

## 16.11: Rules of engagement

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Social media implies a democratisation of information, and requires authenticity and openness from those who deliberately use it for marketing. This means that good and bad stories spread easily and stay accessible. Jeff Jarvis had problems with Dell way back in 2005, and you can easily find all the relevant information about his ordeal with a quick Google search for ‘Dell hell’.

Although you engage publicly with a wide audience when marketing online, marketers need to remember that they are communicating with individuals. While marketers should engage in the conversation, and ideally lead it, they cannot control it.

### Marketing to content creators

Content creators can have strong followings on social media and are thus regarded as online influencers.

Online influencers hold a lot of sway, and should form part of any social media strategy. Supply such content creators with the tools and resources they need to talk easily about your product, including links to your social profiles, Twitter handles and hashtags.

### Marketing to content consumers

Social media allow anyone to have a say, and the same tools that are available to individuals are available to companies. Company blogs allow a brand to build an online personality and to interact with their target market. Entertainment created and spread via social media increases brand touchpoints. Using the same channels that are available to your consumer aids in understanding the consumer, and levels the plane of conversation.

When using social media to reach out to content consumers, go to where your consumers are. The media you use is dictated by your users. For example, a nightclub for students can create a Facebook Page to advertise its weekly specials and interact with fans, while Land Rover enthusiasts may prefer to engage on a discussion forum.

With all interactions, marketing messages need to be clearly identified and labelled, with a disclaimer added if necessary. Trying to hide them as something else will only decrease your authenticity and probably your following.

### Marketing to content sharers

Content sharers are content consumers who also pass your message on, whether it’s by chat or email, by sharing a link on a blog or by submitting your content to a bookmarking or aggregating service. They are a crucial link in the chain that passes your message around. Make it as easy as possible to share your content by using chiclets and unique and easy-to-read URLs.

### Advertise on social media platforms

While marketers can use the tools of social media to convey their message, the characteristics that define a social media platform are also important. Social media allows users to express themselves, and this means that rich demographic and psychographic information can be compiled for more useful and targeted advertising. This presents many opportunities for finding creative ways to reach an advert-fatigued demographic. It also introduces the risk of dealing with personal information so make sure you’re up to speed with the relevant laws in your country.

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