

Social media has changed corporate transparency. Since we know bad news travels faster than good, it's more important than ever to connect with your marketplace proactively, to know what's being said; about your company, your brand, your people.

Keep your finger on your customers' and clients' pulse and react to news – good and bad - in a timely manner and people will know you care and they matter.

The Dave Carroll story is a great case in point. When United Airlines mishandled Carroll's guitar and caused over \$1500 of damage, Carroll attempted to get the airline to compensate him. They refused, citing every rule in their book – he didn't make the claim soon enough, there was no way to prove the airline caused the damage, the beat went on. For 9 months. Carroll escalated the issue to no avail.

In frustration he wrote a song entitled United Breaks Guitars, posted it on YouTube where it became an overnight success and has had, to date, over 9 million views.

It didn't take much to change perception in that moment from: Fly the Friendly Skies to United Breaks Guitars. United responded immediately and offered to pay damages. Chances are that upper management would have compensated Carroll earlier on had they known about the problem.

Create social media tools and use them to listen to your marketplace. Give your public a way to connect with you directly before broadcasting their concerns to the world at large. Make it a short path between the social media manager and the people empowered to make decisions.

Do this well and people will be talking about how responsive you are. People don't care if you make mistakes – they care that you correct them. They care that you respond. They care that there are actual human beings who respect them and want to make 'it' right. Social media is the two-way web and it gives customer and company a way to connect that can revolutionize your business and improve your bottom line in the bargain.