TfL and social media

Debrief
October 2015
Background, objectives and approach
Background

- TfL is currently trying to meet several customer and organisational needs through social media (customer service, journey planning, promotion) but this strategy has evolved organically, and TfL now want to better understand what people want from TfL via social media.

- Research is required to inform TfL on:
  - How customers view TfL’s social media presence
  - Where to focus efforts and adjust social media approach in certain areas
  - How TfL measures up versus other organisations
  - The impact of social media on reputation
  - What social media is doing well, and not so well, versus other channels

Business question

What is TfL’s role in social media and how can TfL’s social media strategy be adapted to better meet customers’ needs and expectations?
Overview of our approach

**EXPERT INTERVIEWS**
- Interviews with experts in social media strategy:
  - To explore best practice and future strategy for social

**2CV WIRE: COMPARATIVE REVIEW**
- Discourse analysis of three organisations that deal with ‘crisis’ management
- Tracking the day-to-day practice of social feeds from other organisations - exploring the reality of the relationship between organisations and their customers

**CUSTOMER FOCUS GROUPS**
- To deep dive into their social media behaviours, expectations and ideas for the future of TfL’s social media

**2CV HUB: PRE-TASK**
- Online forum pre-task to understand customer use of / engagement with social media for travel information
  - What they value / dislike
  - Examples of other organisations that they think are doing well vs not so well

Customer use / behaviours, expectations and future desires

**Speaking to TfL customers who use social media**
Putting social media use into context

- Important to bear in mind that not everyone in London uses social media, and 9% of Londoners do not have internet access.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of Londoners*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use any Social Media</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly use Twitter</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly use Facebook</td>
<td>61</td>
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- Social Media users are most likely to be aged 16 to 34 and female (although Twitter users are slightly more likely to be male), while non users are more likely to be aged 55+.

*Figures from Digital Media Monitor Spring 2015 – re-percentaged to take into account the 9% of Londoners who do not have internet access.
Headlines from the research
Key headlines

Brands on social media are on a path towards being popular and successful with customers on these channels

- **Entry-level**: Present on social media but are yet to develop a successful social strategy and are not meeting many customer expectations
- **Mid-level**: Visibly trying to develop their social strategy and are broadcasting information relevant to their customers
- **Best-in-class**: Demonstrate true customer focus through engaging and interacting with its customers in a truly authentic and relevant way

Customers feel TfL is currently at mid-level, as it is highly informative but is not yet fully engaging or interacting with customers on their level

- Individual line and pan-London Twitter feeds provide useful information, but can lack the human touch or personality that customers want and expect
- The general feeds/pages provide some useful updates, but also lack personality and are not engaging. They don’t appear to encourage interaction that customers want and expect, particularly from the Facebook page

TfL must decide whether to stay at mid-level or invest in being best-in-class

- At mid-level TfL must continue to focus on delivering the information and customer care – but dial up the human side to the organisation
- To be best-in-class, TfL must deliver a more coherent social strategy that is authentic, responsive and engages customers. These brands invest in social media to ensure it complements other communication channels, brings to life the brand personality and demonstrates true customer care
Context of social media
Several major trends are influencing what customers expect from companies on social media

- **Growth of on-demand culture**
  - Expectations for brands to be ‘always on’ and engage with their customers 24/7

- **Human touch and authenticity**
  - Expectations for brands to be authentic
  - Openness, honesty and transparency are important values to live by
  - Social media enable brands to engage with their customers on a human level

- **Personalisation**
  - Expectations for brands to offer a personalised experience
  - Customers want to be remembered and listened to by organisations
  - Social media enables brands to build and maintain relationships and personalise their service to the needs of the individual

**Responsiveness** is a key attribute of social media and is expected to be fast.
Four key needs from brands who use social media

- **Relevant information for daily life**
  - eg Power outages, travel times etc
  - "A lot of the brands I follow on Twitter are giving me useful information that helps me, like recipes for dinner, whether there are delays…"

- **Customer care**
  - eg Resolving complaints
  - "I go straight to Twitter now if I have a problem with something and want to contact the company"

- **Entertainment and inspiration**
  - eg Content, articles, images
  - "I like when brands have entertaining stuff to read, or videos, or sometimes I see stuff which makes me think I should really go out and do it"

- **Promotions**
  - eg competitions, challenges for prizes etc
  - "It’s fun when they’ve got competitions on their page, makes me want to get involved!"

Needs can differ depending on the context of the individual
Brands are expected to play to the ‘rules’ of each social media platform – each platform has its own primary needs that it fulfills

**Twitter**
- Primarily for seeing and engaging in conversations
- Brands have permission on Twitter to engage with customers, particularly about products/services
- Key platform to ‘push information’ ‘respond to events’ and demonstrate customer care in a public way

**Facebook**
- Primarily for establishing and building connections (friendships)
- Difficult for brands to build authentic ‘friendships’ with customers, as this is a personal space
- Important to engage with customers through content and incentives

**Instagram**
- A platform to share images – to bring to life a brand’s story
- Not one that many customers engage with brands on at the moment (unless they have a clear ‘visual voice’)
- Brands have permission to develop their Instagram presence to bring to life the personality of the organisation

Responsiveness is expected across all platforms. Lack of response can be taken personally.
Brands on social media
Brands fall into three broad categories on social media

- Customers are aware and understand that once brands join social media, they are on a journey to learn what works and what doesn’t work
- There are three broad stages in this journey

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry-level</th>
<th>Mid-level</th>
<th>Best-in-class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presence</strong></td>
<td><strong>Informational</strong></td>
<td><strong>Human and engaging</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Present but yet to develop a successful social strategy that integrates social with other channels or play by the ‘rules’ of social media</td>
<td>• Pushing relevant and useful information</td>
<td>• Play by the ‘rules’ of social media: behaving like a human and living the brand’s personality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrating customer care through responsive dialogue with customers</td>
<td>• Authentic, confident and consistent brand voice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Starting to integrate social media with other communication channels</td>
<td>• Engaging content that fits with the brand and consistent two-way communication with their customers</td>
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<td>• Clear strategy to deal with customer care issues</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Integrate social media effectively with other communications channels</td>
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Best-in-class brands are truly customer focused

**Human and engaging**
- Play by the ‘rules’ of social media: behaving like a human and living the brand’s personality
- Authentic, confident and consistent brand voice
- Engaging content that fits with the brand and consistent two-way communication with their customers
- Clear strategy to deal with customer care issues
- Integrate social media effectively with other communications channels
A wide range of service and product brands are best-in-class on social media.

Mastering the human touch

Customer (@gay_platform): "@O2 We’re still waiting for that apology... or maybe they texted me and I can’t see the message because my phone DIDN’T WORK"

O2 response: "@gay_platform Firstly, here are our deepest apologies. Network should be back up and running for you. How’s your service?"

Customer (@grahamcummings): "@O2 F**K You! Suck d**k in hell"

O2 response: "Maybe later, got tweets to send"

Customer (@24vend_Ltd): "@O2 had to travel to Italy to get signal – desperate times!!"

O2 response: "You can come back now. We’re back in business :)

Customer (@Mfob): "@O2 Because of you I missed a call from my dear old mum. For that I owe you a pint. Ta! :)

O2 response: "Um... you’re welcome, we think. But if your mum asks, we’ll totally deny this tweet"

"O2 on Twitter have mastered the art of being like a great friend who talks to you on your level, will always try to engage the customer, and injects humour, pathos, and a good dose of can do spirit into everything they do."
Various customer service organisations are at mid-level

Doing their best to offer the human touch

TfL is perceived to be mid level due to its strong focus on information provision

“British Airways…. Comments on their twitter page are responded to quickly and professionally. The response shows empathy to the customer, provides a solution and includes fact. There is no over performing or under delivering”
Several transport brands are at entry-level on social media and are not meeting the needs of customers

- Lack of personality or human touch
- Slow, untimely, and out-of-date provision of information
- Slow or non-existent customer response

“I get the impression SW trains has one man sitting at his desk, copying and pasting in announcements that are going out at stations, into the Twitter feed, but with TfL I get the impression they have a whole team, and it’s much more modern and up-to-date and human”
TfL on social media
Customers following TfL on social media tend to be aware of and interact with just a few feeds

- Customers tend to find TfL feeds organically, through word of mouth, links on the side of the webpage etc
- This means they are often not aware of TfL’s social presence across a broader range of platforms and may not be following the feed most relevant to their needs
- Customers are largely unclear on the role of different TfL feeds, although they do follow different TfL feeds for different reasons

### Lines (Twitter)
- Followed primarily for information on delays/disruptions to their lines

### Pan London (Twitter)
- Followed primarily for information on delays/disruptions to their mode of transport

### General (Twitter and Facebook)
- Followed primarily for TfL updates and to connect with TfL; engaging and entertaining info on TfL and London
Overall, customers appreciate TfL’s social feeds for being informative but they are not yet meeting other customer needs

**Relevant information for daily life**
- eg Power outages, travel times etc

“I wouldn't class these feeds as interesting, however they are extremely useful for providing real-time updates on the roads, buses and trains around London.”

**Customer care**
- eg Resolving complaints

“They don’t reply to things on their Facebook page”

**Entertainment and inspiration**
- eg Content, articles, images

“I have never engaged with this feed mostly because I don’t feel the Facebook page is intended to be interactive or to allow staff to engage with travellers, more just for announcements about TfL and London, it doesn’t invite comments and there is no need to share the posts.”

**Promotions**
- eg competitions, challenges for prizes etc

“I don’t remember ever seeing any competitions or fun challenges or questions on the TfL feeds I follow before”
Customers want TfL feeds to have more personality, more of a human touch and more engaging content

**Line & Pan London**

- Consistently warmer and more human tone of voice
- Different personalities for different feeds – through addition of content relevant to each feed or tone of voice
- Additional info on each line feed eg local station info and local area info (this must be timely eg not peak times)

"They should be a bit more human and put interesting information in that was related, like interesting bus info on the buses feed, road info for roads"

**General**

- Warm, personal tone of voice and expression of brand personality, particularly on Facebook
- Engaging, entertaining and interactive content that is non-service related and fit for the platform
  - eg showcase London’s ‘hidden gems’, behind the scenes at TfL, customer/staff travel stories and perspectives

They could have so much more personal and engaging stuff from people on the network – like ‘Thought of the day’ Whiteboard sharing! Or photo contribution from fellow travellers / TFL employees or interesting and quirky facts
Moving forwards
How to be customer focused on social media

1. Be responsive – it demonstrates true customer care

2. Be authentic to your brands values and personality at all times

3. Present a consistent human face

4. Ensure social media integrates with other communication channels – one voice

5. Engage and incentivise with content that fits with the brand
TfL must choose whether to stay at mid-level or aim for best-in-class

Best-in-class

Human and engaging

- Relevant info for daily life
- Customer care
- Entertainment & inspiration
- Promotions

Mid-level

Informational

- Relevant info for daily life
- Customer care

Entry level

Best in class requires investment (strategically and financially)
## Mid-level recommendations

### What you say…

- Continue to provide real-time accurate information about service status
- **Develop a strategy** to deal with all customer care issues
- **Be responsive** across all platforms
- Have consistent response times, appropriate for query
- Escalation of issue to other channels if customer desires
- **Be personalised, human** and **authentic**

### Where you say it

- Develop a clear strategy for the role of the different platforms
- Begin a dialogue with your customers
- Use Twitter and Facebook to demonstrate customer care and relevant information
- Have a consistent voice across the platforms
- Make the brand personality shine
How you will know when you are best-in-class

**What you say**

- You are **confident** about what you say and who you are
- You provide information that is relevant to customers’ lives (not just the brand)
- You execute a clear strategy to deal with all customer care issues
- Your customer service strategy is **integrated** with other channels
- You have a clear content strategy that seeks to **engage, inspire** and keep customers coming back
- Your content **fits seamlessly** with the brand and the platform
- Your brand personality is **visible**

**Where you say it**

- You know the role for each platform and ensure they all bring something unique to the conversation
- Your brand personality is consistent across all platforms
- You use Twitter to demonstrate customer care and bring relevant information to life
- You use Facebook, Instagram to engage and inspire with entertaining content that is liked and shared