

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a purple top and a colorful necklace, is laughing heartily while sitting at a table. She is looking towards the left of the frame. In the background, another person is partially visible, and the setting appears to be a meeting or a workshop.

Making every customer
conversation count
A practical guide to
social CRM for small and
medium sized companies

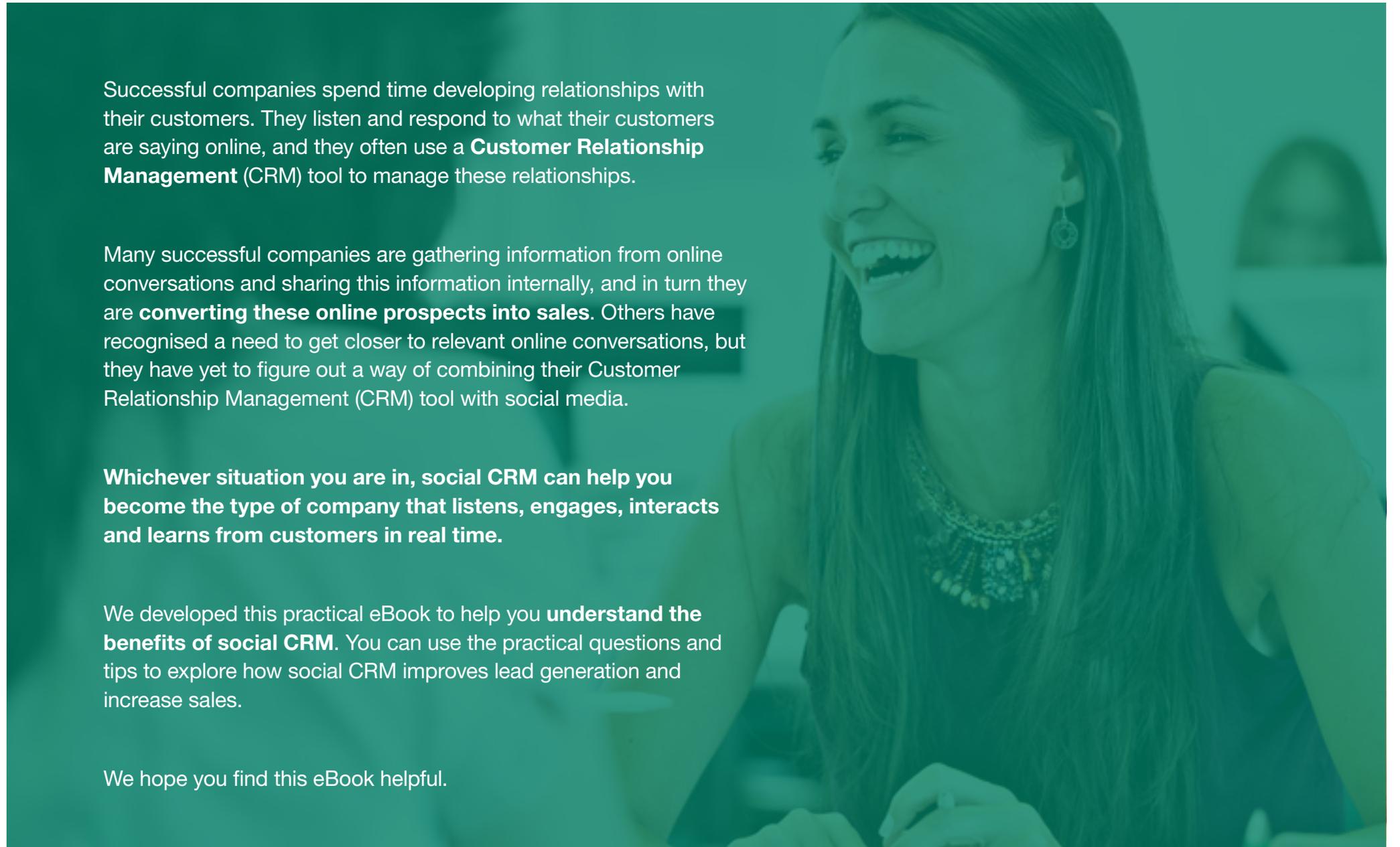
Successful companies spend time developing relationships with their customers. They listen and respond to what their customers are saying online, and they often use a **Customer Relationship Management (CRM)** tool to manage these relationships.

Many successful companies are gathering information from online conversations and sharing this information internally, and in turn they are **converting these online prospects into sales**. Others have recognised a need to get closer to relevant online conversations, but they have yet to figure out a way of combining their Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool with social media.

Whichever situation you are in, social CRM can help you become the type of company that listens, engages, interacts and learns from customers in real time.

We developed this practical eBook to help you **understand the benefits of social CRM**. You can use the practical questions and tips to explore how social CRM improves lead generation and increase sales.

We hope you find this eBook helpful.



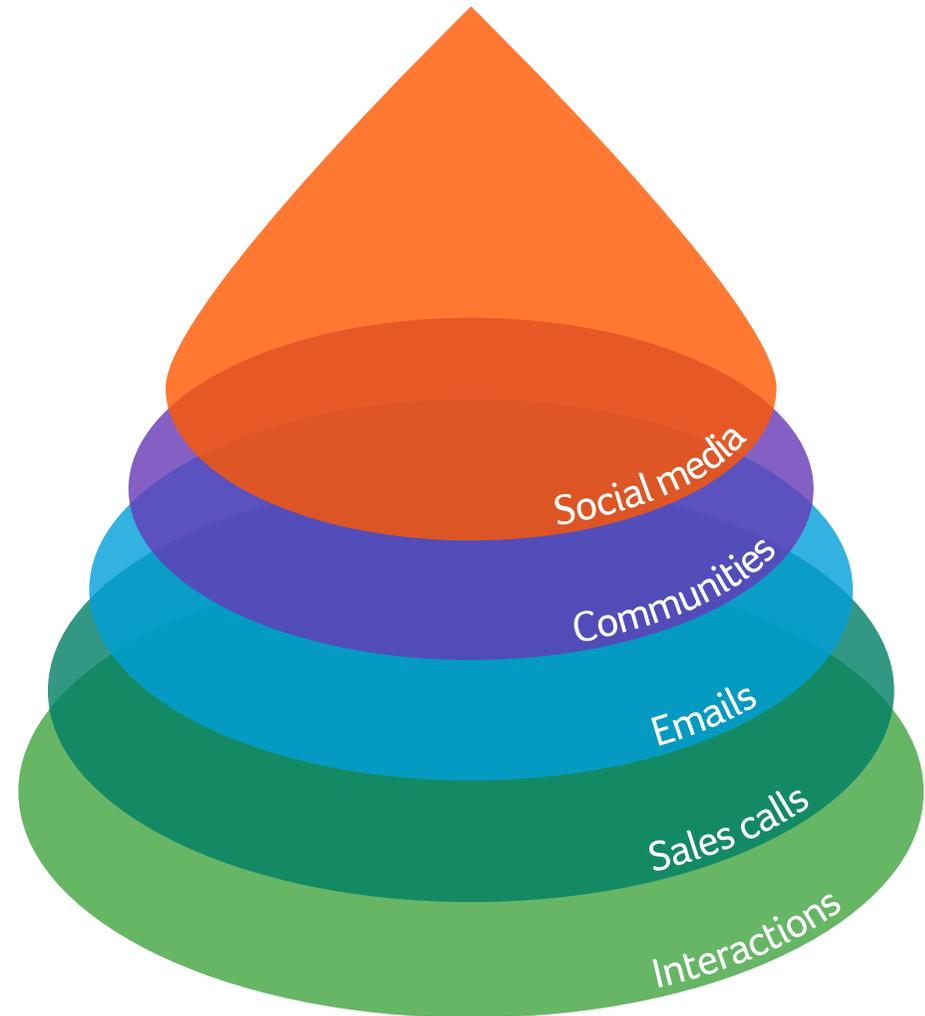
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What is social CRM?

Social CRM is a business strategy that enables the forging of richer, deeper and more intimate relationships with customers and prospects.

It takes the valuable customer insight and conversations you may be gathering on social media and customer communities, and it layers them on top of emails, sales calls and customer service interactions, which you have stored centrally in your CRM solution.



What's the difference between social CRM and CRM?

Customer Relationship Management is a method for managing your sales, marketing and customer service interactions with current and future customers. Typically, this method involves using a technology tool like Sage CRM to store information about your customers in one place.

Social CRM is more than simply monitoring what people are saying on social media, and it's not just about storing information in a customer relationship management tool. Social CRM is a strategy that combines CRM tools and technologies with the workflows and processes of a business. It makes customer conversations and interactions on social media as much a part of a company as more traditional business activities.

Successful companies of all sizes are realising the importance of managing social interactions with customers and they are prioritising social CRM. A recent study by Markets & Markets predicted the social CRM market will grow from STG£1.2 billion in 2013 to STG£5.7 billion in 2018.

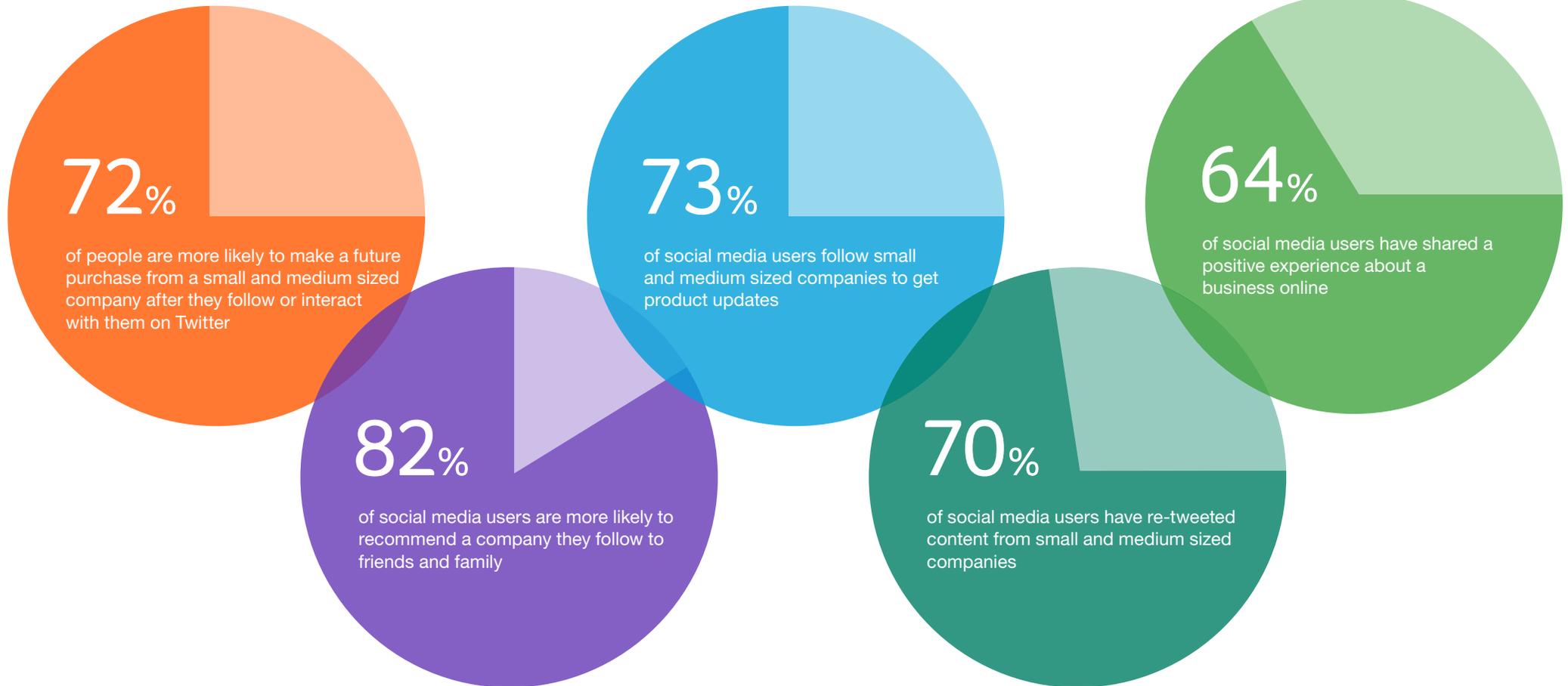


How can social media benefit my business?

According to analyst firm Gartner, by 2016 one and a half billion people will use social media networks. This means more customers of successful companies are gathering and conversing on social media about their favourite brands, products and services. Social media is an important communications outlet for most businesses. However, less than five per cent of business enterprises use social media as a tool for identifying new prospects¹.

¹Gartner Predicts 2014 CRM Sales. Gartner (2013)

We also found that:



From an **online survey** of 500 Twitter users in the US and UK by Market Probe International and Twitter

How can social media benefit my business?

Krishna De is an award-winning digital marketer and a social media strategist. She has worked with CEOs and senior leaders in business strategy, marketing, business development, human resources, PR and communications. Krishna De believes we are witnessing the emergence of social business.

Krishna De

“Today prospects and customers expect organisations to be able to respond to them in a multitude of channels from offline to online and at a time when it suits them.”

“This includes the adoption of processes and tools that ensure that social media channels are not only used for marketing communications... that they can be used to glean business intelligence and for social prospecting.”

How can social CRM benefit my business?

By making your daily social media activity an integrated part of your existing CRM, you can enable sales, marketing and customer service teams to become more customer-centric and communications focused. And you can begin to unlock market insight that drives competitive advantage.

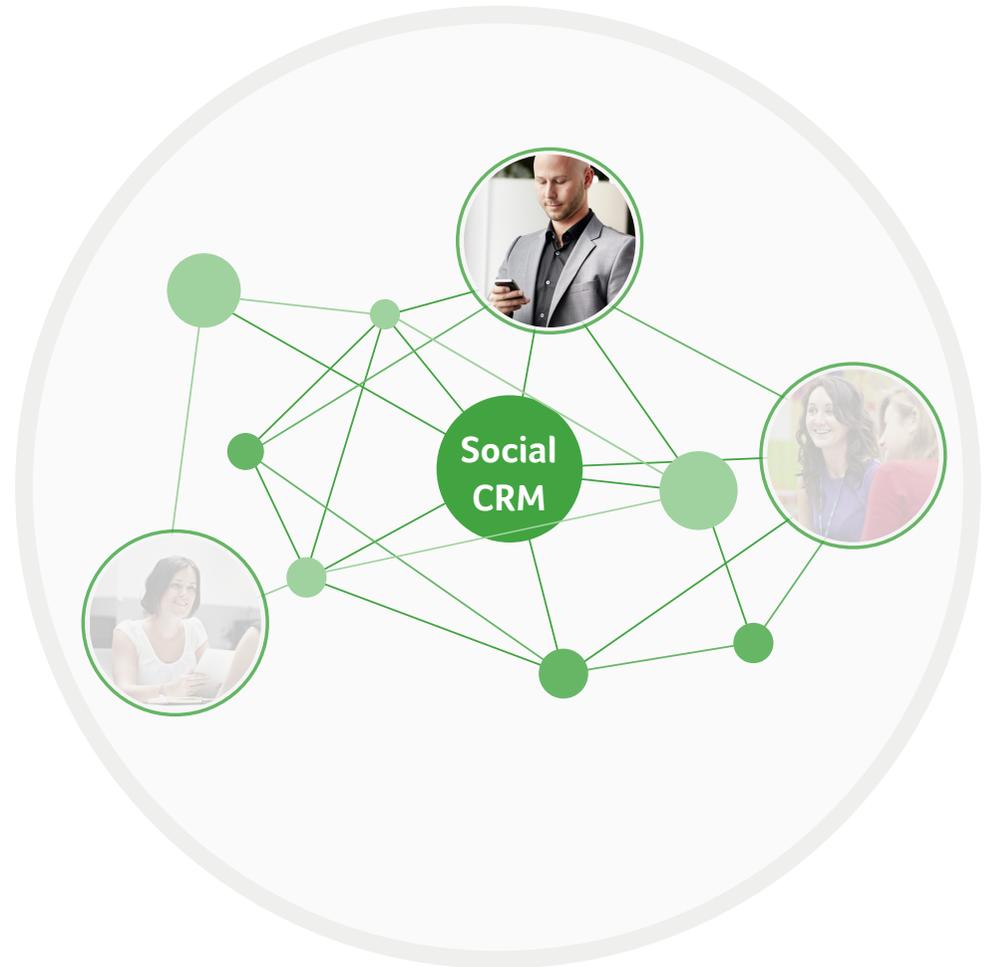
This is why more businesses are adopting a social CRM strategy, and why they are opting in to conversations with customers and prospects that would have been unimaginable a decade ago.



If you successfully implement social CRM your:

Customer service teams can use social networks to become more proactive. They can identify issues as they arise and respond quickly to customer complaints, thereby becoming more productive. A carefully composed reply to a public question on Twitter or Facebook may be read by thousands and can increase the visibility of and the level of trust in your brand. Similarly, other relevant stakeholders within a business can follow these conversations or cases and provide input accordingly.

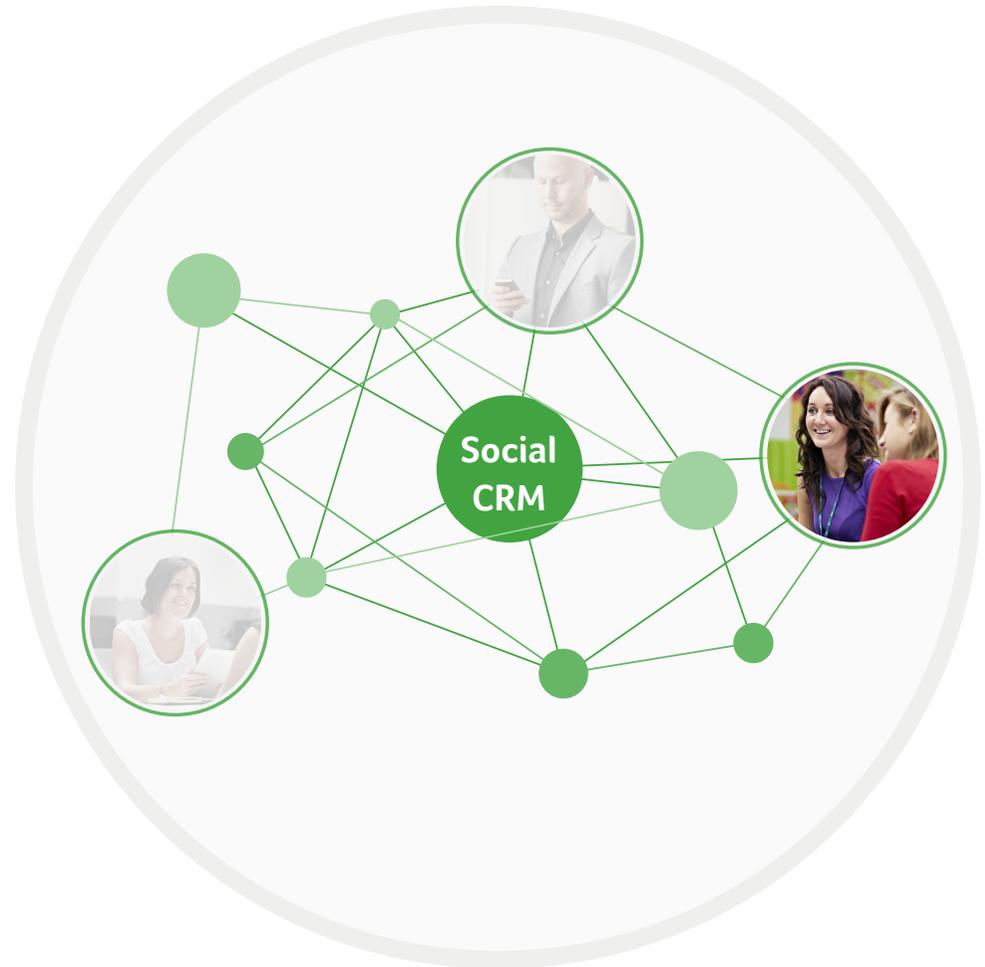
Sales teams can prepare for meetings on how to target new prospects by reviewing activity on networks like LinkedIn. They can also generate new leads and retain existing customers by listening to relevant social media conversations. And they can coordinate and evaluate the effectiveness of social prospecting.



If you successfully implement social CRM your:

Employees can spend less time navigating lengthy email threads and searching for specific pieces of information that are relevant to the account, contact or case they are working on. This is made possible if information about customers is stored in one central location, which everyone can access. Social CRM may even reduce the volume of wasteful and unproductive emails sent across a business. Employees can also use internal or gated communities to share information and to communicate with business partners or valued customers.

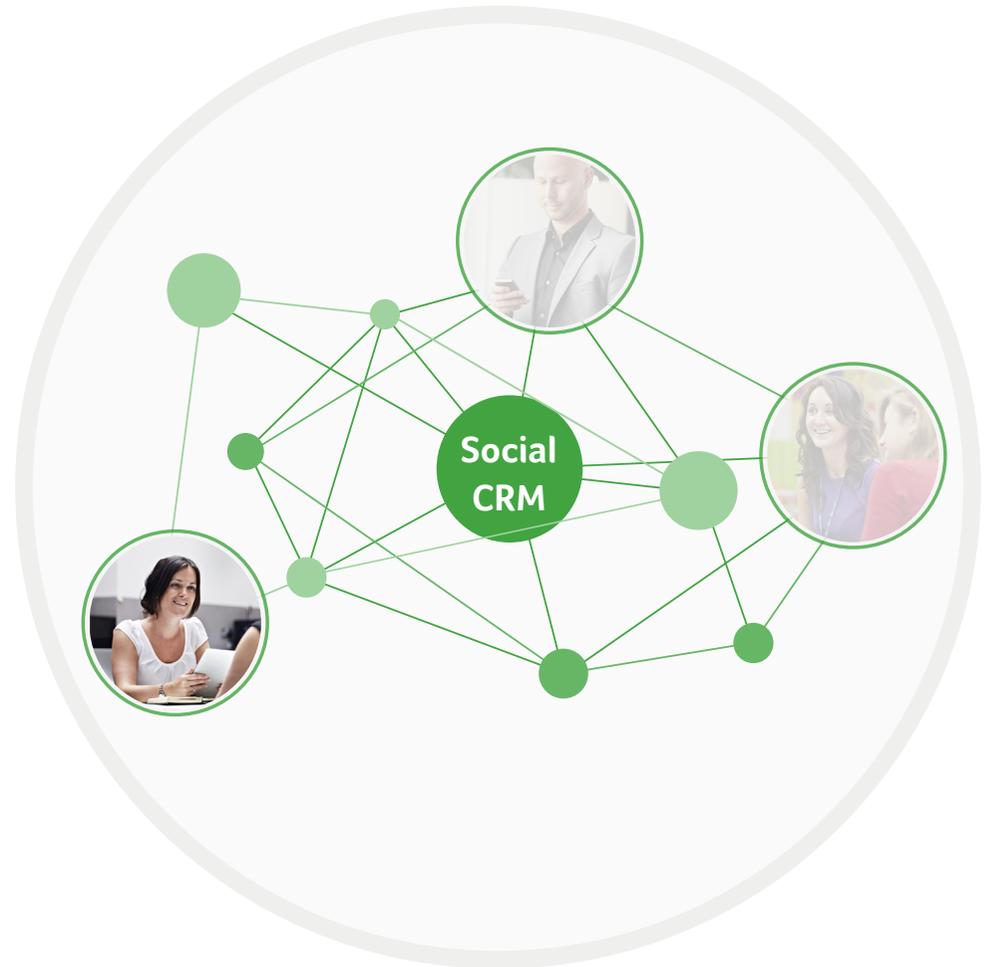
Business departments can begin to work outside of traditional hierarchical structures and share relevant information across departments and geography. This means questions raised by employees have a greater visibility across the company, and the answers to these questions are less dependent on individual team members or company bottlenecks. It also means your company can create up-to-date customer records for various departments using internal collaboration tools like Yammer.



If you successfully implement social CRM your:

Marketing teams can identify your company's biggest online champions and influencers and follow what they are saying and sharing. They can draw on Twitter discussions for feedback on new products and services. And they can use Facebook to launch and measure the impact of a special promotion. Marketing teams can also target campaigns more accurately if they know which social sites customers and prospects are visiting, what they are looking for and who they are talking to.

Management can prioritise social prospecting with the involvement of all relevant employees. This kind of company-wide leadership means you will be less reliant on individuals who champion social media and less affected if these individuals leave or move on to new roles.



How can social CRM benefit my business?

Krishna De

“Implementing social CRM in your business can yield increased productivity and help you achieve your strategic growth targets. It can ensure that all the relevant people who are involved in marketing, sales and customer support understand how to connect with a prospect or customer through their social networks.”

“You will be able to **confidently speak** on behalf of the organisation knowing what other interactions have taken place between the customer (or prospect) and other representatives of the business.”



My business isn't active on social media, where do we start?

STEP 1

Pick a social network and observe participants

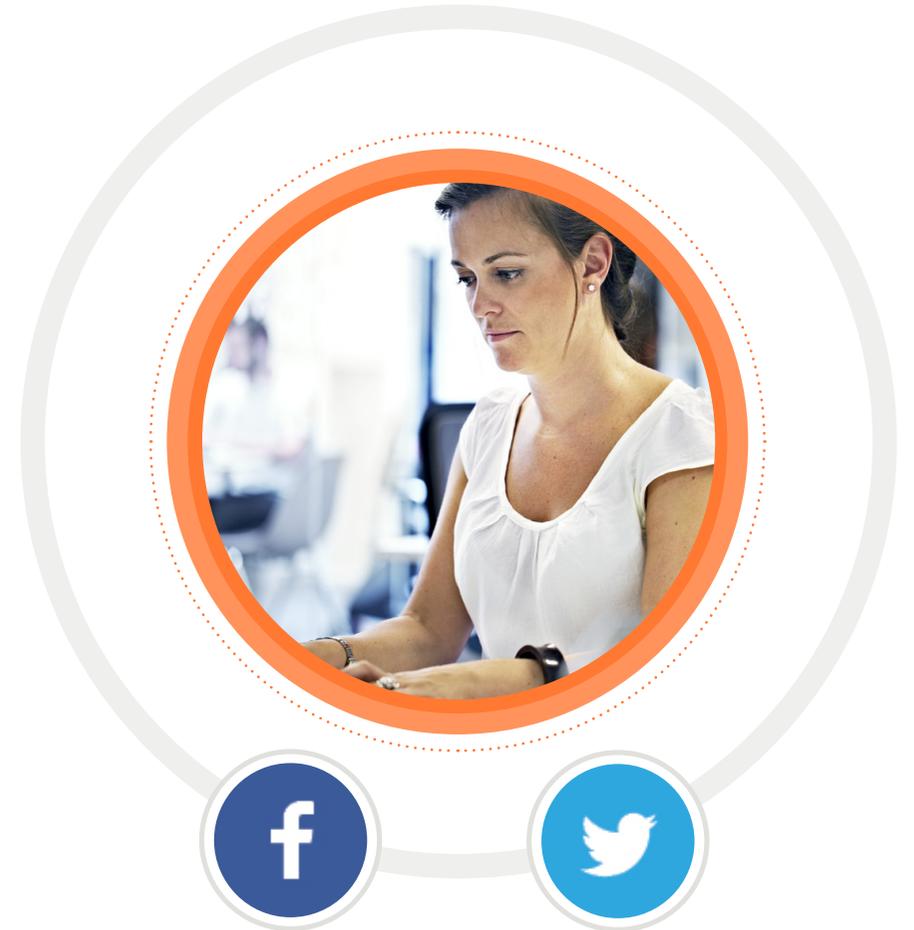
It's worth researching your preferred social network before posting social media content. This means signing up to a social media network and listening to others without necessarily participating. You can use this opportunity to familiarise yourself with the posting guidelines of each network and with what a business can and can't do or say.

If you haven't posted much social media content before, it's a good idea to study the etiquette, tone and nuances of online conversations. This will help you discover how or even if a particular social network will work for your business, product or service.

STEP 2

Talk to your customers online but resist selling to them

Your conversations on social media should be predicated on feeding the appetite of social media participants for sharing and discovering great content. Unlike newspaper readers and TV viewers, social media users have chosen communication channels that are more open to inflection and diversion. They are generally responsive to something new and interesting and will engage with, react to and ultimately shape emerging trends.



My business isn't active on social media, where do we start?

STEP 3

Establish long-term relationships

Companies that 'dip a toe' into social media are often disappointed by the lack of return. Tweeting details of new products or adding some fresh messaging on LinkedIn doesn't necessarily mean a corresponding surge in sales. While special offers and first-come, first-served promotions have their place and can even deliver short term wins, social media is best executed as a long game.

The idea is to foster relationships with customers through streams of regular conversations. These regular conversations with customers will provide you with greater customer insight.

STEP 4

Encourage customer engagement

Social media is about starting conversations as well as joining them. You can encourage engagement through competitions and special promotions. You can run polls to canvas opinion and reward participation with prizes or money-off vouchers.

You can reveal new product features and make announcements on Twitter, and you can run product-related polls on a LinkedIn group. It's also worth crowdsourcing customers for ideas about your products and services and posing questions that encourage constructive answers.



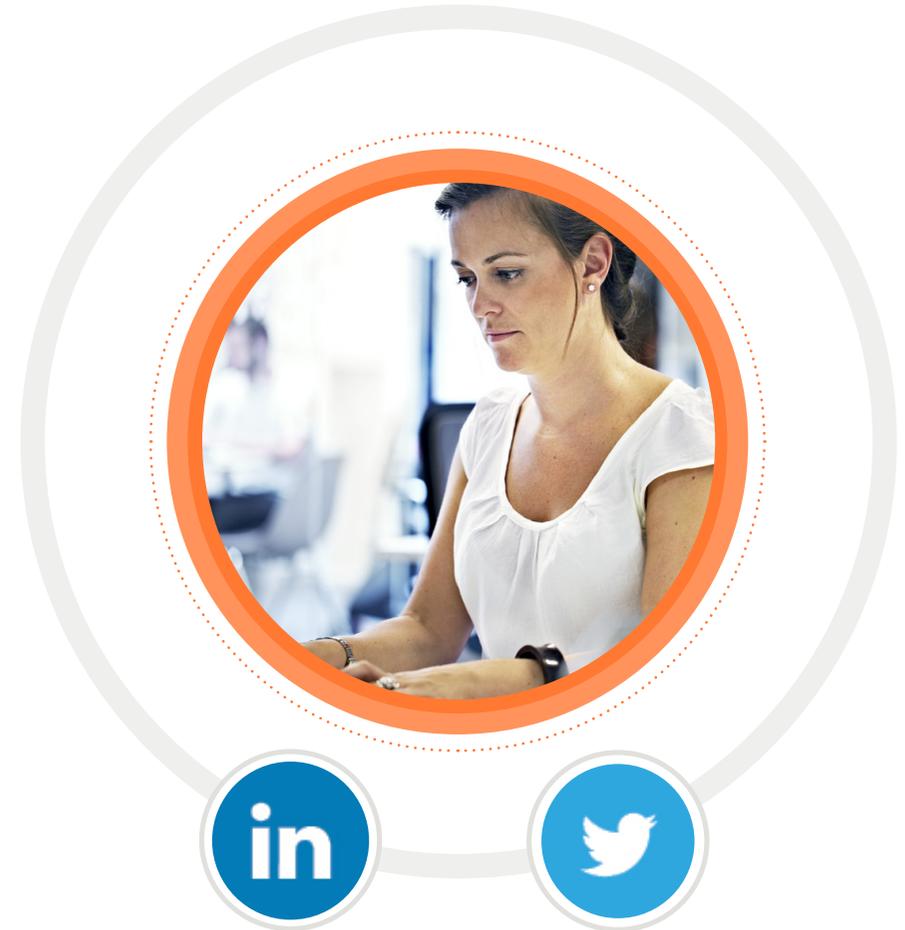
My business isn't active on social media, where do we start?

STEP 5

Let social media inform your business

Social media can provide a company with low-cost market research and the type of customer insight that was once the sole preserve of big business. You can also use social media to keep up-to-date on the progress of customers, leads and business partners by following their LinkedIn page, Twitter stream or other relevant social media channels.

All of this is an essential part of social CRM.



A photograph of two men sitting at a wooden table outdoors, looking at a smartphone. The man on the left is holding the phone, and the man on the right is pointing at the screen. They are both wearing blue shirts. In the background, there are green plants and a blurred building. The image is overlaid with a large green circle containing text and a smaller blue circle containing text.

Krishna De

“When establishing your social media plan for your business, ensure that you take into account any requirements for compliance due to your industry sector. Take the time to develop and communicate social media policies and governance to help you manage your reputation online.”

“It is also important to identify your social media and social CRM goals and objectives so that you can determine what success will look like and therefore track your return on investment when implementing your programme.”

How can I implement social CRM?

The introduction of some simple working processes around the tools and solutions you may already own can build a foundation for social CRM and make social media part of a holistic CRM strategy.

Many companies are drawn towards social CRM but they are unsure how to proceed. The good news is you may already have laid the groundwork for social CRM.



Consider:

- Have you used your **Facebook** company page to **engage** with a customer or lead?
- Do you encourage more senior employees to **share** information with new employees so they can do their job properly?
- Do you manage an internal community where customers and business partners **contribute**?
- Do you follow and converse with brands or industry thought leaders on **Twitter**?
- Do you upload or comment on company videos on **YouTube**?
- Is your company listed and active on **LinkedIn**, and are you connecting and conversing with partners, leads and customers?
- Have you identified your brand or product's biggest online **champions** and **influencers**?
- Have you **contributed** to industry topics and posts on relevant LinkedIn groups?
- Do your sales, marketing, customer service and other internal teams collaborate using social tools like **Yammer**?
- Have you used any of the above networks as a **customer service channel**?
- Are you alerted when a customer publicises a **success** online and do you know when to contact them and offer congratulations?

YES!

If you can answer **yes** to some of these questions, then you may have already gathered information about what your customers are saying online; or you may be in the process of forging a social centric business culture.

?

If you can't answer yes right now, you may benefit from reviewing the **five steps** outlined earlier in this eBook.

I'm engaging with customers on social media, what next?

Now that you are successfully engaging with customers, you can consider your strategy for storing and sharing this information across your business. To implement a social CRM strategy there are a number of things you can do.

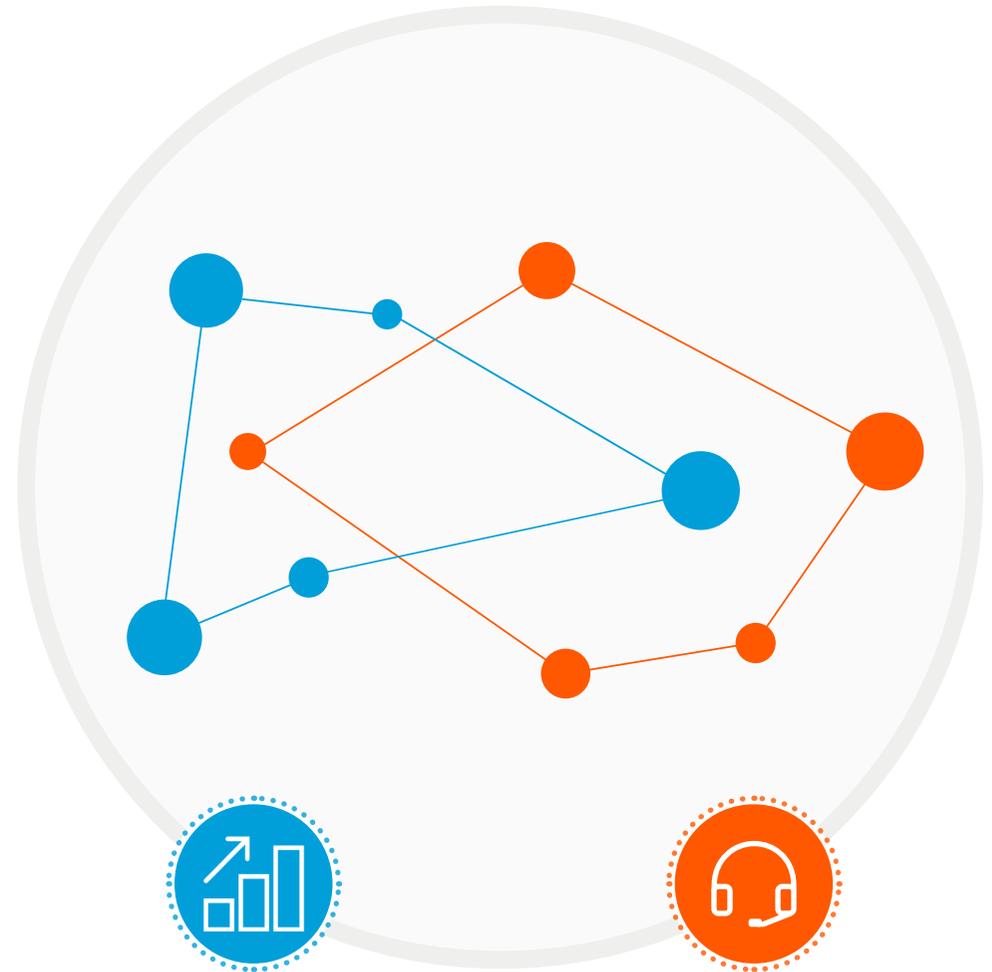
I'm engaging with customers on social media, what next?

Firstly, consider why you need social CRM.

Consider what would happen if, for example, several leads of a telecommunications distributor posted technical queries about the distributor's products on an industry LinkedIn group. These customers posted their queries a week ago and they were answered by the company's sales team.

Meanwhile, the distributor's customer service team has spent several days providing support to customers on an internal community on a related product issue. However, the distributor's customer service and sales teams were unaware of these separate sets of customer queries. This is because traditionally these teams operate within individual silos.

This is a clear case for social CRM.



I'm engaging with customers on social media, what next?

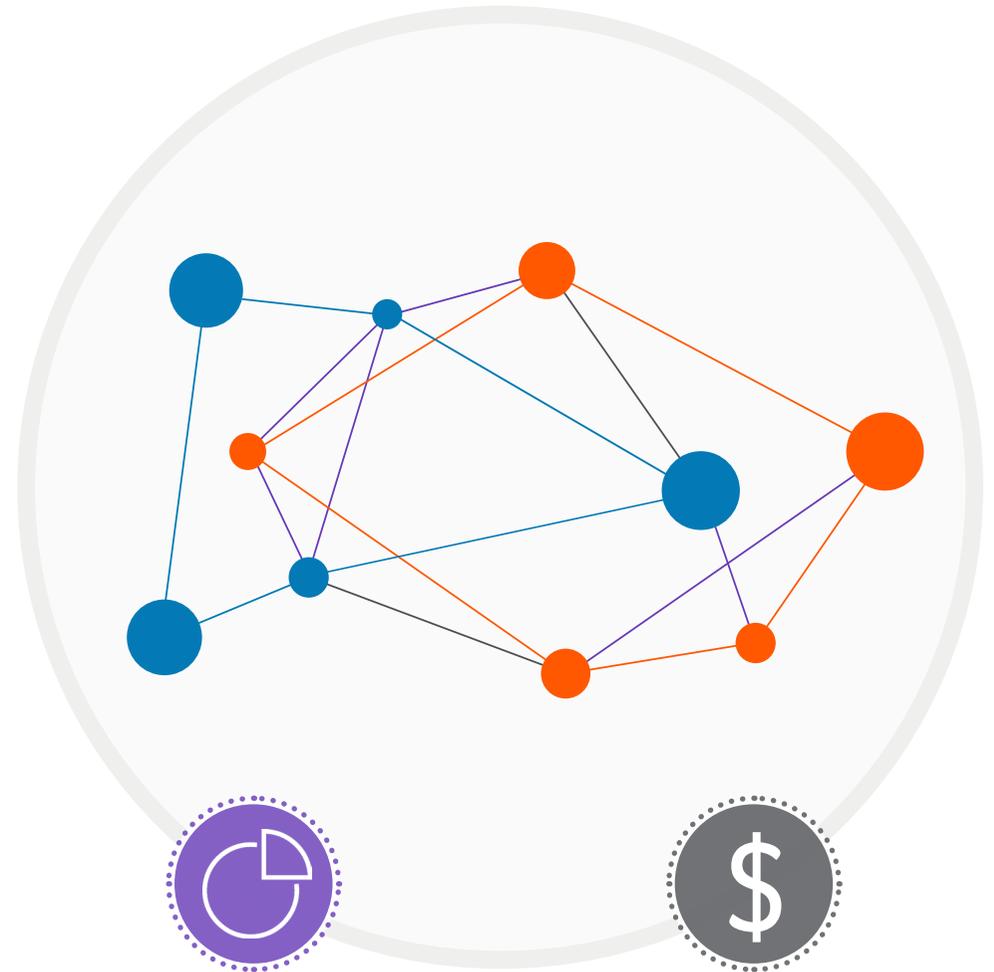
Next, consider what you want social CRM to achieve.

In the previous case, the sales manager of the distributor wants his team to have current information when selling to customers over the phone, on social media or face to face.

The distributor's customer service manager wants her team to have access to all queries and complaints raised by customers, whether on LinkedIn, over the phone or via email.

The marketing manager wants each department to communicate to customers consistently, while the finance manager wants everyone to achieve their business goals within budget.

In this case, social CRM could help achieve business goals. It can help the company sell better and provide improved customer support.



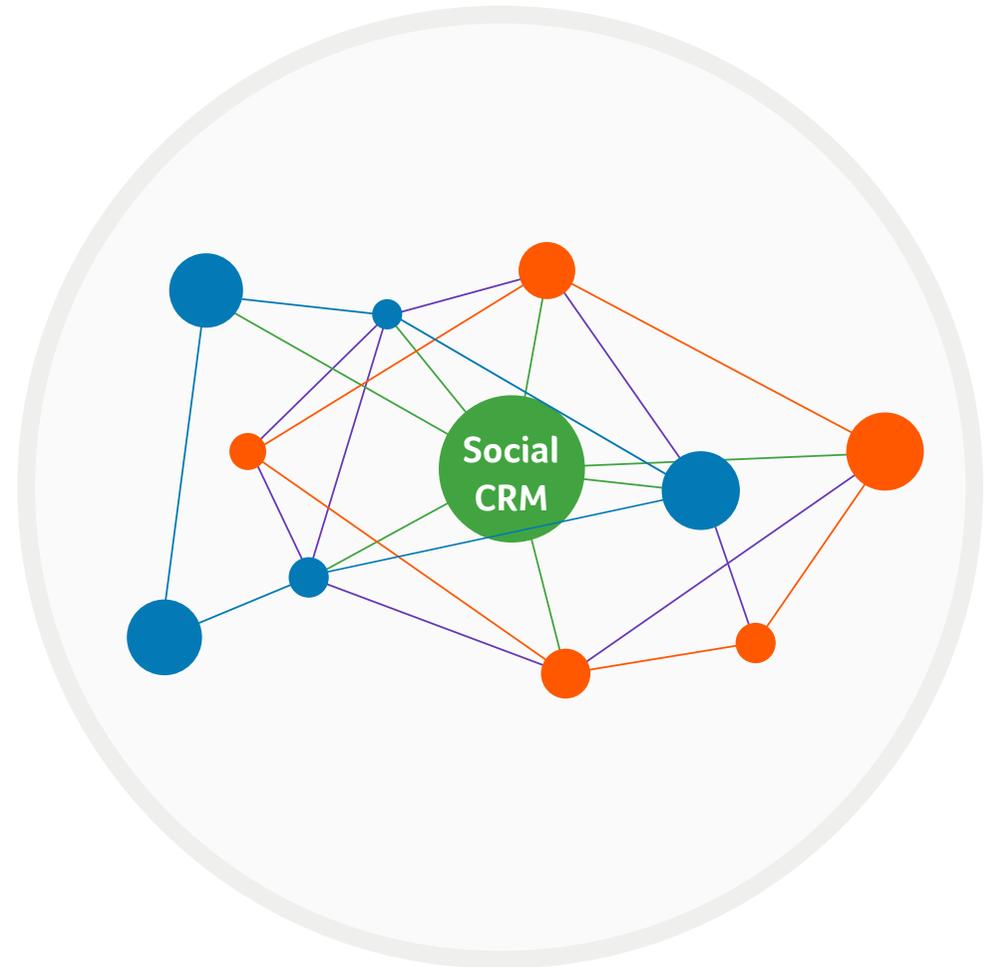
I'm engaging with customers on social media, what next?

Now ask how can you implement social CRM.

This involves looking at your current and potential social media channels and developing guidelines and plans for interacting with customers and for sharing this information internally and externally.

The customer service team in the previous example can commit to replying to customer product queries on LinkedIn and on internal communities within one day. The company's sales team can commit to more regular social media updates and agree to provide weekly updates to customer service about customer queries.

Both teams can agree to share information about their work using an internal collaboration tools instead of relying solely on email. Yammer, for example, is a useful tool for teams who want to collaborate on projects, and it is supported by Sage CRM.

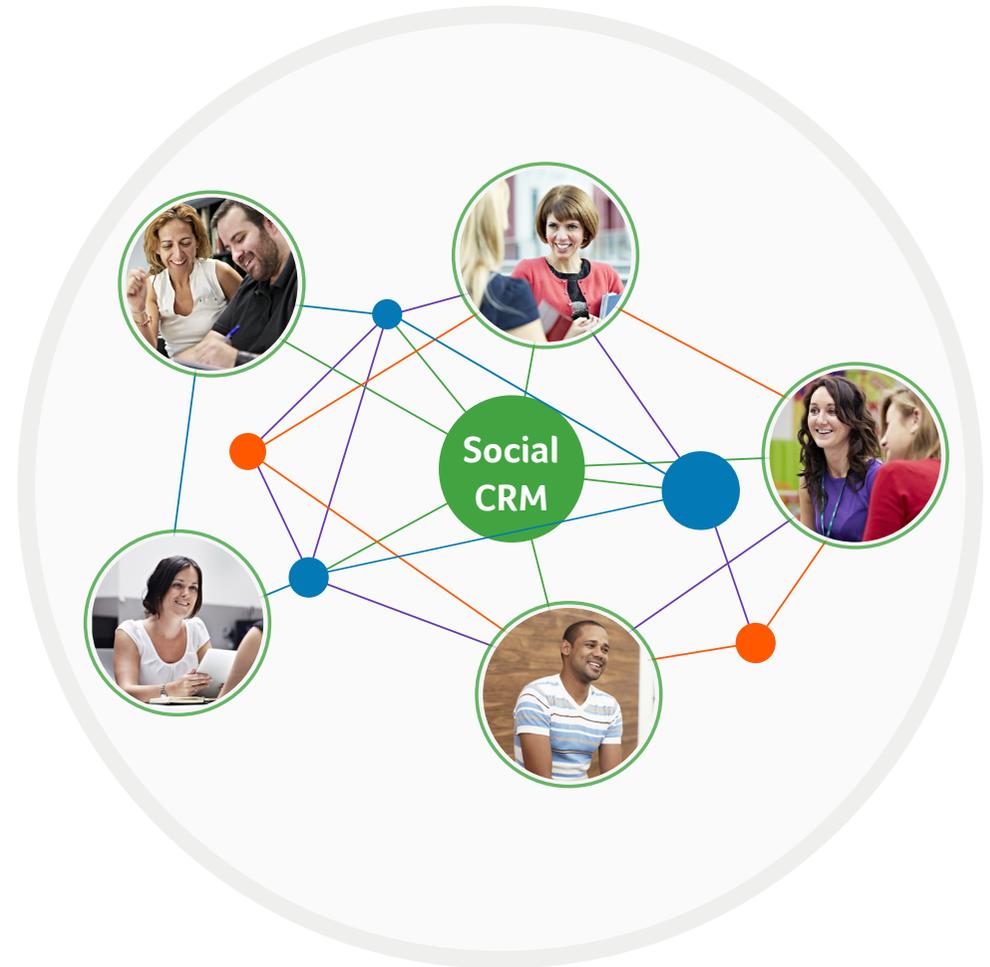


I'm engaging with customers on social media, what next?

Individual team members can also take responsibility for identifying information about customers that can and can't be shared internally and externally. In the previous example, privacy and data protection legislation may mean the distributor requires express consent from a customer before sharing details about a new partnership internally or externally.

Similarly, it may be appropriate for the distributor to share information about an account, contact or case on an internal community, but this information may not be suitable for public consumption.

In this case, social CRM is going to map the company's workflows and processes.



I'm engaging with customers on social media, what next?

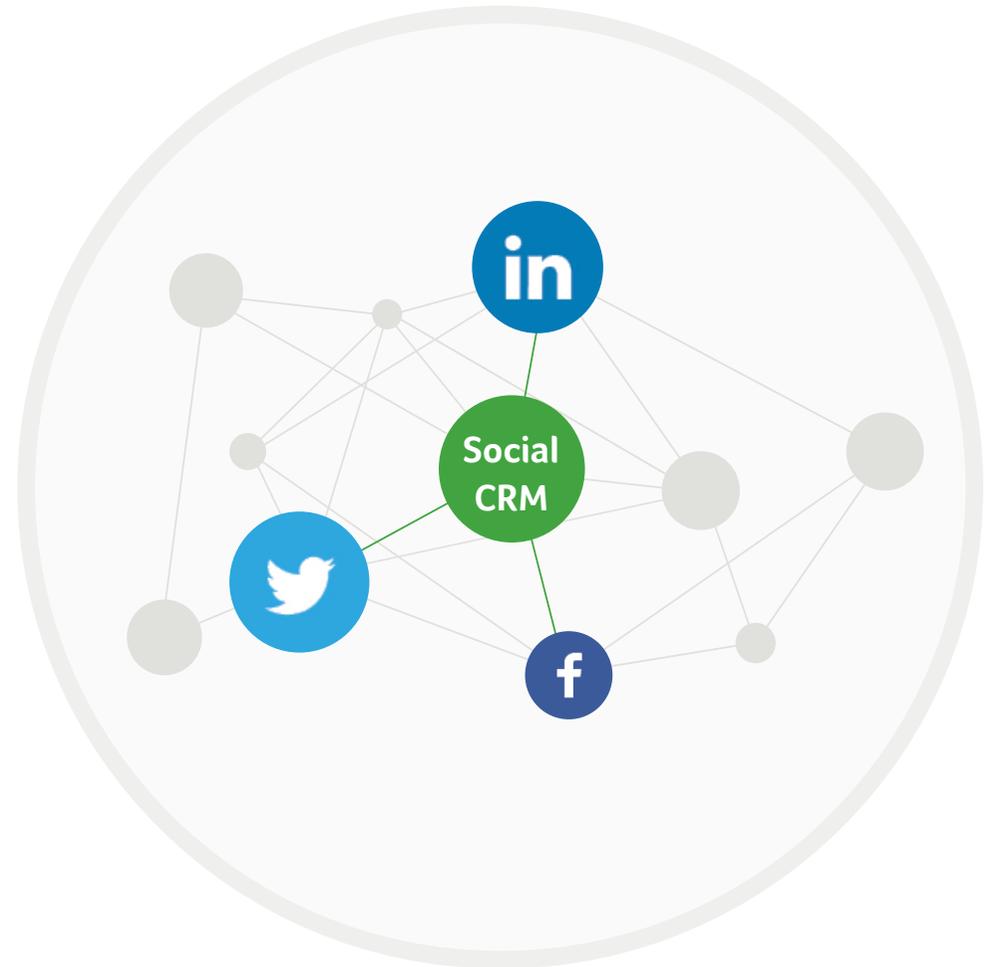
Next, determine which tool is right for your business.

There are a number of tools that let business people manage social media and share information with other team members.

The right technology enables you to monitor and manage all social media activity in one CRM solution, and it provides a complete picture of customer and prospect interactions. In other words, a CRM tool is more encompassing than a shared Excel spread sheet or document library.

The distribution company in the previous example can start by evaluating its size, in-house expertise, technical and customer requirements. They can begin to plan for implementing social CRM, and they can contact a vendor like Sage to discuss a tool that enables its social CRM strategy.

Potentially, a sales rep for this telecommunications distributor could communicate more effectively with customers with the right CRM tools. For example, while travelling, he could monitor social interactions on LinkedIn using his tablet and, while on site, he could continue this conversation face to face.



I'm engaging with customers on social media, what next?

Finally, promote social CRM inside your business.

Social CRM only works when all members of the company have bought into this strategy. In other words, it's not enough for one person or team to handle social media and take responsibility for sharing relevant information internally.

The general manager of the company in the previous example can promote a social CRM culture by incentivising online customer engagements internally and by encouraging staff to share information using tools like Yammer.

The general manager can also provide training for staff in the company's chosen CRM tool so that employees become less concerned with technology and more concerned with customer conversations. Similarly, the sales manager can incentivise social engagements with customers by offering discounts to members of private LinkedIn groups, for example.

In this way, the company's management can break down organisational barriers, respond to customer feedback and encourage ideas that enable better business decisions.



What's my return on investment on social CRM?

Social CRM is a relatively new strategy but there are number of actions you can take when justifying social CRM against the bottom line:



If a customer finds an answer to a query on a company community, consider the value of **time saved** by customer service.



Place a value on **information and content shared online** about your company's brand, product or service by customers and third parties.



Assess **what a manager can accomplish** if less of their time is spent responding to common requests for information.



Track how many **hours per week** employees spend using social media to interact with customers.



Ask if a salesperson can generate more sales with better access to **information customers share online**.



Weigh the impact of a positive or negative **social media comments** about a company's product or service.



Query if a salesperson can generate repeat sales if they are aware of a customer's **online habits** and how they express their post-purchase satisfaction.



Evaluate the **economies of scale** in managing one rather than many customer databases.

What's my return on investment on social CRM?

Krishna De

Krishna De also advises taking time to communicate and celebrate success stories, “so that [you] can understand the outcomes of implementing social CRM practices in your organisation and how it has been of benefit to your customer and to the business.”

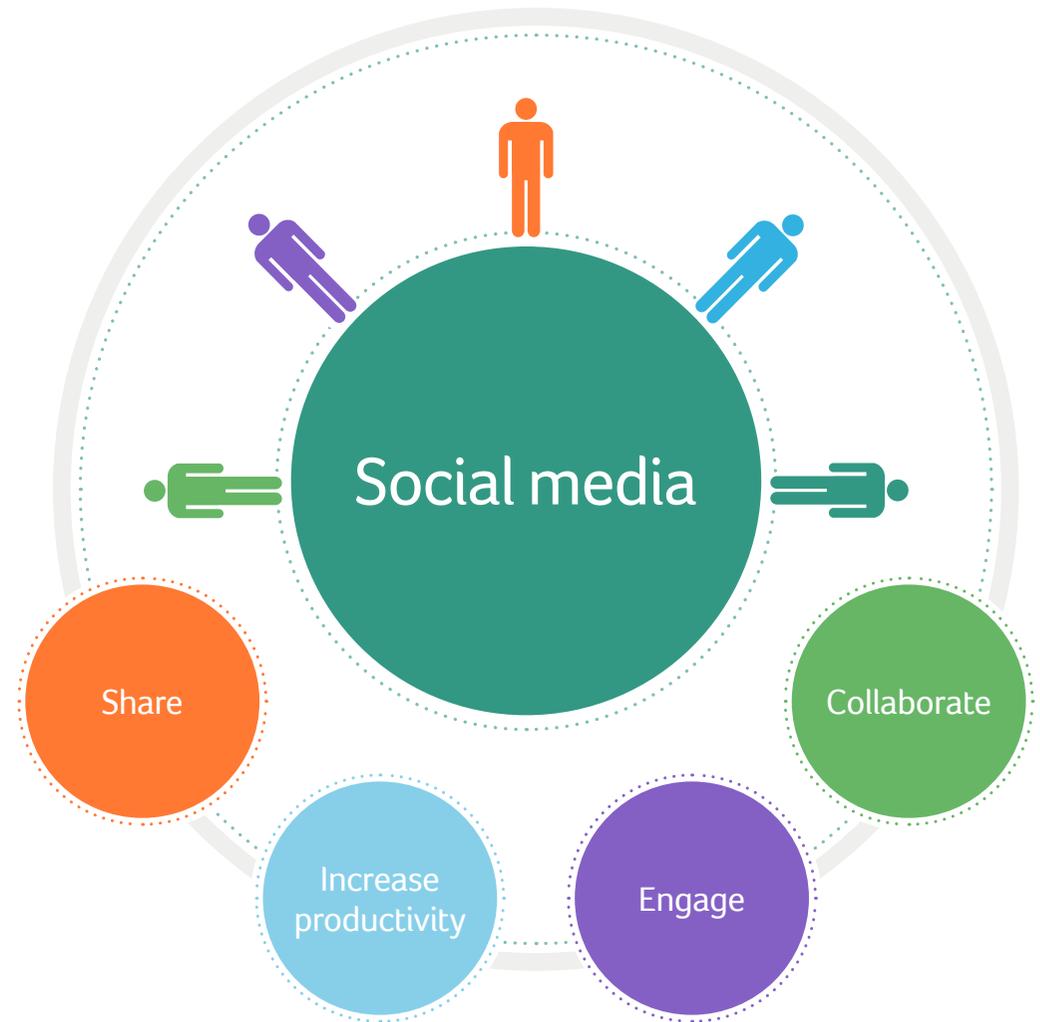


Is the future social?

Social media is a comparatively new channel for businesses, and new networks may yet emerge while others could fade away. In other words, there is no gold standard for social media. There will always be a place for traditional public relations and marketing activity within a business, but social media cannot be ignored. The sooner you integrate it into your wider marketing strategy, the more successful your business will become.

Implementing social CRM means you can encourage employees to share relevant information and work collaboratively rather than within individual silos. And a company that succeeds in social CRM can break through traditional hierarchies and benefit from increased productivity.

If you implement social CRM you can achieve competitive advantage over other companies. You can establish a culture that makes it easier to tap into social media trends and engage with customers online and offline. A social CRM strategy also means your company can develop a customer-centric view and become less dependent on single-channel social applications and tools.



How can Sage CRM help?

Sage CRM integrates with key social media and internal collaboration tools including LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Yammer. It enables you to engage with prospects and customers in a collaborative manner in order to generate leads, foster loyalty and increase revenue.

Cellular Solutions successfully integrated social media into Sage CRM and as result it dramatically improved its levels of customer service.

“It’s an extra avenue to generate leads and generate interest,” said Mike Bowers, managing director of Cellular Solutions. “If people are finding you in multiple places, they’re more likely to come to you when they’re ready to buy.”

Bowers also explains that social CRM provides him with greater business insight.

“I can see accurately where we’re going as a business. And week by week, if the figures aren’t increasing, then I’m the one asking the questions.”



Click to watch the video or visit

<http://bit.ly/SageSocialCRM>

How can Sage CRM help?

The heritage of Sage is built on working closely with companies like yours. With over six million customers worldwide, we are committed to providing practical tools companies need to achieve their business goals.

You can find out more about how we can help you by visiting [sagecrm.com](https://www.sagecrm.com).

Take a free
30-day trial



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