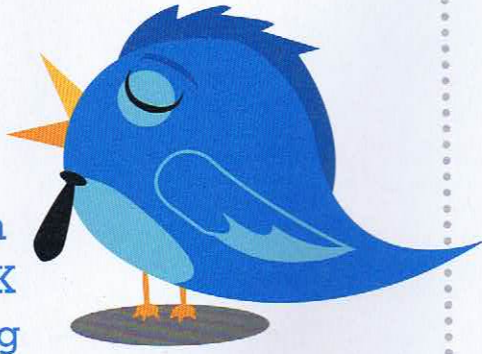


## SOCIAL MEDIA RULES OF ENGAGEMENT TO CHANGE IN 2012



With research suggesting UK businesses lag behind in the use of social media, firms are urged to boost performance in 2012.

Focusing on the need to build better relationships with increasingly savvy consumers, a new report by KPMG predicts 2012 will be a year in which the lines between consumer and corporate use of social media will become blurred.

### The rules of the game will change

The use of game mechanics to attract consumers' attention and generate debate will rise and we will begin to see industries using games to encourage greater brand engagement.

Businesses will start to take notice of fast growing mobile social networks such as Instagram, the photo-sharing site, that are blurring the boundary between content production and consumption.

### Debate will replace spin

Businesses which have been slow to take up social media will gradually facilitate more channels for genuine, honest communication.

Mark Guinibert, Customer & Channel Partner at KPMG said: "Firms will come to acknowledge that, only by being authentic, can they expect to appeal to customers tired of corporate spin."

### Transparency will become the norm

With increasing calls for greater corporate transparency in the wake of the financial crisis, companies will recognise that opening themselves up to scrutiny via social media makes business sense.

"When it's clear that they have nothing to hide," Mr Guinibert said, "they are much less likely to be on the receiving end of public criticism and are perceived as trustworthy."

These comments follow a KPMG report, *Going Social: How businesses are making the most of social media*, which has found that just 48% of UK companies use social media to communicate for business purposes, compared to 72% in the US and 83% in China.

Mr Guinibert: "It is naive to think that social media has no place in the business world. With multiple channels available to consumers in the shape of smart phones, tablets and laptops, the businesses that will do well will be those that can adapt and adopt. Anything less risks closing off routes to market at a time no business can afford to turn opportunities down."

## INSIDEHR 2.0

# EMPLOYEE RESEARCH FLOURISHES IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA GARDEN



**Author: Michael Silverman**

Advances in social media and digital technologies are setting new standards for gathering feedback from employees.

I have always found it bewildering that typical approaches to engagement research use the most disengaging of approaches – the staff survey.

They've been with us since the 1920s but apart from transitioning to the internet and some advances in analytical capabilities, the basic model of surveys has broadly stayed the same: produce a questionnaire, encourage participation, crunch the numbers and report back the findings.

There are several problems with this approach. First, most people find surveys extremely boring to complete, especially when the same set of questions are used year after year.

Second, because senior managers love the simplicity of numbers, there's a massive over-reliance on tick boxes – particularly the notorious Agree/Disagree Likert Scale – which makes it very difficult to obtain any detail that could lead to a meaningful response.

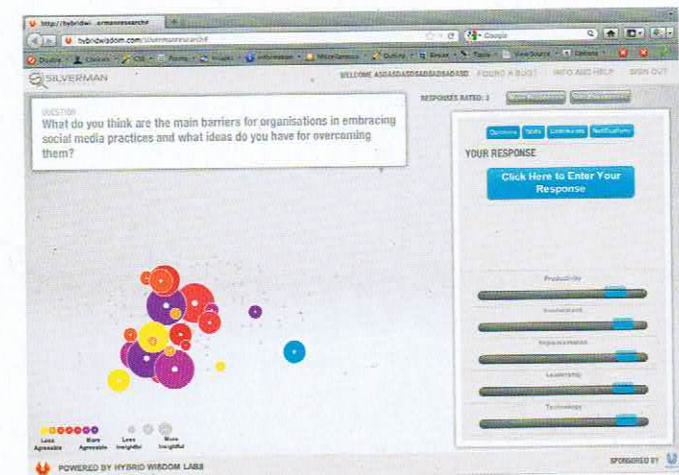
Third, if any open-ended questions are included, despite advances in text and sentiment analysis, most organisations are usually pretty poor at analysing unstructured written data. An additional problem here is that participants do not get to read or comment on their colleague's responses. Who wants to produce a carefully constructed answer, only for it to disappear into the corporate ether?

There is no one solution to these issues, but some organisations are blazing a trail in using unstructured written data from employees. One leading example is Best Buy, the multinational retailer that employs about 180,000 people worldwide, who capture employee feedback on a daily basis using text analysis to track issues in real time. A variety of sources are used, including social media, surveys, phone calls and email.

Unilever have also recently won two HR Industry awards for its work on using social media in employee research. My company – Silverman Research – worked with Unilever to develop a real alternative to employee surveys. We produced a visual online environment where people can share their thoughts on topics, while rating and adding to contributions made by others.

Take a look at how this works in practice. With Unilever's support there is an open-access research project – The Social Media Garden – that aims to provide insight about the barriers organisations face in adopting social media practices and how to overcome them. The Social Media Garden will be open until 29 February 2012. We'll include a full report of the overall findings in the next issue of *insideHR*.

To take part in the Social Media Garden project, go to:  
[www.hybridwisdom.com/silvermanresearch](http://www.hybridwisdom.com/silvermanresearch)



The Social Media Garden: visual feedback, plus a chance to read, rate and respond to participants responses