

# Social customer engagement as a social business enabler

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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If 'social engagement' sounds more like drinks after work than a key component of marketing in today's hyper-connected world, chances are you weren't at last week's CEM Africa Summit...

With five morning workshop sessions to select from on the first day of the Summit, I went for the most 'marketing' sounding one - 25AM's talk on social customer engagement. Here's why I'm glad I did...

25AM's CEO Andre Steenekamp kicked off the topic of social engagement as a social business enabler with a video defining what customer engagement can mean in a broad sense: A little town in Switzerland called Obermatten launched a Facebook page that resulted in more than just a few 'likes' before being forgotten - it was found that four out of five of the page's fans interacted with the page, which is better engagement than that of either Coca-Cola and Justin Bieber. One such reason is that every question posted on the page is answered. View the video embedded below:

Just by using social media, they effectively put a tiny town on the world map. And for a small business, it's even easier, if you know where to start.

Steenekamp pointed out that as the industry is changing so rapidly, just five years ago we were discussing whether social

media would become a channel for marketing, whereas today your business is nowhere without it.

## Social business trends

But where do you get started? The main trends at the moment are all about mobile, automation and beacon technology.

Explaining the 'mobile' point, Steenekamp pointed out that we live in a mobile-first economy, with South Africa's internet penetration at 39%, and 84% of those through mobile - but he says not to fall into the trap of thinking mobile first, rather think people first. It's about offering a meaningful business connection to your consumers, no matter the interaction medium.

Also remember that the more steps there are in a journey, the greater the risk that people will fall off along the way, so keep your business communications simple. Lots of people read their email in preview mode, on their phones so lots of the fancy formatting is lost and embedded images don't always appear in this format.

It's not just about the look though - communication in mobile needs to be just as secure as with any other medium. That's because the ability to geo-locate your consumers is huge, a big step up over fixed internet access points like laptops and office PCs as there is often an issue with IP addresses showing as Mauritius-originating.

All of this points to the fact that social media lets you bring people into your community, if done the right way. People want to share short bites of information, especially with video, as it is increasingly shared on mobile. Speed plays a factor all round as there's no longer a need for pricy, detailed editing of video either, thus speeding up the time from creation to broadcast.

The rise of marketing automation also means we can personalise communication, which improves the quality of leads and the efficacy of cross-selling.



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Moving on to beacon technology, Steenekamp says it's on the rise in SA and proves an invaluable marketing tool while consumers are out and about as they can see your lunch specials when they're outside the restaurant, and can take it further by sensing when they've sat at table, as well as simplifying the order and payment process. This is a form of consumer reward that actually offers the retailer better understanding in real time, similar to social media listening.

Next Bianca Quinn-Diavastos, 25AM's Head of Business Solutions & Strategy shared some insights, stating that "Nothing gave word-of-mouth more power than the internet." For this reason alone, we shouldn't treat it as a marketing dumping ground for all the idea that don't get a chance elsewhere, but rather as a channel of true engagement.

So if you're just getting started with social media marketing, Quinn-Diavastos says to envision an achievable goal. This could be as simple as deciding you're going to use social media as a marketing tool for your business and as a way to dip your toe into the social conversations of your brand evangelists before you dive in.

In order to do so correctly, you need to think of your business as a person and portray its personality consistently, even

when you have different people managing its social media accounts.

## Managing multiple social media accounts

That's right: You need to tell your customers who you are, and not just join conversations but also add value to them.

It's a good idea to do a simple exercise that'll help you devise a 'green orange red' list for handling social media queries, especially if your social media is handled by an external agency. You'll benefit from their expertise, especially if you're just starting out on social media.

Quinn-Diavastos says so many businesses have missed the bus on the social business trend but it's easy to catch up. First though, understand who you are talking to. Social media is very public, simply by being on the platform you're giving yourself and your business a public profile that can be searched and followed by anyone, anywhere in the world. That said, when it comes to your audience, be aware that there is some fear out there and not everyone is on social media, especially in rural areas. That means the first step really is to know who your target audience is and where and how they communicate - take it from there.

For more on 25AM, [visit their press office](#).

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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