MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

SOCIAL LISTENING Integrating Facebook into Business-to-Business (B2B) Communications

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ABSTRACT

This study builds on the motivation to integrate social media into corporate communications and attempts to understand analytically what works and does not work in terms of the corporate engagement of new communications technologies. The purpose of this study is to better understand the ways in which an organization integrates social media into their communication efforts with an emphasis on feedback within these settings. Of particular importance to this concept of feedback is not just how an organization speaks to their audience within a social media setting, but how they manage listening within the same context; how does audience/stakeholder response filter back through corporate channels when received through social media networks?

The specific purpose of this MRP is to observe social listening, that is, how information and communication flows between social media and corporation, with an emphasis on message transmission, processing, and feedback and feed-forward processes through the theoretical lens of autopoiesis, a micro-theory within the larger communications theory of cybernetics. Facebook, in particular, is understood as an autopoietic system. This investigation was undertaken in the form of a case study involving the corporate Facebook page of EMC Corporation, a Fortune200 company. All observation for this study occurred on the Internet and data was collected by taking screenshots of EMC's official Facebook page. These screenshots were analyzed through the lens of autopoiesis and by using methods from discourse analysis. This study attempts to understand the ways in which organizations can increase their presence, enhance relationships, broaden messages, and improve corporate identity all around. In doing so, two major requirements of a successful corporate Facebook page were revealed: the importance of thematic posts and the company's recognition of and response to stakeholder participation on their Facebook page. Although this research is indicative, it is not conclusive. This study opens a door to ongoing research, including the possibility of applying findings from the same study to other social media like Twitter and YouTube.

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FOREWORD

Humans are creatures of collaboration. Since the beginning of time, we have sought each other out and wanted to communicate and share. Language finds its very purpose in this. As social beings, and aided by all manner of advancement, our ability to interact has evolved.

Centuries ago, man stood on hilltops separated by miles and communicated through smoke signals. Pony Express riders carried mail across North America. Mail services could deliver documents anywhere in the country overnight. Email allowed a message to be delivered to the other side of the planet in a second.

PROGRESS Does anyone want to go back to smoke signals? VALUE Collaboration represents a journey.

So what new change is upon us?

It used to be hard to publish information. You needed to know HTML or some complex web layout tool. At a corporate level, it was driven through a content management process that involved some workflow. Content that was needed was thoroughly evaluated, processed, formatted, approved, and diced and sliced with the rigors of the Veg-a-Matic.

Today people are publishing information about themselves, their interests, or anything they want to share easier than ever before.

In today's social networks, we can easily publish a picture, discuss the books we have read, the films we did not like, have a conversation, and blog about our day-to-day activities as a public diary. We can find others who have similar interests, skills, and responsibilities.

Social networks are super simple and easy to use. They also make it easy to connect and share with others. Because people are able to connect with people and share information easier than ever before, there are going to be new ways in which people will interact.

My son forgot his homework one day, so I said to him, "Call up or email your classmate and get the homework—you NEED to DO IT."

Five minutes later I saw him writing on the kid's Facebook page. Why was he doing that?

"What are you doing? I thought I told you to call him or email him?"

"DAD, email is for your grandfather, this is the way he'll get it."

HUH!

Writing on someone's Facebook wall is the new way to openly have a discussion with your network. We turned on a Twitter-like microblogging capability inside of IBM. I microblog my status everyday at IBM. I won't give 500,000 people inside of IBM access to my calendar but I am quite willing to share basically what I am doing everyday and some milestones I want to broadly communicate. This river of news about what I am doing becomes part of my Profile.

Because of this, we are connecting with each other in ways we never could before. People inside of IBM can understand what you are working on and where. A sales representative could search and find any executives visiting their region and co-opt their trip to help or see their client. This is a big change in the way people are connecting.

When I started at IBM over twenty years ago, both my grandfather and father were also at IBM. I could look up their Profile on the mainframe through a 3270 EBCDIC Green Screen terminal and find their name and their phone number.

At IBM today, we have a rich view of employees that spans the basic business card type information to what they know and what they do. I can get to this information anytime, anyplace, and through any device.

We are leveraging this information to connect folks around the world and to best leverage our most precious asset—our people.

We are using capabilities like wikis, blogs, and discussion forums to best suit the interaction between people, no longer suffering an impedance match in collaboration requirements.

We are using these technologies in our intranet and extranet to build better relationships and do important work with our colleagues, clients, and partners.

With these new collaboration tools and ways to communicate, it is imperative to ask the question, "What will it do for business?" (Bernal, J, 2010, xv-xvii)

Jeffrey Schick Vice President of Social Software, Lotus IBM Software Group

INTRODUCTION

The basis of this Major Research Paper (MRP) topic was inspired by a business book entitled The New Social Learning: A Guide to Transforming Organizations Through Social Media (2010). In this book, Bingham and Conner explain the possibilities presented by these new communication technologies, especially as they enable organizations, employees and stakeholders to connect and collaborate on levels previously unforeseen and perhaps even unfathomed. Bingham and Conner emphasize that social media are learning technologies; they enable access to people and information, collaboration and productivity. Social learning involves collaboration and knowledge sharing; it is an interactive teaching-learning continuum that embodies the idea of knowledge management. This learning perspective also ties into the concept of feedback and the opportunity to interact and gather reviews and information from various sources and stakeholders. The New Social Learning offers insight into companies already using social media, creates a landscape on which other organizations can implement their own social media strategies, identifies best business-practices, and, most importantly, moves communication theory into business practice. Furthering ideas established in *The New* Social Learning, the goal of this MRP is to build on the motivation to integrate social media into corporate communications and to understand analytically what works and does not work in terms of corporate engagement of social media.

With the growing emphasis on online social presence, corporations are faced with a new challenge: to synthesize traditional and social media communications. As a result of this new wave of communications media, social media is rapidly evolving into a function of corporate communications, thus presenting new opportunities and challenges through which enterprises can shape and manage their message and brand. Resulting from this emerging shift within the corporate environment is the need to study effective socio-corporate presence, social listening and response. This area of research is of immediate importance as organizations grapple with the possibility of incorporating social media into their existing communications strategy. While some reject the value of doing so, others have embraced social media while seeking further understanding of its risk and opportunities.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the ways in which organizations integrate social media into their communications efforts, focusing on feedback processes in particular. Of particular importance to this concept of feedback is the way in which organizations not only speak to their audience through social media channels, but how they manage listening within the same context; how does audience/stakeholder response filter back through corporate channels when received through social media networks?

Specifically, this MRP analyzes the ways in which information and communication flows between social media and corporation, with a particular emphasis on message transmission, processing, and feedback and feed-forward processes in Web 2.0 systems of communication. Web 2.0 and social media, in particular, are extraordinary communication technologies in that they enable organizations to access their audience directly, en masse, in a customized and personalized fashion, both quickly and efficiently – when done right. Unique to these media is the new and growing opportunity for stakeholders to respond and provide feedback in the same direct fashion; equally important to the concept of accessing and speaking to one's audience, however, is listening to one's audience. I refer to this concept as *social listening*.

For the purpose of this MRP, Web 2.0 refers to the body of online applications that enable information and knowledge sharing amongst individuals in interactive and collaborative virtual communities, for example, social- and professional-networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, wikis, forums, and so on. Tim O'Reilly, founder and CEO of O'Reilly Media, Inc., originally coined the term "Web 2.0" and its use proliferated across the technology industry following the O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 Conference in 2004 (O'Reilly, 2005). Unlike its predecessor model Web 1.0, which links the online world through hyperlinks, Web 2.0 enhances the opportunities created by Web 1.0 and enables communication, collaboration and interactivity amongst users. The functions of Web 2.0 are not restricted to an A to B delivery model; instead, Web 2.0 opens multifarious lines of communication and the possibilities of individual and group interaction in an online setting.

Moreover, Web 1.0 platforms are subject to a producer-consumer approach. For example, a traditional webpage functions strictly as a site of information consumption rather than a site of production. Information is posted on the site and received by its visitors, but there is no concrete opportunity for visitors to contribute to the page or for its owner to track and understand visitor response beyond website traffic statistics. There is no direct means to receive feedback on website content or layout. Web 1.0 is simply communicative; it is not a collaborative tool.

Web 2.0, on the other hand, is a concept describing the characteristics of a set of applications that enable users to respond directly to both independent pieces of information or content as a whole through built in functions; it is these functions that enable and encourage feedback to occur. In turn, page owners can assess and determine the quality and relevance of products, content and delivery based on audience response. Page owners can react in terms of what's working for their audience and enhance those areas of weak or negative feedback to become better all around. Bernal (2010) explains,

> In the Web 2.0 model, users actively participate and contribute to a website. This bidirectional approach enables users to interact with the site and each other in ways that provide for and foster a collective community. Users can create, edit, rate, and tag content at will, which provides users with new information and guides the relevance of what is important to the overall community (3).

Since the inception of Web 2.0, the result has been a change in the way individuals and groups of people communicate, and social-networking sites have been the platform for this change. Moreover, user engagement on these social-networking sites has become a global phenomenon uniting and enabling communication and collaboration to occur virtually instantaneously and without confine to geographic location or time zone. This MRP is based upon the assumption that social media is an important vehicle of communication despite its short lifetime to date. User populations and trends on these

social media sites are indicative of both its prominence and importance globally. The following series of statistics compiled by Social Media Statistics 2011 pertain to the three most prominent social mediums relevant to this study:

Facebook

facebook

Figure 1 - www.facebook.com

- #1 most-visited website
- 500+ million active members
- 700+ billion minutes are spent on Facebook every month
- 200+ million access Facebook via mobile device
- Average user generates 90 pieces of content every month
- 250+ people engage with Facebook on external sites

Twitter



Figure 2 - www.twitter.com

- 200+ million users
- 40+ billion tweets
- 140 million tweets/day
- 1000+% growth
- 500,000 accounts added daily

YouTube



Figure 3 - www.youtube.com

- 2 billion videos viewed every day
- 24 hours of video uploaded every minute
- More video is uploaded in 60 days than all three major US networks created in 60 years
- 46 years of videos watched every day on Facebook via YouTube
- YouTube's auto speech recognition technology translates video and captions into 51 languages

(Social Media Statistics 2011 retrieved from www.slideshare.net/RecruitingBlog/social-

media-stats-2011-7366979 on May 21, 2011.)

The specific purpose of this MRP is to observe social listening, that is, how information and communication flows between social media and corporation, with an emphasis on message transmission, processing, and feedback and feed-forward processes through the theoretical lens of autopoiesis. Autopoiesis is a micro-theory within the larger communications theory of cybernetics. Autopoiesis literally means "selfcreation/organization" and is used to describe systems that reproduce themselves through the very components of which they are composed (Maturana & Varela, 1972, 78-79). An autopoietic network is one that produces itself through a series of components with which it interacts and, in turn, the system is shaped and transformed by these very interactions. Moreover, autopoietic networks are concrete and independent from other networks – they respond to processes within the network alone; they are autonomous. Autonomy is a fundamental feature of autopoiesis; autonomy is a feature of self-production, and selfproduction is autopoiesis – this is a very circular concept, hence the autopoietic feedback loop (Maturana, 1999, 149). Throughout this study, the implications of autopoiesis will be applied to social media; Facebook, in particular, will be understood as an autopoietic system. This study will build on previous studies of other social media as autopoietic systems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Autopoietic theory spans the fields of biology to communications. Central to this literature review is Niklas Luhmann and Fritjof Capra's understanding of autopoietic systems-theory as a foundation to understanding autopoiesis within communication systems, followed by a subsequent application of autopoiesis to new systems of communications, specifically, Web 2.0 message transmission, processing, and feedback and feed-forward processes. Malgorzata Pamkowska and Kathrin Vent's research regarding Web 2.0 as an autopoietic system is also essential to this study and its application of autopoiesis to Web 2.0 communications and Facebook in particular.

Cybernetics

Autopoiesis is a micro-theory within the larger communications theory of cybernetics. Cybernetics was first defined in 1948 by Norbert Wiener; Wiener referred to cybernetics as the "entire field of control and communication theory, whether in the machine or the animal" (Wiener, 1961, 11). The word cybernetics is of Greek origin meaning "steersman". Likewise, Wiener identified the steering engines of a ship as one of the "earliest and best-developed forms of feedback mechanisms" (12). Cybernetics is largely divided into two waves; initially, cybernetics was dominated by studies concerning artificial intelligence until a second wave emerged in the 1970s, this time drawing on research in the area of biology.

Origin of the Notion of Autopoiesis

Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela coined the term autopoiesis in 1972, which, to a great extent, motivated the second wave of cybernetics. The word autopoiesis itself is of Greek origin meaning "self-creation/organization" (78-79). Autopoiesis is a term used to described systems that reproduce themselves through the very components of which they are composed. Like Wiener's focus on control and communication in the machine or the animal, Maturana and Varela (1972) also describe this autopoietic (re)production in relation to machines; they explain,

An autopoietic machine is a machine organized (defined as a unity) as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components which: (i) through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced them; and (ii) constitute it (the machine) as a concrete unity in space in which they (the components) exist by specifying the topological domain of its realization as such a network (78-79).

An autopoietic network is one that produces itself through a series of components with which it interacts and, in turn, the system is shaped and transformed by these very interactions. Moreover, autopoietic networks are concrete and independent from other networks – they respond to processes within the network alone, they are autonomous. Autonomy is a fundamental feature of autopoiesis; autonomy is a feature of self-production, and self-production is autopoiesis (Maturana, 1999, 149).

Autopoietic Organization

Central to the study of autopoiesis is the understanding of living systems as autopoietically or organizationally closed in the sense that self-production occurs within the system without any intrusion from elements existing outside of the system. Maturana (1999) explains that autopoietic organization involves a network of processes that are repeatedly being produced within the network environment by the very components that comprise the network itself (149). Through his study of living systems, Maturana (2002) realized that these systems are characteristically "discrete autonomous entities such that all the processes that they lived, lived in reference to themselves" (6). To explain this, Maturana uses the example of a dog bite; he says that whether a dog bites or not, it is doing something in reference to itself (6). Similarly, in order to understand the actions of a living system, they must be understood in reference to themselves because living systems are autonomous entities that act in and of themselves; in other words, they are organizationally closed. According to Maturana, living systems exist so long as their autopoietic organization is conserved (8). Everything that occurs within such a system is subordinate to the autopoietic structure, otherwise it dissolves and ceases to exist (Maturana, 1999, 149).

Autopoietic Systems of Communication

Niklas Luhmann spearheaded the application of autopoiesis to systems of communication; specifically, he conceptualized the use of communication within social systems in terms of autopoietic reproduction (Luhmann, 1986, 174). He explains, "*only communication can communicate* and that only within such a network of communication is what we understand as action created" (Luhmann, 1992, 301). Luhmann divides his understanding of communication into three components: information, utterance, and understanding/misunderstanding; that is, all communication emerges out of the "selection of *information*, selection of the *utterance* of this information, and a selective *understanding or misunderstanding* of this utterance and its information" (302). These components cannot exist in isolation from one another and all three are required in order for communication to occur. Luhmann explains,

There is no information outside of communication, no utterance outside of communication, no understanding outside of communication – and not simply in the causal sense for which information is the cause of the utterance and the utterance the cause of the understanding, but rather in the circular sense of reciprocal presupposition (304).

Luhmann describes communication as an autopoietically closed system in which communication is the only element of reproduction. Communication, he explains, produces its own components from the very components that comprise the communication-system itself. This process, that is, the transmission of communicative messages, is either successful or unsuccessful depending on the way in which a message is received. According to Luhmann, "communication bifurcates reality" (305); in other words, message transmission is either successful or unsuccessful - there is either an acceptance or a rejection of every communicative message. This is a risk that all communication assumes. "Focusing on the alternative of acceptance or rejection is therefore nothing more than the autopoiesis of communication itself. It identifies the position of connection for the next communication that can either build on an already attained consensus or seek dissent" (305). Each communication gives way to the next and every subsequent piece of communication is a product of and response to its predecessor. The communication system is constantly reproducing itself and the successful or unsuccessful transmission of each communication message is continuously shaping the system. Moreover, the way in which the communication system responds to the successful or unsuccessful receipt of messages provides insight into the character of the system itself.

Structural Coupling

The communication system is continuously shaped by its response to message transmission; in autopoiesis, this activity in which network components produce and transform themselves is called structural coupling. The mechanism of structural coupling is a central aspect to autopoiesis. Fritiof Capra (2002) identifies the defining characteristic of autopoiesis as its tendency to undergo "continual structural changes while preserving its weblike pattern of organization. The components of a network continually produce and transform one another..." (34-35). Capra explains that these network components produce and transform one another in two ways: the first he refers to as self-renewal and the second involves structures that create new structures. Selfrenewal refers to a living system's tendency to continually break down and build anew; for example, biological cells break down and reproduce on an ongoing basis, but the system maintains its overall figure nonetheless (35). New structures, on the other hand, refer to new developments that occur within a system based on its response to a previous change or event that occurred within the structure of the system. Self-renewal and new structures represent the distinction between cyclical versus developmental change within a system (35). "According to the theory of autopoiesis, a living system couples to its environment structurally, i.e. through recurrent interactions, each of which triggers structural changes in the system... The environment only triggers structural changes; it does not specify or direct them" (35).

Maturana and Varela identify this concept of structural coupling as a distinguishing feature between nonliving and living systems. Nonliving systems react to action, whereas living systems respond. Capra explains this difference using the following example,

When you kick a stone, it will *react* to the kick according to a linear chain of cause and effect... When you kick a dog, the situation is quite different. The dog will *respond* with structural changes according to its own nature and (nonlinear) pattern of organization. The resulting behavior is generally unpredictable (35).

The impact of a living system's response compared to a nonliving system's reaction is that each response made by a living system will shape and alter future behaviour, whereas a nonliving system will, for the most part, react to the same or similar actions.

Autopoietic Organizations and Control Mechanisms

Communication is the foundation of every organization, particularly communications surrounding policy, decisions and governance. According to Blaschke (2004), "the communication activity *is* the organization and decisions are the primary organizational objective" (2). Organizations built on communication are, therefore, autopoietic in the sense that they (re)produce themselves through communicative messages and communicated decisions; these decisions can range from corporate strategy to organizational structure and are determined autonomously within the organizational network (2).

Three fundamental control mechanisms arise from communicated decisions within an autopoietic network as such; these control mechanisms include negative feedback, positive feedback and feed-forward processes. Guohua (2009) explains that feedback and

feed-forward are "important embodiments of purposeful behavior" (2). Negative feedback is the most common type of control mechanism; negative feedback occurs when a system has a particular goal in mind, but a deviation from the actual goal occurs. The system, in turn, must respond and adapt to the negative feedback. For example, an organization seeks a particular response to a certain communicative message; if the goal response is not received, the system must adapt to the negative feedback. Positive feedback, on the other hand, is an amplification of this deviation from the goal response. Guohua describes it as an "explosive" response and uses the examples of bankruptcy, recession and expansion to illustrate the effects of positive feedback (2). Both positive and negative feedback offset the equilibrium that the system is desperately trying to maintain. Negative feedback, however, is sustainable, whereas positive feedback is not. Unlike feedback, which represents a deviation from the goal response, feed forward does not respond to a particular system-objective. Feed forward, instead, complements feedback in that it attempts to adjust the behaviour of a system based on its positive or negative response. Using knowledge of the system in which they exist, feed-forward control mechanisms seek to return the system to its equilibrium following a deviation from the goal response (Basso and Belardinelli, 2006, 73).

Web 2.0 as an Autopoietic System

Since the inception of Web 2.0, virtual communities have been rapidly emerging and disappearing; it is difficult to gauge whether one will last and, if so, for how long. In *Web 2.0 as an Autopoietic System*, Kathrin Vent (2009) describes these virtual communities as self-organizing systems, which are, according to Vent, characteristic of autopoietic

systems. Moreover, these virtual communities are a means of knowledge management and knowledge is an essential component of the autopoietic process. Vent explains,

Social systems like an online community not only emerge through communication – but also cease to exist without it. If a new online photo sharing community having the same design and technology as Flickr could not attract users who publish photos, the communication on the platform would die. The online community would vanish like so many other Internet start-ups. Even with sophisticated technology, it is useful to remind that online communities are disappearing as fast and as often as emerging (136).

These online communities are social systems within which communication plays a central role, but this time, communication is assisted and implicated by digital technology – this concept is both evolutionary and revolutionary for communication and autopoiesis. Vent determines, however, that although technological features are an important design element, they are not an impetus for perpetual communication and therefore do not determine whether a particular platform will continue or cease to exist.

In *Autopoiesis in Virtual Organizations*, Pamkowska (2008) studies Wikipedia as an autopoietic Web 2.0-system. Pamkowska explains, "Wikipedia is a self-productive, self-organizing and self-referential knowledge system... As a wiki, articles are never complete. Wikipedia is in constant process of self-production. They are continually edited and improved over time..." (37). Wikipedia has successfully integrated its membership into the production of its network – an increasing membership means an increasing knowledge base, these components give way to one another within the system. It is the reciprocal relationship between shared knowledge and member benefit within the

Wikipedia network that lends to further development and production of the system itself, that is, its autopoiesis (38).

With the growing emphasis on online social presence, an increasing number of organizations are embracing virtual communities, including online social media, in order to transmit messages. Autopoiesis, as conceptualized by the theorists included in this review, provides a framework through which organizations can assess the impact and efficacy of communicative messages and try to understand and respond effectively to the various feedback and feed-forward processes.

CASE STUDY



Figure 4 - www.emc.com

Subsequent to existing studies like that of Malgorzata Pamkowska's (2008) *Autopoiesis in Virtual Organizations* and Kathrin Vent's (2009) *Web 2.0 as an Autopoietic Structure* – *Implications for Innovative Web-interfaces*, this MRP will undertake a study of Facebook as an autopoietic system, focusing particularly on corporate engagement of this same medium as it is exemplified in a single case study. For the purpose of this case study, the subject of observation is EMC Corporation (EMC)¹. EMC is a Fortune200 company and an early and eager adopter of social media. EMC incorporated social media as an integral component of its corporate communications strategy as far back as 2006.

Moreover, EMC Corporation is a business-to-business (B2B) company, which means the company's transactions occur primarily between businesses as opposed to amongst business and consumers. EMC Corporation was specifically selected for its B2B characteristics and veteran involvement in social media. Business-to-consumer (B2C) engagement on social media predominantly occurs from a marketing/selling standpoint.

¹ Note: For the period of January 2011 to April 2011, I had the opportunity to work first-hand with the Manager of Enterprise Social Media Engagement Strategy at EMC as my internship in the Masters of Professional Communication program at Ryerson University. A report of this experience is attached (Appendix A).

B2B companies market less and instead focus on building greater brand awareness in the social media context. It is this focus on building brand awareness through conversation in Web 2.0 settings that is of particular interest to this study.

EMC's Facebook page is public and can be accessed by any member of the general public who has joined Facebook by creating a personalized username and password. No content on EMC's Facebook page is limited or protected in any way. All data collected for this study is freely available in the public domain.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To the extent that EMC is representative of corporate communication within this particular context, the overarching research questions addressed through this MRP are:

- How do organizations manage listening and response within a social media setting?
- How are Web. 2.0 social media applications understood as autopoietic systems of communication?
- How is the way in which business-to-business (B2B) companies manage listening and response within a social media setting characteristic of autopoietic systems?
- How do organizations manage their message and brand through an integration of these social media channels?

RESEARCH APPROACH

This study assumes the form of a case study in which all observation has been conducted on the Internet, primarily on the official Facebook page of EMC Corporation (located at http://www.facebook.com/emccorp). Secondary research involved the same company's Twitter and YouTube pages, particularly in terms of how these other social media accounts are integrated into EMC's Facebook page (e.g., posting YouTube videos or Twitter feeds on Facebook). The intention of the observation process was to understand the ways in which other social media accounts are engaged on EMC's official Facebook page, that is, the frequency and quantity of YouTube videos posted or Twitter feeds incorporated on the Facebook page in comparison to direct Facebook to Facebook posts. Subsequent to this analysis of the frequency and quantity of YouTube videos posted and Twitter feeds incorporated into EMC's Facebook page, the user activity and response in relation to the integration posts has been analyzed in comparison to user activity and response in relation to direct Facebook posts. Special attention has been paid to EMC's response rate (or whether there is a response at all) following stakeholder activity on EMC's official Facebook page.

Methodology

The success of Facebook pages like that of EMC Corporation lies in user-generated content and, as understood by autopoietic theory, these pages will cease to exist without such communication. That is, if page owners and page visitors do not contribute to the conversations and content of these pages, they will cease to exist, which could jeopardize the existence of the system as a whole. In terms of this specific study, if EMC does not engage in conversation with its stakeholders through these online communities, the community will cease to exist as part of EMC's communication strategy.

As an autopoietic system, these Facebook pages are self-organizing/self-producing systems. It is the reciprocal relationship between activity and response – both by corporation and stakeholder – within the Facebook network that prompts further development, production and benefit of the medium itself. It is both the frequency of communication and the mutual contribution of corporation and stakeholder that underlie the autopoietic nature of this medium.

The following is a pictoral representation of the autopoietic nature of EMC's Facebook page:



The social behaviour (i.e. the frequency and type of conversation) occurring on EMC's Facebook page – both by EMC Corporation and its stakeholders – are the units of analysis, rather than the individual persons engaged in the conversation. For the purpose of this study, "type of conversation" refers to the category of activity, e.g. textual post or comment; video post, typically an integration of a YouTube video; photo uploaded direct to Facebook or integrated through another social media post; etc. In terms of data collection, screenshots of EMC's Facebook page have been collected over the course of approximately a one-month period ranging from February 11, 2011 to March 16, 2011 inclusive.



Figure 6 - Sample Screenshot of EMC's Official Facebook Page (Retrieved from <u>http://www.facebook.com/emccorp</u> on June 17, 2011)

Analytical Framework

These screenshots have been analyzed using methods from discourse analysis.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) describe critical discourse analysis (CDA) as:

...both theory and method: as a method for analyzing social practices within particular regard to their discourse moments within the linking of the theoretical and practical concerns and public spheres... where the ways of analyzing 'operationalize' – make practical – theoretical constructions of discourse in (late modern) social life, and the analyses contribute to the development and elaboration of these theoretical constructions (16).

As explained by Chouliaraki and Fairclough, discourse analysis links the theoretical and the practical or, in other words and in the case of this particular study, discourse analysis links academia and business. This understanding of discourse analysis is of particular value to this study as there is an autopoietic nature embedded within the concept itself. Chouliaraki and Fairclough explain that analysis makes theoretical constructions practical and, in turn, the analyses contribute to the "development and elaboration of these theoretical constructions" (16). The authors have quite precisely described the process of an autopoietic system, that is, a system that reproduces itself through the very components of which it is composed. In the case of discourse analysis, theory lends to analysis, which in turn contributes to the (further) development of theory itself.



Moreover, "the concept of 'operationalisation' entails working in a transdisciplinary way where the logic of one discipline [for example, cybernetics] can be 'put to work' in the development of another [for example, virtual communications]" (16-17). The "mutually informing development of theory and method" at the foundation of discourse analysis connects autopoiesis and analysis in an integral way, which leads to a greater understanding of the data in relation to this particular study.

Categorization of Data

Screenshots of EMC's Facebook page were collected over the period of February 11, 2011 to March 16, 2011 inclusive. These screenshots encompass every post made on EMC's Facebook page within that time period. Once collected, each post was categorized into at least one of the four following categories: inquiry, integration, response, and theme. These categories applied to all posts on EMC's Facebook page regardless of whether the post was originally constructed using Facebook itself or the post originated from another social media account (e.g., EMC's Twitter account or YouTube channel). The category of "integration" was included in order to identify the origin of the post and analyze it accordingly.

For the purpose of this study, the data categories are defined as follows:

Inquiry: The post requests information or asks users a direct question. *Inquiry* posts are intended to not only elicit a response from the organization, but also solicit user response.

Integration: A post from another medium is integrated within the medium in question; for example, a Twitter post has been enabled on the Facebook account or a blog entry is linked to the Twitter and/or Facebook account.

Response: A comment has been posted or a stakeholder has posed an inquiry and the corporation has/has not responded as expected. The initial post is stakeholder generated and the *response* refers to the corporation's response/reaction to the user's post/comment.

Theme: This refers to an event or topic that characterizes a post, e.g. "EMC's recordbreaking challenge" or "EMC World Conference".

Quantitative Analysis

Once categorized, I undertook a quantitative analysis that included the number of entries under each category as well as the number of user responses (also visible on the screenshots) received within each particular category. On Facebook there are two types of user responses: users may respond either by making a comment or by selecting the "like" button; both response types have been tallied and a record has been maintained in order to gauge the types of posts (i.e. categories) that are eliciting the most feedback and response from stakeholders.

Finally, every activity occurring at the research site/on the Facebook page is both date and time stamped. This date stamping of user-generated content provided a way to note and record quantitatively the time at which each communication occurred on the page as well as the particular type of communication occurring. Ultimately, this information would assist in understanding the significance of when engagement is occurring.

Specific to this case study, it is important to note that although EMC is an international corporation, their social media strategy is managed by staff at its world headquarters in Hopkinton, Massachusetts and, as a result, EMC's response rate is largely Eastern Daylight Time and North American hours of work. Consequently, some questions arose during this particular analysis including whether comments are being made during work hours or otherwise, how the time in which posts are made is impacted by the global access to EMC's Facebook page and how this relates to the global nature of EMC Corporation.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

As previously identified, once screenshots were recorded and the data set was established, each post was categorized into at least one of the four aforementioned categories: inquiry, integration, response and theme. Grouping the posts into categories allowed the feedback each post received to be understood within the same context as similar posts.

Occurrences per category

The first stage of analysis recorded the number of occurrences per category. "Occurrences per category" refers to the number of posts pertaining to each of the categories identified (inquiry, integration, response and theme). In order to identify the occurrences per category, posts were assessed according to the stipulative definitions of inquiry, integration, response and theme respectively, and were then coded and assigned to one or more relevant categories accordingly.

The results of this stage of analysis, that is, the total number of occurrences per category in the data sample is as follows:

Inquiry had a total of 9 occurrences; *Integration* had a total of 6 occurrences; *Response* had a total of 3 occurrences, and *Theme* had a total of 20 occurrences.

Figure 8 represents these findings:



Figure 8 - Total occurrences per category of analysis within the data sample

The primary reason for the substantial increase in theme-oriented posts in comparison to other categories of analysis is due to the fact that a large number of posts within the *theme* category also pertained to one of the three other categories of analysis. The *theme* category experienced more overlap with other categories than any other category of post. Specifically, 7 of 20 posts in the *theme* category were also members of the *inquiry* or *integration* categories; the *response* category had no participating posts.

Categorical Breakdown

The following tables (Tables 1 to 4) show the breakdown of specific details pertaining to posts assigned to each of the four respective categories.

These details include:

<u>Date:</u> The date on which the post was made on the Facebook page.

- <u>Time:</u> The specific time of day at which the post was made. The hour and minute is recorded for each post. All times in this study reflect Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).
- Source: Source refers to the venue in which the post was made, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube. It is possible to post in one venue and have it appear simultaneously on a Facebook page.
- <u>Secondary Categories</u>: Identifies any other categories in which the elements of the post pertains to outside of the primary category in question. E.g., an *inquiry* post may also be a part of the *theme* category.
- "Likes": A "like" is one of two ways to provide feedback on Facebook. The "like" button allows users to acknowledge a post in a positive way without having to provide actual commentary or new content.
- <u>Comments:</u> A comment is a user-generated post made in response to an initial post on Facebook. The initial post could be text, photo or multimedia; comments, on the other hand, are always textual.

Inquiry – Total of 3 occurrences

Date	Time	Source	Secondary Categories	"Likes"	Comments
February 18, 2011	10:39 a.m. EDT	Facebook	Theme: EMC Breaks Records	24	0
February 24, 2011	9:42 a.m. EDT	Facebook	Theme: Cloud Computing	17	0
March 4, 2011	12:13 p.m. EDT	Facebook	N/A	24	0

Table 1 - Breakdown of "Inquiry"

Integration – Total of 6 occurrences

Date	Time	Source	Secondary Categories	"Likes"	Comments
February 11, 2011	12:50 p.m. EDT	Chuck's blog (internal stakeholder's blog)	Theme: RSA	13	0
February 25, 2011	12:54 3m. EDT	EMC's Official YouTube Channel	Theme: EMC Breaks Records	22	1
March 1, 2011	11:58 p.m. EDT	Chuck's blog (internal stakeholder's blog)	Theme: EMC World Conference	5	0
March 5, 2011	3:32 p.m. EDT	EMC's Official YouTube Channel	Theme: Cloud Computing	23	2
March 7, 2011	11:38 p.m. EDT	EMC's Official YouTube Channel	N/A	14	2
March 14, 2011	11:53 p.m. EDT	Forbes blog (external stakeholder's blog)	Inquiry Theme: RSA	12	0

Table 2 - Breakdown of "Integration"

Response – Total of 3 occurrences

Date	Time	Source	Secondary Categories	"Likes"	Comments
March 11, 2011	1:56 p.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by corporate stakeholder: Mass Mentoring Partnership	N/A	0	0
March 15, 2011	10:59 p.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by individual stakeholder: Keith	N/A	0	0
March 16, 2011	3:18 p.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by individual stakeholder: Alisha	Inquiry	1	0

Table 3 - Breakdown of "Response"

Theme – Total of 20 occurrences

When assessing whether a post was thematic, five thematic topics were identified and are represented by the various colours as shown in the table below. The colours refer to the following themes:

Blue = RSA

Pink = EMC Breaks Records

Green = 2011 EMC Heritage Trust Project

Purple = Cloud Computing

Yellow = EMC World Conference

Each of these topics and corresponding colours represent recurring themes on EMC's

Facebook page.

Date	Time	Source	Theme	Secondary Categories	"Likes"	Comments
February 11, 2011	12:50 p.m. EDT	Chuck's blog (internal stakeholder's blog)	RSA	Integration: blog	13	0
February 14, 2011	9:29 a.m. EDT	Facebook - post made by EMC	RSA	N/A	18	3
February 15, 2011	8:54 a.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	EMC Breaks Records	N/A	40	11
February 16, 2011	9:18 a.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	2011 EMC Heritage Trust Project	N/A	13	0
February 17, 2011	11:59 a.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	RSA	N/A	15	0
February 18, 2011	10:39 a.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	EMC Breaks Records	Inquiry	24	0
February 22, 2011	12:19 p.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	RSA	N/A	31	2
February 23, 2011	4:17 p.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	EMC Breaks Records	N/A	36	6
February 24, 2011	9:42 p.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	Cloud Computing	Inquiry	17	0
February 25, 2011	12:54 p.m. EDT	EMC's Official YouTube Channel	EMC Breaks Records	Integration	22	1
March 1, 2011	11:58 a.m. EDT	Chuck's blog (internal stakeholder's blog)	EMC World Conference	Integration	5	0
March 4, 2011	4:17 p.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	EMC World Conference	N/A	19	1
March 5, 2011	3:32 p.m. EDT	EMC's Official YouTube Channel	Cloud Computing	Integration	23	1

March 8, 2011	10:28 p.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	EMC Breaks Records	N/A	22	1
March 8, 2011	1:32 p.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	RSA	N/A	13	0
March 10, 2011	3:54 p.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	EMC World Conference	N/A	40	0
March 14, 2011	11:53 a.m. EDT	Forbes blog (external stakeholder's blog)	RSA	Inquiry Integration	12	0
March 14, 2011	11:53 a.m. EDT	Forbes blog (external stakeholder's blog)	Cloud Computing	Inquiry Integration	12	0
March 15, 2011	8:55 a.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	EMC World Conference	N/A	0	0
March 16, 2011	3:05 p.m. EDT	Facebook – post made by EMC	EMC World Conference	N/A	32	5

Table 4 - Breakdown of "Theme"

As indicated by the colours in the previous table, there were five different themes identified within the theme category. The following graph (Figure 9) represents a subsequent analysis of the *theme* category based on these five sub-categories. Five themes were identified: Cloud Computing, EMC Breaks Records, EMC Heritage Trust Project, EMC World Conference, and RSA. Of the five themes, three were dominant: RSA (6 occurrences); EMC Breaks Records (5 occurrences); and EMC World Conference (5 occurrences). RSA is the security division of EMC, EMC Breaks Records posts are part of a 2011 EMC campaign, the EMC World Conference is an annual event hosted by EMC Corporation, Cloud Computing is the core of EMC's business offerings, and the EMC Heritage Trust Project is part of EMC's community involvement.



Figure 9 - Facebook posts categorized by theme

Focus on Feedback

The second stage of analysis focused on feedback. For the purpose of this stage of analysis, feedback is understood as either a "like" or a comment made in response to an initial post. On Facebook, to "like" a post or to make a comment on a post are the two options available for providing feedback to user-generated content. Unlike the comment option, the "like" button allows users to acknowledge a post in a positive way without having to provide actual commentary or new content.

The following graphs (Figures 10 and 11) identify which posts received the most user feedback and response. (Posts in Figures 10 and 11 are identified by number in sequence; this number does not necessarily pertain to the date on which the post was made.)



Figure 10 - Number of "likes" received per post



Figure 11 - Number of comments received per post

Thematic Feedback

The following data identifies which themes received the most user feedback and response.



Figure 12 - Number of "likes" received per theme based on individual post



Figure 13 - Number of comments received per theme based on individual post

Although RSA, EMC Breaks Records and EMC World Conference collectively dominated the *theme* category in total number of posts, EMC Breaks Records resulted in the most user response, particularly in terms of comments received. EMC developed the EMC Record Breaking Challenge online campaign with the particular goal of generating stakeholder engagement leading up to the EMC Record Breaking Tour of 2011. EMC started promoting this event online prior to announcing the product. The idea of "record breaking" led to the biggest announcement in the data storage industry. At the climax of the campaign, EMC announced 41 new storage products encapsulating "record breaking" technology in terms of speed and efficiency.

Response Rates

This section undertakes an examination of comments made to posts on EMC's Facebook page, specifically in terms of the response rate in which comments were made following the initial or parent post as well as response posts to previous comments made. It is important to note that only one post outside of the *theme* category received comments; this post fell solely into the *integration* category. Since comments were predominantly made to *theme* posts, the *integration* post that received commentary was blended into this group for the purpose of data presentation only. (The *integration* post with commentary occurred on March 7, 2011 at 11:38 p.m. EDT.) The following table (Table 5) summarizes the details of all posts that received user-generated feedback (i.e. comments); this summary includes the date and time of the initial post, the number of comments received, the time at which each comment was made following the initial post, and whether EMC contributed comments to the post.

Date	Time	Comments	Response Rate	EMC Participation
February 14, 2011	9:29 a.m. EDT	3	 11:27 a.m. 11:46 a.m. 	No
February 15, 2011	8:54 a.m. EDT	11	2:50 p.m.10:19 a.m.	No
			10:22 a.m.10:23 a.m.	
			10:26 a.m.10:28 a.m.	
			10:30 a.m.10:31 a.m.	
			10:34 a.m.10:37 a.m.	
			10:40 a.m.11:31 a.m.	
			Note: Posts 10:19 – 10:40 a.m. were	
			made by same individual	
February 22, 2011	12:19 p.m. EDT	2	 12:26 p.m. 1:26 p.m. (EMC response) 	Yes
February 23, 2011	4:17 p.m. EDT	6	 4:23 p.m. 5:26 p.m. 6:50 p.m. 8:04 p.m. 11:28 p.m. 1:45 a.m. 	No
February 25, 2011	12:54 p.m. EDT	1	• 1:02 p.m.	No
March 4, 2011	4:17 p.m. EDT	1	 March 5 at 4:07 p.m. 	No
March 5, 2011	3:32 p.m. EDT	1	• 9:38 p.m.	No
March 7, 2011	11:38 p.m. EDT	2	11:46 a.m.4:07 p.m.	No
March 8, 2011	10:28 p.m. EDT	1	• 10:30 a.m.	No
March 16, 2011	3:05 p.m. EDT	5	 12:36 p.m. 6:27 p.m. 9:42 p.m. March 17 at 7:25 a.m. March 17 at 7:55 a.m. 	No

Table 5 - Breakdown of Posts with Feedback



The following graph (Figure 14) shows the number of comments received per post. In this graph, posts are organized by the date on which the initial post was made.

Figure 14 - Represents the number of comments received per post

A total of 10 posts received comments ranging from 1 to 11 comments per post or an average of 3 comments per post. It is, however, important to note that 10 of the 11 comments made to the February 15, 2011 post were made by the same user in a language other than English. EMC did not offer a response to any of the aforementioned comments. EMC was only involved in the February 22, 2011 post. The content of the post initiated by EMC on February 22, 2011 was congratulatory; EMC's comment to the same post extended further congratulations.

Assessment of Findings

The data collected is a clear indication of the importance of thematic posts. Themes establish consistency, familiarity and identify areas of interest amongst stakeholders. The data sample included 20 theme posts, which resulted in 407 "likes" and 31 comments. Within the *theme* category, the most frequently referenced posts were in regards to the EMC Record Breaking Challenge, which were most commonly tagged as "EMC Breaks Records" in the data sample. The EMC Record Breaking Challenge was an online campaign with the particular goal of generating stakeholder engagement in various online venues including EMC's official website, a promotional site created for the sole purpose of this campaign, Twitter, Flickr and Facebook. The culmination of this online campaign also resulted in many on-the-ground activities that toured the US and other major countries. The EMC Mini Cooper cars that could be spotted everywhere from Singapore to France became icons of this campaign. The dynamism of the EMC Record Breaking Challenge, including its success on EMC's Facebook page, is indicative of the dynamism and interaction of various social media channels more so than the autopoietic nature of one social media site (like Facebook) alone. Autopoietic systems are generally considered to be closed systems in the sense that the system self-produces without the intrusion of elements existing outside of the system. EMC's Record Breaking Challenge was not autopoietic as it incorporated various media available both within and outside of its Facebook page. Although only speculative, it is unlikely that the EMC Record Breaking Challenge *theme* would have been as prominent and popular on EMC's Facebook page had the same theme not been engaged in a multitude of ways through an array of media.

Overall, the *response* category revealed a major shortcoming of EMC's Facebook page. A total of 3 *response* posts received only 1 "like" and 0 comments. This category is indicative of the fact that not only are stakeholders not participating in the content of this page, the few instances of contribution are not recognized by EMC. The overarching issue with the *response* category was an overall lack of response. A total of 10 posts received comments with an average of 3 comments per post. EMC, however, was only involved in one of these responses and, as a result, discouraged stakeholder participation by not acknowledging user-generated responses, nor did EMC offer any incentive for users to participate in its Facebook conversations.

Similarly to the *response* category, *inquiry* also needs improvement. The inquiry category received 65 "likes", but 0 comments. Encouraging and engaging user participation by asking response-provoking questions should elicit more feedback; these issues could be linked heavily to problems previously described in the *response* category.

Finally, the *integration* category presents the greatest opportunity to increase participation and feedback rates on EMC's Facebook page. This category consisted of 6 posts, which resulted in 89 "likes" and 5 comments. Of these 6 posts, 3 involved the incorporation of videos from EMC's Official YouTube Channel; these 3 YouTube posts received a total of 69 "likes" and 5 comments. The integration of more YouTube and/or interactive content in EMC's Facebook page would likely contribute to an increase in stakeholder participation. Moreover, it is not apparent that posts from EMC's official Twitter page have been integrated into EMC's Facebook page for the period in which data was collected. Incorporating official EMC tweets into EMC's Facebook newsfeed would extend information and ideas shared by EMC through its Twitter account to its Facebook audience, thus increasing message transmission altogether.

In autopoietic theory, feedback is divided into three categories: positive feedback, negative feedback and feed forward. As explained by Gohua (2009), negative feedback is the most common type of control mechanism. Most commonly, feedback occurs when a system has a particular goal in mind, but a deviation from the actual goal occurs. The system, in turn, must respond and adapt to the negative feedback. In terms of social media, negative feedback could take the form of a stakeholder comment that does not align with the organization's goals and objectives or a comment that expresses criticism toward the organization in some way. The organization would then assess the comment and respond accordingly or, in some cases, not respond (a non-response is as much of a response as an actual comment, they both send messages, albeit different ones). Unlike negative feedback, positive feedback is much less common; it is the amplification of a deviation from the goal response. It is much more explosive and extreme than negative feedback and significantly more difficult to recover from. For instance, in a social media context, positive feedback could occur if an organization's social media network was hacked and sent misinformation or frequent spam to its network users. The organization would have to repair the error and regain the trust of its network. Both positive and negative feedback offset the equilibrium that the system is desperately trying to maintain. Unlike feedback, which represents a deviation from the goal response, feed forward does not respond to a particular system objective. Instead, feed forward both complements and is contingent upon feedback; it attempts to adjust the system based on a positive or negative response and seeks to return the system to its equilibrium following a deviation.

In terms of EMC's Facebook page, it is difficult to gauge from the data sample the extent to which negative feedback, positive feedback and feed-forward processes are in effect. This is largely due to the limited amount of feedback occurring on EMC's Facebook page as well as the company's overall market success over the years since it engaged social media as part of its marketing-communication strategy. One can speculate, however, that the more stakeholder participation that EMC can engage on its Facebook page, the more likely it will be to receive and respond to negative feedback. In the unfortunate event that EMC experiences a crisis of sorts, positive feedback would likely come into effect on its official Facebook page both in terms of the company's reaction to the situation, stakeholder comments/posts in response to the situation and EMC's response, and EMC's subsequent response to these stakeholder-initiated posts and comments. Feed-forward processes would be reflected in EMC's ability to respond to negative and positive feedback if and when it occurs.

As noted earlier, in *Autopoiesis in Virtual Organizations*, Pamkowska (2008) studies Wikipedia as an autopoietic Web 2.0 system. In doing so, Pamkowska reveals that Wikipedia has successfully integrated its membership into the production of its network. It is the contribution of members to the Wikipedia network that lends to the further development and production of the system itself, that is, its autopoiesis. In a similar application of autopoiesis to Facebook as a user-generated system of communications, this analysis of content on EMC's Facebook page does not reveal the same level of member contribution due to the limited conversation occurring between EMC and its stakeholders in this particular venue. Moreover, in *Web 2.0 as an Autopoietic System*, Vent (2009) explains that online communities not only emerge through communication, but also cease to exist without it. If you can't attract users to the platform, the communication on the platform will die. This is not to say that the existence of EMC's Facebook page or use of this medium is in jeopardy, but in terms of incorporating and engaging user feedback into this particular communications venue and thus maximizing its social media advantage, a further emphasis on response-provoking posts and acknowledgement of stakeholder contribution must be made on behalf of EMC – in other words, more active social listening.

CONCLUSION

The New Social Learning: A Guide to Transforming Organizations Through Social Media (2010) by Tony Bingham and Marcia Conner teaches us that social learning via Web 2.0 communities involves collaboration and knowledge sharing. This idea of social learning is both linked to the autopoietic concept of feedback and the overarching opportunity to connect with stakeholders, gather information and respond accordingly. Embedded in this understanding of social learning is the new and growing opportunity for stakeholders to respond and provide feedback in the same direct fashion. From this comes the equally important concept of not only accessing and speaking to one's audience, but listening to one's audience; this we refer to as *social listening* and this autopoietic phenomenon remains the predominant feature of this study.

Bingham and Conner say, "Develop a relationship with customers. Communicate with them; don't just transmit information to them. Pay attention to how they interact with the information and make data-driven improvements because of it" (29). EMC has established a Facebook community of 20, 412 participants (as of June 19, 2011) and yet the value of this community remains in its level of participation and engagement, not necessarily its volume – but the opportunity is there. EMC's Facebook page is active: the page owners post regularly and posts receive a commendable amount of "likes" despite falling short on comments in comparison.

In order to increase user participation and engagement in EMC's Facebook activities, the data analysis is indicative of two fundamental problems with the management of this page that must be resolved. First, EMC must become more actively involved in stakeholder-generated posts both by responding to inquiries and rewarding stakeholder

contribution – even if this only appears as a "thank you for sharing" type of response. Next, EMC needs to improve the level of integration and media sharing that currently exists on their Facebook page. Sharing information and stories via pictures or video is not a new concept. Bingham and Conner say, "Pictures make Progress" (61). Media sharing is a way to provoke interaction and cultivate (online) community. "Media sharing, especially video sharing, can provide a captivating way to convey a human voice, rich with emotion and expression, that people trust instinctively more than words on paper or still photos alone" (64). These opportunities further the opportunity to manage messages and corporate brand through social media because they are inherently relationship building; they present an opportunity to establish trust and set the tone of a company outside of products and consumerism alone.

Unlike many other large corporations enabling social media as part of their communications strategy, EMC is fortunate that there is no abusive behaviour or spam occurring on their Facebook page; this is a testament of EMC's page-management abilities and an indication of the system's well being. Moreover, each post effectively received some form of response whether it was a number of "likes" or a series of comments. It is this response that gives way to the next post just as Luhmann explains that each communication prompts the next and every subsequent piece of communication is a product of and response to its predecessor. In theory, this is the autopoiesis of EMC's Facebook page, that is, one post prompts the next and so on. In practice, stakeholder response is a form of encouragement that someone is listening, thus adding value to the maintenance, necessity and possibilities of EMC's social media strategy altogether. Although this research is indicative, it is not conclusive. Like autopoietic systems, social networks are living organisms; they are active, growing online entities that are constantly changing and evolving from one piece of content to the next. This study attempts to understand the ways in which organizations integrate social media into their communications efforts and how corporations can tap into these growing opportunities to increase their presence, enhance relationships, broaden messages, and improve corporate identity all around. Furthermore, this study opens another door to ongoing research, including both a larger ever-evolving data sample as well as the possibility of transposing the same study to other social media like Twitter or YouTube in an effort to understand how information is transmitted and feedback is processed by the same company within each of these channels.

As Bingham and Conner rightly observe, "Social media has arrived, regardless of your participation. People are social and will connect with new technologies. You have two choices for involvement – get in the way or get on board" (165). EMC is certainly on board and has a clear opportunity to increase its involvement and improve its strategies alongside the ever-growing population and opportunities of social media.

APPENDIX A

Carley Desjardins - Internship Final Report Submitted to Dr. Ava Cross April 17, 2011

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of my internship experience, specifically as it relates to the Masters of Professional Communication (MPC) program and my Major Research Paper (MRP). First, I have summarized the context of my internship; linked it to my MRP; identified research and findings gained through this internship, especially those that are relevant to my area of research for the MRP; and, finally, I summarized the relevance the internship component specifically as it relates to my experiences in the MPC.

Internship Summary

Over the course of the past four months, I undertook an internship with EMC Corporation, a \$17 billion Fortne200 provider of information infrastructure systems, software and services. EMC was an early and eager adopter of social media, which they use to enable sharing and direct communication with stakeholders and employees alike. EMC's goal is to connect with customers, partners and prospects in order to promote brand and thought leadership, as well as an opportunity to listen to what stakeholders are saying.

Throughout the internship process, I had the opportunity to work directly under the supervision of Jamie Pappas, Manager of Enterprise Social Media Engagement Strategy at EMC. In this role, Jamie was directly accountable for the enterprise strategy development, planning and executive of the company's social media marketing function. Jamie is also a founding member of The 2.0 Adoption Council and serves on the Board of Directors for The Social Media Club, Boston Chapter and the Advisory Board for the Enterprise 2.0 Conference. The opportunity to work with someone as specialized and involved in social media as Jamie was truly a privilege.

Working under the supervision of Jamie Pappas, my role at EMC involved thought and research surrounding social media and EMC's social media strategy. My responsibilities included assessing EMC's social presence, contributing ideas and opinions on the intersection of social media and corporate communications, identifying opportunities to integrate traditional and social media communications, comparing EMC to other corporations in terms of social media strategy, and identifying opportunities for improvement and synergy.

MRP Relevant

The opportunities and experiences that this internship presented were immediately aligned with the topic of my MRP. For the MRP, I am studying the ways in which organizations integrate social media into their communications efforts, while focusing on feedback processes in particular. Of particular importance to this concept of feedback is the way in which organizations not only speak to their audience through social media channels, but how they manage listening within the same context; how does audience/stakeholder response filter back through corporate channels when received through social media networks? Following this internship experience, I have determined that EMC's social media accounts will be the research site for my MRP. I selected EMC based on research and insights gained throughout the internship experience, the company's veteran involvement in social media, and also for its business-to-business (B2B) classification, which means the company's transactions occur primarily between businesses as opposed to amongst business and consumer. Business-to-consumer (B2C) engagement on social media predominantly occurs from a marketing standpoint. B2B companies market less and instead focus on building greater brand awareness in the social media context. It is this activity that is of particular interest to my MRP.

Research and Findings

In an effort to better understand EMC's social presence, I undertook an ecological scan of both EMC's social footmark as well as that of other companies in the technology sector. Alongside EMC, I researched Hewlett Packard (HP) and Cisco Systems. An interesting similarity that I noticed between HP and Cisco's social media pages was the overlying theme of "humanity". Cisco's slogan is "the human network" and HP's is "IT humanity", including taglines of "where is the humanity in your technology?" and "technology with a human touch". I recall a conversation that Jamie Pappas and I had regarding this idea of "humanizing" a brand, particularly in online arenas. Jamie explained that this should be a "no brainer" and that these overt attempts to humanize technology are becoming cliché. This attempt to humanize a brand also builds off of the standpoint that the company (or the technology) do not, ultimately, have people behind them. This was particularly poignant insight into online marketing strategy that I gained.

Although my research originally focused on B2B companies alone, over the course of the internship, Jamie and I decided that it would be valuable to undertake a study of B2C (business to consumer) company usage of social media as well. In doing so, I sought B2C companies who engaged social media without engaging the tools simply from a marketing perspective, but also engaged in conversations with shareholders through social media. One of the best examples found was Levi's. To our surprise, Levi's jean company was doing a phenomenal job of engaging their audience through social media. Well above three million people "like" the official Levi's Facebook page and the average post on this page receives an average of 1500 comments – a substantial amount of activity! Posts on this page range from sneak previous of upcoming products to audience polls, the results of which the company will actually base upcoming product launches on. The level of engagement and audience listening that Levi's has incorporated into their

Facebook page lends to its success. The individuals who manage the page also show appreciation or provide feedback on every post or contribution that individuals make to the page.

A number of social media sites identify Microsoft as a leader in social media strategy. Unlike Levi's, however, Microsoft only has around 500,000 people who "like" their Facebook page. Although there is a lot of activity on the page, a lot of it is spam. People will make irrelevant comments or identify that they are "hackers". Unlike Levi's and EMC for that matter, Microsoft is mostly using this page as a marketing tool in which they promote a ton of their products but do not engage in conversation with other shareholders posting on their page. This came as a surprise considering Microsoft is not only a leader in the technology industry, but also because of the numerous social media acclamations they have received.

Internship Experience

It has been both a pleasure and a privilege to work with Jamie over the course of the past few months. The opportunity to learn from and engage in genuine conversations regarding social media with Jamie has been incredibly formative and foundational to the career I am building in communications and social media. I am incredibly thankful for all of the insight and information that Jamie has shared with me and the time that she so kindly took from her busy schedule to work with me one-on-one throughout this internship process. I think very highly of Jamie as a special career mentor and will always appreciate the chance she took on me.

In terms of the connection between my internship experience and area of research for the MRP, I was particularly fortunate to have already identified a general understanding of my research interests at the beginning of the program. Based on these preliminary interests, I sought an internship experience that would bring value to my experience in the MPC and enhance my understanding of the field in which I will be performing research for my MRP. I contacted Jamie Pappas directly via LinkedIn to determine if there would be any possibility that she could undertake an intern in her role at EMC. Jamie responded favourably and the internship experience moved forward positively from that point onward. Beyond the extensive research, data gathering, webinar attendance, etc., it was the one-to-one conversations that Jamie and I had regarding these various elements that shaped both my experience at EMC and my personal expertise related to social media. The time that Jamie took and the insights that she shared with me were both incredibly generous.

My experience at EMC also enabled me to integrate classroom content with practical experience. The emphasis on social media both in my research and internship experience reinforced, once again, the demand for the MPC to include course content in the area of social media as well as the need to integrate social media channels into the program's marketing strategy (as per our team presentation in Advanced Speaking & Presentation Technology).

Internship Wrap-up

The end of my internship also marks the end of Jamie's career at EMC Corporation. Jamie has accepted the role of VP of Social Media at AMP Agency, the leader in inspiring brands with integrated digital and experiential marketing. In this role, Jamie leads the development and execution of strategic digital influence and social media solutions for clients across a range of digital and social channels.

Like Jamie, I too have had the opportunity to accept a new position, which includes elements of marketing and communications, within the financial sector. I strongly believe that the combination of course work and my particular internship experience were invaluable components lending to my success as the chosen candidate for this position.

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GLOSSARY

The following is a list of terminology associated with this MRP:

<u>Autopoiesis</u>: Autopoiesis literally means "self-creation/organization" and is used to describe systems that reproduce themselves through the very components of which they are composed.

<u>B2B</u>: Business-to-business or B2B refers to companies whose transactions primarily occur between businesses as opposed to amongst business and consumer.

<u>Comments:</u> A comment is a user-generated post made in response to an initial post on Facebook. The initial post could be text, photo or multimedia; comments, on the other hand, are always textual.

<u>Feedback</u>: A response to a particular comment or post made on a social media account; the response could be made either by the corporation (i.e. the owner of the social media account) or one of its stakeholders.

<u>Inquiry</u>: The post requests information or asks users a direct question. *Inquiry* posts are intended to not only elicit a response from the organization, but also solicit user response.

<u>Integration</u>: A post from another social medium is integrated within the social medium in question; for example, a Twitter post has been enabled on the Facebook account or a blog entry is linked to the Twitter and/or Facebook account.

<u>"Likes":</u> A "like" is one of two ways to provide feedback on Facebook. The "like" button allows users to acknowledge a post in a positive way without having to provide actual commentary or new content.

<u>Response</u>: A comment has been posted or a stakeholder has posed an inquiry and the corporation has/has not responded as expected. The initial post is stakeholder generated and the *response* refers to the corporation's response/reaction to the user's post/comment.

<u>Social Media</u>: Online media used for social interaction; these media are part of Web 2.0, which enable user-generated creation and exchange of content (i.e. users can communicate and interact with one another via these media).

<u>Theme</u>: This refers to an event or topic that characterizes a post, e.g. "EMC's recordbreaking challenge" or "EMC World Conference".

<u>Web 2.0</u>: Web 2.0 refers to the body of online applications that enable information and knowledge sharing amongst individuals in interactive and collaborative virtual communities, for example, social- and professional-networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, blogs, wikis, forums, etc.