton Manasco, Pem McNerney, Hunter Muller, Jeanne Murray, Viviana Padilla, Mark Polansky, Laurie Ruettimann, Brad Samargya, Jeffrey Schick, David Meerman Scott, Euan Semple, Ruth Stevens, Luis Suarez, Lucas Swineford, Teka Thomas, Pamela Warren, and Sean Whiteley.

I owe special thanks to Don Peppers for recommending several terrific books, including *The Wealth of Networks* and *The Rational Optimist*.

Don also planted several ideas in my mind that took root and blossomed during the writing of this book. For those ideas, and for the time that Don spent chatting with me on the phone, I am truly grateful.

I would also like to thank my mom, Edith G. Barlow, who remains the best copy editor I know.



# Introduction

*There are some enterprises in which a careful disorderliness is the true method.*

—Herman Melville

First, let's define some terms. Sharing a common understanding of these terms will help all of us dodge some of the confusion lurking around the subject of this book. These definitions are vast oversimplifications, but no matter. They will get us started on our journey, more or less together.

**Social networking:** Humans sharing knowledge with other humans outside of their immediate pair-bond families.

**Social computing:** Systems of hardware, software, and firmware that enable social networking in a digital environment.

**Social media:** Platforms specifically designed to make social computing available to anyone with a device capable of connecting to the Internet.

**Enterprise 2.0:** A term coined by Andrew McAfee, a professor at the Harvard School of Business, to describe the impact of social networking, social computing, and social media on business organizations.