SAP India: Social Media Strategy @SAP India

Poonam Lalwani, Venugopal Desai and Rajiv Dingra
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This case study describes a campaign in India by SAP, the global software and solutions company, which used social media to connect with consumers.

- The company used content and social to explain what the company does, engage consumers and establish itself as a thought leader.
- A quiz was created through a Twitter hashtag, with questions relating to the company's activities.
- Social media monitoring helped to identify sales leads, with an integrated approach allowing a quick follow-up.
- The campaign also included integration of an existing events program with social media, allowing for greater analysis of the success of those events.

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Campaign details

Brand owner: SAP AG
Agency: WATConsult
Brand: SAP India
Country: India

Executive summary

'What do your customers really think?' This was the question on the minds of the marketing team at SAP India, which set it to become the social-media objective when it started its social journey in 2011.

SAP enjoys a great brand presence and clear leadership in India as an ERP company; SAP offers solutions across 26 industries and around five key areas of applications, analytics, database and technology, mobile and

cloud. With an ambitious business objective of touching over 1 billion lives through SAP systems by 2015, it was imperative for SAP in India to reach out, connect and reposition itself within its large ecosystem of customers, potential customers, partners, employees and potential employees – as an organization that 'helps the world *run* better'.

The objectives for the social-media model were:

1. *Advocacy* – to position SAP as a 'beyond ERP' organization and highlight the way itstouches lives.
2. *Listening* – to the conversations, understand perceptions, provide insights to drive business and marketing initiatives.
3. *Activation* – to leverage social as a key channel of our integrated media plan and campaigns including events such as the SAP Forum and SAP ACE Award among others.
4. *Nurturing* – to use social as part of overall nurturing strategy, with the purpose of demand generation.

SAP leveraged social channels to help build a long-lasting relationship with its social audience, and hence implemented the strategy of moving from 'push' to 'pull' with key focus on content. To address the young followers of their social channels SAP engaged with its audience in an interactive way with innovative campaigns like #SAPQuiz. It chose topics that would be of interest to them and linked it back to SAP's offerings – one example was to talk about the Formula 1 grand prix to connect it to partnership with the McLaren Formula 1 team and how ir uses SAP technology to run better. SAP runs a series of flagship events like SAP Forum, SAP ACE awards and SAP Run Better events. These events were taken to the social channels helping a larger audience experience these events virtually.

Leveraging these campaigns has helped SAP establish itself as a thought leader across its offerings beyond ERP. SAP clearly saw the buzz on the cloud graph move away only from ERP to analytics, cloud, mobile, database and applications.

Market background and business objectives

Headquartered in Walldorf, Germany, with locations in more than 130 countries, SAP AG is the world leader in enterprise software and software-related services. We have a 40-year history of innovation! And our solutions are currently used by nearly 200,000 organizations, touch more than 63% of the world's financial-transaction revenue, and positively impact more than 500 million people.

SAP India began its operations in 1996 and is the fastest growing subsidiary of SAP AG. Declared as the 'Hub of the Year in Asia Pacific and Japan' in 2007. SAP India witnessed an unprecedented growth of over 100%, both in terms of license revenue and customer acquisition.

Our core business is creating software solutions and services to deliver a range of choices fitting the varying needs of customers from various industries. Our innovations are not designed only to help businesses run better, but also to improve the lives of people everywhere. Our solutions cover business applications and technologies, as well as specific industry applications.

We empower people and organizations to work together more efficiently and use business insight more effectively to stay ahead of the competition. Our applications and services enable customers to operate profitably, adapt continuously, and grow sustainably. Recently SAP was listed at 21st position in Forbes' list of World's Most Valuable Brands.

One of our business objectives is to be a €20-billion organization by 2015 and SAP systems to touch one billion people worldwide. With such ambitious goals, we wanted to build our brand presence beyond being known as the ERP market leader, establish ourselves as a leading thought leader in our areas of innovation and connect this back to business through social media.

Insight and strategic thinking

When we started off, we had no centralized governance, no content framework and no clear strategy on how to manage our communities or how to leverage them to drive business.

In less than a year, we have a centralized regional social strategy and implemented clear and solid guidelines, a social-content calendar, a robust community and an agency infrastructure capable of scale. And the growth achieved has been purely organic.

SAP India was already a market leader in ERP, but for us to scale beyond ERP and achieve our ambitious target set for 2015, we had to strengthen our brand in other offerings as well: analytics, database, technology, mobile and cloud.

How did we do it?

1. *Content*. We recognized value beyond the specific results of the social-media programme, and instead used it as an incubator for a much larger content-marketing function that is going into place in 2013.
2. *Context*. We appreciated that while we might have a great piece of demand-generation content, the context of social media may 'demand' a different approach. What's appropriate in an e-mail isn't necessarily welcome in the context of social media.
3. Clear social-media *objectives that support business objectives.* The two are one and the same. Social media's reach and engagement goals directly contribute to SAP's business objectives of reaching one billion users by 2015, challenging market perceptions of SAP as a 'large enterprise' or 'pure on-premise ERP' play, and positioning our innovation story.
4. *Measurement framework* in place up front, while maintaining the flexibility to recognize that different metrics are relevant at different stages of the funnel, and the wisdom to know that 'not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted'.
5. Commitment to build an *infrastructure capable of scaling* to meet unforeseen demand. We don't know what we don't know. Therefore, we focused on putting in third-party support that could grow quickly as our communities expanded, new ideas occurred to us and demand for social-media services increased.
6. *Governance.* Lock it down. We consolidated dozens of neglected accounts, centralizing account creation and community management. We published guidelines, educated our marketers in the field and provided full transparency on how their campaigns, content and objectives were represented in social media.
7. *Listen, learn and adapt.* Put our customers in the centre of the strategy, and maintain the flexibility and agility to go in another direction if that's where the community is taking us.

Implementation, including creative and media development

The objective was to increase follower base and *drive engagement through the 'pull' way* instead of the

traditional 'push' way. We wanted our ecosystem of customers, prospects, partners, developers, employees and potential employees to engage with our content instead of it being only one-way communication.

This prompted us to think beyond content which primarily talks about the facts to rather attracting the audience in *contributing* to the facts. This way the brand recall will be much higher. One such idea was the #SAPQuiz, which helped us to get exponential growth in engagement. The results say it all – we trended both in India and globally!

This special Twitter quiz was about SAP and its achievements. This quiz exposed a lot of followers to the strength of the brand SAP. The participation from our audience helped the brand break across the 1,000-followers mark. The hashtag #SAPQuiz trended all over India and later went on to trend worldwide! The key in this initiative was transformation from push to pull. For example, instead of tweeting that '85% of SAPs customers are SME Organizations', we wanted this to have a greater recall and impact by quizzing this 'What percentage of SAP customers represent the SME space?'

We further leveraged Twitter to cover various events in real time, thus giving our audience an experience of attending live events virtually. Our audience was delighted to be attending events like business forums, award functions and seminars without being physically present at the venue. Our flagship events like SAP Forum saw a massive audience online, which helped us scale the event beyond the physical locatiosn of Mumbai and Delhi with 2,000+ physical attendees to 1.3 million attendees virtually!

Formula 1 has a widespread fanbase across the globe and we knew that the fans love Formula 1 as a brand. We wanted to talk about SAP's association with McLaren and how the McLaren team uses SAP systems for better real-time decision-making. Using the Facebook platform, a quiz called #SAPF1Quiz was conducted during the Indian grand prix. This activity talked about interesting facts about Formula 1 and also touched upon SAP brand awareness

A major chunk of our followers are potential employees who wish to be associated with SAP in the near future. To cater to this fanbase, we created a special Facebook tab to talk about exciting job opportunities at SAP. This move helped us reach out to talented eligible professionals for various job categories and helped us with our recruitment procedure.
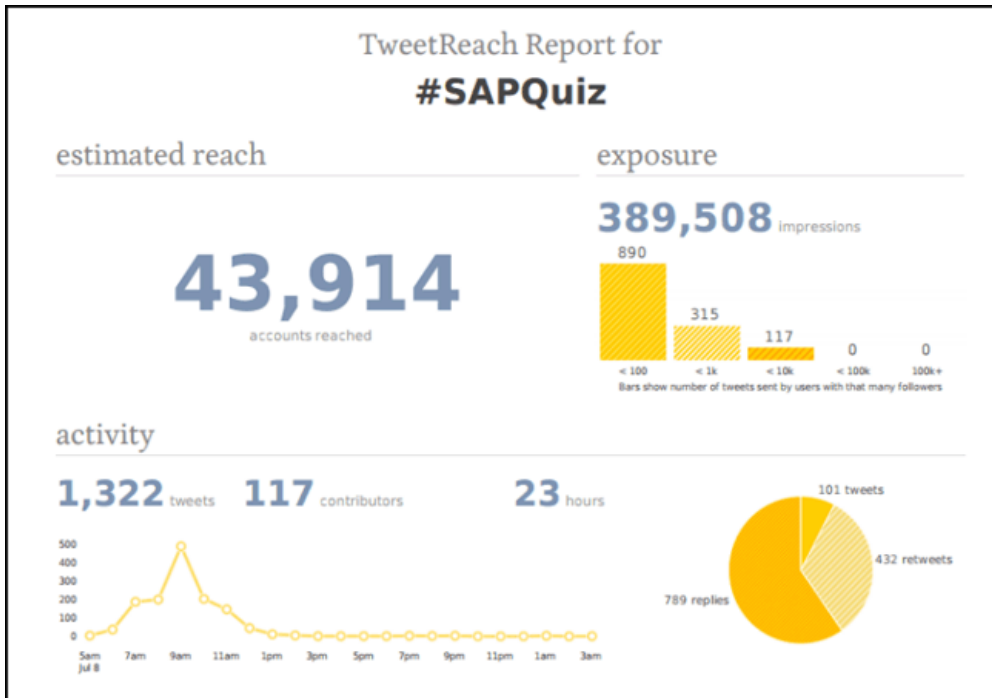
We understand that recognition is the greatest motivator. And to motivate our customers we reward some of the best organizations who have made great innovations using SAP systems. This used to be a physical event, but this time we took it to our social channels. We conducted a LinkedIn InMail campaign where we reached out to all the winners congratulating them and encouraging them to share their victory with their peers on the social community. This helped us gain a greater mindshare and wider spread of brand SAP. This also led to other business houses noticing the importance of SAP adoption for greater success.

Social effects

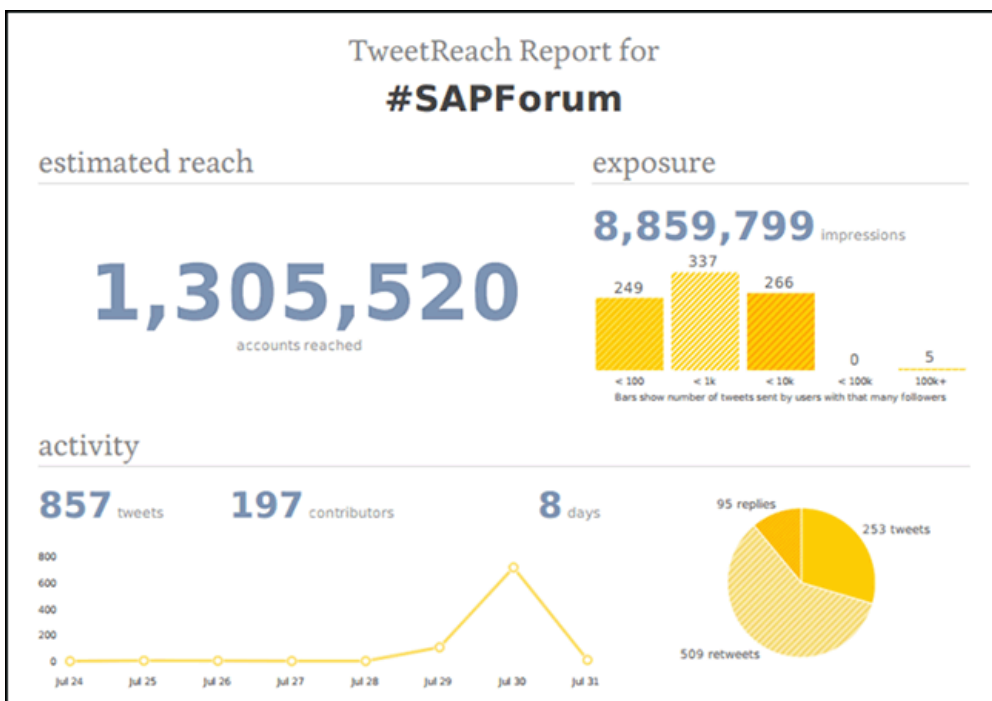With #SAPQuiz we trended worldwide and achieved the following figures:

- 120+ new followers;
- 430+ retweets;
- 775+ replies;
- Estimated 43,900+ accounts reached;

- 389500+ impressions.

TweetReach Report for
#SAPQuiz

estimated reach

43,914
accounts reached

exposure

389,508 impressions

890   315   117   0   0
< 100 < 1k < 10k < 100k 100k+
Bars show number of tweets sent by users with that many followers

activity

1,322 tweets **117** contributors **23** hours

101 tweets
432 retweets
789 replies

For event promotion of SAP Business One Forum, we conducted a quiz on Twitter. The event was live-tweeted and with that we were able to reach out to a large number of people online. The results that we achieved were staggering:

- 225 event tweets;
- 399 retweets
- 544 mentions;
- Reach of 1,305,520;
- 8,859,799 impressions.

TweetReach Report for
#SAPForum

estimated reach

1,305,520
accounts reached

exposure

8,859,799 impressions

249   337   266   0   5
< 100 < 1k < 10k < 100k 100k+
Bars show number of tweets sent by users with that many followers

activity

857 tweets **197** contributors **8** days

95 replies
253 tweets
509 retweets

We showcased our association with the McLaren Formula 1 team using #SAPF1Quiz as a medium on Facebook and attained greater heights of interactions over content on Twitter.
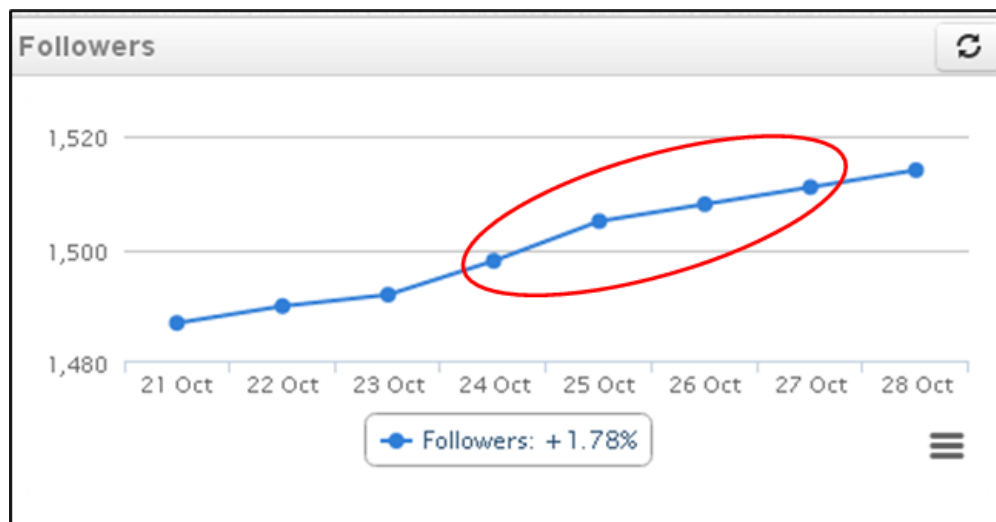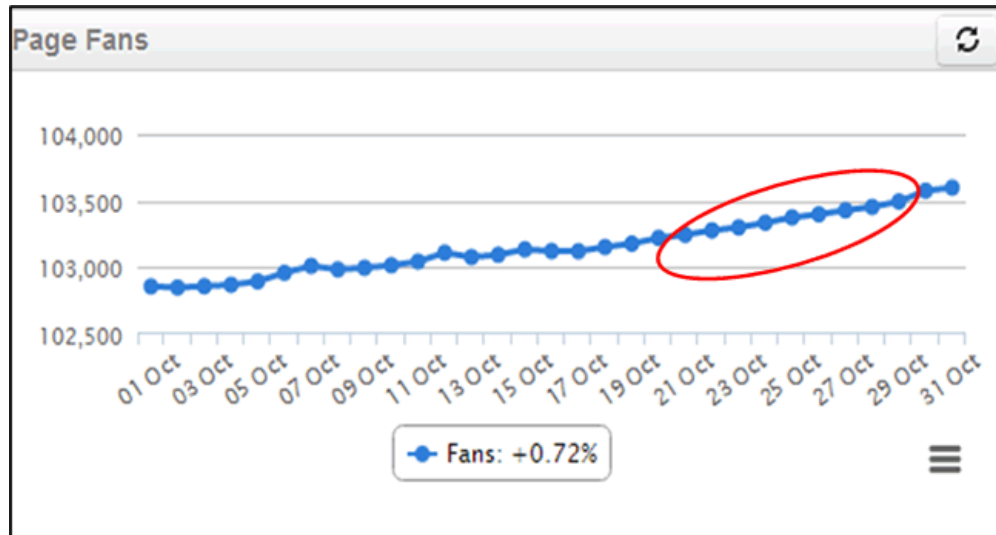
Business effects

Our social-media programme has aligned with sales in four primary ways:

1. *Demand generation:* Opportunities as high as 500,000 are identified through social-media channels. We systemically monitor social-media accounts for lead-relevant activity and have our inside marketing reps reach out within hours.
2. *Social selling:* Having a vibrant, engaged community in place has given the sales force a starting point for its social selling efforts. The sales community is rallying around social media's ability to uncover opportunities, inform and expedite the sales process.
3. *Social-media ambassador programme:* Sales and sales-support subject-matter experts willing to invest the time can participate in this official leadership programme. We provide tools, guidelines and best-practice education. They blog, tweet and post their way to building their social brand – and SAP's.

4. *Integration into events:* Our communities have become an excellent vehicle to measure the impact of an event beyond its physical presence, assess sentiment and extend the conversation after the event's closing ceremony.

Lessons learned

Simple and smart ideas garner bigger results than one can imagine.

Through the various activities conducted by us, we achieved our main goal of establishing ourselves as a technology brand. We learnt that communication with the audience shouldn't be one-directional, but a two-way fruitful conversation. Aggressive product promotion is not the best way to attain results. Through various platforms, we managed to reach out to potential customers and employees.

Social media can be leveraged to generate leads in different forms as generating leads is vital for every business-to-business brand. Spreading awareness about the brand and showcasing the good work can help in converting leads. We gained customers, employees and students through our social-media operations.

We believe that these ideas will help any business-to-business technology brands, which are usually considered boring in their social-media presence, help drive incremental brand awareness and link back to business through sales.

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