

# THE SOCIAL MEDIA JOURNEY WHERE ARE WE?

**Blogworks- Blog the Talk** discussion series was conceived to feature the best of learning from the 'live web' through panel discussions, talks and one-on-ones – mostly conducted online.

The New Year brings with it a new association, **Blog the Talk** series is presented by **Ideafarms**, an IT smart-sourcing company, providing enhanced business value to its globalised clients, through disrupting thinking and innovation.

In association, of course, with **IMPACT** – the marketing, advertising and media weekly, in your hands right now.

Joining us for this edition are Toby Bloomberg and Dina Mehta, with Rajesh Lalwani moderating the discussion.

**Dina Mehta, Mosoci:** Dina is a qualitative researcher and ethnographer. One of India's earliest bloggers, she has contributed to building several communities on the internet, such as Tsunami Help, KatrinaHelp amongst others. Dina is a regular speaker at top international conferences on mobile spaces in India, social collaboration technologies, social media and adopting online social tools for research. She runs workshops that help organizations frame research and strategy for a web 2.0 world. Dina is based out of Mumbai.

**Toby Bloomberg, Bloomberg Marketing:** Toby is president of Bloomberg Marketing, a strategic and social media consultancy based in the U.S. She has been a real live Blogger since the spring of 2004. As one of the most recognized consultants in this space, Toby's passion now is helping organizations navigate and developing social media strategies that support their business goals. Toby is based out of Atlanta, USA.

**Rajesh Lalwani, Blogworks (Moderator):** Rajesh is a marketing communication professional and his offering Blogworks delivers strategic solutions and social media know-how to brands & corporates for using 'conversational communication and marketing' effectively. Rajesh is based out of New Delhi.

What's different this time around is that there aren't the standard questions and answers, but a free flowing conversation with perspectives on where we are, on the social media journey – in context of consumers, brands, organisations, markets and marketers.

*All thoughts expressed by participants are personal opinion of respective speakers and do not represent the views of Blogworks or any other company/ organization.*



Dina Mehta



Toby Bloomberg



Rajesh Lalwani

**Rajesh:** I have been thinking, it's a great time of the year to discuss where we stand on the conversational marketing front. Is it really making an impact on the ground, to the consumer and to the marketer?

**Dina:** What it really means is brands are conversations - markets are conversations.

**Toby:** I like to remind marketers that people are conversations.

**Dina:** We were in a world where media was controlled by brands and managers or those who had money. Today, media is owned by the people who use it. There is no Us vs. Them.

**Dina:** WE ARE THE MEDIA.

**Dina:** People are conversations - nice Toby!

**Toby:** Actually, the secret is that the brands and advertisers never did control the message – they only thought they did. But with technology, WE are the media ... makes it easier to understand that.

**Rajesh:** I had a wonderful experience recently, which I also wrote a case study about. I was looking at buying a bicycle and actually went through the entire process with the help of blogs, where a Google search landed me at a blog with active conversations, negative and positive, taking place between existing users, potential buyers and as a pleasant surprise, the marketer too. The blog allowed me to make my decision.

Of course, the last mile of dealer interaction play the ultimate role on what I call the difference between "Sold" and "Nearly Sold", but the entire episode convinced me about the impact of the social media layer, that is making a real difference on the ground.

Have you had any such instances?

**Dina:** Thanks Rajesh. I had a similar experience recently when I found a Rconnect USB modem driver for my Mac, not through the Huawei or Reliance websites (the latter, in incidentally said no Mac driver) but through a comment on someone's blog.

**Toby:** Very impressive, I am beginning to see more major brands comment back on their blogs.

**Rajesh:** Yes, brochure sites don't really help and customers are usually wiser about the product than the manufacturer.

Interestingly enough, I have seen COO of a radio station jumping into conversations, but the tone has been all wrong – all attitude. Maybe it was done on purpose to actually flare up the conversation and get more people to tune in.

**Toby:** Rajesh, I just sent your link to my friend Tim Jackson of Masi Bikes in San Diego CA. He writes the MasiGuy blog and if Tim picks it up one customer service issue could be spun round the world.

**Dina:** Some of the things that organisations must start working on in this new brand 'operating system' - is first learn how to listen.

**Rajesh:** At one of the client meetings recently, one of the people from the public relations agency asked, WHO should comment on a negative comment – agency/ client.

My submission is shouldn't someone RESOLVE the problem and then take the conversation back by commenting?

**Toby:** My \$ would be on the client – its more credible

**Dina:** Not the agency or the PR guys - they tend to mess things up. Remember the Silky Kumar case?

**Rajesh:** Yes, the client should take ownership of the issue and showcase participation. But to me, resolution is the important part and THEN comes the commenting bit.

**Dina:** It must be written into a brand manager's role - social