Graduation assignment

Social media advice for Tasman Consulting

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Executive Summary

This graduation project has been written for client Arana and Tasman Consulting. Arana has requested the subject matter to be about Tasman’s social media use, in order to create an advice about how Tasman can reach more brand awareness among their stakeholders. This was the objective of this project.

Several research methods have been used through the creation of this report; the main method has been desk research, where data is sought through literature review. Another method that has been applied is interviewing, where the researcher held semi-structured interviews with the client as well as semi structured mini-interviews with professionals in the field of Mergers and Acquisitions over the phone. A last research method has been an analysis of social media use by Tasman’s stakeholders.

Literature review has been the major technique for gathering the data that was needed to create the final advice. It entailed reading articles, journals, essays and case studies in order to first, create a sufficient base of knowledge about the M&A field and second to help answer the various research questions and sub questions that had been erected.

The interviews with the client were held in order to show the data found and obtain the client’s opinion on this data, as well as to brainstorm for more ideas and to pinpoint the direction the research should take. The several mini-interviews with professionals in the field of M&A were held in order to create a reliable source of information that was not literature review and in order to help answer the various research questions and sub questions.

The last research method that has been used was an analysis of the social media use of Tasman’s stakeholders, to find out if they were using social media, and if so which ones. This has been done by taking a random sample of 100 names from Tasman’s stakeholder list and looking for social media profiles from these people on Twitter and LinkedIn.

After all the research had been completed and the research questions and sub questions had been answered, the researcher has come to the following conclusion:

First of all, it is advised that Tasman Consulting will continue to use Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook due to the fact that many of Tasman’s stakeholders are active on these social media, and on the opinion of many researchers and professionals that these three social media are well suited for a business like Tasman. However Tasman should change the way they are currently using social media. Tasman should post more frequently and try to post unique and original content that is of interest to their stakeholders and that their stakeholders will not be able to find elsewhere.

Furthermore Tasman should actively try to engage its stakeholders with its social media. This can be
done by, for example, stimulating discussions and asking questions. The importance of engaging the stakeholders is that on social media, when one person comments, likes, follows or shares a post by Tasman, everyone in their network will be able to see it.

Another thing that is being advised is that before Tasman actively tries to engage their stakeholders, they first create a qualitative base on their social media profiles, with more than just one interesting article, tip or news story. This is important because if Tasman will immediately try to connect with their stakeholders, before enough interesting material can be found on the profiles, they are less likely to follow than if they see a multitude of interesting material the first time they look at Tasman’s profiles.
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1 Project Context

Tasman Consulting is an American mergers and acquisitions consultancy company based in Silicon Valley, California. It has been launched in 2012, by three veterans of the M&A (mergers and acquisitions) market. As stated by de Pelsmacker, Geuens & van den Bergh (2010): “The more a brand is in the consideration set of consumers, the greater the chance that it will be purchased” (p. 67). This purchasing in Tasman’s case would be the hiring of its services, which is the company’s only product and its only income and therefore its main priority. In order to get into the consideration set of consumers there is need for brand awareness. Keller (2003 as cited in Shabbir, 2009, p. 1231) defines brand awareness as: “the ability of customers to recall a brand among the clutter of rival brands”. This is important for Tasman in order to stand out among other organizations that offer the same services; its competitors who are after the same clients and because Tasman is a relatively new company, it is working on introducing the company to its stakeholders, potential clients.

As a means of creating this awareness Tasman has elected the use of social media in order to connect with its stakeholders (Arana, personal communication, March 12, 2014). Arana is in charge of the Public Relations for Tasman Consulting. Furthermore in social media, the more people interacting with your social medium (followers on Twitter, likes on Facebook) the higher the awareness. To clarify, the aim is to connect more of Tasman’s stakeholders with its social media with the aim of creating more brand awareness. Tasman already uses social media, however Arana believes that more can be obtained from its use.

With the latter in mind the client, Arana, has tasked the researcher with creating a social media strategy with which Tasman Consulting can increase the involvement of its stakeholders with its social media so that more awareness will be obtained. Currently Tasman is active on three social media platforms; Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn and does not have a specific strategy for its use.

Social media has proven to be an important part of business Stelzner (2013) found that “a significant 86% of marketers indicate that social media is important for their business” (p.5). However, with literally millions of hits on search engines such as Google when typing ‘which social media to use’ it is not surprising that there are numerous theories and strategies about which works best for which company. Therefore this research project will be undertaken in order to find a social media strategy with which Tasman can more successfully involve its stakeholders with its social media so that higher brand awareness can be obtained.

Arana states that: “Tasman needs to position itself as the leading HR M&A advisory among companies that make acquisitions regularly, specifically in the tech industry. They also need to
position themselves as experts in the field of HR M&A among industry media and professionals. To
this end, they should regularly post information that could be considered relevant and interesting
for those companies” (personal communication, March 19, 2014). This posting should take place on
Tasman’s social media, according to Arana, due to its easy accessibility.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that Tasman does not have any big problem with its brand awareness,
they currently get enough clients and projects and are a growing company. However they would like
to keep growing, and think that a social media strategy might assist them with this. In other words,
they see this project as an opportunity and not a necessity.
2. Organizational context

As stated previously, Tasman Consulting is an American mergers and acquisitions consultancy company based in Silicon Valley. It has been launched in 2012, by three veterans of the M&A (Mergers and Acquisitions) market, and has since grown out to a team of 8 professionals. Furthermore Tasman mainly handles M&A in the technology industry (because many tech. companies are based in Silicon Valley) but they can consult on any merger or acquisition anywhere in the United States.

Tasman’s PR is being managed by Energía Communications, the company from client Arana. Arana’s tasks include the mapping out of Tasman’s stakeholders and writing and release press releases. Updating its social media is not done by Energía. Furthermore, one of Arana’s tasks is to assist Tasman in increasing its brand awareness. She does this for example by finding events related to M&A or where a number of potential clients will be and letting Tasman’s employees present or have a stand with information about what they do (Arana, personal communication, May 7, 2014).

Currently Tasman is active on three social media; Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn as advised by Arana. On which they regularly post news and updates regarding big mergers and acquisitions but, as stated in the previous chapter, no specific strategy is being used at this time. The number of people currently interacting with Tasman’s social media is low with, for example, only 66 likes on Facebook (Tasman Consulting, 2014). A change in its social media strategy might see that number, and therefore the interaction with its social media, rise.
3. Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework is a key part of the research development since it aims at shedding light into the different theoretical aspects that have an influence in the final strategy of this project. This section is aimed at gathering information on four fields: stakeholder communication, social media use for businesses, brand awareness and the uses and gratification theory. This will be done through literature review. The decision for focusing on these four theoretical concepts is based on the goal of this research, finding a social media strategy with which Tasman can increase brand awareness among its stakeholders and to point out the importance of interaction. Using social media to do so requires Tasman to communicate with these stakeholders, to have a certain amount of knowledge about social media as well as an understanding about brand awareness.

3.1 Stakeholder communication

An early communication theory described stakeholder communication within and by an organization in terms of a simple linear model, wherein the firm’s stakeholders constitute “receivers” or “audiences” for particular messages (Redding and Tompkins, 1988). Nowadays, two-way communication models are mainly used (see figure 3.1), especially in social media, where the sender can become the receiver and the receiver the sender. A company or organization can use its social media to send a message to their stakeholders who can instantly respond to this message, social media stakeholder communication is therefore not at all linear, both sides of the message are or can be interactive.

**Figure 3.1**

A stakeholder is a person with an interest or concern in something, especially a business (oxford dictionary, 2014). Stakeholder communication is: “providing the stakeholders with the type of information about the company’s operations in which they have an interest” (Cornelissen, 2011). When looking at Tasman’s stakeholder list of potential clients (see page 40) many of the stakeholders work in the Human Resources and/or Mergers and Acquisitions field. According to Cornelissen the messages send should therefore be related to these subjects.
Crespo states that the main usefulness (for stakeholders) of social networking site profiles often focuses on information that is being distributed (2007) supporting Cornelissen’s advice of providing the stakeholder with information they are interested in.

“Stakeholder communication entails: identifying, segmenting and engaging your stakeholders and the identification of channels and vehicles to reach these stakeholders” (Stakeholder communications, 2014). The engaging process is stipulated by Cornelissen (2011) who mentions that the engagement of stakeholders has a greater focus than a single instance of communication. He then points out a changing trend in the relationship between organization and stakeholders, moving from ‘management’ to ‘collaboration’. This collaboration implies a two-way communication model, as illustrated by figure 3.1.

Since Tasman already identified and segmented its main stakeholders, by analysing fortune 500 companies for important executives in the M&A field (Arana, 2014). The social media strategy for them should focus on how to engage them and how to find the right social media channels to do so, this can be found by looking at case studies on the effects certain social media strategies had for other companies or organizations. Furthermore, Social media could create stakeholder engagement by allowing them to instantly comment, like, share or follow any messages send. Lastly, organizations should consistently ask themselves ‘are we getting our message across?’ as a means to measure the effectiveness of their social media strategy (Stakeholder communications), as Brody states: “the message sent is not always the message received” (2011). The effectiveness can be measured by viewing the activity on the social media profiles, for example an increase in number of likes or follows. Social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn have such statistics readily available (Arana, personal communication, 2014).

Concluding, both Cornelissen and Crespo advice that organizations should focus on communicating information specifically interesting for their main stakeholders, in Tasman’s case this comes to topics such as Human Resources and Mergers and Acquisitions. Furthermore organizations should stimulate engagement among their stakeholders. Social media engagement is often found in the form of a comment, a like or a follow. And throughout this Tasman’s employees should keep asking themselves if the message they are sending is getting across to their stakeholders.

3.2 Social media use for businesses

Tasman’s main stakeholders are other businesses and their employees, therefore the new social
media strategy will likely be B2B (business to business) instead of business to consumer. In a report from the Content Marketing Institute, Narcisse (2014) states that social media is: “ideally suited for impression-based strategies”. Meaning the goal is to have your brand seen by the businesses that might eventually be approaching for sales, in other words, an increase in brand awareness. He further continues by advising companies to attract positive attention from stakeholders by sharing helpful information and contributing insights to online conversations which stipulates once again Cornelissen and Crespo (3.1). Narcisse calls this ‘showcasing your expertise’. According to Carrera et al. (2008): “The most common forms of message dissemination (from businesses on their social media) include posting links to external news items about the organization or its causes and posting press releases”. Waters et al. (2009) in their examination of social media use by NGOs state that this is indeed the case for NGOs. It can therefore be expected that, since these are the most common forms, many businesses and organizations using them.

Qualman (2013) says that when asking any Fortune 500 executive about the most effective form of marketing, the answer will be word of mouth. He continues by saying that in social media, word of mouth can become world of mouth (p. 1). He illustrates the difference with a simple model (figure 3.2).

**Figure 3.2**

![Figure 3.2](image)

Figure 3.2 described word of mouth as: person A tells person B who tells person C and E and so forth, a slow process where the original message can be altered along the way. World of mouth (socialnomics, he uses the title of his book here) however is illustrated as person B likes, shares, follows person A and immediately person B’s entire social network can see it as well.

Word of mouth for Tasman has been its main source of raising brand awareness, by speaking at events, conventions as well as joining (and winning) several business awards (Arana, personal communication, 2014). Social media has for Tasman mainly been an addition to its means of raising
brand awareness. However looking from Qualman’s perspective, world of mouth might be more successful for Tasman.

According to a survey of Brandwatch (2014) social media is starting to play a big role in M&A specifically, especially for target identification, or identifying possible organizations or companies for mergers or acquisitions. (see figure 3.3).

**Figure 3.3** (Brandwatch, 2014)

![Social media role in M&A](image)

Figure 3.3 demonstrates the roles social media plays in M&A according to a Brandwatch survey about using social media to inform M&A. The survey showed that more than half of all social media use in M&A is target identification, meaning companies use it to identify stakeholders, e.g. by assessing their social media profiles on their search for mergers and acquisitions as well as potential competition. 30% of its use in the M&A field is for due diligence (research into an organization before signing a contract), this shows that companies use the social media profiles of other companies to investigate and evaluate them. It also shows the importance of upholding an active profile, at least for organizations in the M&A field.

Social media has become important to businesses for numerous reasons. An important reason for an organization like Tasman is the way social media can help building brand awareness, as stated by Narcisse and the importance of social media in the M&A field as shown by Brandwatch (2014).

Furthermore, referring to 3.1, once again as stated by Cornelis and supported by Crespo (2007), Tasman can use its social media to fulfil the demand by many stakeholders of finding information specifically interesting to them on social media.

Tasman is using Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. These are three of the biggest social media platforms, Facebook having an estimated 1.6 billion users and both Twitter and LinkedIn around 200 million (List, n.d.). Since most of Tasman’s stakeholders are active on Twitter and/or LinkedIn it
makes sense that these two media are being used, and the sole fact that Facebook is the biggest social media with over a billion people to reach is a reason to use it together with the other two (Arana, personal communication, 2014).

Last of all, when running many names from Tasman’s stakeholder list through social media sites, such as LinkedIn and Twitter, their profiles can be found, indicating that at least these two media are platforms where Tasman can reach them.

3.3 Brand awareness

Tasman is currently in its 3rd year and it is therefore not surprising that it is not yet as well-known as, for example, a company that has been around for decades. It also is no wonder that increasing brand awareness among Tasman’s stakeholders (its potential clients) is one of its goals, something that is also advised by Narcisse (3.2). In any case, this awareness goes hand in hand with its stakeholder communication. For Cornelissen (2011) states that stakeholder communication is not only the exchange of information, but it also ‘symbolically crafts and projects a particular image of the organization”. As an example; posting a news article that interests your followers on Twitter does not only provide the followers with information they might be interested in (stakeholder communication), it also shows them what you as the poster find interesting or important enough to mention to them (increasing awareness about yourself).

Making stakeholders aware of Tasman’s social media should work exponentially, for every person in Tasman’s network that follows, likes, shares or replies will bring exposure to persons in its network, who might also follow, like, share or reply at which point its network will also get exposed, this can be seen in figure 3.2 and is called ‘world of mouth’ by Qualman (2013).

To find a social media strategy that increases brand awareness through social media use is the goal of this research. Figure 3.4 is a representation of what a successful social media strategy should result into. Exposure to Tasman’s social media creates awareness, the material Tasman posts influences its Stakeholders. The engagement is any sharing, liking, following or replying to material posted by Tasman and the action can be a stakeholder hiring Tasman’s services. Any profit gained through this process could be funnelled back into the system to increase its potency (Kelly, n.d.). Lastly, Babac (2011) states that publishers can: “increase the level of their brand’s presence in the daily lives of their audience by using social media to directly address their audience”. Whenever an organization wants to send a message to their (social) network they can do so within minutes, making it all the more effective and giving more time for their network to spread the ‘world of mouth’ while something is still of interest.
3.4 Uses and gratification theory

“The uses and gratification theory focuses on why people use the Internet, and most often, how it fulfils a need or want” (Mayes, 2011). In her work on effectively incorporating social media for companies, Mayes points first to the uses and gratification theory. According to Katz, Bulmer and Gurevitch (1974) the uses and gratification theory is:

“(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps unintended ones.”

In the social media’s case, an individual’s exposure to social media creates needs and expectations of these media, which leads to the formation of a frame of reference in which the individual selects the specific social media that satisfies his or her needs and/or wants. This results into need gratification or other, possibly unintended, consequences.

Furthermore, individuals can be more influential in than the media (Katz et al., 1974, p. 2-3), especially when dependency lies more on the individuals than the specific media. The latter can be seen as a social media marketing campaign which attempts to achieve a specific goal, such as stakeholder interaction with a Facebook page, in which the success lies solely with the Facebook user either interacting or not.

Gratification is what an organization using social media might strive for, first creating needs and/or
wants among stakeholders with the goal of gratifying them, so that their needs and/or wants remains. According to Katz et al.: gratification can be obtained from three media related sources, media content, exposure to media and the social framework that characterizes the situation of exposure (p. 6).

Simply creating exposure to social media is something most people are used to and therefore less likely to gain gratification from. Most social media use is a combination of person with a machine (computer, cell-phone, tablet) and the social framework surrounding this interaction is likely not something particularly gratifying.

However as mentioned earlier, the main usefulness of social media profiles is the information being distributed on these profiles (Crespo, 2007) as long as it is of interest to them (Cornelissen, 2011). Therefore, this is why in social media the media content is most likely to achieve gratification. Mayes research combined with the advice of Crespo and Cornelissen shows the importance of creating the right messages so that Tasman’s stakeholders start and keep interacting with its social media. The importance of this interaction has been explained in figure 3.3.
4) Research Design

4.1) Research Objective
According to Verschuren and Doorewaard there are several stages in the research and solution of a problem, they refer to this as the intervention cycle (2010). According to both authors, the design stage is the stage in which a plan is “developed in order to find a solution to the problem” (p 48), chapter 4 is about the design
The objective of this project is: to provide Tasman Consulting with a social media strategy with which it can obtain wider brand awareness among its stakeholders. In order to select the right social media strategy for Tasman, the researcher has analysed theories on stakeholder communication, social media use for businesses and brand awareness and will take a close look at several case studies on social media strategies and communicating with the client.

4.2 Research Framework
A research framework is: “a schematic representation of the research objective and includes the appropriate steps that need to be taken in order to achieve it” (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2010, p. 65). Figure 4.1 is such a representation.

**Figure 4.1**

The figure shows: the study of theories on stakeholder communication, social media and brand awareness and the uses and gratification theory, as mentioned in chapter 3. As well as case study reviews and communication with the client. These three actions have been and will be undertaken in order to create a preliminary advice that entails information on strategies and methods for
increasing Tasman’s brand awareness through social media use. Next the research questions will be answered through literature review as well as interviews with professionals in the field of M&A and lastly an analysis of the social media use by Tasman’s stakeholders. These four tasks are named the research objects. This strategy is the final advice and should show Tasman how it can increase brand awareness among its stakeholders through social media use.

4.3 Research objects
The first two research objects that will be analysed in this project are: the interview with the client and the mini-interviews with professionals in the field of M&A, both will be asked questions related to the research questions as well as related to the preliminary advice data. The main reason for the interviews is to create a variety in data types from literature found during the desk research. Furthermore, the client’s opinion on the preliminary advice on strategies and methods for increasing brand awareness through social media will be asked. This, in order to finally select a social media strategy suited for Tasman Consulting, the researcher will find out exactly what the client’s wants and wishes are.

The next research object is an analysis of social media use by Tasman’s stakeholders, in this analysis the researcher will see if Tasman’s stakeholders are using social media and which ones.

The last research object is: the answers to the research questions and sub questions described in chapter 4.4 through desk research such as literature reviews.

Together these two objects should give the researcher enough information to either select the most suitable social media strategy for Tasman, to create a suitable strategy or to realize the right information has not yet been obtained for being able to advise a good strategy. In case of the latter, the researcher will then start to collect new information and the analysing will start over.

4.4 Research questions
As advised by Verschuren and Doorewaard, a set of research questions will be formulated in order to help obtain the knowledge that is necessary to achieve the research objective. These questions will be divided into central and sub-questions (2010, p. 91).

1) What and how should Tasman communicate to its stakeholders through social media?

The sub questions are:

a) What kind of information should Tasman’s convey?

b) Which social media do its stakeholders use (if any)?

c) Which social media should Tasman use for its communication?

d) How frequently should Tasman Communicate through social media?
e) How can success be measured?

2) What are the advantages of using social media for Tasman?
The sub questions are:
   a) What are the advantages for Tasman’s brand awareness?
   b) What are other advantages of social media use?

3) How should brand awareness be obtained through social media use?
The sub questions are:
   a) What does literature say about how social media is used to gain brand awareness?
   b) How do other companies in the M&A field use social media to increase brand awareness?
   c) How can its success be measured?

In the findings section of this report the answer to these questions, if found, will be given.
5. Research strategy and limitations

5.1 Strategy

The research strategy presented in this project is based on strategies recommended by Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010). The foremost research strategy that is used throughout the project is desk research, Verschuren and Doorewaard define this as: “a strategy in which the researcher does not gather empirical data herself or himself, but uses material produced by others in combination with reflection” (p. 194). The choice for desk research above, e.g., direct communication with Tasman’s stakeholders is that Tasman prefers not to inform its stakeholders about its search for a social media strategy.

The information is found in literature such as academic articles, textbooks, websites and several other sources that can be used to gather information about social media. The desk research is directed at finding sufficient information to answer the research questions stated in the previous chapter in order to create the final advice for Tasman.

Besides, another reason for using desk research instead of empirical research is that there is much easily obtained material produced by experts in the field which can instantly be used to answer the research questions, thus creating more time to analyse all the results and conclude the best social media strategy for Tasman.

Furthermore, other research methods will assist in successfully completing the project, such as semi-structured client interviews, to obtain the client’s opinion on the several social media strategies that are selected.

These interviews will be semi-structured, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill; semi-structured interviews consist of several subjects and potential questions (2009). This keeps the interview from getting restricted on specific questions or topics.

Small also semi structured mini-interviews will also be held with professionals in the field of M&A who will be asked the same questions in order to create some versatility in the type of data that will be used. These interviews consist out of 6 questions, and will be held by phone, due to the limited time available for both the interviewer and the interviewees.

Regular contact with the university supervisor will also be held for feedback, tips and to make sure the project fulfils the requirements set by the university.

The research done will be in-depth instead of breadth, because the aim of finding a single most suitable social media strategy for Tasman calls for specific research and data. Moreover it will be qualitative instead of quantitative research, for the same reasons as well as time constraints.
5.2 Limitations

There are a few limitations to mainly relying on desk research. One limitation is that the material used will likely have been created for other purposes than what the researcher uses it for. Also when a researcher gathers material himself then he will only gather the material that is useful, but in desk research one has to sift through much information that is of no use to the project, therefore wasting time (Verschuren and Doorewaard, p. 198). Lastly, the two scholars state that the formulation of the research questions depend on whether the information to answer these questions can be found in the available sources. If not then these questions should often be changed.

There are several other limitation factors that influence the project. The biggest limitation is that there will be no contact with Tasman’s stakeholders. Therefore only educated guesses can be made concerning if the stakeholder will actually react towards Tasman’s social media use as is attempted by the strategy. The educated guesses will however be based on the theory and possible strategies found in cases that have proven to be effective in that case such as mini interviews with other professionals in the M&A field.

Another limitation is the distance between the researcher who resides in the Netherlands, Arana in Spain and Tasman in the United States. The only contact between the three is through internet. Interviews will be held with Skype, and even though the interviewer and interviewees can see each other it is different than talking face to face.

A further limitation is the summer holiday that cuts through the project planning, a period where the researcher has no contact with neither client nor supervisor. This can negatively influence the project due to the short amount of time after the holiday and until the deadline in which the researcher has only a few days to implement any feedback that is received.

The last limitation is that M&A consultancy is a fairly small market, and finding specific material about M&A consultancy on social media is unlikely. Therefore links between more general information and M&A consultancy will be sought.
6. Research results

6.1 Research question 1

The first research question that had to be answered was; what and how should Tasman communicate to its stakeholders? The first sub question of this research question was; what kind of information should Tasman’s convey?

Part of the answer to this question can be found in chapter 3, where Cornelissen (2011) states that the information should be of particular interest to the stakeholders they are targeted to. To find the answer to this question should therefore have been easy, by asking the stakeholders what kind of information they find interesting. However, as stated before, the researcher cannot contact Tasman’s stakeholders about this, and therefore has to presume what kind of information they might find interesting. It goes to show that people working in the M&A and HR business are likely to be interested in information about M&A and HR such as news articles about big mergers or tips and tricks for businesses.

Fokkema (personal communication, August, 2014) states that social media should not be used for advertising yourself directly to its users. He claims that by posting news and articles and referencing to your website you still advertise yourself indirectly but it won’t be viewed as pushy, also relevant to frequency.

Furthermore, as stated earlier, when you manage to engage a social media user with your message their whole network will be able to also see your message (figure 3.2), it is a two-way form of communication. Paine (2011) stated that: “engagement means that someone has taken an additional step beyond just viewing what you tossed out there” (p. 5), which in social media jargon means either sharing, liking, commenting or re-tweeting something posted by the company.

Lastly, Stoker and Tusinski (2006) suggest balancing dialogue with information dissemination in order not to create a demanding quid pro quo relationship by only asking stakeholders to participate. Engagement could be stimulated by asking questions or inviting discussions on social media profiles.

The second sub question of the first research question asks which social media is used by Tasman’s stakeholders. Since asking the stakeholders themselves is not an option, the researcher had to try and find the stakeholders from the list (see page 40) on various social media. This was done by simply typing in the name of a stakeholder and seeing if their profile came up. If the name and the job title was the same as on the list, the researcher concluded that the stakeholder did indeed use that type of social media. However since on Facebook the Job title is often private information or not filled in the researcher only looked for stakeholders on Twitter and LinkedIn, figuring that since
Facebook is bigger than both of those the chances that many stakeholders also use that is a fair assumption. Over half of all the names on the list had LinkedIn and/or Twitter accounts. With others having either more private settings or an out-dated profile it is again a reassurance that more than half of the stakeholders on the list do indeed use social media, and that the social media they mainly use for professional purposes are Twitter and LinkedIn.

That brings us to the questions which social media should be used by Tasman itself. Based on the information obtained in answering the last sub question, the obvious answer is Twitter and LinkedIn, and in part these two should indeed be used. However with Wright and Hinson’s 2012 survey that found Facebook was accessed by 80% of public relations practitioners with some degree of frequency. Moreover, being the biggest social media in the world, as mentioned in chapter 3.2. And the fact that Tasman already has a Facebook profile with some likes then it only makes sense to keep using it.

The fourth sub question is about the frequency with which Tasman should post things on its social media profiles. Since Tasman wants to reach as many of its stakeholders as possible it should post articles and news stories on all three social media platforms at the same time (unless Twitter’s maximum character count does not provide enough space). Cohn (2010) has three short advices for the three social media Tasman uses. Cohn’s advice for Facebook is to post at least once a day, although if you have more to share you can make several posts, if you have two different things to say, do not combine them in the same message. Moreover, if you do not post often enough you simply won’t get noticed on people’s newsfeed.

For LinkedIn she advises not to update more frequently than once a day, since LinkedIn is mainly a professional networking site you do want to be seen by its users, but you do not want them to consider that you’re posting spam.

Lastly she states that with Twitter it is entirely alright to post multiple times a day, due to the posts being fairly small and a less significant filler of a user’s newsfeed. However, as goes for all three social media, always make sure that whatever you post is of interest to your stakeholders.

Figure 6.1 describes results from a study by Social Baker (2011) on Facebook posts by major brands. Although there is some variation between different brands, the average number of Facebook posts a day in 2011 was 1, supporting Cohn’s claim. They also found that posting fewer than twice a week would not engage an audience enough for them to stay engaged and posting more than twice a day would generally make the audience lose interest as well.
In a different study by Social baker (2013) where they analysed a random sample of over 11 thousand Tweets during one month, they found that after three Tweets a day the engagement decreases, see figure 6.2. The advised amount of Tweets a day lies therefore between one and three.

The last sub question asks how the success of communicating in the right way can be measured. Success as in the effect Tasman’s social media strategy has on the amount of likes, shares, follows,
re-Tweets, web traffic etc. As mentioned earlier in this report, there are services provided by most social media which give you updates on how many views, likes, comments, followers etc. you have received during a certain period. If there is an increase in this, after implementing the new strategy, then it can be assumed that there was some success. If nothing changes or the number declines then that also tells something about the effect of the new strategy. Also by looking at who liked, followed, shared or commented on a profile or a page, Tasman can see if any of its intended stakeholders are among those people. And further Tasman could look at people who are not stakeholders but did like, share, commend or follow something it posted, to see if they might be potential stakeholders.

6.2 Research question 2
The second main research question asks what the advantages of using social media for Tasman are. The first sub question of this research question is; what are the advantages of using social media to increase Tasman’s brand awareness?

According to Stelzner (2012) who did extensive research into social media, the main benefit for businesses using social media is brand exposure, in other words creating brand awareness, see figure 6.3. Stelzner say: “building an optimized social media presence to increase the brands’ online awareness has become an absolute must for digital marketing” (p. 35). He adds that by being exposed to a brand for the first time by reading a social media post, tells the consumer that the organization is active online and it gives them easy access to towards the brand, product or service.

Figure 6.3
The difference, and therefore the advantage, of using social media marketing instead of a different kind of marketing is that social media provides a more interactive way for the audience (Stelzner, p. 33). And once again this interactivity can cause the ‘world of mouth’ effect described in chapter 3. The ‘world of mouth’ effect as described by Qualman (2013) mentions that when one person responds on a social media to a message from a company, then the whole network of that person can also see the message, creating a ripple effect that gets bigger with every person responding to the message. When trying to raise brand awareness the first step is to expose people to your brand (Stelzner, p.33), for which social media is a very effective and efficient tool. Weber (2009) also points out that one of the main advantages of using social media to create brand awareness is the possibility to create dialogue with social media users. In other words creating the interactivity previously described.

The last sub question of the second main research question is: what are other advantages of social media use?

First of all, as stated in Harvard business review (2010): “Never before have companies had the opportunity to talk to millions of customers, send out messages, get fast feedback, and experiment with offers at relatively low costs.”

For finding more advantages for using social media aside from brand awareness, look once more at figure 6.3. Previously the main benefit, according to Stelzner, increased exposure was explained, however the table shows more benefits that Stelzner found after his survey among marketers. The second biggest advantage is increased traffic, according to 80% of marketers asked. Increased traffic means the amount of people going to and looking through a website or social media profile, this is very much related to exposure. Not all of Stelzner’s categories are relevant to Tasman, however creating marketplace insight is valuable for Tasman. Tasman can use social media to explore the marketplace by looking at and coming in contact with stakeholders in its market. Visa versa, stakeholders can also come across Tasman when exploring their own marketplace on social media sites. One further advantage described in figure 6.3 which is useful for Tasman is improved search rankings, a better search ranking means that your business can be more easily found on sites such as Google, making the chance that a potential customer finds you bigger.

Another reason for using Facebook is, as mentioned earlier, that when a social media user finds a business’ active social media profile it tells them something about that the business is active online and gives them easy access to information and/or services (Stelzner).

6.3 Research question 3

The last research question asks how brand awareness can be obtained by using social media?
It has now been shown what the advantages of using social media to gain brand awareness are, but it is not yet clear how social media can be used to gain brand awareness. The first sub question asks what literature suggests about this.

As explained in chapter 3.4, by creating dependency among your stakeholders a company can keep them coming back, for example by regularly posting news articles in which your stakeholders are interested, they will come back to read them (Mayes, 2011).

Speakwellcommunications.com (2010) has several recommendations for creating brand awareness. A first step is approaching the customers instead of relying on them to find you. By consistently engaging stakeholders on the social media they are present a company can integrate themselves into a conversation, which according to Speakwellcommunications.com will result in exposure and awareness among the other people part of the conversation. Another step is to create solely quality content, supporting Cornelissen’s advice to only create information that is interesting to the stakeholder (2011). Speakwellcommunications.com say that stakeholders will more likely return to your site/page if they think they will get something out of viewing it, e.g. learning something new.

The third way advised is to use Twitter, where anyone can join any conversation at any time, and where a business can answer questions or offer suggestions to other users. Moreover, it’s clear that brand awareness can be obtained by exposing a social media page to social media users, and the most important way to do so is, as mentioned time and again, by creating content which is interesting to the people you want to target as well as by creating the world of mouth (Qualman, 2013) so that once one person responds his or her whole network will also be able to see the message, in other words get exposed to Tasman’s social media profile.

Figure 3.3 by Kelly (n.d.), illustrates the process of creating brand awareness on social media.

The next sub question questions how other companies in the M&A field use social media. To answer this question several small interviews have been held with professionals in the field. Such as Stubbé (personal communication, august, 2014) who uses Twitter and LinkedIn for his company Blauw BV. Stubbé says he uses social media mainly for creating brand awareness, and he does this by posting articles or news stories that he thinks will be of interest to his stakeholders. On average Stubbé updates his social media twice a week. Lastly, he sometimes actively tries to come into contact with stakeholders by re-tweeting or responding to their social media posts, this was also advised by Weeda-Swamborn (personal communication, august, 2014) advisor at Berenschot who suggests to actively search as well as join discussions on social media in order to create awareness.

Abelen (personal communication, august, 2014), from Adcorporate was also interviewed. Adcorporate uses LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter and update their social media a minimum of once
a month, sometimes more often. They measure the social media statistics, as described in the answer to the next sub questions as well as monitoring and react to messages posted by stakeholders on their social media. Abelen also stated that using social media for creating brand awareness is done by them through promotion of their website and articles. The most important reason for *Adcorporate* to use social media according to Abelen is that it’s a new form of communicating.

The last sub question asks how to measure the success or lack thereof of using social media to gain brand awareness.

The effect social media has is often measured by social media metrics, think of likes, shares, comments, follows etc. that have previously been mentioned. Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter send Tasman frequent updates that show, for example, the increase or decrease of likes, comments or re-Tweets. If a company is looking for more in depth measurement tools they can hire the services of companies who do just that. Companies such as Hootsuite who offer in depth social media analytics needed to prove the ROI of social media use and marketing (Inform, n.d.). The decision on whether or not to hire the services of a company such as Hootsuite depends on the goals set by the company. If a goal is to simply increase the number of likes or Tweets then an in depth analysis might not be needed, however if a goal is to increase traffic between a website and a social media profile for a certain demographic then a ROI analysis might be worth the costs.

### 6.4 Review interview with client

The last part of this chapter is about the interview with client Arana during which most of the data found has been discussed in order to see if it is on line with the client’s wishes as well as if it is deemed feasible. The interview transcript can be found in the Appendix (see page 31). During this interview some new ideas came up, such as the suggestion that Tasman should create its own research and articles that can be posted on its social media. These articles should of course be of interest to its stakeholders but more importantly it should convey unique and original information that can only be found on Tasman’s social media profiles. This will support the creation of the previously discussed dependency on Tasman’s social media. The whole interview is an important addition to the project and the findings, it is therefore recommended that the reader will read the entire interview transcript before continuing with the rest of the report.
7. Conclusion
In the previous chapter the sub questions to the three research questions have been answered by using data collected through desk research as well as semi structured mini-interviews with professionals in the field of M&A. By answering the sub questions, the research questions themselves have almost been answered as well. However, in this chapter the three research questions will be answered in a clear and coherent way.
The first research question asked what and how should Tasman communicate to its stakeholders. By answering the sub questions it has been shown that an organisation should only create content interesting to its stakeholders and they should try to engage them by asking questions for example. It was also shown that the main social media used by Tasman’s stakeholders are LinkedIn and Twitter and it has been assumed that Facebook is also used by them. Furthermore, by reviewing data it has been advised that Tasman should use these same three social media, and the frequency of using the three social media has also been explained. Lastly the manner in which success can be measured has been explained.
With the answers to the sub questions found the first research question can also be answered:

Tasman should communicate through Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn by posting content which is of interest to the stakeholders and by stimulating interaction through creating discussions for example. Furthermore, posting regularly (once a day for Facebook and Twitter) to keep followers enticed.

The second research question asked what the advantages of using social media are for Tasman. By answering the sub questions in the previous chapter it was revealed that there is an overall agreement that creating or improving brand awareness is one of the main advantages for using social media, in part because of the effectiveness of world of mouth (Qualman, 2013). Moreover it was shown that using social media can also be advantageous for increasing web traffic, getting improved search ratings and for exploring the marketplace.
With the two sub questions answered the second research question is answered already:

The main advantage which Tasman can gain from using social media is gaining increased brand awareness through processes unique to social media such as world of mouth. Other advantages however are increased web traffic for Tasman sites and social media profiles, for exploring its marketplace as well as gaining better search ratings, allowing people to find Tasman with more ease.
The last research question inquired specifically how brand awareness can be obtained through social media use.

The answers to the sub questions taught that once again by creating content of interest for your stakeholders but also by creating a dependency as described in chapter 3.4 in the uses and gratification theory (Mayes 2011).

Moreover a company or organization should be trying to engage their stakeholders; engagement can be obtained by for example stimulating discussion. Furthermore this was supported by professionals in the field of M&A who also stipulated the importance of creating content special for your stakeholders as well as actively seeking them out instead of relying on them finding you online.

Lastly it was shown how success and effect of social media use can be measured, by for example hiring a company specialized in creating social media analysis reports.

As with the second research question, the answers to the sub questions have almost literally answered the main question, however for clarity:

Brand awareness can be obtained through social media by creating content of interest to your stakeholders and by stimulating engagement by asking questions or encouraging discussions as well as by creating dependency on your social media updates. Lastly to actually see if brand awareness is obtained an organization can hire the services of a company specialized in creating social media effectiveness analyses.
8. Advice

The goal of this report was to create an advice that would tell Tasman Consulting how it can use social media in order to gain wider brand awareness among its stakeholders. In order to create this advice a research project over a period of 5 months was created. In this project the researcher mainly used desk research to gather data from literature as well as semi structured interviews with the client and several semi structured mini-interviews with professionals in the field of M&A. The data collected was firstly used to gain a wider understanding of the topic and later used to answer the research questions and sub questions that the researcher had created in order to help working towards the final goal, the advice. In the previous chapter the researcher answered the research questions through which the main part of the advice might already be clear.

8.1 Introduction to the advice

For businesses of today, using social media seems to be a must, the time of searching for a company in a phone book or the advertisement page of a newspaper is no more. Nowadays, if you are looking for an optician you simply Google to find one. The same goes for most other businesses. However, this has not changed the fact that the general opinion on the best marketing practice is still word of mouth, where one person advices the use of a product or service to another person, often a friend or a family member. Although there seems to be a switch in this, led by people such as Qualman (2013), who introduced ‘world of mouth’ which works in the same way, except that it is on social media and it can be theoretically seen by an almost infinite number of social media users. The exact usefulness of social media is a topic which involves a host of opinions, although using it for creating brand awareness is generally seen as the most important aspect, as was proven in this project not just by literature reviews but also during the mini-interviews with professionals. Moreover, since Tasman Consulting has been using social media for the past years, the question about whether or not they should be using it was answered before this project began. The question that was asked however, was how they could use it effectively and successfully. In order to answer this question a research project involving several methods of research over a period of 5 months is now being concluded.

The final aim of this project was to answer the question; how Tasman Consulting can best use its social media to gain wider brand awareness. By following the research methods proposed by Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010) the researcher has done preliminary research to get an understanding of the topic, has created several research questions and sub questions needed to be answered in order to create the final advice. In the previous chapter the research questions have been answered successfully, according to the researcher, enough to create a final advice for Tasman.
However as stipulated in the limitations chapter (5.2) it was also explained that due to lack of communication with the stakeholders certain success can not be guaranteed. It therefore is advised to, if possible, measure the opinion of stakeholders about the social media strategy. However, if this is not possible, the researcher is still confident that only positive results can come from using the advice. However, the amount of positive results could only increase if the strategy is specified to fit the stakeholders, but this can only be done by involving them in the process, through surveys for example.

8.2 The advice

Even though, after having read this report, the advice should already be more or less clear, however in this section of the report it will be summarized in as few sentences as possible. For the sake of clarity and to try and keep it relatively short, it will be expected that the reader has read the entire project and therefore topics that have been explained in previous chapters will not be explained in depth again, in other words the how and why to all of this can be found in the previous chapters (mainly chapters 3 and 6).

In order for Tasman Consulting to use social media to gain wider brand awareness it should create content on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook which is of interest for its stakeholders. Since Tasman’s stakeholders are mainly working in the M&A and HR fields Tasman’s posts should therefore mainly be focused on these two fields. It is advised that the posts themselves should be news, articles and tips about M&A or HR with a specific focus on the technology industry, since most of Tasman’s projects involve companies in this industry. Furthermore, Tasman should stimulate engagement by e.g. encouraging discussions on its social media profiles. This could be done by asking questions to its social media audience or asking for opinions about certain topics. The goal of creating content of interest for the stakeholders is to create a dependency among stakeholders, resulting in them returning to Tasman’s social media on a regular basis. The main goal of stimulating engagement is to create the ‘world of mouth’ effect, in order to increase the exposure of social media users exponentially for every person that engages with Tasman’s social media profiles. Continuing, it is of importance to keep the social media profiles active by frequently updating them with new articles, tips or questions. The frequency of how often this should be done can be found in chapter 6. If Tasman’s employees do not have the available resources to implement the advice in combination with the current workload, the researcher advises strongly that they create space for this, for example by hiring an intern, which in the case of social media is
often done by businesses. It is important to spend enough time on Tasman’s social media in order to keep it up to date and active by posting enough news, articles and tips. Due to the fact that people will stop following a page that stops providing them with their needs and/or wants, which were described in chapter 3.4, and by frequently updating social media profiles Tasman will tell its potential clients that it is an active and current organization. Lastly, before actively starting to engage stakeholders Tasman should provide enough interesting content on their social media pages, so that once a wider audience is reached they will see that the quality and quantity of Tasman’s social media use is on-going and not just one good article or news story.
Reference list


Interview transcript with Beatriz Arana
29-08-2014
duration: ± 35 minutes

Marten Muller = M.:  
Beatriz Arana = B.:  
short pauses or breaks = …

Some parts of the interview will not be transcribed due to confidential and/or personal information, the information left out will be shown as [Confidential] or [personal].

[personal]…

M.: Alright so… I’m really on the last pages of what I have to do to finish it all, and I thought I will just tell you some of the things that I found in my research

B.: Okay

M.: And just let you say your opinion about [the research] and just what you think, if you think it’s a good idea or not, if it’s feasible for Tasman, or not. Just general opinions on some of my... the things that I found

B.: Perfect, okay go right ahead

M.: alright, well I divided the research into 3 main research questions

B.: Okay

M.: And all those questions have a couple of sub questions and by answering those I have come up with the final advice

B.: Okay

M.: Now I’m still finalizing the advice, so I will send that to you on Monday when the deadline is there

B.: Perfect

M.: So then you’ll receive that whole thing, but for now the first research question I had is: what and how should Tasman communicate to its stakeholders, so what should they communicate to their stakeholders and how should they do that. Through the social media

B.: Right

M.: And then I found... this is pretty much the obvious thing, but it is the advice that keeps coming back from everyone that wrote something about it. It is that the information should be of particular interest to the stakeholders it’s targeted to
B.: Of course, right

M.: And of course in my research I haven’t been able to contact the stakeholders to ask them what they are interested in, but it might be able to be assumed that it [the information] has to do with mergers and acquisitions as well as human resources, because that’s the two big parts in the business

B.: Right, exactly

M.: Yea... then a man I interviewed said that social media should not be used to advertise themselves directly to social media users, because he says that’s very pushy. Instead he said you should just be posting the articles and referencing to your site from time to time. Other news, through which you’ll advertise yourself indirectly but it won’t be viewed as that pushy

B.: Right, provide information that is interesting to your readers, but does not directly promote you without directly... obviously promoting you. But you have to generate, an expertise in the industry so that people will consider you experts in HR and M&A in the case of Tasman. And they will look to Tasman for answers for those types of... how to integrate people and after acquisitions and things like that

M.: Yea... so you want to end up in their heads, so whenever they’re thinking about maybe a merger maybe buying a company they will immediately think about Tasman

B.: Exactly

M.: To do that, three other authors said that you should balance the dialog with information dissemination in order to not create a demanding quid-pro relationship by only asking stakeholders to participate. So they say you should obviously give them back something. Because getting them involved in social media is kind of what you’re striving to. Because once someone on Facebook or Twitter likes something or re-Tweets something, everyone in their network will be able to see that, and that’s you know... word of mouth, and author described it as world of mouth. Because it is one person saying something to the other one, but everyone in the network surrounding it will also be able to see it. So exponentially bigger

B.: exactly.

M.: I think the social media tasman use and keep using are the ones they already do, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. The reason for that is because LinkedIn is the professional social network. It is actually only there for professional use. So it’s suited perfectly for business to business, which is Tasman’s bread and butter... or however you say that

B.: Yes, yes, exactly

M.: And Twitter as well because it is also one of those bigger ones that is currently being used for... well by businesses. Facebook on the other hand, although it is very much used by businesses, it is also just mainly for personal use

B.: Personal and consumer type businesses, not so much services and consulting
M.: Not so much no, however since it is by far the biggest social media out there, with two billion or maybe three billion, I mention that somewhere, users and since Tasman is already on Facebook and has acquired some likes and some followers... I think they should continue using it as well, because it doesn’t cost much more of an effort to post things they put on their website or Twitter anyway.

B.: Exactly, it doesn’t cost much more of an effort, they should be present but it doesn’t particularly add value to their business, I think, but it would be a loss for them to... since it doesn’t cost much more work for them, it would be a loss to not also post whatever they post on the other two, also post on Facebook.

M.: Definitely, alright... hang on... then I researched into frequency of how often they post, currently it is two times a month I think. Depending on how big of stories they come across. Like if Facebook buys something.

B.: We’re trying to do once a week. Between you and I [confidential]... were only posting acquisitions, but what we ideally should start to do is comment on those acquisitions. So that Tasman can position itself as experts in integrating people. But... [confidential]... ideally a company like Tasman should actually comment on and produce some research, which is something we’re talking about and something you may want to add to your conclusion. Tasman should start producing research on HR M&A and current trends in HR M&A especially in the technology industry, they could do a survey among big companies that are serial acquirers...

M.: ...Alright there you are again, sorry, internet froze for a second

B.: Oh, it’s okay, no, one thing that we talked about doing that we talked about doing that we haven’t done yet with Tasman is a survey, where they could survey potential clients and just generally serial acquirers and ask them what are your biggest challenges. is it in integrating people post acquisition, is it in working with the other cross functional areas, other departments with finance and corporate development and other departments. Because HR has to work with other departments when they work on integrating people. It is not just themselves with the other HR department. They have to work a cross function with their company and other companies and they have to work across borders, different national cultures but also different corporate cultures. And so ideally if Tasman could produce such research via a survey that... what is the latest trend in cross border mergers and acquisition with integrating people. I think that would generate a lot of interest and a lot of potential following. And ultimately possibly new business. So I don’t know if you want to include that or if you already did as a recommendation. But I would say start to actually produce research, don’t... [internet loss]... we post articles that they have been interviewed in. which is good for people to know, that they’re coming out in the media. But really need to start, in order to position ourselves as the industry experts we really need to start to produce research and even ourselves interview potential clients and current clients for what works, what doesn’t. And that... and then communicate that via social media, I think that would be a huge help for us. But that’s... [confidential]... you could recommend that they get someone specialized in social media that could work on this

M.: Definitely, I mean it’s again what we just talked about, you have to produce content that is of interest to your stakeholders, however if it’s a news article about a big takeover or a big merger they [stakeholders] will probably know it from any other news agency they follow.
B.: Exactly, from other media. So the conclusion is that what Tasman is currently doing is not enough

M.: Yes, so by creating original unique content that is of interest, it will be a lot more likely that they [stakeholders] will stick with Tasman’s social media. Yes that is indeed the case

B.: Absolutely.

M.: Also, coming back to the frequency to which they post, trying to once a week is according to the research that I found still not enough. Because people who are active on social media such as Twitter, they come across, I don’t know, maybe a hundred Tweets a day just by scrolling through it

B.: If not more

M.: That is seven hundred a week, and if one of those seven hundred is Tasman, it kind of drowns in the flood of all the different Tweets

B.: ... Absolutely... let me get my charger so we don’t disconnect...

M.: Okay, sure...

[...]

B.: Just a second... go ahead

M.: Alright... so yes, like you said Tasman is very busy, so this is something that might not be feasible for them straight away. However having an intern or someone like that working just for the social media of a company is something you see almost everywhere nowadays

B.: Exactly

M.: If you become an intern at well.. human resources, PR, marketing any similar company like that, as well as I imagine M&A they put you on the social media tasks. Which is very useful, because most people advice... most professionals advice to post on Facebook at least once a day, LinkedIn not that important because people mainly use it for networking, not as much to learn new things. So that can be once a week, probably more than fine. And Twitter sometimes multiple times a day. And it doesn’t have to be a big article or big research. It can be a minor tip or a minor headline or anything like that. But just to... that people keep coming across Tasman in their newsfeed. So that their name will stick... clearer in their mind

B.: Now that you’re making me think out loud, I know that social media is something I really have to work on, Like I said I have a limited amount of time. The problem is that an intern... let me just tell you what I’m thinking about... an intern doesn’t know enough about their actual business internally, so we need tips from people that know, and now that Tasman... that the intern could then communicate via social media but somebody needs to give them the expertise. So now that Tasman has a number of employees, they have about 8 or 9 consultants that are full time and that are working very hard on deals... sometimes more sometimes less depending on how many deals the company has. But one thing think I’m going to bring up, and this is something you could put in your recommendations if you want. During my next call with them... to involve the employees in helping us provide tips for how to... what happens when this happens on a deal, this is what you should do
or this has been found to be very helpful. Without maybe mentioning the client or maybe the company, because sometimes that’s confidential but actually involving their consultants in providing their advice. And then the intern could post the advice. But at least we’re getting the employees... [confidential]... but it shouldn’t be too difficult because they’re experts in their area

M.: And I mean it won’t cost them that much more time, because they are professionals in the field and they are full with such tips which they tell the clients constantly

B.: And they’re learning constantly, so I think that’s a great thing that you can put in there and I will keep it in mind for my next call

M.: And it’s also perfect for social media posts, because its general small but it’s interesting, so it won’t be seen as spam that much. People will read over it and think; ah... interesting... so it’s something I will definitely put in here as well

B.: Perfect

M.: Alright... so the main benefit of using social media is according to literally everyone, increasing brand exposure and brand awareness. Which is exactly what my project is about. So that turned out alright. But once again I advise Tasman that if they do implement a more... an actual social media strategy. Because... [Confidential]...

B.: They need a social media strategy, exactly. And I mean to help them with that

M.: And... where was I going with this...

B.: It’s okay take your time...

M.: ... [personal] hang on let me read this... everyone says you have to create, sort of a social media plan. You want your stakeholders to become more or less dependent on what you provide with your social media... because when they are that [dependent] they will come back. So by posting interesting articles, interesting news they will actually look at Tasman... I mean not just through their newsfeed but they will go to Tasman’s profiles and website, because they know that’s where they can find information. However to get people to do that you do have to take it... how do you say that step by step, not just every now and then thinking this might be interesting let’s put it on there. It has to be more... structured, that’s the word I’m looking for

B.: Exactly, structured, it has to be sort of a long term strategy. One thing that would be interesting to think about is the fact that Tasman consulting provides a service. They provide a service to companies that are making acquisitions. And that service is integrating the people, as we know. So that’s different from companies that provide products, like a grocery store or a regular store that sells clothing. There’s the product versus the service, and I don’t know if you have time to look into this, or if you already have but I think you hit the nail on the head and it’s pretty obvious that a company that provides a service that...

M.: ...Sorry could you repeat that? Because internet froze again

B.: Yes, a company that provides a service like a consulting firm, needs to provide tips about how to... implementing a service like theirs will generate value for a company, like [a company] that is
making acquisitions. So that’s different of course than a company that provides products, because they want to sell products and so they might have a different way of communicating in social media. So my curiosity is how does a service firm behave differently from a product firm in social media. Are there recommendations... if you Google how to promote companies that provide services versus how to promote companies that provide products... are there different sort of recommendations, you definitely hit the head on the nail by saying we need to provide research and tips as to how to integrate your employees which is the service Tasman provides... but what else can a service firm do that is different than what a product firm could do. I would be interested in seeing that... if you have time you might want to Google it. And might want to mention it in your report

M.: Yes, sure... right now I haven’t mentioned exactly the difference between a company selling a product versus a company selling a service, however most of the research I used is specified for companies providing services, so it is in there more or less...

B.: So if you mention that at the beginning

M.: Yes, sure. And I will send my thesis to you on Monday when it’s done and I send it to the university. However that doesn’t mean we have to send that product to Tasman immediately. If you say; hey Marten maybe it would be good to add this or for example that comparison than I will... [personal]... I will have time to work on it and then give it to Tasman

B.: [personal]... I just want to give you ideas that maybe you have not thought of. But that your research has been about service firms that’s helpful for me to know. And that should definitely be in your introduction. To clarify that.

M.: Okay, and then I once again stipulate that it’s important to create dialogue with the social media users, because then people in their network will be able to see it, and that’s how it might spread. And then... how to create dialogue is for example... on Twitter you can search for certain terms, so you could search for mergers or acquisitions. And you can see people Tweeting about this, and you can join conversations. And by joining conversations as well... I’m quite sure that everyone in theory can reply to any Tweet given by anyone. Which means that if someone asks a question or there is a discussion between a couple of people going on about... this with mergers or this with acquisitions that’s the perfect situation for Tasman to give one of their tips that they might normally Tweet out to the world but to [give it] specific to that conversation. So by joining a discussion... that’s one of the ways to create dialogue

B.: Absolutely

M.: Another one is to simply ask questions or ask for opinions on something, so not just... I’m sure from time to time there are takeovers or mergers that are maybe... raise some questions, why would this company take over that company or things like that

B.: Because they’re so different for example. They’re so different culturally or something

M.: Yes, and that’s a perfect situation for Tasman to not only post; this company is taking over that company, but to then add... a question like; why would you think this is happening, or; we think it might be because of this... or just explaining if they already know. But that’s also one of the ways with which they can stimulate...
B.: Yes, comment on what’s happening, exactly

M.: And for that, like I said, Twitter is perfect because you can join conversations with ease. And on Facebook, more or less, you have to either have people like your page or be friends with people before you can do that, so it’s a little bit less suited, but it’s still alright to ask questions there as well. And people who like your page or follow your page can then respond in the comment sections below your post. So it’s possible there as well

B.: What do you recommend, I just have a question, so you know we had all those contacts, the contact list. So what do you recommend, do you think that... I guess the logical thing is to create a social media strategy and to actually start implementing it with ideas, tips, research, surveys what ever. And then ask people to follow you, and not ask people to follow you before. Because if you ask them to follow you now they are going to say: why should I follow you now, you don’t tell me anything interesting

M.: For sure, yes. I mean... you want to create some sort of basis... so that when people first look at the page they see that it is being active, that there is interesting information provided. Because even if... let’s say tomorrow they post an utterly interesting story, and a lot of people like it and look at the page and see that the rest of the content is things they already knew or whatever.. then even though this one story might have been amazing they might think I won’t follow it because I already follow enough. It will just clog up my newsfeed. That is indeed very important and I will add that as well... that’s completely right yes

B.: Yes, we don’t want to invite people without having a strategy first

M.: And as for inviting people... you can of course, does Tasman have a Newsletter?

B.: Yes, twice a year

M.: I remember now. In that you can include, for example, they should include I think. Once they do start a real social media strategy that they now... they changed the way they act with their social media and if people are interested they should check it out, and provide links in the newsletter. So that’s a way to really connect

B.: Excellent recommendation to advise people that Tasman is now more active, or is active in social media

M.: Because that information will be provided in the newsletter they will receive anyway, so it won’t be seen as pushy again. It won’t be a message saying: hey we are Tasman please follow us because we do something new. It is inside this whole list that they [stakeholders] already know and read... some other benefits of using social media I found was... increase in traffic, web traffic. When Tasman starts gaining people who look on Tasman’s Facebook might also look on their website, and their LinkedIn. So there will be some increased traffic which of course helps... increasing brand awareness as well. Also for business to business, social media is said to be a very good tool to explore the marketplace, so you can look at your competition and your potential customers or potential clients by looking at their social media pages. And vice versa they will be looking at yours. By that you can for example compare how good you think you’re doing or how active you think you are compared to others
B.: And you can put that as a recommendation, or I guess you have... Tasman should evaluate what the large consulting firms are like. Because most of their competitors are the large firms. So the large consulting firms like Lloyd and McKinsey... Towers Perrin is another one. And those are large firms that do the exact same thing, but Tasman competes with a lower cost and more personalized service. So you want to see if those larger firms are doing something specific, because those larger firms do a lot of types of consulting. So with respect to their HR and M&A integration do they do something social media wise, and if so what?

M.: The last extra advantage of using it [social media] was improved search rankings on sites such as Google for when you type in Tasman Consulting you won’t only see their website but also their Facebook and their Twitter. And the more times you’re mentioned in a Tweet the higher the chance someone will find you... it speaks for itself

B.: Very true

M.: Alright, last research question already. Here I asked how brand awareness can be obtained by using social media. Up till now I’ve talked about the advantages of using it, but now more specifically about how it can be obtained... already most of this has been answered by us, for example providing people with a service with interesting news, and all that stuff. Creating the dependency which I already mentioned... it comes from a theory... let me find the name of the theory again, it’s called the uses and gratification theory, and it says that... and individuals exposure to social media creates needs and expectations of these media, which leads to the formation of a frame of reference, in which the individual selects the specific social media that satisfies his or her needs or wants. So they look for things interested just for them, and once Tasman can hopefully be that provider of that information interested to the person, then more or less you can say; alright now it has been more or less successful and we’re going on the right path

B.: That’s right

M.: Alright let’s see...

B.: You picked a good case study, because the... in terms of social media, so this is a good company to cover. Because you can provide all the recommendations of what we’re not doing

M.: Yes, definitely... also it is being advised that you shouldn’t just rely on people finding you, but you should try to approach them as well. Which can be done for example in the newsletter we just mentioned, or joining discussion a on Twitter, or just... trying to have people comment or like or share or re-Tweet your material so that their whole network can see it. So you really have to be active in trying to engage people and engaging with people. Because you can’t expect they will just do it because they just feel like it when they read your...

B.: Right, it needs to be reciprocal, you need to engage with them as well. That makes sense

M.: Obviously you solely have to create quality content, you want to make sure that people won’t get annoyed by the things you post. Because they already know everything...

B.: And that it’s not just all about you, not just about promoting you, but that it’s about third parties and cases and interesting research. Not just about promoting you, exactly
M.: Alright, that were already the points that I wanted to mention

B.: Great, well it sounds like you got some good points there

M.: Thank you, there is a lot of information about social media, because it is all still relatively new as well, so there is some contradiction as well. But I think what I have is pretty much the general opinion, specified to Tasman and business to business

B.: I’m glad... [personal]... Turn it in and then we’ll touch base, okay?

M.: Okay

B.: Have a wonderful weekend... take care

M.: Bye bye
### Sample from Tasman’s stakeholder list (100 out of 2966)

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<td>Michelle Wood</td>
<td>Director of Talent Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Express</td>
<td>Christine Robinson</td>
<td>Human Resources Senior Vice President Global</td>
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<td>American Express</td>
<td>Colleen M. Rumbal</td>
<td>Senior Vice President Global Employee Relations/International Human Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Express</td>
<td>Corinne Bilerman</td>
<td>Director, Executive Talent Management</td>
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