

# **Proposals for a New Vision of the Pauline Channels of Diffusion**

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## **The market's ambiguity**

The world of books is as seductive as it is intriguing. Writers, editors, cultural agents and booksellers, with their mutual and reciprocal relations, create a microcosm that is unique in itself. These individuals are characterized by their intellectual life, the birth of new ideas and proposals, but also by a certain reluctance (maybe arrogance?) to compare the book dealers' activity with other economic activities; there is reluctance in not accepting books as products that are subject to economic and market laws.

*"The Bookstore As Business" By Brunetti, Collesei, Vescovi Y Sostero Published by Fondo de Cultura)*

## **So far, yet so near**

- What makes books different from other market products are their content. The processes, marketing needs, operating logistics are very similar to the other consumer products.
- Know how to draw attention to the differences about our product, and at the same time, know and regulate the most conventional marketing practices—this is fundamental in order to highlight that difference.
- Otherwise, the principal difference that we will present will be the inability to modernize and evolve in our beloved book market.

## **The "role" of the bookcenter**

- We always expect that a bookcenter is able to achieve a social and cultural role in the area where it is located. The majority of founders who chose this type of work were motivated from the beginning by this decisive factor.
- In business, it is fundamental to distinguish between the end goal and the operating objectives and working conditions. Economic balance is a working condition and, therefore, represents an operating objective to be attained in order to develop the business; but it is distinct from the end goal for which the business was instituted.
- We attain the end goals, above all, through good management. That is, if the bookcenter is to become a hoped-for cultural agent of transformation, it needs to be an extremely well managed business.

## A “**weighted conscience**” (???)

“...This type of conscience destroys the book business and all those who consider themselves above business (towns, cooperatives, state and private stores and parish centers). The book business can both distance or draw people close to the Church....”

Demais Books, Gabriel Zaid. Summus Publishing

## **Words of Don Alberione**

In order not to remain trapped in an approach excessively heavy on marketing, I saw in the writings of Don Alberione that he had a very precise vision of the bookcenter and the awareness of its role in building up its desired image....

## **Centers of Diffusion**

“The centers of diffusion are at the service of nations, regions, dioceses, parishes, associations and communities. To open a center we need to obtain the appropriate permits. Their organization requires both good management and order. The management comes from the center. The order refers to the supply of materials for diffusion, their separation, and the decorum of the center....”

“Whoever enters into it, must see at a glance the various classifications of books in order to more easily find what he or she desires.”

*Don Alberione*

## **An Enterpreneurial Mindset**

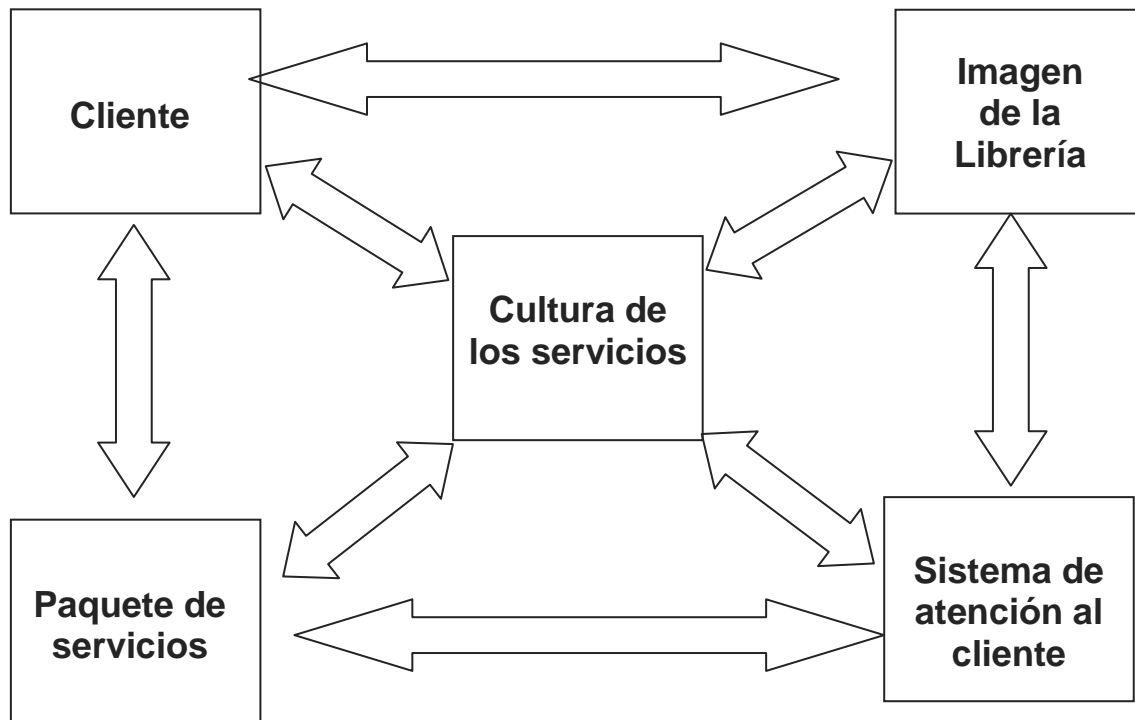
In the above two paragraphs, we undoubtedly notice the preoccupation with the diffusion of works about the Catholic faith. But we can also see clearly the entrepreneurial vision of one who understood that books are more than the mere retail of products on a shelf.

Even before the English terms became common and repeated ad infinitum, Don Alberione had already taught about *layout*, *merchandising* and *brand equity*.

Now, faced with the challenge of digital books (e-books) and the use of social networking (even to the detriment of interpersonal relations), and many other technological innovations, the concept of **Center of Diffusion** should be adopted by all those who deal in the book business as their principal form of financial support.

## **The Bookcenter as service to patrons**

- The definition of service, and the way that patrons will use it, follows a system composed of five interconnected elements:



- ✓ Patrons
- ✓ Service packs
- ✓ The image of the store
- ✓ A system of attention to the client
- ✓ A culture of service

1. **Patrons.** It is important to research the consumer habits of the reader who comes to our store. By understanding their profile in connection with the store hours and days, will permit us to make changes in order to satisfy these patrons.
2. **Service Packs.** This involves all the potential services offered, whether to an individual client, or those geared exclusively to groups of patrons registered in some plan for frequent visitors to the store. Normally it is composed of services related to stock selection, events, information, support and business hours.
3. **Image of the store.** More than being recognized by the commercialization of products, the bookcenters must use their image to convince the consumer that they possess the best conditions for the **experience of buying** and the knowledge of products desired by the consumer.
4. **A system of attending to patrons.** This refers to the ways and the means necessary to provide service. The type of attention given to patrons that is chosen by the store—whether personal assistance or self-service—determines the strongest identity of the bookcenter. Also to be considered is the technology available, the way the products are displayed, the assistance to the patrons, the layout of the store, days and times of business, the availability of products others than books, the number of employees, and their role in serving the client.

5. **A culture of service.** Consists in seeking to satisfy patrons; any action that reinforces the value of the business, the correct use of myth associated to the history of the bookcenter—all that serves as references to create the concept of the services that the store offers. This culture must be understood and utilized by all, from the most experienced employee to the recent newcomer.

### **The geography of marketing**

Introduced in the 1960's by the American Jerome McCarthy, and then popularized by Philip Kotler, the concept of the 4 P's (*product, price, promotion, point of sales*) establishes even still today the fundamentals of a good marketing performance.

Retail specialists demonstrate that when erring at the point of sales, it is necessary to more aggressively control the area of *product, price and promotion*.

This research was carried out by the Institute Popai, Brazil. *Point of Purchase Advertising International*. Eight-five percent (85%) of the decisions regarding purchasing are made at the point of sales.

### **Threats and opportunities**

When we analyze our competitors and business in general, we can react in two ways:

- Lament the present state of affairs and cry over the good old times, because all novelty is a threat to us....
- Understand that in the novelties that come up and become part of our life, we can find opportunities never before experienced.

Cultural changes mean changes in consumer habits; and cultural changes are happening in the world of books; to dive in and dominate the new waves means to navigate with greater tranquility in this new and unknown sea.

### **Strategic alliances**

- “The problem with cultural changes has to do with the difficulty that the bookseller experiences in updating and changing his points of reference regarding the world of books; it implies the necessity of seeing one's business and one's relationships with suppliers and clients through a new perspective, assuming a standpoint that is much more proactive than the present one.
- The problem of competencies has to do with the transformation of the profession of booksellers, which should be based on the ability to modify information and to offer clients the solutions that have to do with content.
- Among these new competencies are: marketing, the internet, the technology of information and creating a new atmosphere in the bookcenter . These do not eliminate the traditional skills of the bookseller—the knowledge of the products offered, and the capacity to manage the company.

- The problem with the business dimension and strategic alliances is connected to the necessity of investment and the reduction of unit costs when facing the development of innovation, which is possible only after reaching a sufficient critical mass.
- Small bookstores, like small publishers, cannot compete alone against the big networks, the big virtual stores and the big publishers.
- The solution is to establish strategic alliances with other companies (bookstores, publishers, distributors, virtual stores, etc) who have the conditions to operate the entire chain, and can divide the cost of investment.
- The survival and the growth of small bookstores are possible thanks to their capacity to join together, whether horizontally or vertically, and to create networks of innovation and management.
- Another challenge to bookstores, in this time of the internet, is to increment its value.

*The Bookcenter as Business*” (Brunetti, Collesei, Vescovi Y Sostero), Fondo de Cultura Publishing

### **Content—Key Word in the New Information Era**

Social networking is a phenomenon known and used by the majority of people, especially those who frequent book stores. Reading, writing, commenting and sharing are part of the daily lives of these people. The desire to be a part of something relevant is what motivates people to spend around 16 hours weekly in these virtual environments.

Content, topics and themes represent the essence of a publishing house. An action inspired by the content of the works of a publishing house can motivate the visit to the center, and become an opportunity for a better identity relationship between readers and patrons in the bookstore; thus uniting all in an act greater than one merely destined to the patrons, but one that transforms them into evangelizers (a name used by marketing specialists for those in love with a brand). People who are fans of a literary style, or a musical group, are much more than consumers; they become propagators of what they like.

### **From the four P’s to the three F’s**

We have looked at the concept of the four P’s. Now we will look at the three F’s:

- Fans
- Friends
- Followers

### **Contents and branding**

- From blogs to Tumblers, “branded content” has been one of the principal online marketing strategies for the fashionable logos—examples of the success of

online communications which call for innovative solutions to connect with their clients.

- Branded content has various purposes: entertaining clients, advertising, social involvement, product sales. Logos that produce contents are a step ahead and have at hand an instrument which bloggers and other media can share. At present, in 2011, branded content represents the tendency to sustain logos online.  
(*HSM Magazine*)

### Concept of social commerce

- **Social commerce** imposes on businesses to act like human beings. Instead of seeking information, consumers discover the product through the referral and recommendation of those they trust. More than a mediator of CTR (click-through), this requires regulation.
- **Practice the art of conversation:** social commerce is not a “capture of leads” or the creation of enormous “databases.” It involves speaking with people and using an authentic voice, the same voice we would adopt if we spoke directly to an individual. After all, businesses are talking to their clients in the same place where they are accustomed to talking to their friends.
- **Build up a stronger relationship with the consumer.** Consumers are a trustworthy network, a community that surrounds the business. By taking care of patrons, stores will not only create better relationships, but will also grow the level of trust as a source of referral and recommendation.

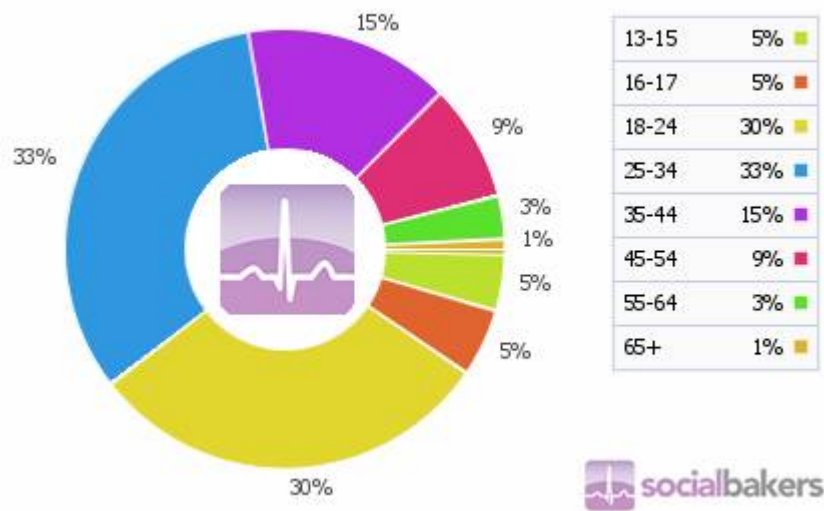
### Facebook, Orkut, Twitter

Social networks like Twitter, Facebook and Orkut are worth their weight in gold. They are ever more popular instruments on the internet. They are such a recurrent and strong phenomenon which cannot be overlooked on the part of small and medium-sized businesses.

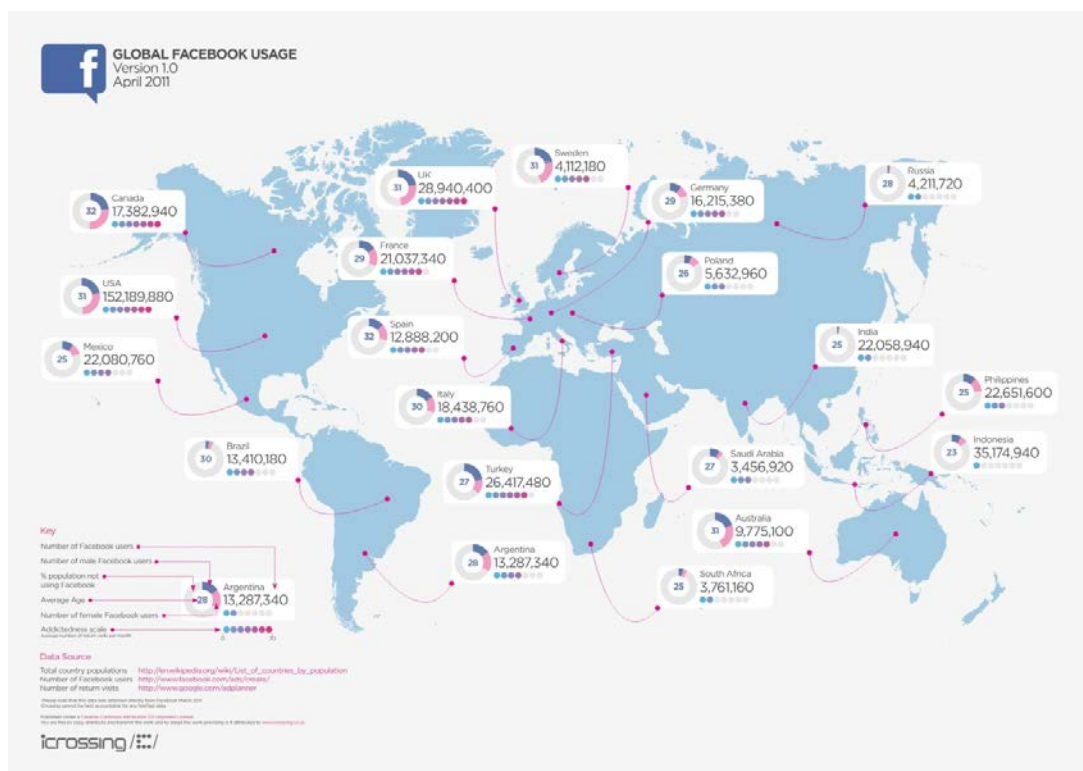
The data from a research conducted by the Altimer Group and Wetpaint for *Business Week* magazine of the 100 most important companies in the world have demonstrated that the businesses that invest in the means of social communication show better results and gains. Generally, the companies that invested in social media showed an annual growth of 18%, while those that invested little in these networks decreased their gains by 6% during the same time period. (From the magazine: Small Companies, Big Businesses).

## Growth potential

- The social network with the greatest expansion in the world is Facebook. It has more than 13 million followers in Brazil and the same number in Argentina. Mexico has almost 23 million users, Canada 17 million, and the United States 153 million. In Europe, Italy alone has 18 million fans.
- Facebook is utilized mostly by women, and 66% of the Brazilian followers are between 18 and 34 years old, as shown in the graph.



One of the most telling factors is the comparison of number of users with the percentage of the population of the cited countries.





## Twitter in the world

Twitter exceeds 300 million users, which represents the entire population of the United States. According to the site Topcharts, which calculates the number of users in social networking, Twitter reached 301 million profiles in May 2011—a little less than the last count in the American census which numbers a population of 308 million. This information is from the site Gawker.

## Eight steps for effective action in social networking

1. **Monitor your brand.** The first stage is to create a form of monitoring to discover in the social media what others are saying about you, your brand and/or your products.
2. **Create a team.** It is fundamental to choose persons who will have the responsibility of daily engaging in social media. Generally, this work is designed for professionals in marketing and communication who understand well your business, have the ability to speak for the company, are users of the main social networks, and are always connected (quick responses make a big difference for the user).
3. **Understand the situation.** It is essential to understand the type of comments being made about you and your brand. You can classify the monitored interaction in social media as “positive,” “negative” or “neutral.” Then generate the numeric data of these classifications. This way you will have a general idea of how your company’s image is playing out in the media.
4. **Forms of communication.** It is necessary to be careful about the types of strategy used to interact in social media. (Avoid various profiles.) The best way is to follow the leader. Define the language to always be used (whether formal or informal); the target population; the ideal form of approach (whether a more personal or an institutional kind of communication); the frequency of posting (in the corporate blog, on Twitter, on Slideshare, or any other social media), and a time period for responding to the users’ interactions.
5. **Create channels.** An important detail is that these channels must follow a premise: that you will truly be present and interact daily in them. Social networks or channels that are left inactive are definitely not well regarded by the users; the same is true for interactions and comments that are not answered.
6. **Interaction.** The most important aspect when you place your business or brand in social networks is for you to interact with the users. This is essential so that they feel heard, and so that they understand how much their opinion is important to you. All the users’ relevant interactions should be answered as rapidly as possible. Give special attention to the more active users—the evangelizers or destroyers of your brand.

7. **Content.** Generating content is a very important step in strengthening relations with people, to increase value, maintain everyone informed about what is new, and to show that the business is alive, dynamic and up-to-date. Many businesses already generate a lot of content—newsletters or social campaigns—but they restrict it to their institutional sites. The job of “spreading” (replicating that content in various social networks) is very important in order to be where the user is. It is not enough to wait for the user to visit your site. In this stage it is very important to follow the decisions adopted in your lines of communication.
8. **Pay attention to the market.** It is also possible to encounter various opportunities as you explore the market through social networking. A good way of doing this is to monitor comments about the key-words related to your business. Besides this, seek communities that are specific to your target users. Work with this data, and relate to your users—this can render valuable information and a new way of identifying possible clients. It is also always good to observe the image of your competitors in these media. It is very important to follow their actions as a benchmark and analysis of the market.

### **Words of Don Alberione**

“In order to attract people, it is necessary that the center be well stocked. The person who is in charge must have the capacity to suggest choices; she should have good sense and the ability of knowing how to take advantage of all the occasions for diffusion....”

“...Sending titles truly helps to generate the interest of the faithful, religious and clergy. To reach everyone it is suggested to maintain files with the addresses of the people whom we wish to contact....”

“Consult newspapers, magazines, catalogues, flyers and advertisements in order to be updated about what is new.”

“Visits to the homes are very useful and even necessary. Particular attention should be given to friends, people whom we know, cooperators, priests, pastoral agents, collectivities, schools, military installations, institutes, associations, hospitals, prisons, offices, clubs, factories, etc.”

### **Long-distance vision**

Thanks to his long-distance vision, Don Alberione could foresee the importance of the means of communication and how those who use them were key agents so that the transmission of the message should be successful. Today the tools of social networking place these opportunities in our hands. Can we imagine the wonderful things Don Aberione would do today with these new means?