INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE PRIMARY INDUSTRY IN NEW ZEALAND

Emma Brand
Synlait Milk Limited

Executive Summary

Social media offers primary sector corporations the opportunity to leverage network effects. Rather than one to one interactions, groups of customers and stakeholders have the opportunity to support each other. Primary industry corporations can use social media platforms to facilitate these interactions. This results in increased efficiency, better brand awareness and improved customer relationships.

The primary industry is constantly in the public eye and put under scrutiny. Therefore, it is important for companies within the industry to have a voice, social media has proven to provide a platform for companies to share their voice.

This report identifies how social media is used both positively and negatively. Firstly, an overview of what social media is, who uses it, and different types of social media.

A literature review researching how social media can be used effectively has been outlined in Chapter 2. This highlights how social media can benefit a business when done right. Social media can be used to build direct relationships with customers, collect feedback, and identify new business opportunities.

Nine interviews were conducted with representatives from companies that are active in social media to evaluate how they use social media, and what their aims are by doing so. Respondents were asked how risk is managed within a team, to ensure that the right information is given and that responses have a positive impact. It was found that companies using social media generally attempt to increase engagement, educate their customers, stakeholders, and the general public. It is important that a company has a risk management strategy, to help manage any negative interactions on their media platforms.

To complement the information gathered through the interviews, a case study was done about a business that has a very low presence on social media. The goal was to see benefits of using a different platform to engage with suppliers. From the learnings found in the interviews with the other companies, it was obvious that there is value in having a social media presence to educate the public. However more resource is needed to manage the social media platforms to make it more effective.

The report concludes with an overview, discussion, and recommendations on how companies can use social media to their advantage, and be an effective tool adding value to their business.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the internet was developed, exponential growth of technology and accessibility of the internet to the public has integrated social media into everyday life. Social media has become a term that is used in daily language to describe the tight integration of the internet into the non-virtual world.

The internet as a platform has encouraged connections between people from grassroots, to corporate, institutional, national, and global levels. However, this can also be seen as a concern, that it may detract people from local, face-to-face interactions (Haythornthwaite 2005).

Social Media – what is it?

As defined in the Oxford English dictionary, social media is websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

Social media starts out as a communication, a word, a statement, that invites others to comment, respond, and connect to that person and / or company. Tredinnick (2006) defined social networking sites as those sites driven by user-participation and user-generated content. Social media is a platform that allows users to become involved with other people and organizations.

The different types of Social Media

There are multiple avenues for social media. The first known use of the term *social media* in print is believed to have occurred in 1997 when Ted Leonsis (past AOL executive), commented that organisations needed to provide consumers with 'social media, places where they can be entertained, communicate, and participate in a social environment' (Treem & Leonardi 2012). During the following decade, blogging platforms LiveJournal and Blogger (2009), the website based encyclopaedia Wikipedia (2001), the SNSs MySpace (2003) and Facebook (2004) and the microblogging service Twitter (2004) made their debuts (Treem & Leonardi 2012). There are now more than 150 social networking sites, and in 2009, Facebook was ranked highest in terms of popularity, with 206.9 million unique visitors globally (Nielsen 2010).

A place to be entertained, communicate and participate.

Who uses Social Media?

Globally, 72% of all internet users are active on social media. Table 1 gives a breakdown of users by age. Of these internet users, 71% access social media from a mobile device (Bullas 2014).

Age	Percentage
18-29	89%
30-49	72%
50-60	60%
65+	43%

Table 1: Percentage of users of certain age brackets that use social media (Retrieved Bullas 2014).

There are more than a billion active users on Facebook.com. Therefore, organisations are seeking to utilise the relationship development potential that social media sites can offer (Waters et al. 2009).

As shown in Figure 1, the growth of social media from 2004 through to 2013 has been exponential. Within 9 years, the amount of registered users on Facebook has gone from one million though to 1.5 billion.

Figure 1: Retrieved from Bullas 2014

Due to the advancement of mobile technology, this has amplified the amount of time spent on smart phones. Consequently, this has made access to social media easier, and more accessible. Social media has caused online relationship development to become a new generational norm (Strauss & Howe 1991).

Aims & Objectives

There is an increasing amount of knowledge around the effects of using social media in the primary industry within New Zealand. However, there is little data available around the benefits of the different platforms companies use in delivering messages and communicating with key consumers.

I chose to focus on the impact of social media on the primary industry because there is so much negativity about the industry in the current social media space. I wanted to investigate how companies currently manage themselves in this space, both positively and negatively. In the current technological environment, it is paramount for companies to be seen in the social media space to be perceived as current, and present.

The company I currently work for does very little in the social media area. The findings from this report will be of use for the communications department at Synlait Milk Limited to determine how to develop an effective social media platform.

The aim of this research project is to gain a better understanding why companies should use social media and discover what is the most effective way to use social media to their advantage.

Chapter 2 contains a brief literature review, specifically looking at social media used by businesses. My objective was to discover the direct benefits of using social media for a business and why they should do so.

Chapter 3, covers interview-based research to identify the presence of nine primary industry businesses in the social media arena. My objective was to see what type of social media platform was the most effective for these businesses, the benefits, the pitfalls, and the risks behind using social media.

In Chapter 4, I developed a pilot social media forum for a company that is currently not very active in the social media space. My objective was to see how much engagement can be created by setting up a communication tool. In the social media space, engagement is important as it increases brand awareness, loyalty, and can have an educational benefit.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There are currently over three billion internet users, and over two billion of them have active social media accounts. What once was something used just between friends and family has turned into something that businesses can really benefit from by offering valuable data about their customers and a (mostly) free way to reach them.

Hootsuite (a platform used for managing social media), came up with ten key points around how social media is a benefit to your business (Copp 2016):

1. Gain valuable customer insights – through daily active engagement and social listening, you can gather relevant customer data and use that information to make smarter business decisions.
2. Increase brand awareness and loyalty – make it easier for your customers to find and connect with you. By connecting with customers on social media, there is a connection to increasing customer retention and loyalty.
3. Run targeted ads with real-time results – these offer powerful targeting options so that you can reach the right audience.
4. Generate higher converting leads – social media can be an effective way to identify key decision makers and new business opportunities.
5. Provide rich customer experiences – customers expect businesses to be on social media, and those that engage customer services see a bigger annual financial gain compared to those without social media.
6. Increase website traffic and search ranking – social media helps direct people to your company website.
7. Find out what your competitors are doing – this allows businesses to make strategic business decisions to stay ahead of the game.
8. Share content faster and easier – social media allows content to reach customers in the shortest possible time.
9. Geotarget content – social media platforms allow you to send a message out to a specific audience based on their location.
10. Build relationships – social media is a two-way channel where there is an opportunity to enrich relationships with customers.

A study conducted by Cone (2008) showed that 93% of social media users believe that companies should have a social media presence, while 85% of them think that companies should interact with companies via social media. Companies have taken this information, and have now created links between their corporate websites to their social media sites and vice versa. These tools have then been used to promote brands and develop communities (Michaelidou et al. 2011).

Use social media to build direct relationships with customers

Companies use social media to build direct relationships with customers, increase customer traffic to the website, identify new business opportunities, create communities of interest, distribute content, collect feedback from customers, and generally support their brand (Breslauer & Smith 2009).

Understanding this about the social media landscape helped me define my approach to discover how primary industry in New Zealand derived benefits that are seen globally from their own social media efforts.

The information identified in this literature review contributed to the structure of my interview questions for Chapter 3. Which subsequently led to me to create my own Facebook group for Synlait Milk Ltd which is outlined in Chapter 4. With this information, the findings will be used to report to the communications department to ensure that an effective social media approach is created in the future.

Chapter 3: Social Media in the wider Primary Industry sector

Introduction

The New Zealand primary sector contributes to 78% of export earnings with a total of $37 billion of export revenue in 2016. The sectors also provide 16% of New Zealand's workforce with people in production, manufacturing, and support services. Therefore, the primary industry plays a highly important role in New Zealand's economy as it provides 10% of New Zealand's total GDP (MPI 2017).

The primary industry needs to have effective ways of communicating with people nationally and globally about what is occurring in the industry. Many people living in urban areas lack the understanding about what occurs in the primary industry. To ensure that there is informed debate, this can be channelled through communication via social media. The use of social media can increase engagement, awareness, educate the public, and showcase positive stories. For that reason, looking at how the primary industry communicates through social media can help understand how this platform could be used both effectively and non-effectively.

New Zealand primary industry contributes 78% of export earnings

The aim of my study was to gain a better understanding of why companies use social media. I used an interview style method to determine effective and productive ways to use this method of communication. In contrast to this, I also identified pitfalls one should be aware of. The results of these interviews will be used to identify themes that can be used for the primary sector to be more effective on the various social media platforms.

Method

The following report was based on nine interviews conducted in March and April 2017 either via phone or face-to-face. The interviewees were from companies within the New Zealand primary industry. These companies were chosen for their existing presence on social media and reflect the scope of the New Zealand primary industry sector.

The main objective of the interviews was to identify key themes that are used to make social media an effective platform as part of the companies' wider communication strategy. The interview was designed to be simple (take 30 minutes to one hour of the interviewee's time). 14 questions (See Appendix 1) were was asked to a company representative from each of the following companies:

- Fonterra Co-operative Group Ltd
- DairyNZ
- Irrigation New Zealand
- Ravensdown
- Ballance Agri-Nutrients Ltd
- Beef & Lamb New Zealand
- Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI)
- New Zealand Fish & Game
- HorticultureNZ

SAFE were approached to participate in the interview process, but were unable to accommodate our request.

The participating companies were first approached via e-mail and then a time was agreed for either a face-to-face or phone interview. Each interviewee was briefed on what the interview was being used for, and where the information would be stored. At the conclusion of the interviews, the interviewee was thanked for their time, and were offered the opportunity to read the current chapter prior to publication.

The first set of questions was designed to determine the background of the interviewee, to identify differences in responses, due to experience levels. Subsequent questions were designed to identify what the company currently does with social media (i.e. their communication strategy and a social media overview), and key themes within their social media platforms were identified (i.e. the positives, and negatives).

Results from the interviews were tabulated and an analysis was done using qualitative techniques (McLeod 2008). All themes and findings from this research are indicative only.

Note, for the publication of this report, the company names have been redacted from the tabulated results.

Results

From the nine interview responses, seven key areas were identified, and have been reported via tabular format (see Tables 3, 4, and 5).

One of the first questions asked was which social media platforms the company uses. The results are shown in Table 2.

The most common platform of social media used was Facebook, followed by Twitter. The respondents highlight that there is a wide range of platforms available to communicate with their audiences.

Table 2: Responses from each industry body about what platforms of social media are used (note: the double ticks in bold represent the most active and engaged forum).

Company	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	LinkedIn	You Tube	Snapchat
Company 1	✓✓	✓	✓		✓	
Company 2	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Company 3	✓✓	✓				
Company 4	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Company 5	✓✓					
Company 6	✓	✓				
Company 7	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Company 8	✓	✓✓	✓			
Company 9		✓✓	✓	✓	✓	

As shown in Table 3, the main aims of using social media in each company are very different depending on the audience they are trying to capture. The resource each company put towards social media has also been captured and is shown on the following page.

Table 3: Responses from each industry body about the aim, audience and resource towards social media.

Company	Aim	Audience	Resource
Company 1	Protect & enhance reputation. Be present and listening. Be perceived as genuine.	Dependant on content, general updates posted to Facebook (more reach, overall numbers and global presence), compared to business updates on Twitter for journalists and media.	2 FTE, part timers on community mgmt. and comms teams.
Company 2	Promotion of good things happening. Education. Let the public know what good dairy sector is doing.	Farmers 80-90% of the time, however aware that getting increasing amount of public followers.	1 FTE with couple assisting. Monitoring daily, content going out daily.
Company 3	Education.	Members, primary sector.	2hrs/wk. Summer student.
Company 4	Increase engagement. Showcase stories, build relationships.	Shareholders & Farmers. Industry leaders & stakeholders.	3 people oversee. 1hr/day/pp on average.
Company 5	Engage & follow. Get ambassadors & advocates.	Dependent on the content, have a matrix to determine what audience is trying to be captured.	Unsure
Company 6	Engagement. Get messages out there. Let the industry know what B & L are doing.	Any business related to the farming sector.	1 FTE. Content going out daily.
Company 7	Create a story on sustainability. Customer services. Provide information.	Diverse audience base. Content is either about growing or protecting.	2 FTE, marketing team assist, regional officers ~4hrs/week on regional pages.
Company 8	Build a community of interest. Alert people to any issue occurring and what is current.	Dependent on context. Can be towards license holders, people concerned with the environment, or corporate and political audiences.	Twitter: 2hrs/day Facebook: 2hrs/day Instagram: self-maintaining
Company 9	Increase engagement & awareness. Gain information, feedback, and opinions.	Growers and stakeholders, while trying to attract new people to the industry.	~17hrs/week

As shown in Table 4, each company representative was **asked "Wh**at are the short and long term benefits **of using social media?", and "H**ave you had any

serendipitous **benefits through social media?".** The responses showed some unique and unexpected benefits for each company. Some reoccurring themes were: increasing engagement, increasing understanding of controversial or current topics, providing a quick and easy way for people to interact, and an effective way to communicate with the public.

Table 4: Responses from each industry body about the benefits of using social media and unexpected/serendipitous benefits.

Company	Benefits of using social media
Company 1	Show a positive impact on New Zealand's economy. Increase engagement, and educate others. E.g. of a serendipitous benefit: #431AM turned into a positive art competition getting hundreds of entries.
Company 2	It is a real time way to deliver information, a direct line of communication. It is able to be interactive, and provide the opportunity to answer questions. E.g. of a serendipitous benefit: starting conversations between farmers nationally that wouldn't occur without the help of social media.
Company 3	Get the community to understand that irrigation is good public infrastructure.
Company 4	Ensure customers are happy, and keep relevant. E.g. of a serendipitous benefit: had a fundraiser to raise $10,000 for prostate cancer. By using a video on social media, it reached other companies which boosted donations to $20,000.
Company 5	Build stronger connections and greater loyalty. Shape the brand, get deeper engagement.
Company 6	Make people aware, use as a stepping stone to the website.
Company 7	Change the culture, help people. Provide quick responses to questions. E.g. of a serendipitous benefit: the frozen berry saga at the end of 2015 expected lots of direct contact from the public. Due to adequate and frequent messaging on social media, was able to increase awareness, therefore keep the direct communications down.
Company 8	Communicate the message. Gauge public and community interest. Encourage people to buy licenses.
Company 9	Be on the front of topics. Increase engagement to grow an audience to reliably have people watching when they are needed. E.g. of a serendipitous benefit: there is a large group of journalists following on LinkedIn. Stories posted are taken and put into larger publications which therefore increases the audience.

As shown in Table 5, each company representative was asked "How do you manage risk within social media platforms?", and "Have there been any traps that you weren't aware of prior to using social media?". The responses were that there are a number of ways to minimise risk, for example, having all content prepared prior to release and have a contingency plan for any negative comments. Some unique traps and learnings identified by respondents are ensuring those who are posting the content are the people with the right knowledge, and are not naïve. Some key points identified were the importance of preparation, have assistance from the communications team, content is everything, and turn all negative content from the public into a positive.

Don't be naïve, be clear and concise, preparation is crucial.

Table 5: Responses from each industry body about the risks and traps of using social media.

Company	Managing risks	Traps of using social media
Company 1	Preparation is important. Rely on common sense. Have a language filter, and close association with the communications team.	Ensure that the person writing the post has knowledge on the topic (e.g. milk price posts need financial people answering).
Company 2	Assistance from the communications team. Hide posts that are irrelevant or offensive. Author of comment will be private messaged.	Don't over post. Depending on the topic of the post will determine the amount of time required for monitoring.
Company 3	Crisis mgmt. strategy. Make direct contact with any negative posts.	Don't be naïve. Need to have enough resource to ensure social media is effective.
Company 4	Remove any irrelevant comments. Answer all questions.	Don't engage with trolls. Make sure content is relevant. Content is everything. Understand what is important to your audience.
Company 5	Be clear & concise. There is always an answer, try turn a negative comment into a positive.	Don't be naïve.
Company 6	Respond to any negative posts directly.	*None thought of at interview.*
Company 7	Have a profanity filter, delete any offensive comments. Incorrect posts are edited, any 'rants' or opinions are left.	You'll be surprised what will go viral. Have a good communications team on board to help being quick and efficient.
Company 8	Risk is managed carefully. Organisation reputation is at risk. Common sense. Content is planned in advance.	Big corporates are sensitive to representative risk. Social media can have huge power and have huge impact on engagement.
Company 9	Have 'stop-phrases' prepared for certain topics. Facebook is not a platform used to eliminate potential risk.	Don't treat each platform of social media the same. Each differ in execution and detail.

Reponses from other questions varied greatly between companies and will be elaborated on further in the discussion where relevant to key themes identified from the interviews.

Discussion

Key themes have emerged about using social media. These themes could be used by other companies in the process of developing their social media strategy.

Of the nine companies interviewed, four said they rely on the public having common sense on the type of interaction and its impact on social media platforms. Only one of the companies has a 'post approval' process. For the others, if anyone wanted to post something, it would be 'live' instantly. The reasons behind deciding not to have post approval is that seemingly it encourages the public to post on social media, therefore increasing engagement. If the company looks to 'not trust' the public to write something that isn't the 'wrong thing', offensive, or incorrect, then it decreases the trust in that company. Using social media is a way to try to encourage people to feel empowered to talk about issues that are happening in the media and in their personal lives.

Another theme is whenever there is post or comment is negative, it is turned to a positive outcome. Likewise, with post approval, the companies want to look like they are open to all communications, whether it be positive or negative. With this in mind, some companies will respond directly and privately to the person who wrote the post, or they will answer the post publically but attempt to spin it into a positive.

A common theme across all those interviewed is around the response time it takes for a comment to be acknowledged. It is important to each company and their brand to have a personal touch to their social media platforms. They think that the public are wanting to be heard, and welcome those to speak freely on their platforms. The companies want to be seen as present, and listening.

It was interesting to find out the different social media platforms that each company uses, and the reasons behind doing so. Facebook is generally the most popular method of using social media as it is the most popular, with the biggest audience, therefore gaining the most reach to the general public both nationally and globally. Twitter is said to be the most professional and found to have the best quality of conversations, and used more for business, politics, corporate, journalists and media releases. Companies that have both Facebook and Twitter tend to not post the

same content on both forums due to the different **audience base that they're trying to** reach. Instagram is used more for users to share an experience.

Engagement is a very important aspect of deciding to use social media. Many companies stated that a benefit of using social media is to increase the engagement of the public, whether it be members, stakeholders, journalists, or general public. If the platforms get greater engagement, then the company is seen to be more personable, rather than just a brand.

Content is everything. Know your audience.

When considering risk mitigation, each company identified how they deal with risk, which is considered before posting anything public on any of the social media platforms. Content is very important, and needs to be planned in advance prior to posting. A close association between the social media team and the communications team within a business is essential to ensure that the right information is being communicated in the correct way.

In conclusion, the use of social media within companies can be quite complex. It needs to be well thought through what is trying to be achieved prior to creating a platform. Content is perceived as being the most important factor. The platform to display the chosen content needs to be considered in terms of the audience that is being targeted. It is important for the public to have the freedom to engage and interact with to show trust from the company, becoming more personable rather than just a brand. Risks are managed by turning any negative posts into a positive. It is important to ensure that there is a minimal amount of response time to decrease the impact of any negative postings. Therefore, it is important to have a good association with the communications team to ensure that this is done efficiently without causing any reputational damage.

Chapter 4: Introduction of the Lead With Pride™ Facebook group

Introduction

In Chapters 2 and 3 I found that there are plenty of differing types of social media available for companies to use, and that there are some effective examples of how companies already use social media.

One method to investigate the influence of social media is by designing and **implementing a platform to use in a company that doesn't currently use social media**. Synlait Milk Limited is a dairy company based in Canterbury, New Zealand, which produces a wide range of nutritional and value-added milk products (e.g. infant nutritional powders, whole milk powders, skim milk powders, anhydrous milk fat, and lactoferrin). It is a business to business company, with a large global customer base. It is also the largest infant formula site in the world.

There is a myth that social media will only benefit B2C companies.

In the social media space, Synlait currently has presence, but lack activity. There are LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter accounts. The only information that is put on social media are key business announcements through the LinkedIn profile. There is a realisation that Synlait is behind in the industry with social media, and that there is room to progress in this space.

Previous research has established the importance of branding for business to business firms (Lynch & De Chernatony 2004; Lindgreen et al. 2010; Mudambi 2002), especially in an industry characterised by commodity products. Branding allows business to business organisations to differentiate themselves from their competitors by creating a unique and consistent identity (Michaelidou 2011). This transfers to a higher demand and / or allows companies to command a premium price.

Within Synlait, a best farming practice programme has been developed called **Lead With Pride™.** Suppliers are recognised and financially rewarded for best farm practices across four key aspects of the farming business: environment, animal health and welfare, milk quality, and social responsibility (human resources and health and safety). **Lead With Pride™ was Australasia's** first internationally accredited ISO/IEC 17065 dairy farm assurance system.

We hoped that developing a social media forum would create increased engagement between suppliers and Synlait, as well as aid communication amongst each other.

Methods

Social Media Forum selection

Over the past two dairy seasons, the suppliers involved in **Lead With Pride™** have been requesting a forum to allow them to communicate ideas, opinions, and share knowledge amongst each other.

Image A: Introductory Facebook post

Facebook was chosen to be the social media platform of choice, as it was the most popular forum used by New Zealanders (refer information in Chapter 2). This has also been backed up by the findings in Chapter 3.

Design and Sampling

On the 22nd **March 2017, the Lead With Pride™ Facebook Group was launched** (See Image A). As of the 25th April 2017 there are 22 members, covering 20 Lead With **Pride™** farms.

A content calendar was made outlining when posts were to be made, the content to be included (links, photos etc.), who was responsible, and if the post was done either by a Synlait employee versus a farm employer (Refer Appendix 2). The data collected from each post was the **amount of 'likes' it received, an**d if there were any comments / discussion. If a post was submitted, the amount of time it took to approve the post was recorded.

Success will be measured by the amount of engagement received **per 'post' and the amount of** engagement done by suppliers posting their own content to the page. This is instead of a post that has been posted by admin personnel (i.e. Synlait staff member).

Results

After setting up the page, there have been four posts that have

Image B: Monitoring services enquiry

been from a supplier to the page. Image B shows a supplier asking for some guidance around general monitoring services that other farmers are using. The post was viewed by 17 of the page members and there was an interactive discussion between three members.

Another post that was initiated by a supplier was around advice for the incentive payments being distributed around with having a contract milker on farm (Image C). Interestingly for this particular post, a different method of communication took place. One of the responders decided to reply via a private message instead of a public message.

Image C: Payments enquiry

Other posts have been posts done by a member of the Milk Supply team to the group. These posts have primarily been about communicating with the group around what is currently happening, what is topical, or educational. The following page shows a sample of posts that have received some interaction from the group.
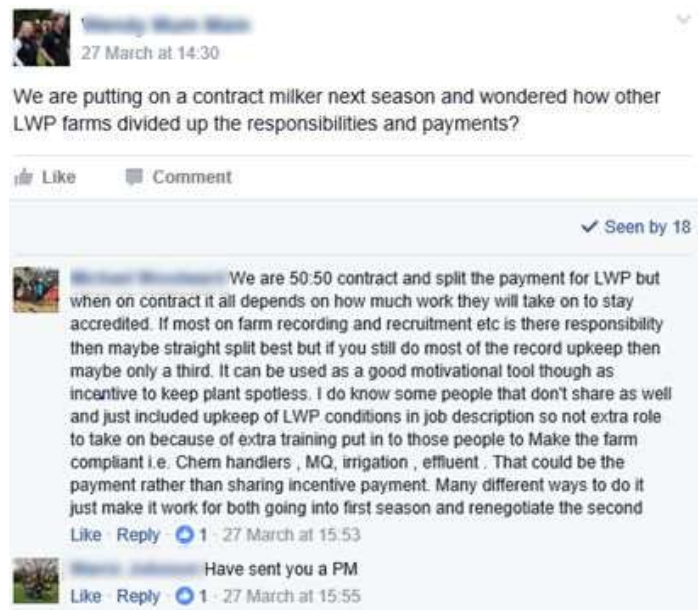
Lwp Programme
30 March at 15:11

Great turn out to the lunch today. Hope you all enjoyed yourselves. You're all True Leaders 😊

👍 Like　💬 Comment

😊 4　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　✓ Seen by 19

Fantastic lunch on Thursday, much appreciated
Like · Reply · 1 April at 09:39

Lwp Programme
24 March

Have you seen the new 'Check It - Bucket Test' App from Irrigation NZ? This is a great time of year to do a bucket test to assess if your irrigators require any calibration maintenance over the winter time. Download it free of charge from the App Store or Google Play.
Comment your thoughts or post photos below of you doing your farm! ^EB

👍 Like　💬 Comment

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　✓ Seen by 19

Great session yesterday thanks EB...Hugh had a wonderful time!! 😊

Like · Reply · 24 March at 11:32

Lwp Programme
18 April at 14:57

It was discussed in the standards group meeting around how we can tell good stories about what we are achieving within LWP. With all the negative press that's been going around lately, do any of you have any ideas on how we could promote the program, or how we get our good stories out there? ^EB

👍 Like　💬 Comment

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　✓ Seen by 20

What I think might work well is having an open public field day on farm to show case what Synlait is doing in this space. Lincoln Uni holds there own open day once a year but there is room for more. We can always get in other key rural suppliers that are also helping farmers meet environmental requirements i.e. Fert companies or irrigation providers that can help show what they do to help in this space. Have lots of interactive stuff and drum up a bit of media . Hold it on ideally a gold elite farm but needs to be close enough to a major town to attract enough people to make it worth while.
Like · Reply · 😊 1 · 18 April at 16:00

What about local media - eg Malvern News, Oxford bulletin, Ashburton Guardian, etc, "X number of farms in this area Lead With Pride accredited" as a headline?? Could be a good starting place,
Like · Reply · 😊 1 · 23 April at 16:00

Question time!
Last spring a North island farmer had a bunch of calves with patchy bald spots - see the pictures attached.
What do you think the condition is, and have you seen calves like this before??
Answer to come at the end of the week with information to follow ^EB

👍 Like　💬 Comment

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　✓ Seen by 20

Fed on penicillin milk?
Like · Reply · 5 April at 13:38

Lwp Programme Nice try

The bald calves have a condition called Anagen Defluxion! Cool name huh. Pretty uncommon and results from some stress condition (which may be an illness) causing patches of hair to fall out. It can be confused with a bunch of other conditions including mites/lice, spring exzema and milk scald. So there you go! MW
Like · Reply · 😊 1 · 7 April at 13:49

Discussion

Results show that that there is interest amongst the **Lead With Pride™** group to have a forum to discuss questions about the program in general, as well as gaining information about specific requirements that are mandatory to comply with within the programme.

To date, the page has created some discussion within the group. It is important that we continue posting information to the group to gain more engagement. The aim of establishing the group was to assist and develop suppliers' learning and skills. Interaction and discussion facilitated member learning and education from dialog within the group.

I followed up with the group members who asked questions on the group page about their experiences since getting the feedback. For the supplier that enquired about the monitoring services, they have since made contact with those providers that were recommended, and is now awaiting quotes. Therefore, this is an example of an effective way to communicate with others around recommendations. As part of the Lead With

Using social media will provide insight into what the public are thinking, and develop trust.

Pride™ program, Synlait cannot endorse a specific product. Therefore, the use of Facebook allows suppliers to communicate amongst each other to get live information around recommendations, and ask for personal recommendations and experiences.

In reference to Image C, I enquired to the supplier about why they chose to reply to the post via private message. The response was around privacy issues and discussing contracts publically. When I enquired to the supplier who posted the original question, they found the feedback useful to answering the query, however said they were disappointed they **didn't get more** feedback from the members of the group, but the information that it did provide was very useful. This is an example which proves the importance of communication and engagement. For people to feel confident enough to post a question and seek advice they are reliant on others to read the post and give a response. As shown in the image, 18 members saw the post, yet only two members responded. This may be due to only a certain proportion of suppliers being in the right situation to respond to the question, or it may be due to the confidence levels of the group.

The posts that have been developed and posted by the Synlait team have been seen and acknowledged by a number of suppliers. The key to the ongoing success of the page is to understand the audience and knowing what they expect from the page.

A possible improvement would be to set explicit expectations for group participation. For example, everyone is expected to ask and respond to four questions a month. The potential trade off to initiating this is that forcing people to participate will decrease engagement.

At a Synlait level, it is important for the business to grow their social media profile. In doing so, this will develop trust, provide insight into what people are thinking, grow partnerships, and reduce marketing expenses (Karr 2015).

To date, Synlait is using very limited social media platforms, with little resource dedicated to it. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is important for a business to keep in touch with their customers and shareholders, to know what is wanted of them, and to keep ahead of their competitors.

When considering the value that social media has for Synlait, it is certain that they are currently behind, and that they should be more proactive. However, the question is: how does it add value (if any)? Social media is a great tool when a company has a large group of stakeholders. Synlait currently has a small group of stakeholders and suppliers. However this is likely to increase over time. When discussing this with the CEO John Penno, he thinks it is a tool we could use, but unsure of how it fits in with the overall strategic plan.

The Lead With Pride™ Facebook group is an opportunity to create a community.

It is important that Synlait does not become behind in its use of social media. It does not want to get to the stage where social media is needed and then it is rushed to get platforms up to a suitable standard. It is essential that social media is planned effectively and successfully to gain value. Therefore, for a company to do a good job with social media, a team of staff and/or with a use of a consultant with appropriate experience will need to be appointed to ensure that it is successful. To recover the time and effort staff put into social media, there must be sufficient amount of value (specifically in terms of dollars) put back into the company.

A direct benefit was seen on the Facebook group when a supplier asked for advice about contract agreements. They were able to save time (and therefore money) by having an opportunity to ask a question directly to those that could give advice. They also had the potential to save money by getting quality advice from the community instead of seeking advice that would otherwise be charged. There are also soft supplier community benefits in having a forum where people are able to express their emotions and opinions.

In conclusion, the use of the **Lead With Pride™** Facebook Group is a good start for Synlait to learn from when expanding into the social media space. As it is a business to business operation that is growing in size, it is important that Synlait utilise social media platforms to increase engagement, guide followers to the corporate website, keep ahead of competitors, and be updated with what customers are expecting of them. As shown from the results in Chapter 3, increased engagement can be positive for a business by protecting and enhancing reputation and brand. With more activity there comes more opportunities to showcase good stories and build strong relationships.

A recommendation for Synlait is to broaden their social media strategy further. By doing this they will increase engagement with suppliers from one end of the supply chain to the other. Beginning with those working on the dairy farms producing milk, to consumers buying the end product in the can. As mentioned in Chapter 2, other business to business companies have seen benefits by gaining valuable customer insights, increasing loyalty, increasing website traffic, share content faster and easier, and keeping ahead of competitors. Specifically for the Lead With Pride™ Facebook group, it is an opportunity to create a community of practice.

Chapter 5: Research Project Conclusion

It is important to acknowledge the large role and effect that social media has on engagement for customers and suppliers and increasing public perception and awareness of a company.

As research shows from the literature review in Chapter 2, there is a number of **ways that social media can be of a positive benefit to a business. It's now considered the 'norm' for companies to be active in social media.**

To complement the research found in Chapter 2, a number of companies were contacted to see what the key reasons behind using social media were and identify what they were trying to achieve. The data reported in Chapter 3 highlights that there are some distinctive reasons around what makes a social media program either successful, or the reverse.

If a business is to use social media effectively, it first needs to decide what audience is being targeted. It is important to understand who the audience is, and what value that audience has towards the company. This comes back to the original question of why should we use social media, and what is the main aim? There were a couple of common aims that were reoccurring for companies using social media. The majority of companies that were aiming social media efforts at members and stakeholders have social media to increase engagement and educate. The companies that were aiming at the general public, both nationally and internationally, use social media to create a story, interest, and be perceived as present and listening to those who wanted to know more.

It is important to understand the needs of your audience.

An interesting set of results were shown in Table 5 around managing the risks, and traps of social media. Any business that uses social media needs to ensure that they have a good relationship with the communications team within the company to get additional support. The success of social media is reliant on the amount of resource that is put into it. It is imperative not to be naïve, and content is considered to be everything. To ensure that content is going to be of value, it needs to have been prepared taking into account the risk management strategy.

The Lead With Pride™ page is in the early stages of development, showing some positive signs of the value in the page to both the company and suppliers using it. Currently, there is evidence of supplier engagement and this has been measured via the number of responses to questions and thoughts put to the remainder of the group. Since doing this research, I have found there are some areas that would make a

huge improvement into the success of the page. Refer to the Recommendations section below for areas of improvement and important next steps.

For the primary industry as a whole, it is important to conduct social media correctly to ensure that it creates a positive image. While writing this report there has **been a number of stories shown on TVNZ's Sunday Program ('Saving the Selwyn'** aired 26th **March, and 'The Price of Milk?' aired** 9th April) which caused a huge response on social media. These episodes were an example of how media can be used in a negative way to direct criticism towards the primary industry.

Some companies interviewed noted that when these stories break in the media, they need to be prepared, and have a plan in place to address any negative comments. A number of companies have a method in which they attempt to turn all negative comments received from social media into a positive. In addition, they will try make direct contact with the person who made the negative comment.

Recommendations

From this report, a number of recommendations are made at both an industry level, and at a business specific level.

- At a general level, it is important for the industry to be present on social media as the public expect it. Companies can get value by increasing their exposure, increasing traffic to associated websites, improving search rankings and developing partnerships. For the companies that were interviewed and findings gathered in Chapter 3, it is essential that all social media managers have enough resource and knowledge in their teams to ensure that their information is effective. Having a risk management plan for all content and having a strategy in place for prospective stories topical in the media is essential. This ensures that all social media is positive.

- At a business specific level for Synlait, it is important that they become more **active in the social media space to avoid being 'l**eft behind**'. If a company** is absent on social media, this puts them at risk of being perceived as not caring about the voice and opinion of the public. If a time came when it was important to have social media, it is essential that the platforms have been set up and are working effectively, instead of being rushed and not being having the resource to manage them successfully.

- However, for Synlait to participate in social media, there must be value for them to do so. From the research conducted in Chapter 3, it is important that there is a good relationship with the communications team. The interviews also indicated

that there needs to be a team of at least two personnel with time dedicated to managing social media. In this context, value is defined as money. The time and money spent by developing a team overseeing social media needs to provide money back into the business.

Public perception is EVERYTHING

- Cost efficiencies could potentially be made by using the social media platforms to replace resources such as direct mail outs for newsletters, and emails for company announcements. Time could be saved by being able to reach a large amount of people in a quick period of time instead of individual emails and phone calls.

In a final conclusion, social media can be a great tool if it is managed effectively. If not, it can be detrimental to the company and create negative criticism to the industry as a whole.

If managed well, it can increase engagement of stakeholders, customers, and the general public. It can also be used to educate those that want to know more information, both generally and specifically. It is a myth that social media is only appropriate for business to customer companies. Social media is a unique tool to leverage interactions between not just business to customer interaction, but also between multiple actors (e.g. a company, its customers, employees, collaborators, the public etc.). Social media has a clear payoff when it comes to building an audience and developing a reputation for a business, even one that is not reaching out or seeking to serve billions of consumers online.

There is continuous growth in the number of people using social media. Therefore it is important for companies to be active and do enough research with enough resource to ensure it is done effectively. It is important to be seen as active in the social media space. Public perception is everything for the primary industry.

References

Bercovici, J. (2010). Who coined 'Social Media'? Web pioneers compete for credit [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffbercovici/2010/12/09/%20who-coined-social-media-web-pioneers-compete-for-credit/#7f851e13220b

Breslauer, B., & Smith, T. (2009). Social media trends around the world! The global web index (GWI). ESOMAR Research. *Online Research*, Chicago, IL.

Bullas, J. (2014). 22 Social Media facts and statistics you should know in 2014. Retrieved from http://www.jeffbullas.com/2014/01/17/20-social-media-facts-and-statistics-you-should-know-in-2014/

Cone (2008). Business in Social Media Study. *Fact Sheet*. Retrieved from http://www.conecomm.com/2008-cone-communications-business-in-social-media-study-pdf/

Copp, E. (2016). 10 Benefits of Social Media for Business [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-for-business/

Haythornthwaite, C. (2005). Social networks and Internet connectivity effects. *Information, Community & Society*, 8(2), 125-147.

Karr, D. (2015). B2b Marketing Survey: 9 Benefits of Social Media Marketing. Retrieved from https://martech.zone/b2b-social-media-benefits/

Lindgreen, A., Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. (2010). From strategy to tactics: Building, implementing, and managing brand equity in business markets. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 39(8), 1223-1225.

Lynch, J., & De Chernatony, L. (2004). The power of emotion: Brand communication in business-to-business markets. *The Journal of Brand Management*, 11(5), 403-419.

McLeod, S. A. (2008). Qualitative Quantitative. Retrieved from https://www.simplypsychology.org/qualitative-quantitative.html

Michaelidou, N., Siamagka, N. T., & Christodoulides, G. (2011). Usage, barriers and measurement of social media marketing: An exploratory investigation of small and medium B2B brands. *Industrial marketing management,* 40(7), 1153-1159.

Ministry of Primary Industries (2017). Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries, March 2017. Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Mudambi, S. (2002). Branding importance in business-to-business markets: Three buyer clusters. *Industrial marketing management*, 31(6), 525-533.

Nielson (2010). Led by Facebook, Twitter, global time spent on social media sites up 82% year over year. Retrieved from http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2010/led-by-facebook-twitter-global-time-spent-on-social-media-sites-up-82-year-over-year.html

Strauss, W., & Howe, N. (1991). Generation Z.

Tredinnick, L. (2006). Web 2.0 and Business: A pointer to the intranets of the future? *Business information review*, 23(4), 228-234.

Treem, J. W., & Leonardi, P. M. (2013). Social media use in organizations: Exploring the affordances of visibility, editability, persistence, and association. *Annals of the International Communication Association,* 36(1), 143-189.

Waters, R. D., Burnett, E., Lamm, A., & Lucas, J. (2009). Engaging stakeholders through social networking: How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook. *Public relations review*, 35(2), 102-106.

Images not otherwise attributed are royalty free images from www.unsplash.com

Appendices
Appendix 1: Interview questions

<u>Questions for phone interviews</u>

1. How long have you been with the company you work for?
2. What is your experience in marketing and communications?
3. What social media platforms does the company have?
   a. Which one is most active?
   b. Why?
   c. How long has the company been using social media?
4. Is social media part of your overall communication strategy?
   a. What other communication tools make up your strategy?
5. What audience are you aiming at?
   a. When posting, is there much cross over to appeal to the non-farming community?
   b. **Can you distinguish comments and posts between farmer's vs townies?**
6. What are you trying to achieve through social media?
7. Have you had any successes due to social media?
   a. Are there any stories you can elaborate on?
8. What do you see are the short and long term benefits of using social media for your company?
9. Have you had any serendipitous benefits through social media?
10. How much time is committed within your business to social media? (i.e. 2 FTE)
11. How do you manage risk within social media platforms?
    a. How do you deal with any negative postings? Do you require post approval?
12. Do you have a code of conduct on your platforms?
13. **Have there been any traps that you weren't aware of** prior to using social media?
14. **Are there any learnings that you've had that you can elaborate on?**

Appendix 2: Content Calendar (sample)

Lead With Pride – Facebook Page content plan

Owner: Emma Brand
Date:

Publishing date	Type of post	Content	Notes	Responsible	Dependencies	Status	Approval Time	Successes	Likes
22 March 2017	Milk supply post	Welcome to the Lead With Pride™ Facebook group! We hope you find this group a useful forum for both you and your farm staff to use as a way to share ideas, interests, raise questions, and improve your way of farming! Please make sure you've read our terms and conditions in the description for this group. ^EB		Emma Brand	n/a	Published			
	Milk supply post	South Island Field Days – have you RFV'd? One week to go! On Thursday 30th there is a luncheon exclusive for LWP suppliers. Look forward to seeing you there! ^EB *Insert SIAFD Page link*	Include link to SIFD Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/SIAFD2017/	Emma Brand	n/a	Published			1
23 March 2017	Milk supply post	Last night the 2017 Canterbury-North Otago Dairy Industry Awards took place and we had a number of LWP suppliers take home some great awards!! Special congratulations to Kerry Higgins, Farm Manager at McKavanagh Holdings Ltd in Hororata for taking the Farm Manager of the Year award, and to Ben Haley, working for John O'Donnell down at Eiffelton for taking home the Dairy Trainee of the Year. There were also a number of merit awards awarded to our LWP guys, with the list below. Congrats to all of the finalists and winners, we are very proud of you all!! ^EB Kerry Higgins: ScanSouth Employee Engagement Award, DeLaval Livestock Management Award, and Westpac Financial Management & Planning Award. Ben Haley: Alexandeus Communication & Engagement Award, and DairyNZ Practical Skills Award. Keaan & Erin McCall: Meridian Energy Farm Environment Award Paul Clement: Fonterra Farm Source Feed Management Award	Include link to news article on Awards.	Emma Brand	n/a	Published			5
24 March 2017	Milk supply post	Have you seen the new 'Check It – Bucket Test' App from Irrigation NZ? This is a great time of year to do a bucket test to assess if your irrigators require some calibration maintenance over the winter time. Download it free of charge from the App Store or Google Play.	PHOTO: of bucket test. Insert link about the bucket test app.	Emma Brand	n/a	Published		[...] commented and posted a photo in the comments box. Good conversation between Jess [...]	
24 March 2017	LWP supplier post	It worked Emma ..Hi everyone just wondered what monitoring services people use out there?? Thanks Sue		Jess Glazsey		Published	5 mins till approval		
27 March 2017	Milk supply post	DairyNZ's cowbassadir, Rosie the Cow, has teamed up with WorkSafe and ACC to create Farm Rules. An engaging app for primary school children to learn about the risks involved with farm activities and how to minimise them. Check it out!	Include link to the site: https://mkid.in/pPsq1OP	Emma Brand	n/a	Published			1
27 March 2017	LWP supplier post	We are putting on a contract milker next season and wondered how other LWP farms divided up the responsibilities and payments?		Wendy Mann		Published	13 mins till approval	2 comments.	
29 March 2017	Milk supply post	Sneak peak for the luncheon tomorrow! Look forward to seeing you all. It is a bit muddy around the place, so bring the right footwear for walking about! ^EB	Photo of the site	Emma Brand	Photo	Published			4
30 March 2017	Milk supply post	Great turn out to the lunch today. Hope you all enjoyed yourselves. You're all True Leaders :-)	Photo of luncheon	Emma Brand	Internet capabilities - unable to stream.	Published		Positive comment from [...]	4
3rd April 2017	Milk supply post	AH&W: Trough Cleaning Have you been keeping your trough cleaning program up to date? Sam Wood is offering a Trough Cleaning Service which may be of interest for some of you! Check it Out. ^EB	Flier attached	Emma Brand		Published			1