

Where are you in the social business maturity model?

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The imperative for companies to extend their thinking beyond **social** media into **social** business is gaining traction. The road from **social** media to **social** business is potentially long and arduous. Once the benefits of **social** business become clear, questions abound: What does **social** business mean to us specifically? Where exactly do we want to go? Where are we now?

With technology research business Altimeter, a **Prophet** company, we've defined **social** businesses as those that apply **social** technology, techniques and the insights derived from **social** media to a wide variety of business functions across the enterprise, impacting internal and external processes. And we use a model of six stages in the **social** business maturity model to help companies understand where they are on the journey and where they might go:

1. Planning: listen and learn

Many companies begin the journey in this phase, perhaps setting up initial **social** presence and engaging in **social** listening to understand where they're currently positioned in the ecosystem. A cautious way to begin, and perhaps even to extract valuable and actionable customer insights, but without activity these benefits will be limited.

2. Presence: stake our claim

Here **brands** begin developing **social** content and **social** campaigns, perhaps implementing publishing processes and tools like content calendars, campaign guidelines, and **social** bibles. This is also where many companies will risk being distracted by the broad number of **social** channels available and the temptation to be in all of them, and where a strategic approach will be important to help identify the smartest moves.

3. Engagement: deepen dialogue

Another big step, this is where companies apply learning and begin to nurture the mechanisms for customers to connect. A common misstep here is mistaking the importance of helping customers engage with each other for hoping they'll engage with the **brand**.

4. Formalised: organise for scale

An inflection point for many organisations, here “**social**” is declared a top leadership initiative and sees teams and processes formed around it. The organisation establishes a center of excellence and **social** infrastructure and internal **social** collaboration begins in earnest.

5. Strategic: becoming social

These are the kinds of companies that start to apply shared KPIs and efficiencies across silos for measurable ROI. Here a company might start correlating **social** advocacy with uptake in its CRM programme, for example, or be able to attribute sales to its **Twitter** activities. It also might understand how **social** media customer service directly affects its NPS.

6. Converged: business is social

These are companies who have achieved sophisticated levels of thinking and doing. They may have advanced **social** commerce platforms, or may be using **social** insights to create a unified view of customers, for example. Imagine a company that uses **social** technologies to connect their sales and product teams to bring customer requirements to market quicker. Or a hospital that makes its knowledge available to medical students and caregivers giving them access to a **socially** connected community of experts for guidance and best practice. This exalted stage of **social** business maturity will look different at different companies.

That final stage of maturity might seem a lofty goal, but it's important to keep in mind that companies can find business value at any stage in the model. In fact, some may be perfectly content with the results they're achieving at step four and look no further. As with so many **digital** transformation initiatives, **social** business needs to be seen as a journey rather than as a discrete destination.

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