

## **10 Common Objections to Social Media Adoption and How You Can Respond**

By Marshall Kirkpatrick: Aug 21, 2008

It can be hard to convince leadership that working with social media doesn't mean they've been paying you to catch up with friends on Facebook. You've probably heard some of the objections. But there are ways you can respond. Here's a list of common objections, along with suggestions for countering them:

### **1. I suffer from information overload already.**

Possible replies:

- Try just skimming messages in some fora. You may need to look closely at every email you get but you don't have to look at every Facebook friend's update.
- The right tools for you will feel helpful in time. Experiment for awhile with new tools and stick with the ones that deliver you the most high-quality information, whether those tools are high-quantity or not.
- Check out tools like [AideRSS](#) and [FeedHub](#) -- just two examples of services aiming to improve the signal-to-noise ratio.
- Times change and so do information paradigms. Get used to it. The amount of information you had access to 3 years ago was infinitely more than people at any other point in history and we're in the middle of another huge leap right now.

### **2. So much of what's discussed online is meaningless. These forms of communication are shallow and make us dumber. We have real work to do!**

Possible replies:

- Much of it is not meaningless, but if you feel overwhelmed with meaninglessness, try subscribing to a search for keywords in a particular service and using that as your starting point for engagement.
- Having a presence and starting a conversation is rarely a bad thing. Bring quality conversation to a space and you'll find others ready to engage. (Thanks to [Banana Lee Fishbones](#), obviously a fan of open, non-anonymous public communication :) for this articulation.)
- Personal information can be very useful in understanding the context of more explicitly useful information.
- If learning how the market feels about your organization, engaging with your customers and driving traffic to your web work -- all very realistic goals for social media engagement -- aren't work, then I don't know what is. Even in the short term, strategic engagement with online social media will have a clear work pay-off.

### **3. I don't have the time to contribute and moderate. It looks like it takes a lot of time and energy.**

Possible replies:

- If you aren't going to eat that lunch of yours, I'd be happy to, thanks.
- With practice, familiarity, and technology fine-tuned with a little experience, you'll find the time required will decrease.
- You might consider this time spent on marketing or communication with your existing customer base. Perhaps there's something else in that department that isn't working well and could be replaced with online work.

### **4. Our customers don't use this stuff. The learning curve limits its usefulness to geeks.**

Possible replies:

- You might be surprised to learn how many of your customers do use these new tools already. Even more will do so in the future.
- The best designed tools are designed like good games: you can get small rewards right away and then learn more advanced skills to win bigger rewards. Among online services that are intended for general audiences, only poorly designed ones are too geeky.
- Many of these tools provide value vastly disproportionate to the literal number of people they reach. These are like high-value focus groups where you'll gather information and preparation to engage with the rest of the world.
- Try asking someone near you to give you an in-person demonstration of one of these tools. You'll find it much easier to learn once you've seen the right paths taken to show what it can do.

**5. Communicators [bloggers, tweeters] are so fickle, it's better to stay unengaged than risk random brand damage. We don't want hostile comments left about us on any forum we've legitimized.**

Possible replies:

- If you need to, you can require that any comments left on your own site be approved before they appear. This slows down the conversation but if it makes conversation possible for you, then do it.
- There are far fewer people who will take the time to say hostile things, even on the internet, than you might imagine.
- Engage. You'll be appreciated more for it. People are going to say what they are going to say. You can either let any criticism go unanswered or you can be the bigger person/brand for responding well.
- Conversations are going to happen online. It's better to be engaged than to have it happening behind your back. (As articulated by [Rick Turoczy](#).)
- It's OK, no one believes that anyone is perfect anymore. Swing for the fences sometimes. You might strike out, but sometimes you'll hit a home run.
- Even if you're not responding publicly, you should watch closely so you know what people are saying. Maybe you don't have a blog, but subscribe to a blogsearch feed or alert for your company's name. Maybe none of your people are on Twitter, but you can subscribe to a feed for a search via [Terraminds](#).

**6. Traditional media and audiences are still bigger. We'll do new stuff when they do.**

Possible replies:

- They already are, from blogging to online video to social networks to mobile to microblogging. Big, established brands are already doing all of it. They may be experimenting, but they will bring all their market dominance into the most useful social media sectors as soon as it suits them. Will that be too late for you? It might be.
- Traditional media audiences are also more passive. Online audiences can engage with, rebroadcast, and otherwise amplify your communication efforts.

**7. Upper management won't support it/dedicate resources for it.**

Possible replies:

- A lot of technology adoption has for some time had to happen despite this reality. People adopt new tools on their own at work, without permission. They discover powerful ways to solve their problems and then they share them horizontally.
- Compared to other expenses, meaningful engagement with new online technology does not have huge costs.

**8. These startups can't offer meaningful security. They may not even be around in a year. I'll wait until Google or our enterprise software vendor starts offering this kind of functionality.**

Possible replies:

- The skills you build and the connections you make will remain with you, though. This is a paradigm shift underway more than it is about any particular tool.
- Chose your tools carefully. Expect data export as an option so you can back up or switch services whenever you need to. This isn't widespread yet but the best tools allow it.

**9. There are so many tools that are similar. I can't tell where to invest my time so I don't use any of it at all.**

Possible replies:

- A little experimentation goes a long way.
- Try asking people in your field who have some experience what tools they are using.
- Try searching for keywords related to your work in various sites. You'll find out that way which sites are best suited for you.

**10. That stuff's fine for sexy brands, but we sell [insert boring B2B brand] and are known for stability more than chasing the flavor-of-the-month. We're doing just fine with the tools we've got, thanks.**

Possible replies:

- Some of these things -- RSS and wikis, for example -- aren't passing social fads: they are emerging best practices and the state-of-the-art.
- ROI is very hard to measure, but try allocating a little energy over time to experiment and see what kind of results you get. From connections between people and projects, to search-friendly inbound links, to early access to important information, the benefits of engaging in new social media go on and on.

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