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INBOUND MARKETING
IN RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

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Introduction

We live in times of revolution! We are witnessing a revolution in the way we choose new products and in the way we look for business partners. Nowadays, almost everybody who is looking for a pram for his child or a new accounting company for his small business, always starts by turning on the computer. We start with Google or any other search engine, we ask our friends from the Internet, our family members and colleagues for assistance, usually via e-mail, online chats, Facebook or Twitter. We live in times of revolution – as a result of this revolution companies without huge budgets and not resorting to eye-catching tv commercials are able to attract our attention. Nowadays, we pay more attention to companies offering us excellent content on the Internet – a good example here is Zaoppos, a company selling shoes which rapidly evolved into a multi-billion-dollar business. There is no doubt that currently an attractive form of presence in the web is of utmost importance for any company. **The main force driving this new revolution is inbound marketing**[1]. This revolution has a global and universal reach and affects everybody without regard to his or her social or economic status, his or her education or culture.

The term of Inbound Marketing hasn't been translated into Polish yet. It can be interpreted as active, incoming marketing.

Inbound Marketing is opposed to outbound marketing – traditional way of communicating, which is all about „pushing out" information, advertising message to the potential customer. Inbound marketing is focused on activities on the Internet, which allow the customers to find the message they are looking for. The potential customer is following issues he is looking for on the Internet, which leads him to the source of the message. The idea of inbound marketing is about taking such actions in the sphere of media that allow potential customers to find what they are looking for. Inbound marketing combines elements of Internet marketing which can efficiently draw customers into the sphere of activities of marketing specialists. The main areas of interest are:

- Marketing in search engines,
- Activities associated with creation of content in the blogosphere,
- Taking advantage of social networks and microblogs[2].

1 B. Halligan, D. Shah, *Get Found Using Google, Social Media, and Blogs.*
2 http://www.inbound-marketing.pl/informacje/

As any revolution Inbound brings liberation.

What we are talking here about is liberation from the tyranny of the assumption that the efficiency of marketing activities depends on the money involved. Everybody who has something to say and offer can reach out to people – also to clients – over the Internet.

This revolution liberates us from the tyranny which is about disturbing everyday lives of people in order to sell them something. Instead of drawing the attention of consumers with expensive advertising campaigns we can publish attractive and useful information on the Internet and later present it to the people who are directly interested in it.

We have also been liberated from the necessity of using mainstream media in order to present information on the market. Now it is possible to communicate with people directly. The best thing in this is that if we tell them our story in a proper way, those willing to do business with us will find us themselves.

Inbound marketing is the art of making oneself visible in the web – being found through such networks as Facebook, YouTube or Twitter. These are websites visited every day by hundreds of millions of people looking for answers to their most pressing questions[3].

People get knowledge from many different sources. Rapid development of the Internet means that we are being literally inundated with hundreds of bits of information. This causes certain problems, as in such abundance of information it is hard to find what we are looking for. For this reason the power of traditional advertising is waning. Every day the customer is attacked with a huge amount of information about products and services. When he sees another advertising of a product, he immediately gets annoyed and an inner voice tells him: they want to sell me something again. The consumer doesn't like when somebody is trying to sell something to him, but loves buying. The customer likes taking decisions with regard to his purchases himself. Our marketing activities should follow the spirit of the times and now is the time of social networks, which enjoy a huge popularity[4].

Social media in numbers…

Social media constitute a revolution in the manner of communication, which affects us all. Research shows that even sending traditional e-mails is getting ever less popular. The e-mail service is being replaced by in-built features of social websites. Thanks to these features users can send messages, which in turn has reduced interest in sending traditional e-mails. Social networks are now one of the most complex tools for creation of identity in the web. They can be used not only for the creation of a personal image, but also for the creation of a company image.

The role of social networks in the lives of contemporary people is constantly growing. Every day new social websites, or applications using such networks are established. Everything suggests that in the nearest future this trend will continue. This means that social media will become a part of life of an average citizen for good. Many Internet users are actually addicted to social media. For many people social

3 B. Halligan, D. Shah, Inbound marketing..., op. cit.
4 A. Podlaski, Marketing społecznościowy, tajniki skutecznej promocji w Social Media.

media are the main source of knowledge about current events in the world. Moreover, this is where they find out what they should buy, what they should read or what film they should watch in the cinema. For companies that want to efficiently advertise their products or services this situation means much room for manoevre. „The CMO Survey" research by Duke University's Fuqua School of Business and American Marketing Association (AMA) shows that budgets for marketing by means of social networks are constantly growing.

In the nearest years almost 20% of budgets of marketing companies will be allocated to social media.

Other research conducted by the research company Mzinga & Babson Executive Education shows that already 86% of American companies take advantage of social marketing. For example, HP decided to advertise its products on Facebook. This move has been a big success. Every month HP's website is visited by 200,000 Facebook users. Rapidly growing companies are able to take advantage of the potential of social websites. Companies actively participating in Internet-based social life achieve certain benefits that cannot be achieved through other means of communication[5].

Research conducted by Harris Interactive in April 2009 showed that at that time 48pct of all adult Americans had an account on Facebook or MySpace. The user base of Facebook increased from 100 million to 200 million in eight months. In comparison, it took 52 years for the population of the United States to increase from 100 million to 200 million! If Facebook were a country, it would be the fourth biggest country in the world in terms of the number of inhabitants, ahead of Brazil, Japan, as well as Germany, France and Spain together. Moreover, we are not talking here about people using the service from time to time. According to Nielsen Online in April 2009 people spent a total of 13.9 billion minutes on Facebook. Compared to 1.7 billion minutes in April 2008, this means a growth of 699%. This means that participation in social networks is currently the third most popular activity on the computer, ahead of, among others, using e-mail. 29.9% of all Internet users in the world get in contact with Facebook. Obviously, what we are looking at here is a widespread phenomenon and we can be sure that these figures will grow even further.

The rapid development of social media coincides with the drop in popularity of the traditional media. Statistics concerning the usage of social media are growing, whereas circulations of newspapers are dropping. In many cities in 2008 there were more users of social websites than there were readers of the most respected newspapers. eMarketer reports that in 2008 Internet users were far less likely to reach for traditional media, than just two years earlier. Without any doubt it could be said that people currently receive latest news, information and opinions from friends to a greater extent than from the traditional media[6].

In January 2010 research company Nielsen announced that the global consumption of time spent in social media increased compared to the previous year by 82% and the average user of social media devoted over 5.5 hours to them in December 2009. Even though the research didn't cover the Polish market, also here more and more is being said about the social media and more and more people use

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5 A. Podlaski, Marketing społecznościowy..., op. cit.
6 C. Treadaway, M. Smith, Godzina dziennie z Facebook marketingiem.

not only Nasza-Klasa, but also Facebook. In the media much attention is paid also to such microblog services as Twitter or the Polish Blip. Some of the most popular meeting places among Poles are also such websites as GoldenLine, Grono or Flaker[7]. At the time when this report was created, the number of users of Facebook, the biggest social network, amounted to 350 million. By May 2011 the figure doubled to 700 million and in June of the same year SocialBakers, a service supported by Facebook, calculated that the number of Facebook users will exceed the magical one billion threshold at the end of June 2012[8]. These figures leave no room for doubt that social media, regarded by some as the next stage of evolution of the Internet, are much more than just a temporary fashion. These huge figures speak for themselves, but it is also necessary to remember that they are subject to constant changes. For this reason it is necessary to be present in the social media, it is necessary to get to know them and above all to get to know their users, who are consumers, employees, opinion leaders. **Waiting for a revolution doesn't make any sense as nowadays even one single day brings bigger changes[9].**

Strategies of presence in social media

Taking up activities in the world of social media without an adequate strategy is the shortest road to failure. In fact, marketing in this type of media doesn't differ much from other forms of marketing such as e-mail marketing, online marketing, using billboards, direct mail or tv advertising. In all of these areas it is necessary to create meticulously planned strategies and monitor the achievements. Companies which take up the task of preparing such strategy for the first time, may find marketing in social media to be a real challenge. This is a very broad category which consists of many different services. Merely finding the recipients or clients and identifying the place where they are present, may prove to be a very difficult task. In order to be successful, it is necessary to understand in what way representatives of a given target group use various services. It is also necessary to take into consideration that Internet users don't limit themselves to using one service or website or just one type of service. Their activities can be compared to pollinating flowers – they create their own content, which they later present on many different websites. When all of this is taken into consideration, it becomes clear that the mission is neither fast, nor easy, nor cheap.

There is no single recipe for success. If there were one, universal approach to presence in the social media, there would be nothing exceptional about the process – it would be as common as creating Internet websites.

Effective marketing in social media requires research, strategy, planning and measurement. The effects of research carried out by various companies differ. As a result there are differences in the identification of the most efficient social media services and formulating the best marketing plans.

Indeed, in the media a lot is being said about efficient and inefficient strategies of presence in the social media sphere, but still companies should rather focus on formulating own plans of this kind. It makes no

7 *Publikacja KNOW: Konsument w mediach społecznościowych - EURO RSCG WORLDWIDE/Edycja Polska, wydanie 2.*
8 *http://www.fejsik.pl/Kiedy-liczba-uzytkownikow-Facebooka-przekroczy-miliard-Wiemy-to-a1741.*
9 *Publikacja KNOW: Konsument w mediach społecznościowych..., op. cit.*

sence to get involved in certain activities, just because this is what the competition does.

Anyway, there is no doubt that it is impossible to avoid changes. Internet and Internet marketing are constantly changing. Things that used to be popular a year ago, may be forgotten by now. A marketing strategy, which used to be effective just six months ago, may not be that strong right now[10].

Defining targets in social media

Regarding certain achievement as a real success, the representatives of the top managements of companies base their opinions on clear and measurable indicators. Marketing conducted in social media cannot be measured in such a way as other forms of Internet-based marketing, such as search engine optimization (SEO) or pay-per-click advertising (PPC). SEO and PPC allow us to identify the course of events in every detail: the Internet user utilizes a search engine, for example Google, Yahoo! or MSN; the search engine provides results, the user clicks a link and is referred to a particular website, he takes some particular action, returns to search results or abandons further search. These three options can be regarded as fully measurable results. On their basis it is possible to measure the efficiency of marketing efforts targeted at making a particular person take a desired action or achieve a particular target.

In the social media nobody encourages users to take particular actions such as purchasing a product or signing up for an e-mailing list. They are encouraged to share their experiences. It is very hard to assess this process in a rational way, as it usually doesn't take place on the website of the company. In association with utilization of Internet marketing companies have got used to directing visitors to their websites and assessing the efficiency of their efforts on this basis. Exactly for this reason they find it hard to accept the idea that potential successes can be measures outside their own website. However, this is exactly the sort of success offered by the world of social media.

With regard to the issue of measuring achieved results, marketing conducted in social media is in many respects similar to traditional forms of marketing. In the PR area the number of times the company is mentioned and the recognizability of the company's brand are monitored. In case of tv and radio commercials most important is the number of people who have seen or heard the advertising material. Gauging achieved effects and comparing them to actions taken in the area of marketing turns out to be rather hard. Since the emergence of online marketing and programs analyzing website traffic and actions taken by visitors, assessing the effects of actions taken by specialists has become much easier. The concept of monitoring Internet activity seems to be perfectly justified and it is of utmost importance for the assessment of successes achieved thanks to implementation of marketing strategies.

The emergence of websites allowing users to create their own contents – covering their interests, passions, fears and complaints – has forced companies to learn to measure the successes and failures of their marketing strategies also outside their websites. It is necessary to remark here that we are talking here about areas, where companies are not in full control of their messages, which they prepare in every detail. As a result even the smartest marketing specialists can feel slightly intimidated.

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10 L. „Li" Evans, *Social Media Marketing, Odkryj potencjał Facebooka, Twittera i innych portali społecznościowych.*

Social websites provide their users with quite a high level of control over who directs their marketing contents at them and over what they are offered.

Most contents generated by users are created on social websites owned by completely independent entities. For this reason monitoring successes and failures associated with implementation of marketing strategies is becoming an ever more manual process. These websites are someone else's property, which means that companies don't have access to information concerning actions taken by particular users (unlike in case of their own websites). Thus, in order to gauge the efficiency of their marketing efforts in the social media, companies have to focus solely on public activities – this means that they know just as much as the members of a particular community[11].

Dialogue in social media

From the traditional point of view a website is the creation of the owner or of the team of editors, which fill the website with content. **In case of social websites it is the user who generates content and thus creates value for others.** Users and their mutual relations are the main stimulus for using social networks. **The main feature of a social network is communication.** For this reason websites of this kind offer various chats, message boards, and all other tools enabling communication between users[12].

In the world of social media investments are focused on dialogue and not on advertising materials sent out to members of a given community. Maintaining a dialogue in the social media – gathering active users interested in a given branch, products, services and brands – is a necessary condition for building good relations based on trust. **Members of communities are looking for personal ties and these can be established with people, but not with marketing messages, discount vouchers or other objects. People love iPods, but create a community of iPod fans, because they want the feeling of unity with the group of Apple brand fans.** iPod itself is not an element of ties with members of the community. **Users want to know that there are real people behind products and services.** They want to have the feeling that representatives of the company will listen to them, answer their questions and share their experiences. Social websites are a great tool for establishing this type of dialogue and providing information for members of a community „We are here and we are real". **The dialogue is constantly in progress.** It takes place among other on Twitter, YouTube, message boards, on Digg and StumbleUpon. People love interacting and discuss matters they are interested in. They love talking about the things they have in common and discuss matters they disagree on[13].

However, it hardly ever happens that one conversation brings an immediate return on investment. It would be very hard to find a person who would go to a shop to buy a new washing machine following a single conversation with someone else. Nowadays, we have access to so many sources of information that an average customer listens to the opinion of his neighbour, later visits a website with opinions written by Internet users and looks for more detailed data that could confirm or disprove his neighbour's

11 L. „Li" Evans, *Social Media Marketing...*, op. cit.
12 A. Podlaski, *Marketing społecznościowy...*, op. cit.
13 L. „Li" Evans, *Social Media Marketing...*, op. cit.

opinion. For this reason it is very important to monitor more than one Internet website. Only this way is it possible to identify the paths taken by the dialogues we are interested in. This way we can follow them around the world of social media[14].

In the middle of 2008 EURO RSCG group asked Poles about their expectations with regard to the way companies communicate. Already back then 89% of surveyed people said that they expect greater openness and dialogue. Social media encourage such communication. Many global brands have taken advantage of the new reality and redefined the way they communicate with the consumers. In the ranking of the most socially involved brands in 2009 the most successful companies were not only those from the high technology sector (iPhone, iTunes, Wii, Apple, Xbox, PlayStation, BlackBerry) but also those which accompany the consumers in their everyday life (Disney, CNN, MTV, NBA, Nike, Starbucks, Adidas).

Social media are not an easy environment for brands. Even though the presence of advertisements allows free access to services (46% prefer such solutions rather than paying for their accounts), 49% think that social media lose their atmosphere as soon as companies appear in them.

However, it seems that everything depends on the idea for the presence of brands, as at the same time 23% of surveyed people declare that they add brand or company profiles to their friend lists or become their fans. A similar proportion of people encourage their friends to become fans of a brand or adding it to their friend lists.

For people taking part in the survey the most important reason for adding a brand to their friend list is their liking for the brand. It is the main motive for 72% of the surveyed. The second reason is the fact that they are customers of a given brand (57% of surveyed people gave this answer). Other reasons are, among others: contests or special offers (42%), receiving direct invitation from a brand/company (37%) and curiosity (36%). Majority of people decide to interact with the profiles of brands or companies on social websites – 43% add comments on the profiles, 16% comment on the materials posted by the company.

People participating in the survey expect from the brands present in social media above all access to special offers and information about discounts. This was the answer given by 63% of people. 51% expect access to unique information, which is not published anywhere else, about a half expect updates on the company's or brand's activities.

Almost one fifth of the surveyed Internet users have removed a company or a brand from their friend lists at least once or stopped being its fans. Among the mentioned reasons for this move there were: too frequent posts, lack of benefits associated with that, impudence of messages, too much advertising content, disappointment with the company's products, getting bored with the company's activities in the area of social media.

The surveyed people are able to enumerate brands which in their opinion meet expectations. What's interesting is that among the mentioned brands there are both the biggest concerns and the activities of small Internet shops or local brands. This confirms – despite limited usage of mobile services –

14 Ibidem.

a global trend called hyperlocalism. Social media allow people to find and communicate with local people and companies[15].

We are witnessing a transformation of our society. Nowadays it is hard to imagine functioning on the Internet without creating any smaller or bigger communities with other people. For this reason communities are such an efficient tool when handled by smart marketing specialists. It is because communities give us the opportunity to get the message across to a large number of recipients in a very short time. Moreover, we can reach recipients who are potentially interested in our products. It is thanks to communities that we can reach many potential customers in a credible and non-invasive manner[16].

The emergence of content and media generated by users and the opportunity to share it through social websites should make companies realise the existence of the dialogue and lack of control over it. Attempts to take control over the ongoing dialogue can only result in a rebellion of members of a particular community and a terribly bad PR no company would ever like to have. The best mode of conduct in this situation is active participation in all discussions in the community sphere that the company can keep track of.

Companies cannot allow themselves any more to further ignore the social media sphere or say „we didn't know". The impact of contents generated by consumers on the way a particular company is regarded or whether a particular person decides to make a purchase is getting ever greater. This kind of influence doesn't become apparent immediately, but at a certain stage of the decision-making process discussions taking place on social websites certainly have an impact on the final choice.

Every day we deal with potential clients who are unwilling to accept the idea of taking up actions in the social media saying that it is because others may start „saying negative things about them". For many general directors and corporate level managers this is the biggest problem – they cannot come to terms with the fact that they will be unable to control what is being said about them in the social media sphere.

The conviction that it is possible to avoid unfavourable comments by staying away from social websites, is groundless. In the contemporary world of reviews posted online, blog posts, exchange of photographs, a dialogue concerning a particular company is in progress all the time, whether the company participates in it in an active way or not. Companies cannot control either the dialogue itself or the tone of statements which constitute the dialogue – even if they participate in the dialogue.

Every business activity is associated with the necessity of facing negative attitude. Even though, we have got used to solving problems with traditional means, for example by resorting to the assistance of a PR company, the contemporary world of social media requires establishing closer ties with customers and addressing both their praise and criticism. A good indicator of new quality in this respect is the speed at which customers can share their experience on the web. Social websites can spread one person's experiences with one company around the globe in a matter of a few seconds. Lack of action in this kind of media may be detrimental for a company and its marketing activities regardless if consumers share their positive or negative experiences. It is obvious that negative experiences may have serious harmful effects, especially when the company is not participating in the dialogue. That's why there is no reason

15 Publikacja KNOW: Konsument w mediach społecznościowych..., op. cit.
16 A. Podlaski, Marketing społecznościowy..., op. cit.

to be afraid of comments posted by users of social networks. It is necessary to know what is happening, understand a particular situation and react to it in an adequate manner[17].

Target group in the social media

Most companies know quite well who belongs to their target group. Far-reaching research projects identifying people who buy products of a particular company and the reasons why they do so are being carried out. This knowledge helps companies formulate ever better marketing strategies and messages adapted to the needs of particular recipients. This in turn raises the chances for achieving the desired reaction. Marketing message prepared in every detail is targeted at a selected demographic group, which according to the company shows most interest in its offer[18].

Non-invasive approach in social media

One of the most important reasons why users accept the presence of brands in social media is the fact that contents presented by these companies are non-invasive. Obviously, there are exceptions to that, because not every company acts in a non-invasive manner and not every social platform provides adequate tools for advertising. Lack of sufficient tools on a particular social website often makes companies resort to invasive advertising, which is unacceptable for the users.

A good example here is Facebook, which allows companies to create their own profiles. Users can become fans of a particular company and follow its activities and published contents. **Users themselves want to participate in the life of a given company, which creates strong ties between the company and the users.** This has nothing to do with traditional advertising, where the user is bombarded with contents he wants to skip as fast as possible[19].

As the results of a survey carried out by Euro RSCG show, **the surveyed people regard themselves as independent thinkers (85%), who often are the first to try out new things (41%) and are asked for recommendations and advice in many areas (68%).** However, at the same time they emphasize that they don't belong to a group of people following the latest trends (45%). **At the same time they are eager to share both positive and negative experiences associated with a brand, product or service – three quarters of the surveyed people do so[20].**

In the same survey people clearly show that **they don't believe that much in messages received from the traditional media:** less than 1/5 of the surveyed trust in messages received from this source. Advertisement conveyed by the traditional media is not convincing for them either[21].

In the decision-making process concerning purchases people depend mostly on recommendations from their friends (¾ of the surveyed people, 46% from Internet friends). In case of Internet-based

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17 L. „Li" Evans, *Social Media Marketing...*, op. cit.
18 *Ibidem.*
19 A. Podlaski, *Marketing społecznościowy...*, op. cit.
20 *Publikacja KNOW: Konsument w mediach społecznościowych...*, op. cit.
21 *Ibidem.*

sources people put most trust in price comparison websites (59% of the surveyed trust them), as well as in search engine results and posts on message boards (51%). **People also trust (46%) in recommendations of experts posted on their blogs or on social websites. At the same time they pay least attention to advertisements posted in social media.** Only 11 pct of the surveyed people trust them[22].

That's why it is necessary to remember that one of the main goals of actions in social networks is providing users with some value. The users appreciate non-invasive approach, because they themselves take action[23]. It is non-invasive approach that is the key to success in building adequate relations with users. It makes no sense to forcefully enter the lives of particular users through social media. It is necessary to provide the recipients with a value that will encourage them to visit and follow our profile, because everything is based on the foundation of providing the user with a value.

Value is one of the most important factors associated with the creation of content – this is what determines whether members of Internet-based communities want to establish and maintain relations.

When you deal with a member of an involved community, the most reasonable gift may be something non-material. For such a group of people interesting content may often be more valuable than the offered products.

Contents may become a valuable commodity in Internet communities actively interested in a particular brand, products or services. It is associated with the fact that members of a community who have already got to know these contents want to share these experiences with others.

Content is not only about texts posted on websites, even though such publication is undoubtedly one of the simplest ways to deliver potentially valuable content to the members of a community. Videos, photos and podcasts also constitute great content. **Above all, it is necessary to understand that what is crucial is that the content has to be regarded as valuable by the recipient and not the sender[24].**

Credibility in social media

Long history of presence in social networks makes company more credible and trustworthy. Trust grows even more through contact with users.

Regular activity in social networks and positive presentation to users boosts trust[25].

Presence in communities makes people more willing to trust in what a company has to offer and as a result they are more willing to spend money. Thanks to social websites it is possible to establish a relation with consumers on an entirely different level through direct contact. This allows companies to obtain from users valuable information concerning the functioning of companies, products and their services. Thanks to individual approach it is possible to solve the problems of particular entities. Users are grateful for that and express their gratitude in public.

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22 *Ibidem.*
23 *A. Podlaski, Marketing społecznościowy..., op. cit.*
24 *L. „Li" Evans, Social Media Marketing..., op. cit.*
25 *A. Podlaski, Marketing społecznościowy..., op. cit.*

Customers often have various ideas for improving what a particular company can offer. However, they themselves are not eager to send messages on that matter. Social websites enable rapid exchange of information between a company and its potential clients.

A good example for that is Dell, which came in for a lot of criticism in 2005 and 2006. The wave of criticism was initiated by a blogger – Jeff Jarvis – who highlighted shortcomings in the client service office and criticised the way Dell used to process customers' complaints. Dell's reaction to these accusations turned into a real success. Dell transformed its shortcomings into advantages by launching a company blog and a system which monitored opinions appearing in social media. Dell implemented IdeaStorm and Direct2Dell programs, which allowed clients to submit their complaints and notices directly to the company. Thanks to this the company raised the quality of offered services and boosted clients' satisfaction. "It was a factor and a catalyst which made us start listening to what the blogosphere has to say" - John Pope representing Dell company said[26].

Reach in social media

Everything we know now has originated from an idea – an idea how to improve communication over long distances, how to light up the darkness, how to get from point A to point B faster. If we hadn't had these ideas, if someone hadn't implemented them, we would probably still be living in caves and we would still be spending our time hunting and gathering food. People develop thanks to ideas and communities develop thanks to following and implementing these ideas. Every day hundreds of Internet users come up with various ideas they share with other users of social networks who share their point of view. Before Internet message boards and discussion groups emerged, informing others about a new idea on a global scale was very hard. Nowadays all it takes to share an idea with the rest of the world in a matter of a fraction of a second is to post it on a message board. Thanks to this form of spreading ideas, cultures, communities and individuals find it easier and easier to implement their ideas, because other members of the community are constantly improving them.

Members of online communities don't limit themselves to just sharing their experiences and feelings – they also share their knowledge. It is easiest to observe this process on message boards and in discussion groups. This process is usually headed by leaders of particular communities. They are the users who have been participating in a particular group for a long time and have huge knowledge in a particular area. They are eager to help any user and provide him with advice and support. Traditional marketing didn't give much room for sharing or two-way exchange of information. Television, radio and press are all one-way means of communication, which allow companies to direct a particular message at the recipients. In fact, companies could not find out what their customers were thinking and in what way they used their products and services in everyday life. Before the onset of social media companies couldn't participate in the conversations of their consumers concerning their brands, products and services.

The emergence of social websites has changed this situation completely. Now, marketing spe-

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26 Ibidem.

cialists can listen, gather information and even participate in an active way in the dialogue. Unfortunately, representatives of the traditional advertising agencies still find it hard to come to terms with these facts. Members of Internet-based communities share both good and bad experiences. If one of the users has bad experiences associated with contact with a company or with using a particular product, he will probably inform other Internet users about that. This way he will try to warn others and thus protect them against similarly negative experiences.

People active in the social media sphere want to share, because this way they sacrifice a part of themselves for a good cause. Most of them regard this as a source of huge satisfaction and feeling of fulfillment. They want to establish relations with people who desire the same things. In fact, they don't want to interact with some „institution", for example with a name of a company. Members of Internet communities want to establish relations with people constituting a particular company. They want to offer a part of themselves to another person. This might be a story about how a certain product sold by some company changed their life or how some service made them happy – the most important thing is that they want to share this story directly with a human and not with the name of a company or a banner on the wall of the company's headquarters. Internet communities expect that a particular company will share information – not only about the way a particular product is manufactured or about improvements it is going to introduce next year.

They want to learn something about the people behind a particular company. This means that companies have to present its human side to the recipients, because Internet communities have to share their experiences with people[27].

Social websites allow reaching a broad group of recipients through creation of various actions and promotional campaigns. For this purpose viral marketing or whisper marketing can be used. It depends on the creativity of a particular company what tools offered by social websites it will use. Presence on social websites paves the way towards potential business partners and as a result creates the opportunity for cooperation with another company or clients.

Public institutions in social media

More and more organizations of various kinds start realizing the opportunities provided by social media. The general importance of social media and strategies applied in social media depend on a large extent on the kind of organization and its approach to marketing, client activation, risk and following the latest trends. The utilization of these media also determines access to various assets, the kind of employees, pace of action and tasks that have to be carried out.

Employees and managers of public institutions from all over the world start appreciating the benefits and possibilities provided by the utilization of social media in the sphere, which up till now has been dominated by traditional communication channels. This is happening for reasons which have already been discussed: immediate communication, low costs, wide reach, possibility of fixing potential mistakes etc.

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27 L. „Li" Evans, *Social Media Marketing...*, op. cit.

Among some demographic groups social media are as widespread as electronic mail. All of this contributes to the attractiveness of social media, especially in societies where people's technical competence is high.

The concept of e-administration was created in response to the above-mentioned conditions. Now is the best time for public institutions to deal with social media. This is determined by several factors:

- **Maturity of social media technologies and Web 2.0.** Facebook, Twitter and other social media technologies are competing with each other and are now starting to strengthen their positions. Thus, the risk associated with utilization of these tools is now getting smaller.
- **Growing pressure on modernization of administration.** Decision-makers are starting to hear stories that the utilization of social media in the private sector allows companies to cut expenses and raise revenues. This encourages them to transfer these solutions to the public sector.
- **Prospects for reduction of spending.** Appropriate application of new technologies may lead to substantial reduction of costs of promotion and communication.
- **Barack Obama's success in presidential elections.** It could be said that the 44th president of the United States is the first president elected through social networks, where millions of people were encouraged to vote for him.

What's interesting is that administrative practice hasn't got used to the reality of social media, assigning tasks to open groups of volunteers and creation of content by users themselves yet. For example, many public bodies don't allow their employees to write blogs, as they are afraid that such posts may be regarded as an official statement of a particular institution, which would have to face the resulting legal consequences. Looking at many such situations it is possible to understand that people responsible for regulating these issues are not really trying to stop progress, but want to balance risks and benefits. At the same time they want to reduce potential undesired effects as much as possible. Anyway, a serious disadvantage of social media is the inability to completely separate private life from professional life. Achieving this requires a great deal of effort. Thus, which public projects can be supported with Facebook and other social media?

Let's have a look at what NASA has done to its presence on Facebook. It has managed to gain thousands of fans who regularly receive updates concerning current events, articles, photographs and other information concerning aeronautics and space science. NASA also shares various links to other Internet and social media sources of information and uses its Boxes tab for stimulating discussion and providing users with resources from the official NASA.gov website, which are buried deep or for some reason are hard to find. However, the most interesting measure is providing channels on Twitter, which allow users to receive current data concerning activities of real astronauts.

In Poland a good example of utilization of elements of Web 2.0 is Instytut Lotnictwa (Institute of Aviation). The entity with a status of a research and development institution runs quite advanced activities on such social websites as Facebook, MySpace or YouTube. Moreover, it has an entry in Wikipedia. Many people interested in and identifying themselves with the branch comment on the information posted on

these websites. The published information covers current activities of the institute and interesting facts associated with the aerospace branch. The goal of this large-scale campaign conducted by Instytut Lotnictwa is the presentation of the institute's scientific achievements and the most important events in the activities of the institute, not only on a local level but also on an international level. Thus, this campaign is an important element of promotion of the institute.

Public bodies can also use social networks as a platform for supporting communication between people. A good example of that is the fan page of US Air Force. The default tab is the Wall, where people from all around the world can write about their liking for the Air Force of the United States or for their friends and relatives who serve there. What's interesting is that currently the Air Force has two fan pages. It seems that one of them is maintained by the Pentagon and the other one was established at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. One of them is more interactive and the other one has more resources. One institution – two official pages on Facebook. Nobody has ever said it is easy to coordinate activities, nor has anyone ever said social media strengthen friendships[28].

Conclusion

A hundred years ago most companies only had a local reach. Their marketing actions were limited to personal acquaintances and contacts with people. The introduction of film, radio and television in the 20th century stimulated first great revolution in the world of marketing. Companies received new tools allowing them to reach mass consumer and other companies with their products and services. It was much more beneficial to conduct outbound marketing on a national scale rather than a local scale, so companies gained the opportunity to expand their activities. This is how some of the biggest concerns like Procter & Gamble, Budweiser or McDonald's emerged. It was then that advertising agencies from Madison Avenue emerged as leaders. Thanks to outbound marketing they learned to invest huge money in building even more valuable relations with clients. Revolution of outbound marketing lasted over fifty years, but now it is becoming less and less important, because people are getting better at blocking marketing communicators. At the same time, more and more often they look for information and do shopping online. This huge change in the way of functioning of trade gives room for development of a completely new group of big companies and a new type of advertising agencies. **These new companies, new marketing agencies and PR agencies will have to master new rules of inbound marketing, because only inbound marketing enables converting creativity, content and communication into clients generating value**[29].

Social media change the rules of communication between companies and their recipients and clients – nowadays companies have to learn to listen and establish direct relations with representatives of their target groups. The world of social media consists of many different elements. It is necessary to learn to deal with each of these elements. The activities of the Internet community are not limited just to Facebook and Twitter – social media are much more than marketing specialists and directors of companies usually imagine. In order to achieve success it is necessary to understand that recipients and clients don't

28 C. Treadaway, Smith M., *Godzina dziennie...*, op. cit.
29 B. Halligan, D. Shah, *Inbound marketing...*, op. cit.

necessarily have to be located where people dealing with contact with media think they are (that is, for example on Facebook or Twitter).

Moreover, social media are subject to constant changes. Websites like Facebook may become like Friendster of Myspace tomorrow. The functioning of Internet communities to some extent resembles high and low tides. To a large extent they depend on the involvement of particular members and their willingness to sacrifice their own time. It sometimes happens that users of a particular website conclude it makes no sense to participate in a particular community any more. They leave then and the community goes through a rough patch. Some of them are able to recover from that, some are not. It is exactly for this reason that it is necessary to prepare flexible strategies of action in social media and constantly monitor and analyze the dialogues between recipients, at the same time paying attention to the location of the dialogue.

In the pre-Internet era companies didn't have to be afraid of the impact of external forces (such as clients or even employees) on their activities in the area of PR, marketing or advertising. Marketing activities were conducted in isolation – a team of specialists took care of preparing the image of brands and messages associated with products and services of a company, consumers only received these messages.

Back then marketing was a separated process. In this respect companies relied on own specialists or agencies from Madison Avenue. They ordered them to research demographic groups, identify their preferences and formulate appropriate messages. Nobody thought that consumers and employees not associated with marketing could have anything to say in the area of brands.

The onset of the Internet and the emergence of the social media sphere has brought about a change in all rules governing the world of PR, marketing and advertising. It turned out not only that the consumer can voice his opinion, but also that employees from divisions other than marketing have become spontaneous spokesmen of their employers[30].

In the last five years social websites transformed from a rather slow means of communication for students, to an area where people will in the future exchange information and where our off-line lives will go online. The scale of transformation of Internet entrepreneurship which took place thanks to Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and other means of social communication is incredible[31].

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