



Social Media in Acquisition Marketing

When Charter Communications signed Elasticity for acquisition marketing in December 2008 it was largely for Elasticity's skill in search engine optimization (SEO) which, along with banner advertising, was the standard means at that time of enabling an interaction with customers online.

As hard as it may be to believe, less than a year and a half ago, few companies had any sense that social media could be used for much beyond the postings of its high school- and college-aged users who had minimal input into the cable purchase decision. Looking back, the hiring of Elasticity, a digital word of mouth agency, was a key decision that led it to what has become one of the most important tools for the cable company and many other companies like it.

For Elasticity, Charter Communications was no simple client. As the fourth-largest cable operator in the United States, it operates in a disparate geography spread out over 27 states, serving 5.5 million residential and business customers. And the cable business itself had changed from a sleepy product sold to many who had no other choice to one of the most hotly contested businesses in America. Charter was just emerging from a bankruptcy that had damaged its reputation, but also allowed it to shed legacy costs at an important time.

To remain competitive in a space that included AT&T, Verizon, DirecTV and Dish Network as well as other Internet and phone providers, Charter's promotions change almost monthly. That means new material must spread online through multiple channels and visibility built up each month. The slate is then wiped clean and the process begun again as the next promotion starts. This process challenges any agency whose strategy is to slowly build an engaged and mobilized audience.

That is where Elasticity's value resides. With its guidance, Charter began to augment its digital marketing with social media channels. This meant using multiple tools including traditional PR to bring visibility online and offline; its customer service group to address key service issues, and to cross-promote its marketing effort; and a seamless integration of email, display, search and other marketing.





And acquisition? Well, in a year where overall conversions increased over 32%, social media increased with the channel and is a permanent fixture in the ongoing planning of the online channel. The results went beyond just more orders, it enhanced corporate reputation and increased online sentiment at a critical moment in Charter's existence.

How did Elasticity do it? Through a combination of organic outreach, building up of Charter-owned social media channels, cross-promotion, and a mix of sponsored social media, we maintain the "buzz" curve throughout the month, constantly looking for another way to provide value and engagement to potential and existing subscribers. At the core of Charter's mission is to provide value to their customers, and social media has been a welcome addition to that vision.

