Case Study: Delaware North

How Delaware North's Social Business Lab Unified its Social Presence

Delaware North is a multibillion-dollar hospitality organization that had an adhoc social media strategy for its departments and over 200 venues. In an effort to coordinate social listening, engagement, and analytics, a Center of Excellence model, called the Social Business Lab, was established while using Hootsuite in an effort to scale social across the global organization.

Delaware North

Founded in 1915 by the Jacobs brothers, Delaware North was originally a concessionaire for theaters and ballparks. It has since expanded into a $3 billion company with over 60,000 employees worldwide. This hospitality management company provides hospitality and food service through its operating subsidiaries in over 200 locations, including global sports arenas, airports, parks, resorts, and entertainment venues.

Detected 220+ social media accounts

Detected 40+ "rogue" social media accounts

Established social benchmark for continuous improvement

What They Did

Delaware North subsidiaries operate in over 200 locations—places such as TD Garden in Boston, Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex and The Plaza Hotel—a vast majority of which are on social media. Chairman and CEO Jeremy Jacobs also owns the Boston Bruins. Over the years, many social profiles were created out of a desire for the business locations to be present on social. Most had little to no consideration for long-term strategy or direct business correlation. The result was social sprawling. With so many rogue accounts and sprouting social hubs that lacked strategy and purpose, there was a clear concern regarding reputation management and security.

It was then that the new CMO of Delaware North, Todd Merry, challenged Kerry Hassen, the digital marketing manager, to:

- Secure the brand online
- Put processes behind their activities and start measuring business impact
- Empower venues and employees to engage with best practices
- Eliminate redundancy, confusion, and waste

How They Did It

Getting Executive Buy-In to Scale Social

Once Hassen and the marketing team had executive buy-in to become a social business with a scalable strategy, they did an audit of their social media inventory. From this audit, they categorized accounts as low level or active; medium level or immersed; and high level or influential. All of the influential accounts with assigned social media managers or practitioners behind them that were building relationships, engaging, and listening on social, were given a seat in Hootsuite Enterprise.

> "Our CMO was keenly aware that social is beneficial for the whole effort, not just one department."
>
> *Kerry Hassen, Digital Marketing Manager, Delaware North*
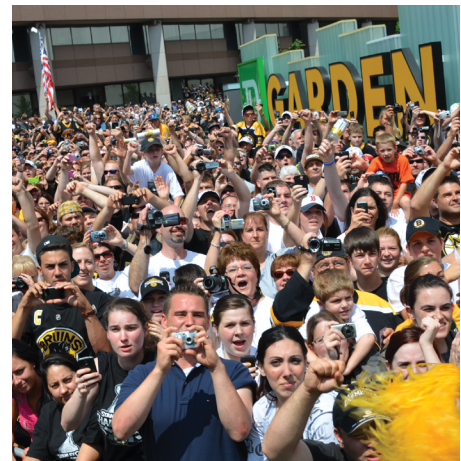
Establishing a Social Business Lab

Here are the steps that Delaware North took to create an effective Social Business Lab:

Step 1: Establish a core group of social advocates. Hassen reached out to the heads of Delaware North's business lines and got them to nominate passionate social advocates to represent their teams. Made up of a core group of influential practitioners and managers, the "Social Business Lab" was instituted to follow a Hub and Spoke Center of Excellence model.

Step 2: Revisit and revise the previously established policy and best practices. Once every 60-90 days, the Social Business Lab meets to make decisions on and strategize around infrastructure, process, policy, best practice, education, training, evangelizing and scaling social across the enterprise.

Step 3: Share and train departments, teams, and venues on established best practices and purposed departmental strategies. Looking back at their initial audit just a year and a half before, they began training and giving the low- and medium-level account owners the tools for success. These practitioners now meet every 60 days via WebEx to discuss trends, issues, best practices and share ideas.

"If someone comes to us and wants to launch a campaign or open an account, they now know to provide us with the business use case. Having teams think strategically about why they need time and resources allocated to a project is so beneficial to the growth and success of our entire organization."

Kerry Hassen, Digital Marketing Manager, Delaware North

The Results

Before the Social Business Lab was established, there was a lack of clarity around digital rights and responsibilities within the organization. After establishing goals and strategy, all of the department and venue teams have a clearer understanding and now know what to be listening for and how best to engage clients and customers through the digital platforms.

Using Hootsuite, they listen and assign those messages to their team and then craft messages that are timely and strategic. Not only are they collaborating with other departments, they have greater confidence and trust in listening and engagement, and have improved the quality of their responses and response rates.

By establishing the Social Business Lab to support scaling social across the organization, Delaware North saw incredible results within the first few months—across many venues and departments:

- Increased collaboration, trust, and confidence

- Improved customer responses and faster response times

- Higher visibility into social accounts

- Established scalable social strategy

- Improved focus on resource allocation, business goals, and strategy behind social

- Confidence in crisis management and security

- Established brand presence across departments and venues

- Improved overall reporting and analytical reporting at the local and corporate/enterprise level

"Sharing departmental goals and being ever-focused on how every effort ties back to the organization is key."

Kerry Hassen, Digital Marketing Manager, Delaware North

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