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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

The Conversation Company: Boost Your Business through Culture, People & Social Media

Steven Van Belleghem
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Steven Van Belleghem, a successful entrepreneur, business professor, and managing partner of the firm InSites Consulting, wants companies to pay close attention to communication—not traditional, one-way, top-down, paid and owned advertising, but real, ongoing, open, and accessible conversation between the company's two most important and valuable resources: its employees and customers. His goal is to make every organization a "Conversation Company," with the mission "to ensure that every interaction ends with a positive, high-impact conversation."

To help create win-win situations, he has written an inspiring and highly motivating book about how to achieve productive conversations between businesses and customers that lead to a positive outcome and improved quality experience for both. Van Belleghem demonstrates how to effectively participate in and benefit from social media, beginning with an examination of company culture, the shared and stated values that shape a company and define its purpose.

Using case studies and examples from successful companies such as Zappos, Google, Nokia, and Microsoft, Van Belleghem explains the four C's of business success: customer experience, conversation, content, and collaboration. In a step-by-step plan to help transform an organization into a Conversation Company, he describes how to put employees first in restructuring the way companies think and work and how to enable them to effectively and honestly represent their company in conversations on social media.

His wisdom cuts straight to the point: "Customers now understand that advertising always portrays the world as more beautiful—and reliable—than it really is. They have become more critical than ever. They expect honest communication … Rather than investing in an advert that promises good service, you should invest the money in actually providing good service." What's more, customers should be able to participate in and critique not only the product and service, but contribute to the process that delivers it to them, using interactive social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and methods that emerging technologies have in store for us next.

Keeping up with changing markets is essential to business. Beloved and well-regarded companies like Borders Books simply disappear if they fail to successfully participate and deliver in the always-on community of digital marketing and social media. Consider the research: "On the basis of emotionality of Twitter updates, specialists can predict movements in the Dow Jones index with an accuracy rates of 86.7%."

In tandem with *The Conversation Manager*, Van Belleghem's earlier book, *The Conversation Company* is an ideal companion for businesses seeking to respond to shifting markets in an age of ever-increasing connectedness. "Today's customers want more from companies than just a creative Facebook page or an occasional response to a tweet. Today's consumers want a company that is open and responsive to their opinions, a company that puts the customer first." In a fascinating volume sure to inspire innovation and success, Van Belleghem teaches us how to do just that.

PAMELA HARRIS KAISER (June 27, 2012)

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