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New Wilke/Thornton Social Media Analysis and Response Service for Consumer Products Companies Meets Growing Critical Need

Columbus, Ohio – Responding to the rising amount of social media commentary about consumer brands, Wilke/Thornton has launched its *Social Media Analysis and Response Tool (SMART™)*. The new online subscription service provides consumer products companies with the ability monitor social media commentary about their offerings and to engage individual consumers directly in dialogue.

The service monitors targeted social media sources—blogs (e.g., Blogger), micro-blogs (e.g., Twitter), video services (e.g., YouTube), social networks (e.g., Facebook), and online retailers (e.g., Amazon) with customer-contributed product reviews—enabling users to retrieve current opinions and sentiments.

The Web and wireless networks provide instant access to interactive social outlets where consumers praise and vent about products and services. Unflattering commentary spreads instantly from one to many social media users, causing much buzz and potential marketplace impact. To mitigate negative commentary, companies need to react quickly to protect themselves and their brands.

In late 2009, information management firm Convergys conducted market research that indicates one negative consumer social media comment can influence 30 customers to defect. One in three consumers affected by bad customer service share their problems on the Web. Each post on a social media site reaches 45 users on average. Sixty-two percent of respondents said they would stop buying products about which they read bad things. (Alistair Jamieson, *Silent majority risk worse customer service as companies monitor Twitter, Facebook*: [Telegraph](#), December 13, 2009).

Using Wilke/Thornton's *SMART* clients easily set up key search terms and social media sources to monitor. The service scours the sources for mentions of specified brands, products, topics, and issues. An interpretive engine with user-defined rules categorizes and prioritizes mentions. Users scan the mentions and decide which require further handling. Detailed tagging can mirror coding applied to the user's regular CRM contacts. This enables mentions to be correlated and reported alongside regular call center contacts. For clients also using Wilke/Thornton's *Consumer Relationship System*, the correlation and reporting are tightly integrated, providing further advantage.

Users tag mentions for positive, negative, or neutral sentiment, or discard them as 'noise'. Those requiring attention are forwarded to Consumer Affairs representatives for further categorizing and processing into the company contact handling system. *SMART* users can immediately respond to actionable social media contacts using their preferred communication channels. Also the service provides in-depth analysis and trend reporting. Users view current activity on a continually updated dashboard and distribute reports to company stakeholders.

Social media is creating new opportunities to engage consumers to better understand their reactions to products and services. Monitoring and responding to consumer commentary enables companies to capture valuable insights about customer satisfaction. Using *SMART* will put Consumer Affairs in a better position to offer appropriate consumer assistance, correct misunderstandings quickly, and resolve issues before they cause harm.

Wilke/Thornton service benefits include:

- Capturing consumer issues and sentiment for better current attitude and trend awareness.
- Comparing issues and sentiment trends across consumer feedback sources.
- Capturing customer *verbatim* reactions for product and service improvement planning.
- Identifying and collecting reactions to new product introductions.
- Mitigating marketplace risk and economic impact by detecting activity quickly.
- Increasing capture of insights with minimal increase in cost.
- Increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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