



CHANGING THE CULTURE

With Sport England outlining strategies to increase diversity in coaching, clubs should seize this opportunity to foster real growth in their organisation, writes *Matt Ng*.



“Funding streams will be more readily available to clubs that can demonstrate they offer a welcoming environment for all, regardless of background, ability, race or age.”

Recent research has shown that overall the coaching workforce in the UK is quite diverse, in terms of gender, ethnicity and physical/mental health conditions.

Yet the overall picture masks pockets of inequality, particularly in sports club settings and at high performance levels.

Recent figures report only one in 10 accredited Olympic sport coaches are women, and further research shows a disproportionate underrepresentation of ethnic minority coaching staff at the elite level.

The consensus is that much more work can be done to not just bring these populations on to the playing field, but into sports coaching and leadership roles to deliver positive change at a deep structural and cultural level.

New measures implemented by the government and Sport England, Sporting Futures Strategy and the Coaching Plan for England, will fundamentally affect the way coaching is delivered in the future. Funding streams will be more readily available to clubs that can demonstrate they offer a welcoming environment for all, regardless of background, ability, race or age. The Football Association has recently followed suit by announcing its three-year diversity and equality plan, In Pursuit of Progress, to help ensure the diversity of those governing both on and off the pitch.

In 2016 UK Coaching, in partnership with Leeds Beckett University and ORD Consultants, launched Changing the Culture of Coaching a programme of workshops to help sports organisations develop a long-term blueprint of how they can attract, recruit, manage, develop and retain coaching talent at all levels.

Designed using approaches within neuroscience, sport psychology and change management, the course set out to initially outline the current landscape of coaching in the UK, create the vision for change in recruiting new coaching talent, while also focusing on developing the existing workforce as leaders.

Dr Leanne Norman from Leeds Beckett University says we should embrace the new strategy if we want to both attract a wider player base and enhance the way our organisations and clubs operate.

“Our coaches are our frontline to potential players,” she says. “Underrepresented people are more likely to connect with them if they can see themselves reflected in those leadership roles.”

While some might resist this change, seeing it as a box-ticking exercise that will only serve to restrict how clubs operate, Leanne highlights the benefits that a diverse workforce can offer.





© British Triathlon

“Research consistently proves that diverse teams make better decisions and are more productive, while staff turnover is lower and well-being is higher. These teams have the ability to bring different ideas and approaches to the table.”

The first cohort of the course included representatives from national governing bodies including the Lawn Tennis Association, British Cycling and England Netball.

Helen Hiley, Senior Coaching and Education Officer for British Cycling, was one of the participants. “Last year we set a goal to have one million more women on bikes by 2020,” she said. “The course helped us consider how to better reach our audiences traditionally but also through the hiring of diverse staff.”

“We’ve also given more thought about making our sport more approachable – the way we promote cycling and through which channels, and we’ve redesigned our resources to become more accessible by people at all levels.”

Should clubs not change the way they operate and recruit, their ‘business as usual’ approach could well put off potential players from joining, and at the very worst, lock out some potential avenues for funding.

Leanne believes that one of the key factors contributing to this diversity problem is a lack of transparency in coach recruitment. “We have a tendency to hire

those that look and act like us. If we don’t think outside the box, we’re going to bring onboard the same kind of person that will recycle what we’re doing but yet expect better results.”

One of the other major challenges in sustaining diversity has been the limited scope for progression and developing existing talent. While underrepresented groups do come through the door and take up entry level coaching roles, beyond Level 2 there is a huge drop off in their numbers.

“The biggest barrier is people asking the question, ‘why should I bother investing in a higher qualification if there’s no opportunity for me to utilise these new skills?’” says Leanne. “Clubs need to stop thinking of what their coaches can do for them, but what they can offer to our coaches - how do we nurture them in the long-term and provide opportunities to help them develop as professionals?”

For clubs yet to engage with this strategy but willing to take the first step, Leanne says: “You can begin by having the conversation with people that can kick-start real change. Instead of asking why should we diversify, we should ask, what is the cost of not having a diverse team? Take people on that journey, and your club will grow.”

Where next?

Book a place on our **Equity in Your Coaching workshop** via UKCoaching.org



Being in a society means more than wearing a special ring and knowing the secret handshake. At Leeds Beckett, it means sharing your interests with like-minded people, making friends, trying new things or getting involved in something you love.

You can join dozens of different student-run societies, and you can even help with the running of one if you fancy – that’s more colour to add to your CV. Being part of a society is a great way of

developing skills, practising hobbies, expanding your social circles, and most importantly, having some fun!

HERE'S JUST A FLAVOUR OF THE SOCIETIES YOU CAN JOIN:

- Amnesty International
- Film
- Harry Potter
- Journalism
- British Sign Language
- Games
- Hooping
- LGBTQ*

If none of our societies are your cup of tea, the Students’ Union offers advice and a handy toolkit so you can set up your own!

For the full rundown of societies you can be a part of, check out the Students’ Union web page at leedsbeckettsu.co.uk

“We meet up once or twice a week to rehearse, do improv and re-enact film scenes, like the ‘funny guy’ scene from Goodfellas. If you love film and acting, or even if you don’t know the first thing about drama, you’ll enjoy our society.”

Pishdaad Modaressi
BA (Hons) Filmmaking
Member of the Drama
& Live Theatre Society

BE A GOOD

..... *sport*

Whether you're fiercely competitive and looking to fill your trophy cabinet or just want to have fun and meet new people, we offer sports clubs to suit all tastes and abilities.

You might want to pick up old favourites such as football or hockey, or you could try something a bit more niche, like lacrosse, cheerleading or, should you literally want to go off-piste, snowboarding. It's all good.

"Handball was the chance for me to try something new and meet new people. If you start playing as a fresher, by your third year the people you play with will be your best friends, no matter where they come from or who they are. We don't have trials, so get involved and you can come a long way in a very short space of time."

Chris Millard
BA (Hons) Sport Development
Member of the Handball Club

SPOTLIGHT ON: HANDBALL

What is it?

Take a hint of football, a sprinkle of netball and a portion of basketball, whizz them up in a blender and you have yourself a high-octane sport suitable for all. Easy to pick up but tricky to master, handball relies on quick reflexes and some sleight of hand as players try to throw the ball into their opponents' goal. What makes it fun is that practice sessions are attended by men and women of any ability, ensuring it's a really social sport. Fifteen million players worldwide can't be wrong.



Put your hands in the air for (you've guessed it) our handball team

Keep reading to whet your appetite and find out more about the sports activities we offer...

... Be ...

ACTIVE

From Pilates to spinning, we've got a class for you



We're big into sport here at Leeds Beckett. Olympic triathlon champion Alistair Brownlee graduated from our University with an MSc in Finance in 2013 and still trains with us.

1,500m Commonwealth Games silver medallist Laura Weightman and World Cup footballers Lucy Bronze and Jade Moore are also graduates of our University.

Even if you're a long way from a podium finish, you can still benefit from all the activities we have on offer – our excellent facilities and sports-related opportunities are open to everyone to help you keep fit, have fun and expand your social circles.



Our Sports Volunteering programme is a great way to gain experience and skills. Find out more on page 29.

Yet another exciting opportunity thrown up by university sport. There's no better place to learn than at leedsbeckett carnegiesport

 @JONATHONROBERT

CAMPUS SPORT

If you're looking to keep fit and make new friends, there's a team sport for you, regardless of your experience or ability. Already into football, rugby, cricket or netball? We've got you covered. Ever fancied trying cheerleading, baseball, ultimate Frisbee or even American football? Step this way...

FITNESS CLASSES

Whether you're into spin, kung fu, cardio, Thai boxing or Zumba, feel the burn with our diverse range of fitness classes. Slow things down with yoga or Pilates, or learn self-defence Israeli-style with Krav Maga. Classes run throughout the week at both campuses and are included in the cost of your membership (although you don't have to be a member to take part).

Our sports membership is great value and gives you access to a huge range of quality facilities and fitness classes. Take a look at our website for more details:

leedsbeckett.ac.uk/sport

ATHLETIC UNION

Our Athletic Union has 40 clubs and more than 85 teams that compete weekly in BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sport) competitions. Our annual Varsity tournament pits our teams against our friendly rivals at the University of Leeds, as they go head-to-head over a whole day of competitive sport.

TOP-FLIGHT CAREER

If you're looking for a career in sport as an athlete or coach then we can help. Our Carnegie Coach Education programmes offer workshops led by experienced coaches and can provide you with a nationally-recognised qualification in a variety of sports. Every year, our University helps more than 3,000 people earn a sports coaching qualification, opening up a range of volunteering opportunities and boosting their career prospects.

SCHOLARSHIPS

If you're already competing at a high level and have the desire and dedication to push yourself further, then our scholarship scheme enables you to develop your sporting performance alongside your academic studies.

leedsbeckett.ac.uk/sport

Focus on your future

Your Leeds Beckett learning journey will combine academic study with practical experience and the chance to broaden your horizons through participating in once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, fully preparing you for your chosen career and life after university.

Whether you are being guided by industry experts, building the contacts to help you succeed in industry, working on real projects to develop your portfolio or even helping to lead a student society, your learning experience will help you stand out in today's crowded job market.

Don't just take our word for it - 96.8 per cent of our undergraduates¹ are in work or further study six months after graduating and we are ranked third in England for graduate employment².

We host regular careers fairs where you will get the chance to meet employers



Graduate Emma Endersby, BA (Hons) Sport Marketing, in her role working for the Rugby Football League



BA (Hons) Entertainment Management graduate Ben Brown



BSc (Hons) Computing graduate Adil Ali is now a webmaster at Mudfords Ltd

ACCREDITED COURSES

With our range of accredited courses, you can be assured your learning will be informed by best practice and to standards set by professional bodies. By the time you graduate, you'll have the expertise employers are really looking for.

LEARNING FROM EXPERTS

You'll constantly glean insight and knowledge from people who are leading in their area of expertise, whether it's being taught by our skilled academics, meeting a range of employers at one of our many campus events, including our Annual Careers Fair, or attending our packed programme of guest lectures delivered by industry experts. Previous guest speakers have included former Leeds Rhinos and England rugby league captain Kevin Sinfield, and Gina Boswell, General Manager of Unilever UK.

To help you realise your potential, you will work particularly closely with our academics. For example, students in our Northern Film School were able to work closely with Principal Lecturer Jennifer

Granville, an established actor and screenwriter, in the production of eight short films about the 1984-85 miners' strike, which were premiered at the 2016 Leeds International Film Festival.

In another example of student and academic collaboration, computer security Senior Lecturer Dr Z Cliffe Schreuders led a cybersecurity project funded by the Higher Education Academy. As part of the project, students ethically hacked into a network of computers in order to improve their hacking techniques and to inform developments of future innovative cyber software.

PLACEMENTS

Placements will enable you to apply what you've learned on campus to the world of work and will give you an invaluable taste of your chosen career. We've developed exciting placement programmes in partnership with more than 2,000 companies and organisations.

In 2015-16, we arranged 5,231 student placements in organisations such as Disney, Samsung, Apple, Nike, BMW and many more.

OUR COURSE ACCREDITORS INCLUDE:



¹Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey 2014-15. Includes all UK, EU and overseas undergraduates.

²Based on HESA data and the DLHE 2014-15 survey. Ranking excludes providers with fewer than 500 respondents to the DLHE survey.

Get career ready

ENTERPRISE & INNOVATION ACADEMY

If you dream of running your own business, our Enterprise & Innovation Academy for Students can provide start-up workshops, networking events and advice on funding to help you get your idea off the ground. During your studies, you could even develop your business through our Placement Year Entrepreneurship Scheme and use it as a module credit that could count towards your final year result.

Since 2004, the Academy has helped create more than 180 student and graduate businesses, including Sweet Cecily's, a natural skincare company established by LLB (Hons) Law graduate Cecily Fearnley, and Boston Shakers, a mobile cocktail bar service set up by BA (Hons) International Business graduate Mehul Patel.

The Academy also offers recent graduates use of a business address, professional meeting spaces and membership of the Leeds Chamber of Commerce, all completely free of charge for three months.

EMPLOYABILITY ADVICE

Our dedicated Employability Team will help you shape your CV and write job applications, prepare you for interviews and provide expert guidance when it comes to deciding your next steps in the world of work. They can also arrange career mentoring, where you'll receive advice from people who have been successful and influential in their chosen field.

STUDY SUPPORT

Our Skills for Learning programme is designed to help you improve your communication, critical thinking and research skills. These sessions will help you get the most from your studies and will build the confidence and expertise you'll need in your future career.

VOLUNTEERING

We work with some of the world's premier music and sporting events, charities and community groups to offer you invaluable volunteering opportunities, where you can learn from industry leading experts and develop your workplace and people skills. Previous students have volunteered with Live at Leeds, the Great North Run, the Audio & Radio Industry Awards and the 2012 London Olympics. On the University's doorstep, students have visited local schools to support children with their reading and helped charities to raise vital funds.

If you've set your sights further afield, Thailand, South Africa, Brazil and Peru are just some of the countries where we've run international volunteering projects over the last few years. As well as broadening your life skills, these ventures will give you a global perspective and provide much needed support to communities across the world.

No matter what you choose to do as a volunteer, the skills and insight you will gain will add colour and experience to your CV.

leedsbeckett.ac.uk/volunteering



"By studying LLB (Hons) Law at Leeds Beckett, I set myself up with all the skills to understand the legalities of running a business. I studied employment law, consumer law and copyright law (amongst everything else), which have all been very useful, and I also have the ability to read and understand the legal information I now come across, such as product regulations."

Cecily Fearnley
Managing Director, Sweet Cecily's
LLB (Hons) Law

Research and field expertise

Research is at the heart of the academic community here at Leeds Beckett. Many of our course teams engage in groundbreaking studies in their field and present their findings at major conferences all over the world. Their experience continually shapes our courses to ensure they are relevant and insightful. Here are just some of the studies and activities the School has been involved in recently:

MEDITATION TO TREAT PAIN

Just 10 minutes of mindfulness meditation could act as an alternative to painkillers, according to research conducted in our School. A cold pressor test was used to cause pain to 24 participants – they each put one of their hands in warm water for two minutes before removing it and placing it immediately into ice water until the pain became too much to tolerate. They then sat quietly for 10 minutes or meditated for 10 minutes before repeating the test. The participants from the meditation group saw a significant decrease in anxiety towards pain and a significant increase in pain threshold and pain tolerance.

ANTIBIOTIC RESEARCH RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL BACKING

A Leeds Beckett academic is at the forefront of attempts to tackle antibiotic resistance after receiving an international grant to conduct research. Senior Lecturer Dr John George is Chief Scientific Officer of biopharmaceutical company Oppilotech Ltd, which has received a share of \$24 million from a global consortium as part of a programme to rejuvenate early-stage antibiotic research in the US and UK. The World Health Organization has ranked antibiotic resistance alongside global warming as a serious threat to humanity, and this research will explore innovative ways to kill bacteria.

Meditation could be a suitable alternative to traditional painkillers





Physiotherapy education in Leeds began in 1942 with the establishment of the School of Physiotherapy

SCIENTISTS SHARE FINDINGS AT BRITISH PAIN SOCIETY CONGRESS

A team of research students and staff from the Centre for Pain Research at the University presented their work at the 50th Annual Scientific Meeting of the British Pain Society in Birmingham. PhD student Sue Hartup presented her findings, Patient Self-Reporting and Real-Time Education to Reduce the Impact of Persistent Pain Following Breast Cancer Surgery. Sue's PhD is funded by the National Institute for Health Research and involves the development of an electronic tool that will ensure breast cancer patients receive effective pain management treatment following surgery.

CENTRE FOR BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The Centre for Biomedical Science Research consists of a diverse group of biomedical researchers working in areas relating to human disease and wellbeing. Expertise within the group covers a broad range of disciplines, including molecular biology, yeast genetics, biochemistry and biophysics, virology, microbiology and antimicrobials, toxicology and DNA repair. Principal investigators in the group have a wide network of well-established collaborations with researchers in China, Ireland, France, Germany, Spain and the USA, among others.

For more information on the research we undertake and to find out how to join our scientific community, visit leedsbeckett.ac.uk/research

75 YEARS OF PHYSIOTHERAPY EDUCATION CELEBRATED AT LEEDS BECKETT

Leeds Beckett University marked 75 years of teaching physiotherapy with a celebratory event. Former students, teaching staff and clinical industry colleagues gathered at the University's Rose Bowl for an afternoon tea and tour of the clinical skills suite. Attending the event were Karen Middleton, CEO of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy and a Visiting Professor at Leeds Beckett, and Janice Martin, Head of Physiotherapy at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust. Physiotherapy education in Leeds began in 1942 with the establishment of the School of Physiotherapy on the Leeds General Infirmary site, which became part of the University in the early 1990s.

SHOCKING LEVELS OF UNCLEANLINESS IN HOTELS

Dr Margarita Gomez Escalada, a medical microbiologist in the School, helped to uncover startling levels of uncleanliness in UK hotels after featuring on BBC One's Rip Off Britain. Swabbed samples were taken from rooms in hotels of varying standards and prices and passed to Margarita to test here in the laboratories at the University. The hotel with the worst levels of cleanliness was found to be a five-star hotel. Swabs taken from a light switch, remote control and blanket bed cover had so much bacteria on them Margarita was unable to count them in the lab.

Dr Margarita Gomez Escalada featured on BBC One's Rip Off Britain after helping to uncover poor hotel hygiene



Malmaison Birmingham

By Matt Ng



Birmingham has enjoyed a renaissance of redevelopment in recent years, with a multitude of new and exciting buildings like the Bullring changing much of the city's skyline almost overnight.

One such structure making its mark on the Midland metropolis is decked in a visually striking red façade. Aptly named The Mailbox, the build-

ing used to be a bustling Royal Mail sorting office, but now things have taken a slightly more laidback approach, as its now home to the luxurious Malmaison hotel. With 189 rooms available, including four super deluxe suites and one executive suite, this review covers a stay at one of the five bedroom suites.

As soon as you enter the hotel's foyer and reception

area, the dark yet soft décor is very pleasant and inviting, as are the friendly front of house staff. Indeed, it was satisfying to see that Mal's luxury is based on contemporary chic rather than ostentatiously opulent.

The double bedroom suite was luxuriously cosy, spacious and decked in a brown and cream theme, upholding the hotel chain's firm reputation for comfortable yet fashionable modern surroundings. It's a shame then, that the view from the window captures Birmingham at its most drab and grey, bringing a clashing realisation that the surrounding city's architecture just hasn't caught up with the building you're in.

In the next room were a coffee table, two chunky sofas, and one long recliner sofa, the latter being big enough to fit your whole frame on.

Most gratifying for gadget-lovers was that the room was very tech savvy, having been kitted out with not one but two micro music players, widescreen TV, DVD player, internet access line and even portable speakers for your iPod (yours to take and keep at a price, naturally).

Included in the bathroom basket of goodies were scented Malmaison body lotion and massage oil, a nice pampering bonus among the usual sundry of miniature bottled wash

The Reviewers

Matt is an independent writer. He is a real paying customer at the places he stays, and aims to give a realistic and fair account of his experiences.

We hope that he will offer an insight into what customers can expect, and what aspects of the service you provide is considered of most importance.

products you get at hotels.

Highlight of the stay for this reviewer has to be the luscious bed, stacked high with uber-soft pillows and silky smooth linen. You'll soon forget those usual 'sleeping in an unfamiliar place' pangs as that divine divan literally wraps you in utter comfort.

When dinnertime beckons, you can stop by the Brasserie restaurant, offering a good selection of high quality dishes, as well as tantalising choices from the grill menu, which will no doubt indulge the carnivorous. On top of this, they also present a 'home-grown' menu, concocted to include the finest locally grown ingredients for enhanced flavour and freshness.

The main bar is a fine place to sample the tipples on offer. And its here the term mood lighting comes into its own: dim lights set against dark, sleek surfaces evoke a buzzing yet intimate atmosphere among the many

views of a room

One of the hotel's 189 bedrooms



patrons. Nicknamed the 'Champagne Bar of Birmingham', the place really gets packed once the weekend lands. Whatever your poison: fine wines, cocktails, or a glass of bubbly, the ambience here just has to be savoured. Good thing its open until 2am then, because you won't want to leave in a hurry.

Those who believe location is paramount will be pleased to know that the hotel is only a few minutes walk from Birmingham's high street. Which means a multitude of modern retailers; bars, restaurants and clubs are only a leisurely saunter away – perfect for shopaholics and night-time hedonists. And for those of you who want to stay indoors, The Mailbox mall also boasts a truly eclectic mix of shops and eateries, including Hugo Boss, Gourmet Burger Kitchen, Harvey Nicholls and Bang & Olufsen, to name a few. With such high-class staples catering for the discerning, Malmaison is right at home here. There's also plenty of secure car parking underneath the Mailbox in the form of an underground NCP, but the price does bite, setting you back £17 for a full day. In hindsight, it would have been great to see some sort of discount for hotel guests.

For the truly active person wanting to feel the burn, there is a hotel gym that's open until ten at night, with more than adequate equipment, including treadmills, exercise bikes and free weights. Handily, you've also got the option of getting some motivation from a personal trainer.

Of course, if you fancy just a taking a load off and relaxing, maybe a pamper session is what you need. Impressively, the beauty treatment options this hotel has on offer are enough to rival a dedicated health resort. Named 'le petit spa', they have available everything from ocean seaweed wraps to hot stone therapy, as well as your more common massages, facials, and waxes.

Fine ingredients make up the breakfast, with pastries, pain au chocolates, croissants and fruit salads to choose from. The quality of the food ensures you'll definitely taste the difference here, but the meal itself could have garnered extra praise with a wider selection of cooked food at the buffet.

Malmaison Birmingham is a shining example of the rule you get what you pay for. If you're willing to fork out for it, you'll get a near peerless hotel in terms of style and

Malmaison Birmingham's restaurant



comfort, despite one or two niggles. Sensuous and sleek surroundings, a bar with character, as well as quite possibly the cosiest, softest bed this re-

viewer has slept on, all come together for an enjoyable stay that will leave you feeling pampered, refreshed and recharged on checkout.

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Social Media: Keeping Up While Managing Risk

Social media's always on, 24/7 workings might keep risk mitigators up all night – Matt Ng discusses how to deal with this unique medium and steer your brand for the win.

Before boarding a flight from London to South Africa one Friday in December last year, PR director Justine Sacco casually updates her Twitter account about her holiday to her 200 followers. “Going to Africa,” she tweeted. “Hope I don't get Aids. Just kidding. I'm white!”

One of her followers picked it up and sent it to the editor at ValleyWag, a technology blog based in Silicon Valley, who in turn forwarded it to viral internet news site BuzzFeed. Eleven hours later, Sacco landed in Johannesburg 11 hours later to a Twitter firestorm.

Legions had taken to the social media channel to voice their outrage and disgust at her incendiary post. Scores of fake derogatory accounts had been registered in her name, while that evening the hashtag *#HasJustineLandedYet* climbed up Twitter's Trending chart, with nearly 100,000 mentions worldwide. On board a long-haul flight with no Wi-Fi, Sacco could neither check her post nor delete it, while one can only imagine the gravity of the situation as she checked her smartphone after landing – the digital equivalent of an angry villager horde with burning torches and pitchforks springs to mind.

Her employer InterActiveCorp (who are the parent company of some big internet brands including Ask.com, Match.com and Vimeo) had to step in with a corporate response before she had even landed in an attempt to distance themselves from the offending post. On hearing of the internet furore, Sacco herself soon deleted her Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts without so much as an apology or explanation, but the damage had been done. On Saturday, Sacco and her employer parted ways. Many questioned how a PR professional could have failed in such spectacular fashion.

This cautionary tale is only one of many instances where people or companies have failed to grasp the double-edged sword of social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

According to ComplianceOnline, there are 1.7 billion social media users worldwide. That's a massive market of potential stakeholders to open unique online dialogues with, plus avenues for new and stimulating opportunities to actively engage the customer.

In a Grant Thornton survey of US company executives, 68% of respondents indicated that social media will be an important component going ahead in business, while only 3% stated it was of little benefit. Evidently, the significance and opportunities on offer are becoming all too hard to ignore.

“In a B2B environment you may want to use it for thought leadership or recruitment,” says Chris Scott, Partner at legal firm Schillings. “For consumer facing businesses there are more obvious marketing opportunities. Possibly most valuable is the ability to listen – it is a good weather vane for customer feedback and sentiment, and most interestingly can sometimes be tied to risk management to identify early indicators of problems, particularly around reputation.”

For a B2C, staying off the grid and not actively engaging with your customer now simply isn't an option. Those that have already taken the plunge are finding themselves in murky waters, and there are quite a few reasons why this is happening.

As a relatively new but large dynamic in business, compliance models are still in the embryonic stages, while risk management policies remain fragmented and under-defined. In addition, the nature of tracking performance in social media interactions through multiple channels makes it difficult to assess and discern value.

Unfortunately, there are companies who attempt to use social media as a direct advertising platform or shareholder communication vehicle without attempting to engage the audience. Or perhaps they've left the logins to a graduate intern, who feels they can broadcast their opinions on corporate policy, with the fate of your firm's reputation resting on a few keystrokes.

These are the companies that do not grasp the notion that social media is a device for the people, by the people. Corporates are facing scrutiny in alarmingly fast and increasingly public ways, and it's no longer the case that this area should remain in the exclusive remit of marketing departments.

"Social media has changed the way individuals and organizations communicate with each other, which has increased transparency, but has also increased risks for companies," said Jan Hertzberg, leader of Grant Thornton's Business Advisory Services' IT Audit, Security and Privacy practice. "The increase in risk and investigations related to social media underscores for organizations the need to have a considered approach to social media risk assessments."

A customer who has a gripe with a company is perhaps now more likely to make a public post of their grievance (defamatory laws notwithstanding) on their Facebook page, where reports of bad services or products are placed in the online equivalent of the old medieval stocks for everyone to jeer and ridicule.

Making an irate and quick name and shame over the internet in a spur of the moment is clearly going to prove more cathartic than spending time and money on hold to a company's [outsourced] customer care call centre.

Crises arising on these digital channels can spread so far and so fast that they immediately begin to erode brand reputation within minutes. Social media has transformed into a massive risk era, which is exacerbated by the fact that more and more firms are feeling the pressure to get involved in the new medium, for fear of being left behind by their competitors.

Risk management is still in relatively young stages, and as technology and user bases expand, there's more and more exposure to damages associated with reputation, data privacy and confidentiality. Risk departments could be playing catch-up for quite some time as they are continually shaped by new technology such as the rise of the mobiles and tablets and the incoming era of the wearables, while tech behaviour is also changing, like the Bring Your Own Device crowd. Regulatory measures are beginning to start to change the landscape of its use, but it in itself is a slow, drawn-out process compared to the speed and tenacity of content in the viral digital plane.

"On a micro level, volume and speed makes oversight incredibly difficult," says Scott. "Equally detailed policies are difficult to enforce, especially when there is a large workforce or social media is part of active customer engagement. Because of that, managing risk is often more effective

looking at the big picture, with simple guidelines and education to raise awareness of significant risks, how to react and how to escalate.”

And with any form of risk, management can be applied through the traditional models (see panel).

“Make sure all the right people understand who in the business is using it and how they are using it,” says Scott. “Too often different teams use it for different purposes and do not co-ordinate, let alone seek guidance from the legal team on how they use it. Without that it’s impossible for the lawyers to train on escalation policies, which issues to deal with and which to leave alone. In the worst case, that can cause or aggravate legal problems when consumers deal with the business directly.”

As firms look to the big digital plains to seek out new opportunities and markets, they must be adequately prepared for the dangers and pitfalls ahead. Sentiments on social networks are almost impossible to delete, while they can be replicated and shared globally within a matter of hours. Gone are the nine-to-five traditions where an escalating crisis can be left to be dealt with the next morning.

Social media policies should be rigorously enforced with all staff, with regular checks to ensure compliance and monitoring to spot potential problems before they exacerbate.

The many missteps by corporations have been widely reported, but as businesses adapt to the changing landscape, learn the best practices, social media can be a powerful and essential tool going ahead.

“Companies will continue to better understand how it benefits their business and normalise social media as part of their commercial activity,” says Scott. “Legally and defensively it would be nice to see lessons learned from past mistakes: change the Twitter password when the social media manager leaves, ensure the CEO’s teenage children are not campaigning against the 1% on Facebook and make sure that staff communicating to an audience of millions have some basic training on publishing laws.”

Interestingly, it’s the companies who understand the importance of letting go that succeed in social media. For example in FMCG, it’s important to focus less on the sell and add contextually relevant, entertaining content where appropriate, rather than constantly towing the company line. Lose the dull corporate tone, connect with your audience in real-time; simply be more human.

Scott concludes: “Where social media is concerned, the best insurance policy is often having a strong communications team with good self-awareness and a sense of humour. Often when businesses make mistakes with social media, it is less about how they respond legally and more about how they respond graciously and with the right tone to problems.”

//Sidebar

Six best practices to reduce social media risks

Assess

Develop a social media risk analysis and include IT, HR, legal, marketing and communications/public relations, along with the executive team.

Govern

Create a social media governance structure with clear roles and responsibilities. Senior management should direct the use and administration of social media.

Source

Appoint the appropriate professionals to be responsible for social media, given their knowledge and roles. For example, marketing professionals for social media, and marketing and audit or compliance professionals for monitoring and policy adherence.

Monitor

Keep an eye regularly on social media comments and postings across all platforms.

Manage

Create a due diligence process for managing third parties, including third parties who monitor your organisation's social media.

Train

Make sure you regularly train employees on social media policies.

Source: Grant Thornton LLP

//Sidebar

Corporate Social Media Blunders of 2013

- When more than 100 vehicles were involved in collisions due to heavy fog along the Sheppey Bridge Crossing last September, a personal injury claims firm calling itself LAS_UK on Twitter sent out tweets offering legal services to the 200 people injured. The posts occurred just hours after the crash, with people still being cut out of wreckages at the time. The blowback was fierce: "Top-level ambulance chasing", one user described. The firm soon had to issue an apology and their Twitter account has since been deleted.
- When HMV entered administration early last year, disgruntled social media employee Poppy Rose Cleere live-tweeted the mass firing of more than 60 staff from the entertainment chain store's HR department. She described it as "mass execution of loyal employees who love the brand", and when managers tried to step in, she tweeted, "Just overheard our Marketing Director (he's staying, folks) ask 'How do I shut down Twitter?'" Cleere started at the company as an intern who was given the responsibility of managing HMV's proprietary Facebook and Twitter accounts for over two years.

- In November, JPMorgan received a scathing taste of the public perception of banks when it announced that it was asking for questions for a live Q&A tweet session with Jimmy Lee, a senior investment banker who worked on the Twitter floatation. Their account was barraged by a flurry of negative and hostile questions, with one user asking: “Did you have a specific number of people's lives you needed to ruin before you considered your business model a success?”

“Tomorrow’s Q&A is cancelled. Bad idea. Back to the drawing board,” yielded the JPMorgan’s Twitter account a few days later.

- A similar Twitter Q&A session organised by British Gas backfired in spectacular fashion – it was held in response to the same-day announcement that the energy company would introduce a 9.2% price hike for customers. “Thanks for helping me save money on heating,” tweeted one user. “Your latest hike has boiled my blood enough to keep me warm through winter.” Managing director of customer services Bert Pijls, who fielded questions for the session, left his post at the end of last year, citing organisational changes as the reason for the departure.
- It doesn’t even take the efforts of a Twitter army to harm a company’s brand reputation. Businessman Hasan Syed was tired of the way British Airways was handling a complaint about his father’s lost luggage and paid over \$1000 to buy a Promoted Tweet. “Don’t fly with British Airways. They can’t keep track of your luggage,” it said. Promoted Tweets appear in selective search results, and Syed arranged it so that his tweet was seen by 50,000 Twitter users in New York and the UK.

Corporate Social Media Winners

- Tesco Mobile’s budget phone network might not have the same brand appeal as the big four providers, but digital agency Jam took the bull by the horns and confronted this view head-on. Social media experts responded back to negative tweets denouncing the brand in an engaging, personable and humorous way, gaining fans who virally shared the series of exchanges as well as improving the brand image.

“Immediately turn off if a girl’s mobile network is Tesco Mobile,” tweets one sardonic user. “Are you really in a position to be turning girls away?” quips the Tesco Mobile account.

- The American Airlines social media team proved themselves to be a real-time asset in the stressful world of air travel. Last July, Alan Silberberg was stuck on a grounded plane at Philadelphia with his three sons awaiting take-off. Concerned that he might miss his connecting flight from Chicago, he tweeted the American Airlines Twitter account to see if he would have to re-book. AA responded to say that they had contacted Chicago airport and managed to hold the outbound flight until they arrived, and tweeted him the departure gate number.

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In a Grant Thornton survey of US company executives, 68% of respondents indicated that social media will be an important component going ahead in business

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The many missteps by corporations have been widely reported, but as businesses adapt to the changing landscape, learn the best practices, social media can be a powerful and essential tool going ahead.