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Moog Synthesizes Social Media



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Matt Moog is a serial technology entrepreneur who is reinventing the online shopping experience for traditional brands. Moog's Chicago-based business called Viewpoints Network—which consists of a product review website called Viewpoints.com and the Viewpoints Technology Platform, a hosted online community service—helps Procter & Gamble, Sears, Kraft, S.C. Johnson and other classic brands synthesize customer reviews and social media technology into a suite of successful marketing programs.

"Imagine if you walked into a retail store and there were only a couple of salespeople, but every customer was turning to another customer and helping them figure out what to buy," Moog says. "You'd be stunned. You would think this is the greatest thing ever. ... Online, that's exactly what happens. Millions of reviews are written by people. They are helping your customers decide whether or not to buy your products."

Moog's technology is helping Sears capitalize on this phenomenon by customizing its websites and business processes to include product reviews and be responsive to consumer feedback. "Consider a woman shopping for a new washer and dryer," Moog says. "She can go to Kenmore.com or Sears.com and read the specifications about capacity and durability. What gives

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a shopper confidence is reading a product review by someone like them, telling them in their words that this machine is perfect for them. When customer reviews explain that the Kenmore washer is: 'Good for a large family. Good to get hair out. Good for removing soccer stains,' that makes a difference. ... Surveys indicate shoppers trust the opinions of other shoppers more than they trust marketers."

Moog's point is simple: "Retailers and brands must introduce a voice of the customer as part of their marketing mix. It's critical to maintaining credibility with your customer."

In other words, retailers have to do more than master the technology of building online commerce sites; they also have to foster community among their shoppers and provide credible content that moves the buying process forward.

Moog calls it the three C's of online retailing: commerce, community and content. For many retailers, capitalizing on the three C's can be a daunting task. Moog's aim is to help make it easier. "We



anticipated this phenomenon and launched Viewpoints.com, a consumer website that has grown to become the second largest product review site on the Web and the fastest-growing," he says. Then, to help marketers like Sears and P&G capitalize on the power of customer reviews, Moog licensed his technology to the big brands.

He has registered more than a million shoppers who are willing to write product reviews and share their views with their friends on Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn, or simply by e-mail. Now when marketers want to promote a product, they can turn to Viewpoints Network for help.

When Kraft's Philadelphia cream cheese introduced a pair of product line extensions, Viewpoints provided free product coupons to members of the network. "We asked them to go to the supermarket and buy the product, redeem the coupon and then review it," Moog says. Nearly 70% of those recruited from his network redeemed the coupon, tried the product and wrote a review, he says.

Moog recruits what he calls the "social influencers, the one out of 10 consumers who are prone to influence their social circles." He says these social influencers provide the best possible advertising for a brand: word of mouth and personal endorsements.

"Sears believes that the future of online shopping is inherently social," Moog says. "They recognize the advantage of selling online is that shoppers are able to share what they're going to buy, what they're considering buying and what they've bought with their friends. That's powerful, provided marketers can harness it."

If you're looking to take advantage of customer reviews and social media in your marketing strategy, Moog says, consider these points:

- **SET YOUR OBJECTIVE EARLY.** Decide whether you want to gain insight, drive product or brand advocacy, or increase sales.
- **PICK A PARTNER TO HELP.** Ask your agency or a specialized technology provider to show you the ropes. Figure out what you need to do together.
- **BE PREPARED FOR TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION.** Have staff in place to reply to and support the communication once it starts.
- **DON'T BE AWED.** Recognize that social media is just another way to communicate with your customers.

Perhaps Moog was born to help companies synthesize product reviews and social media into effective marketing programs. His father, Robert, invented the Moog synthesizer, which relied on new transistor technology to create synthesized sounds that revolutionized rock and roll in the 1960s. Today, Matt Moog is carrying on the family tradition of showing organizations how to apply technology in new ways—only this Moog is helping large companies instead of rock bands, and the sounds that Viewpoints Network creates for its clients are those of the cash register ringing. **m**