College of Business Book Review by David Coffee

Title: “Customer Service: New Rules for a Social Media World”

Author: Peter Shankman

Publisher: QUE, 800 East 96th Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46240 USA

Length: 189 pages

Price: $19.99 ($12.12 Amazon New)

Reading Time: 7 Hours

Reading rating: 8 (1 = very difficult; 10 = very easy)

Overall rating: 4 (1 = average; 4 = outstanding

If your responsibilities involve public relations, advertising, marketing or customer service, this is a book that you ignore at your own risk. Peter Shankman, a self-confessed technological geek and a noted author, entrepreneur, and speaker provides us with a compelling strategy to enhance any company’s performance in these critical business functions using the currently popular social networking resources which are becoming more and more a part of our daily routines. If you are trying to come to grips with the emerging social media tools like Google, Facebook and Twitter and how these resources can be a part of your company’s public relations and customer service, I recommend this book. Shankman is effective and concise as a writer and is skilled in using countless cases to illustrate his points.

Shankman is corporate savvy, particularly in the area of customer service and the strength of this book is his ability to keep his focus on the strategy of developing and implementing effective PR, marketing and customer service by integrating social media resources as tools. The reader is bombarded with real world cases which serve as a platform to give us clear, concrete and practical examples of what would otherwise be obscure and abstract concepts.

Shankman is convincing not as someone who talks about social media and leads expensive motivational seminars, but as someone who does social media and demonstrates the value of social media. He tells a story which benefits both the seasoned geek armed with in-depth experience with Google, Face Book and Twitter, and those with only limited involvement. Being among the latter, I appreciated Shankman’s assumption that the reader has only a basic understanding of social media tools and his decision to provide us with the basics, stuff that can easily be passed over by more experienced readers. For example he demonstrates how to use Google news alerts (<http://www.google.com.alerts>), setting up search terms which will search blogs, news, the web, and social media sights for your company name as well as specific phrases or words you choose, sending you emails of the content. Google news (<http://news.google.com>) is a source for more generalized events. The use of Twitter tools such as UberTwitter (<http://www.ubertwitter.com>) Tweetdeck and Hootsuite (<http://hootsuite.com>) can monitor your company name, your brand, your Twitter name, and your competitors constantly in real time.

Despite the heavy dose of specific social media information the book transcends this and keeps its focus on the important concepts of customer service and PR and what these functions should accomplish irrespective the specific tools used. With dozens of books out there trying to help executives come to terms with emerging technologies, which can make or break their business, Shankman’s blend of anecdotes, case studies and a focus on strategy provide an edge. This could be important to your company. Facebook now has 500 million members. This book belongs in your business library. Read it to find out how Shankman uses Facebook and Twitter for customer service, PR, advertising and marketing.

Peter Shankman will appear at Carolina Connect, a conference for entrepreneurs, investors and other business people. Carolina Connect is being held May 5th at the Renaissance Asheville and is presented by Advantage West and Mountain Biz Works. You can visit [www.advantagewest.com](http://www.advantagewest.com) or call 828-687-7234 for information and to register.

David Coffee is a Professor of Accounting at Western Carolina University. He has ridden thousands of miles on a mountain bike and a half million miles on a motorcycle, including five solo trips to Alaska.