



Wish You Were Here!

**Social Consumer
Engagement**

in the

Cruise Industry

a bloomThink whitepaper

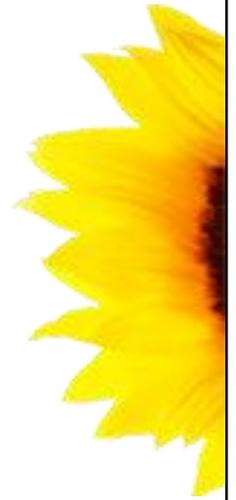
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Executive Summary



Social Media has exploded in recent years. However the maturity and sophistication with which organizations engage with consumers through the social tools still leaves much to be desired. Executives see this in the lack of social media ROI. Marketers see this in the difficulty of converting fans and followers into advocates and customers.

Social CRM – customer relationship management – is helping to bridge the gap somewhat. But CRM, however social, is still focused on the business managing the customer. The customer wishes not to be managed but to be engaged.

BloomThink conducted a deep social consumer engagement analysis of a high-touch, consumer focused industry: the Cruise industry. We reviewed 6 large cruise companies for how they have grown in social media reach over the last year and how they are using the social platforms to engage their customers and prospects. We reviewed Carnival Cruises, Royal Caribbean, Princess Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Lines, Holland America, and Celebrity Cruises.

BloomThink focused on their Facebook and Twitter interactions and used social media metrics to graph their results.

Emerging from this study was a very clear Social Consumer Engagement Maturity Model with 5 clear stages. All cruise companies we reviewed were at or past stage 2 but none were at stage 5.

BloomThink found that Carnival Cruises were the best example of an organization engaged with their consumers via social media. But even they were not yet doing all that they could.

This whitepaper indicates areas for improvement for that apply to any company starting down the social consumer engagement path. We point out specific areas where leisure travel agents should be tapping into the huge fan and follower base of the cruise companies. We also point out areas where the social media teams of the cruise companies can improve their social interactions with consumers. BloomThink stands ready to help.

As a result of this study a downloadable infographic and maturity model were created. These are available on the BloomThink website at <http://www.bloomthink.com>

MATURITY MODEL FOR SOCIAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

For all the exclamations around social media for business one thing is certain: business forays into social media is pointless if business is not doing anything to turn friends, fans and followers into evangelists and customers.

Businesses may think that they're doing this when they hire a fresh-from-college "community manager" or give social media outreach to a summer intern. Unfortunately, *hope and an intern* is a very poor social business strategy. Much of this stems from a technology focus rather than a social engagement focus. This is understandable even though it is wrong.

But theory is one thing. Practice is another. So here at BloomThink we conducted some independent research into the consumer engagement patterns of one high-touch industry: the Cruise industry. We looked specifically at Twitter and Facebook fans and followers of 6 large cruise companies between December 2010 and October 2011. We also looked closely at the Twitter interactions that the cruise companies had with their customers.

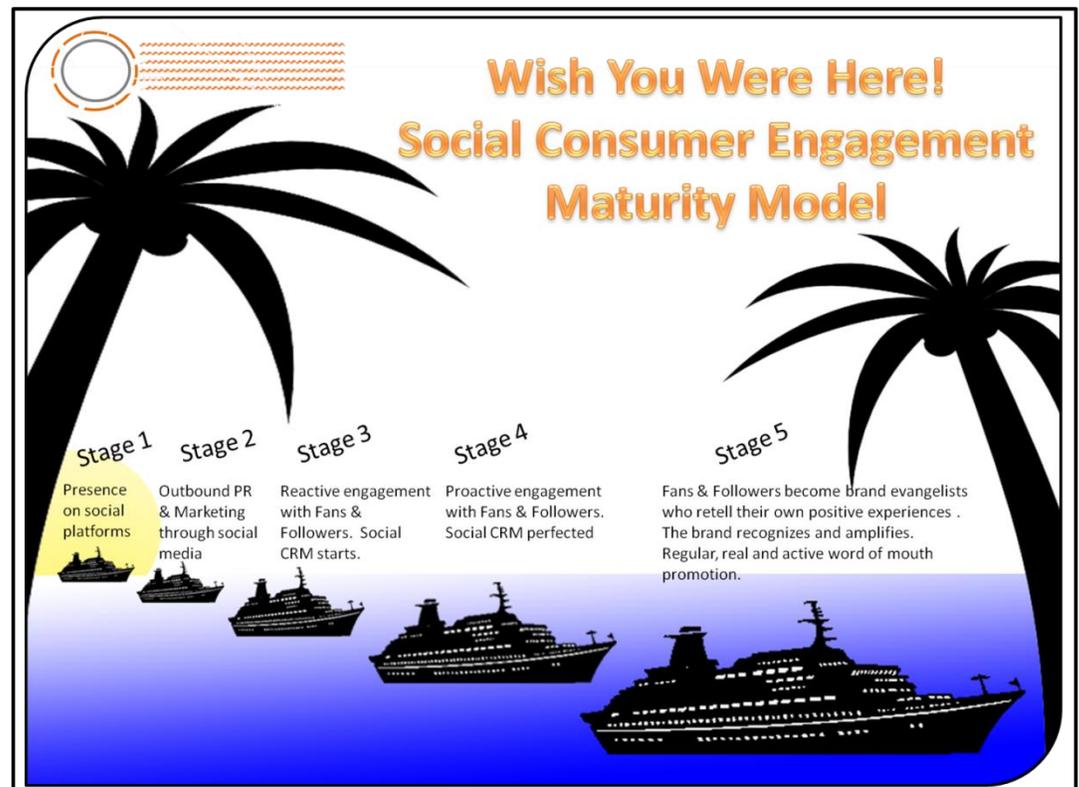
SOCIAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MATURITY MODEL

We discovered 5 clear stages of social customer experience engagement. Each stage moves an organization further along the maturity model until they are a highly mature, fully social, customer engagement team. The cruise lines we reviewed illustrated each of these stages.

Stage 1 is having a presence on the social engagement platforms. We looked at Twitter and Facebook.

Stage 2 is regularly posting and promoting PR and marketing. It is outbound and most often one-way.

Stage 3 is reactive engagement with customers who are fans and followers



through the social tools. This is where Social CRM starts but it does not end here.

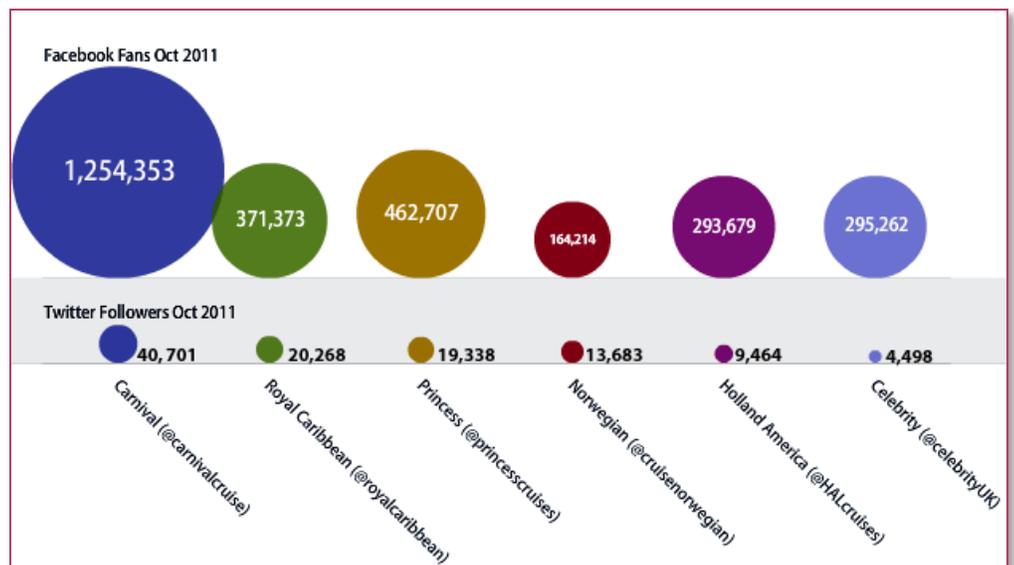
Stage 4 is proactive engagement with fans and followers. This is the optimization and perfection of Social CRM.

Stage 5 is where the audience of fans and followers are actively converted into brand evangelists – ideally through the retelling of their own positive experiences with the brand. The brand evokes, promotes, and amplifies the consumer message. The organization has incorporated regular pulsing of its consumer community into strategic intelligence, operations and product direction. It is regular, real and active word of mouth promotion.

ENGAGEMENT GROWTH ON SOCIAL PLATFORMS

The initial findings in our cruise study indicated that all companies were well aware of stages 1 and 2. They had presence and were outwardly promoting their brands through social channels. The results of our findings were encouraging as well. Even with simple stage 1 and 2 activity, there was huge growth all around in social media connections.

5 of the 6 organizations grew their Facebook likes at rates well over 100%. Twitter follower growth was on a pace that would make any Wall Street analyst jealous ranging from 36% to 85%. All this was achieved in less than one year. This growth generally follows a general global increase in social media. But the magnitude of the increase is indicative of the increasing importance that consumers place on engagement within high-touch industries.



FACEBOOK ANALYSIS

Consumers are looking for interesting news, deals, and enjoyable shared experiences. Reviewing consumer responses on the Facebook wall of the various lines, three main flavors of consumer engagement are evident.

The first is a “we love you” post where a consumer is recalling their own positive experience and sharing it with others who have had a similar experience. This is a community of passion sharing their memories with others who can relate through similar shared experiences. Carnival had the most engagement of this kind on their Facebook wall. This evidences their large community.

The second kind of response is a “can’t wait! We leave soon!” These responses are the pre-embarkation gang who may or may not have ever cruised before. However, they are energized by the “we love you” responses and eager to share their anticipation. From a brand marketing standpoint this is the perfect mix of positive word of mouth reviews and build up of anticipation. Travel agents should be constantly mining this treasure trove of information to offer pre and post cruise up-sell and add-on packages. Cruisers are there for an experience and to be pampered. Leisure travel agents need to up their game and become a critical part of the consumer’s experience chain. All cruise lines had this, “can’t wait” kind of participation.

The third kind of response is a question and answer conversation between consumers. The quantity of these conversations is often lower but they represent a consumer who is expecting to engage via the social tools to get answers from either the company or other users who are “in the know”. Groups with comparatively smaller numbers of Facebook likes tended to have more of this kind of participation. The CRM-themed focus of many of the conversations are ripe ground for travel agents to add value to their customers and to the lines.

Each of these three themes represent positive consumer engagement with the cruise brand. Yet other than providing a “space” in which to gush, the brands appear to be doing very little to capitalize on themes 1 and 2. While theme 3 typically generates an “official” answer, that answer appears to add little value beyond the initial scope of the question. Questions like “is there a ‘walk for the cure’ around the Lido deck?” often elicit a simple “yes” answer with little additional emphasis on other charity involvement or mentioning opportunities for further engagement.

It should be noted that one of the biggest drivers across social media is the ability to share photographs with others. The ubiquity of smart phones with high quality cameras, nearly-ubiquitous wifi and cellular coverage means that taking and uploading pictures is a very popular activity. However, with only one exception – Norwegian Cruise Lines - the cruise companies had very few user generated pictures on their Facebook walls. There were even fewer taken and uploaded while embarked (or in a port of call). This is a huge missed opportunity for the industry. Consider that customers are having a once-in-a-lifetime experience, they are taking pictures of that experience with their smart phones, they want to share those pictures with others. The challenges of shipboard internet access notwithstanding (ports of call are overwhelmingly major cities with cell coverage and wifi), Any company that provides an

BloomThink found three themes in consumer engagement with cruise brands on Facebook:

1. *We Love You!*
2. *Can’t Wait, We leave Soon!*
3. *How do I...?*

The first kind of response represents a passionate brand advocate.

The second kind of response is a treasure trove of opportunity for Leisure travel agents.

The third kind of response is squarely in the realm of Social CRM. Cruise lines and Leisure agents can add additional value here.

awesome experience for their customers' needs to provide a low-friction way of letting those customers share that experience. This is exactly what social media was made for. Yes images need to be screened for appropriateness – all the more reason to ensure that these companies have a senior social media staff employed.

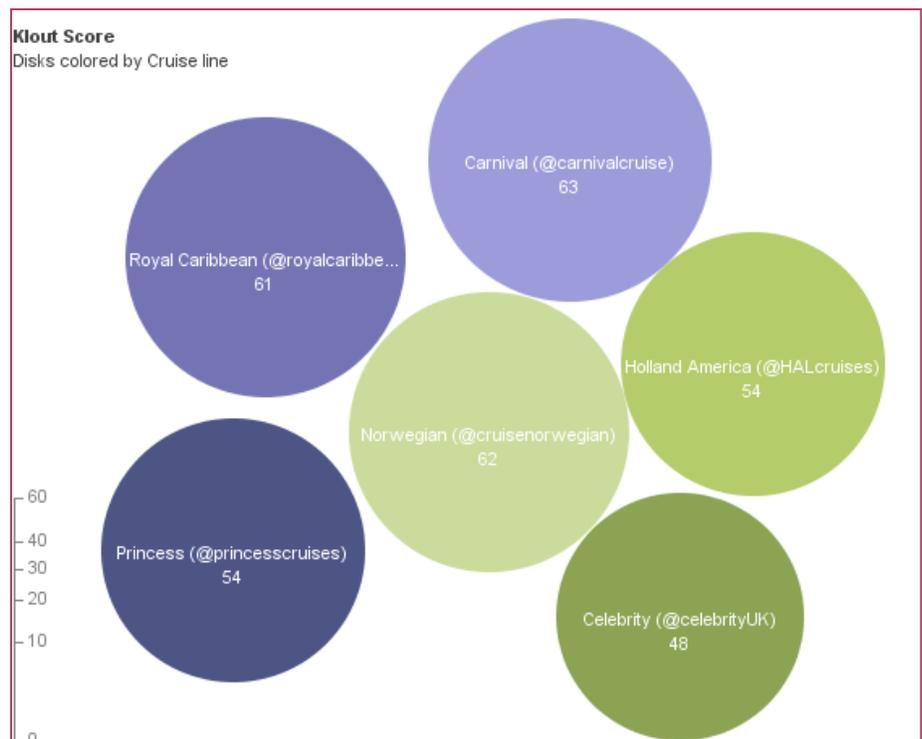
As mentioned previously, the stand-out company in this area was Norwegian Cruise Line. They had a generous number of user generated photos on their Facebook wall that generated feedback. They also used a snapshot of a customer as their Facebook profile picture (at least for a while during the time of this writing). This is a clever way of engaging the enthusiasm of the customer in a practical way. In the opinion of BloomThink, Norwegian's candid Facebook profile snapshot of "Chad" was much more interesting than Carnival's profile "coupon" advertisement.



TWITTER ANALYSIS

We were astounded by the results we uncovered after digging a little bit deeper into social consumer engagement. We used Klout (www.klout.com) scores to pulse the level of engagement influence and reach these cruise companies had with their consumers. It is important to understand that these scores change over time so this represents only a snapshot. However, while the sizes of the networks varied dramatically, the ability to engage a person through social media was much more closely aligned.

We discovered that while all companies are benefiting from increased consumer engagement through social media, a few shining examples of consumer engagement emerged. These discoveries emerged only aft a textual review of the actual tweet streams from the cruise companies. Something of a consumer experience engagement zeitgeist emerged and these were quite different from each other. All can be charted against the 5 stages of social customer experience engagement.



A SHINING EXAMPLE: CARNIVAL CRUISES

The best example was the consumer experience team behind the Carnival Cruises (@carnivalcruise) Twitter account. They had absolutely awesome personal interaction. It was awesome because it was a steady stream of proactive but non-intrusive "we'll serve you!" and "can't wait to have you aboard" engagement. The engagement was clearly focused on their pre-departure and wish-I-was-departing segments. It was fun to read, even as an outsider looking on. Company interest pieces such as PR and YouTube marketing were there but sprinkled throughout rather than force-fed into twitter stream. It was like experiencing a fairy tale through someone else's eyes.



Carnival's consumer engagement through Twitter is sophisticated and positive. While they have a huge reach and are highly trusted, they should now move to a strategy working on their ability to get re-tweeted and mentioned across a greater segment of their followers. Carnival has successfully traversed stages 1, 2 and 3 of the social customer engagement maturity model. They are now well positioned for the greater sophistication and greater rewards that are required by and come from stages 4 and 5.

PRINCESS CRUISES

Princess Cruises (@princesscruises) takes a very different approach to customer engagement. They take a much more reactive approach when engaging their customers. They had more "thanks for participating in our marketing promotion" kinds of tweets. They had an over abundance of self focus that took the form of "look at our blog" and "check out our theme for the day". There was less interaction with what consumers were talking about. Princess was proactive when dealing with complaints on twitter often responding with a "here is how to contact customer service" tweet. These are invariably useful for the consumer experiencing a problem. But as an outsider looking in, BloomThink felt like an intruder or someone inadvertently included in a "reply-all" email intended for one recipient. While customer engagement to get ahead of problems is one use of social tools, a large quantity of apology styled tweets can cast a pall over what should otherwise be a stream of dream-come-true vignettes. Customers want to vicariously experience (and maybe eventually book a trip with) a fairy god-mother, not a Debbie-downer.



Princess's twitter consumer engagement is good from a social CRM stance by reaching out to problem areas. But as a marketing approach this raises awareness and gains mentions for the wrong reasons. While enjoying good participation amongst their twitter followers they need to work on shifting the balance of focus from them to the customer and stop airing so much "dirty laundry". BloomThink recommends using a dedicated CRM twitter account for dealing with problems. Princess has started down the maturity path and is sitting pretty at stage 2-3

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Sophisticated consumer engagement is not an easy task. It requires good conversation skills applied to a new medium and the still-emerging norms of the social spaces. Expert communication skills require three things:

1. Be genuinely and sincerely interested
2. Make the other person feel comfortable
3. Listen carefully

Missing any one of these three pillars causes a conversation to painfully halt. Twitter and Facebook tools make it easy to listen. Whenever someone else's interests and our business interest overlap it is easy to be sincerely interested. However, making the other person feel comfortable is an art that requires practice and sophistication. Simply butting in and hijacking a conversation when someone mentions your name is a sure way to cause a cold shoulder if not outright hostility. Even if intentions are sincere, it is oafish to bluster into a conversation. Unfortunately, when social management tools are keyed to look only for keywords or a twitter handle, you fail to gain context or other social queues that encourage or discourage uninvited participation.

Top notch social communication skills require:

- *Genuine interest and sincerity*
- *An ability to make the other person feel comfortable*
- *Careful listening*

ROYAL CARIBBEAN

Of the three lines we reviewed on Twitter, Royal Caribbean has, in our opinion, the most potential for huge success with social consumer engagement. They appear to have all of the ingredients they need. They just need to mix it up right and give it some time to "cook". Our analysis of what Royal Caribbean should do is deeper than for the others. However, all others can learn from these recommendations.



When reviewing the twitter stream of Royal Caribbean (@royalcaribbean) the lack of sophistication in social communication skills is one negative quality among several good ones that unfortunately emerges. There is good personalization but the engagement is immature for the medium. The feel is of a child who hears their name and then tries too hard to fully participate in and adult conversation. It can be cute and

endearing at first but off-putting as it persists. Take a look at the sample twitter stream above. Each tweet is directed at a person (good). The first tweet is great. It has a context that can be inferred by the rest of us who are casually watching this engagement stream and identifying with the characters mentioned. With the first tweet we infer that Royal Caribbean is a company that values loyalty and it looks like @SunViking2 had a positive experience. So far so good. But then the next two tweets are curious. They have no context except to the individuals mentioned. This is great one on one engagement but Royal Caribbean is missing out on the wider impressions they could be making on the rest of us. One to one engagement does not scale. Royal Caribbean does not have the ability to engage with their 20,000+ followers on a one-to-one basis. They need to remember that the tweet streams are public and with a bit more context, the rest of us can share in the good will of the person mentioned. For instance, is Royal Caribbean glad to hear that @Carolinemoore8 got her lost luggage back? (that would be a bad thing for the rest of us to infer!) In actuality @Carolinemoore8 is looking forward to starting her cruise with a wonderful welcome onboard. Royal Caribbean should be putting that into the context of their reply. Something like this would be better:

@carolinemoore8 Great, We love to hear that you like the unique way we welcome you aboard! We will have that something special for you!

This lets everyone else ride @Carolinemoore8's coat tails and promotes her feelings of eager anticipation as a highly powerful word-of-mouth recommendation to the rest of us.

Turning our attention to the tweet directed to @gracecheung604, we find that there is more to the story. @gracecheung604 had just recently returned from a cruise. But there is no way for the rest of us to know that without digging into several days of tweets. Again, Royal Caribbean shows good initiative in engaging with a highly active twitter user. But the interaction that starts good ends as slightly uncomfortable and in a "hanging" mode.

What Royal Caribbean should have done in this instance is turn a one-on-one conversation into a huge social customer engagement win. Here is how they could have done it:

1. Discover that @gracecheung604 has a high Klout score of 54. This means that she is active, as good reach amongst her followers and they respond to her.
2. When she mentions that she wished she did some other ship-board activities, Royal Caribbean should give her a "first in line" pass to be used by her on her next cruise. When she mentioned that she loved the Chef's Table, give her a "tour the kitchen with our Chefs" pass to use on her next cruise. No expiration. Low to no



incremental cost for Royal Caribbean.

3. This shows engagement and not just marketing through forced conversation and there is a high likelihood that a person like @gracecheung604 with such a high Klout score will positively mention Royal Caribbean in subsequent tweets and facebook posts that are not hidden behind a one-on-one conversation

Royal Caribbean's consumer engagement is on the right track but still gawky. They can make so much more from the willingness of their audience to engage with them. They have an eager audience and an attentive social team on their side. Some sophistication is all that is needed. Royal Caribbean Overall Rating: stage 3-4

CONCLUSION: LESSONS FOR THE REST OF US

The cruise industry is a high-touch industry that is still in the process of spinning up its social consumer engagement programs. They make a good archetype for any other industry. The stages of social consumer engagement, so clearly illustrated by the cruise industry, are relevant for all organizations. There are 5 clear stages of social customer experience engagement. Each stage moves an organization further along the maturity model until they are a highly mature, fully social, customer engagement team. The cruise lines we reviewed illustrated each of these stages.

Stage 1 is having a presence on the social engagement platforms. We looked at Twitter and Facebook.

Stage 2 is regularly posting and promoting PR and marketing. It is outbound and most often one-way.

Stage 3 is reactive engagement with customers who are fans and followers through the social tools.

Stage 4 is proactive engagement with fans and followers.

Stage 5 is where the audience of fans and followers are actively converted into brand evangelists – ideally through the retelling of their own positive experiences with the brand. It is regular, real and active word of mouth promotion.

COMMUNICATION KEYS TO SOCIAL CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

As organizations progress along the maturity model they must remember communication skills appropriate to the social medium. The three pillars of good communication are very much in play at stages 3, 4 and 5. Indeed, these are what enable an organization to move from stage 3 to stage 5. The three pillars of good communication are:

1. Be genuinely and sincerely interested
2. Make the other person feel comfortable
3. Listen carefully

While technology exists to help companies listen carefully to the flood of inbound signals from social sources, a knee-jerk response to someone mentioning your name or your brand is rarely the best way to communicate. This takes time and cannot easily be automated. For this reason, companies looking to move along the maturity path for social customer engagement should not rely *only* on automated twitter and facebook responders.

Companies should employ a human being who understands how to engage with others on topics that are important to them through the social tools. This means hiring someone with the business savvy to both understand the tools as well as how to start, engage and graciously remove themselves from a conversation with a stranger. Simply parroting the latest corporate promotion or hijacking a conversation are signs of immaturity. Realize that hijacking a conversation is just as gawky and uncouth in social media settings as it is in real life. The quick thrill a consumer has by being “noticed” by the big cool corporation wears off as the conversation turns to a marketing pitch.

DEALING WITH PROBLEMS VS. AIRING DIRTY LAUNDRY

Remember that social consumer engagement is a good way to head off customer problems before they spiral out of control. But do so in an appropriate manner. You don't want to air all your dirty laundry on purpose. Deal with public problems as they come up but don't promote problems on purpose out of a misguided sense of sincerity. It can end up doing more harm than good to your brand. Instead, use social engagement tools to channel one-on-one issues into a one-on-one setting. Twitter and facebook are *not* one-on-one settings!

SURPRISE AND DELIGHT TOP CONSUMERS AND REAP THE SOCIAL REWARDS

Finally, look for areas where you can deliver something to the consumer that is valued by them but has a low to no incremental cost for you. Special privileges, back-stage passes, sending a “remember when you were here” postcard are all items that are cool and interesting to an engaged consumer. Remember to be judicious in how those perks are handed out. No one is entitled to them. So make the most of them. Target the consumers with high Klout or other social scoring indexes. They are the ones most likely to repeat to their networks what cool thing you did for them.

When you put these actions together you will quickly move up the maturity model to stage 5 where fans and followers become customers and advocates of your brand.

ABOUT BLOOMTHINK



BloomThink is an Enterprise Information Management consultancy. Billy Cripe is a recognized expert on the intersection of social business, mobility and Enterprise Content Management technology. He is the founder and Principal BloomThinker of BloomThink an information centric social business and mobile strategy consultancy. Billy is an Oracle E2.0 ACE. He is author of two books: "Two Types of Collaboration and Ten Requirements for Using Them" (2010 Smashwords) and "Reshaping Your Business With Web 2.0" (2008 McGraw-Hill). He has over 11 years of experience in ECM and is a recognized speaker, author and evangelist for Enterprise 2.0, mobility and social business.

Billy has developed and implemented EIM strategy and projects around the world. His past work includes strategy, selection program management and implementation for large Hollywood movie studios, Brand management and security for a global entertainment company, GRC architecture and optimization for global bio-pharma organizations, Executive workflow design for a well known news media firm, and many other groups around the world.

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Data Sets created by @BillyCripe and BloomThink: <http://bloomthink.com>

Engage BloomThink for Social Media Strategy

GRAPHICS

The BloomThink [Social Consumer Engagement Maturity Model](#) and [Cruise Industry Social Consumer Engagement Infograph](#) available at [BloomThink](#)

