

**Subject:** NewsBud

**Date:** Tuesday, March 1, 2011 10:53:19 AM ET

**From:** Flowers Canada Retail (sent by Flowers Canada Retail <flowers=flowerscanada.org@mail21.us2.mcsv.net>)

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March 1, 2011

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# NewsBud

GROWING YOUR BUSINESS TOGETHER

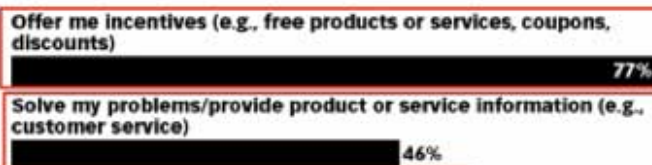
## HOW TO INTEGRATE CUSTOMER SERVICE INTO SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Social media has changed customer service from being a support function to being an extension of marketing. In the social media ecosystem, customers want to know that you're listening and responding. As your organization's front line, customer service is where your company becomes real to prospects and buyers by engaging with the public and showing your firm is real and cares.

With social media, you have to win your prospects, customers, and fans with every interaction across platforms. As your company's point of interaction, customer service is critical to your social media marketing efforts. [Zappos](#) is the poster child of amazing customer service across social media outlets. From a customer service perspective, when it comes to social media networks, 46 percent of customers want to solve a problem and almost 40 percent want to give retailers their feedback according to research from Cone, Inc. Additionally, roughly four out of five customers seeks a special deal.

### Types of interactions that US New Media Users Look for When Engaging with Companies/Brands Online, Sep 2010

% of respondents



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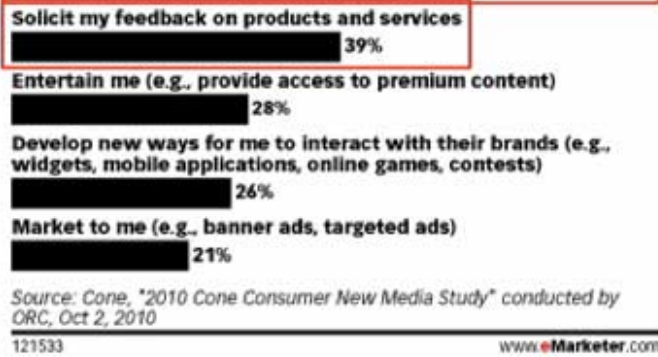
**How to Integrate Customer Service Into Social Media Marketing**

**Consumer Trends on Buying Flowers**

**United Online (FTD) Report Fourth Quarter and Disappointing Full Year 2010 Results**

**Member Update: Ontario Government Freezes Minimum Wage**

**Floral Design School at University of Guelph**



Source: [eMarketer](http://eMarketer.com)

## 12 Ways Social Media Enhances Customer Service

Here are 12 ways social media supports customer service and extends your marketing efforts.

1. Gives business a human face. Social media's engagement and interaction makes online businesses more personable and shows that someone is home. This transparency starts building customer trust. To this end, it's important to have social media guidelines in place to help employees with their [social media interactions](#).
2. Listens to what customers are saying. With the help of social media monitoring tools, customer service can hear what consumers are asking, provide timely responses, and determine early warning signs of PR and other issues. (Note: social media monitoring may reside in different areas of an organization.) In the current social media ecosystem, it's critical to have a [crisis management plan](#) in place to mitigate potential problems.
3. Proactively engages with prospects and customers. This interaction shows that the people behind your company are real and care. Accomplish this with a wide range of interactions such as tweets, Facebook postings, and boards as well as unilateral communications like blog posts. For example, [Two Peas in a Bucket](#), a scrapbooking site, has this message board.





4. Provides additional product-related content. Use a wide range of formats from online videos to blogs. In addition to specific purchase information, show how to use the products. Here is a consumer-made [video](#) explaining how to apply eye color.
5. Answers product-related questions. Real-time and asynchronous conversations can occur on your website, a third-party media site, or a social media network like Facebook. One benefit is that other customers can respond to a confused customer with a direct answer. While the answer may not always be to your liking, it has the authority of being from another customer and reduces your customer service department's workload.
6. Supplies alternative contact channel. Remember, prospects and customers will use any and every entrance to talk to a human and get answers to their questions. Social media-delivered customer service, at least for the short term, tends to be used less on a relative basis, translating to better service.
7. Gives customers a channel to talk to each other. As a marketer, get over yourself! With social media, on your website or on a social networking site, it's not about you, it's about the overall customer-to-customer conversations. You just provide the environment that they want to visit.
8. Shares customer feedback. Often it's ratings and reviews. The benefit is that reviews can help qualify and endorse your product in ways that your staff can't because customers trust other customers. The challenge is that negative issues like [United Breaks Guitars](#) can be amplified due to social media's free media and distribution platforms.
9. Celebrates your customers. By gathering your prospects, customers, and fans on social media platforms, you shine the spotlight on your customers. Oreos does a great job of this with its Facebook [page](#) that shows customers eating Oreos.
10. Shows customers behind the scenes. Use social media to give customers a view of what your firm is like. Think broadly in terms of blogs, photographs on Flickr, online videos, presentations, e-books, and LinkedIn.
11. Makes special offers. Social media presents another venue to share the love with your customers. One way to do this is through social media-only deals. Consider it an extension of customer service's ability to close and upsell customers. Based on Cone, Inc.'s research, this is an important opportunity!



12. Create new purchase options. While many companies haven't started testing [social commerce](#), it's a rapidly growing area. 1-800-Flowers was the first retailer to use Facebook's platform.



## 5 Ways to Measure Social Media Customer Service

As with any marketing and/or social media effort, it's critical to set your objectives and create related metrics to assess your success. Here are five metrics to help you monitor integrating social media into your customer service delivery.

1. Number of interactions. Track the number of fans and followers. Bear in mind you may need to entice consumers with special deals and bonuses. Additionally, understand how each platform works and how to be part of the community, or your actions will backfire.
2. Number of issues identified and responded to. In addition to participating in the conversation on your website and tailored company outposts like Twitter and Facebook, use brand monitoring tools to find and reply to consumer issues.
3. Content creation. Track the amount of content that users contribute in terms of ratings and reviews, social media interactions, photographs, videos, and other formats.
4. Sales. Measure sales related to your social media customer service efforts. Have they contributed to your overall sales? Are these efforts helping customers decide what to purchase and do they contribute in a positive way to your brand association and company revenues?
5. Customer service resources. Consider these three important elements. Are you reducing customer service inquiries via other channels? Social media translates to a lower cost channel in many cases. Are you allocating customer service headcount appropriately? Do you have enough people assigned to each channel? Also, monitor for increased usage as this channel becomes more efficient. People who didn't want to deal with customer service may do so on social media.

Social media has changed how consumers and companies view customer service. Now, customer service fulfills a variety of different functions including enhancing your marketing. Is your firm ready to meet these new opportunities?

Are there any other customer service points that you'd add to this list? If so, please include your perspective in the comments section below.

Source: Heidi Cohe

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## CONSUMER TRENDS ON BUYING FLOWERS

Statistics based on personal consumer purchases (transactions) of fresh flowers, flowering houseplants, green plants and bedding/garden plants (Does not include business purchases):

### What are consumers buying?

Outdoor bedding/garden plants	46%
Fresh flowers	34%
Flowering/Green houseplants	20%

### Who's buying?

Women	79%
Men	21%

### For fresh flowers only:

Women	65%
Men	35%

### For whom are they buying?

Self	63%
Gift	37%

### For fresh flowers only:

Self	33%
Gift	67%

### Why are they buying?

Calendar Occasions 14%

Non-Calendar Occasions 86%

For what Calendar Occasions are they buying?

Christmas/Hanukkah 30%

Mother's Day 24%

Valentine's Day 20%

Easter/Passover 13%

Thanksgiving 6%

Other 7%

For what Non-Calendar Occasions are they buying?

No special occasion 50%

Home decoration 13%

Birthday 5%

Sympathy/Memorial 5%

Anniversary/Love 3%

Get Well 2%

Other 22%

*Source: Data collected by Ipsos-Insight FloralTrends Consumer Tracking Stud*

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## **UNITED ONLINE (FTD) REPORT FOURTH QUARTER AND DISAPPOINTING FULL-YEAR 2010 RESULTS**

United Online, Inc. (Nasdaq:[UNTD -News](#)), a leading provider of consumer products and services over the Internet, today reported financial results for its fourth quarter and year ended December 31, 2010.

"Revenues and adjusted OIBDA came in above our guidance ranges for the quarter," commented Mark R. Goldston, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of United Online.

"Looking ahead, two of our primary strategic objectives for the full-year 2011 are delivering a further improvement in top-line performance in our FTD segment and executing our nostalgia vision to expand the consumer value proposition of our

Classmates.com business," Goldston said. "We are off to an excellent start on the first objective as strong execution of FTD's product, marketing and promotional campaigns helped us to achieve outstanding results for the 2011 Valentine's Day holiday period."

"Today we also took a major step forward on the second objective," Goldston added. "After nearly one year of preparation, we launched the new Memory Lane website and we have officially changed the name of Classmates Online, Inc. to Memory Lane, Inc. Memory Lane provides a broad and compelling range of nostalgic content that creates a virtual time machine for users — while retaining all of the historical features of Classmates.com. The Memory Lane website features an extensive collection of nostalgic content from the 1940s through the 1990s, representing what we believe is the largest online archive of nostalgic content covering these decades. Visitors to MemoryLane.com can immerse themselves in nostalgic content including historic newsreels, classic movie trailers, historic sports videos, the largest collection of high school yearbooks online, memorable music samples, historic photographic images, and iconic magazines. We believe the evolution of Memory Lane in 2011 and beyond will enhance our competitive differentiation and create new revenue streams from e-commerce and pay-per-view transactions in addition to the revenue we derive from paid subscriptions and advertising."

To Read the Full Article [click here.](#)

Source: Yahoo Finance

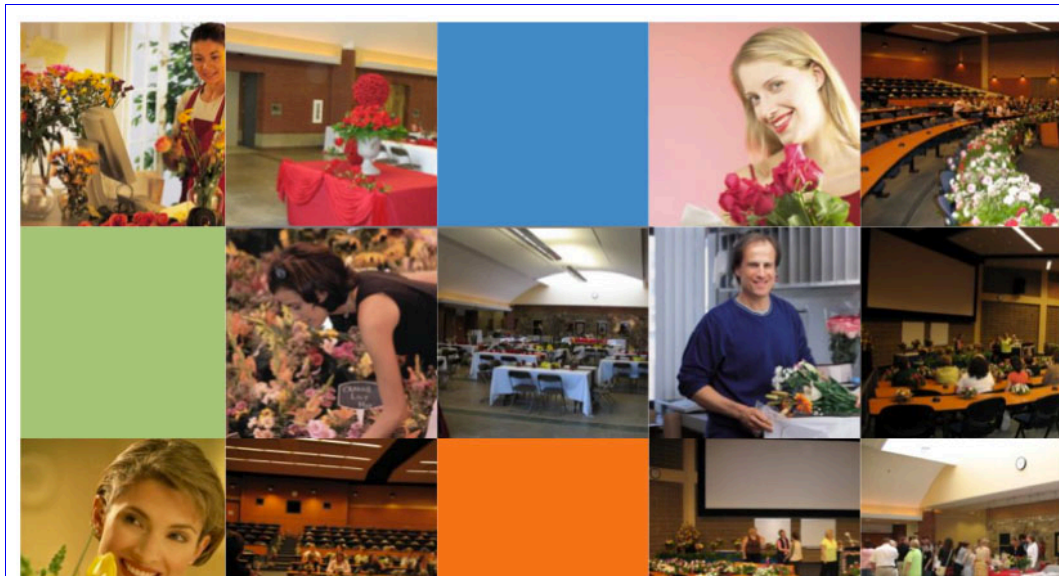
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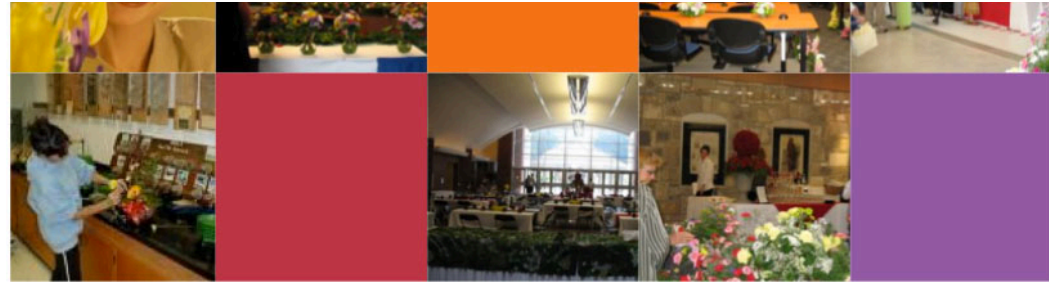
### **MEMBER UPDATE: ONTARIO GOVERNMENT FREEZES MINIMUM WAGE**

After seven consecutive increases, the Ontario minimum wage rate will remain at \$10.25 per hour in 2011, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada. The Ontario minimum wage has increased by 50 percent with annual increases in the last seven years. These increases outpaced inflation in part to make up for a nine year minimum wage freeze between 1995 and 2004. Despite the minimum wage freeze, Ontario still has the highest provincial minimum wage rate in Canada.

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### **FLORIST DESIGN SCHOOL AT UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH**





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