

Customer Network Analysis for Product Marketing

Every day, marketers around the world are trying to find better ways to get their products into the hands of consumers as quickly and efficiently as possible. The web, especially the widespread adoption of social media, has had a huge impact on how customers hear about new products, as well as when and why they choose to adopt them. This is due in part to a tremendous power shift in the communication landscape. In the previous century, product marketing consisted primarily of companies communicating their product message to consumers. Sometimes media middlemen would step in to offer a critique – a kind word or product recommendation from a journalist could go a long way.

But the roles of both the product marketer and the media middleman have been heavily diminished in the world of Web 2.0. In the new century, customers go directly to one another for the first (and last) word on any product – whether they're checking out reviews on Amazon or searching Twitter for real-time feedback as new products hit the streets. Customers have always depended on the recommendations of others to drive their purchasing decisions, but now they can discover the thoughts and opinions of other consumers with a few simple clicks.

So how can product marketing professionals tap into this conversation and benefit from the firehose of customer and product information that's floating around on the web? And how can you manage the paradox of intimacy versus scalability presented by web communications?

Customer Network Analysis may provide some of the answers you seek.

CNA can help you to:

- Discover influencers and opinion leaders to target your messaging and response
- Acquire new customers through word of mouth and accelerate product diffusion in the market
- Cut through the noise to reach the customers that will have the biggest impact for your brand

Understanding the flow of trends and information

As nice as it would be to communicate directly with every potential customer in your audience, for obvious reasons this option is neither plausible nor possible, even on the web. Smart marketing, therefore, tries to make the most of the investment by targeting the people who will help to spread the message to others. This spread can be particularly powerful if the message is being shared by someone with a degree of social influence. On the social web, these so-called "influencers" can be defined in part by their reach (how many people they are connected to), but many other factors play into their level of influence, such as how many different "clusters" of people they connect, or how central they are within a particular network.

CNA is a cutting edge methodology that helps you to profile and rate your customers based on their entire web footprint. This enables you to find the people that will matter most to push your product into the market as quickly and efficiently as possible. CNA can even be used to boost the sentiments of brand community to boost customer loyalty once they have opted-in to your brand.

CNA helps you to answer the following questions:

- Which websites are my customers visiting and using the most?
- On which social websites is my audience most active?
- How active are they on these sites?
- What is the total referral potential of "Customer A" on the web?
- How influential is "Customer A" in her overall online network?
- How influential is "Customer A" within my existing customer base?
- Who are the influential figures for my overall customer base?
- Who are the influential figures for a particular topic of interest?

By applying the answers to these questions to your product marketing initiatives, you can drive diffusion, accelerate adoption, and boost your marketing ROI.