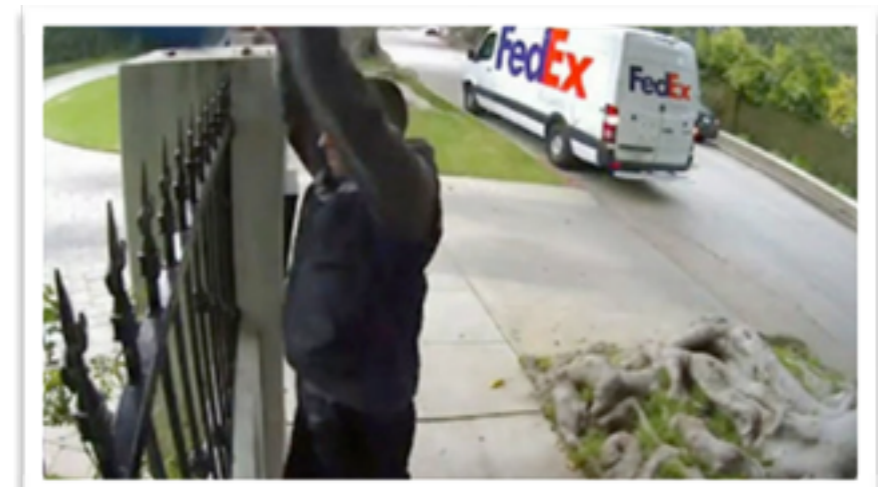
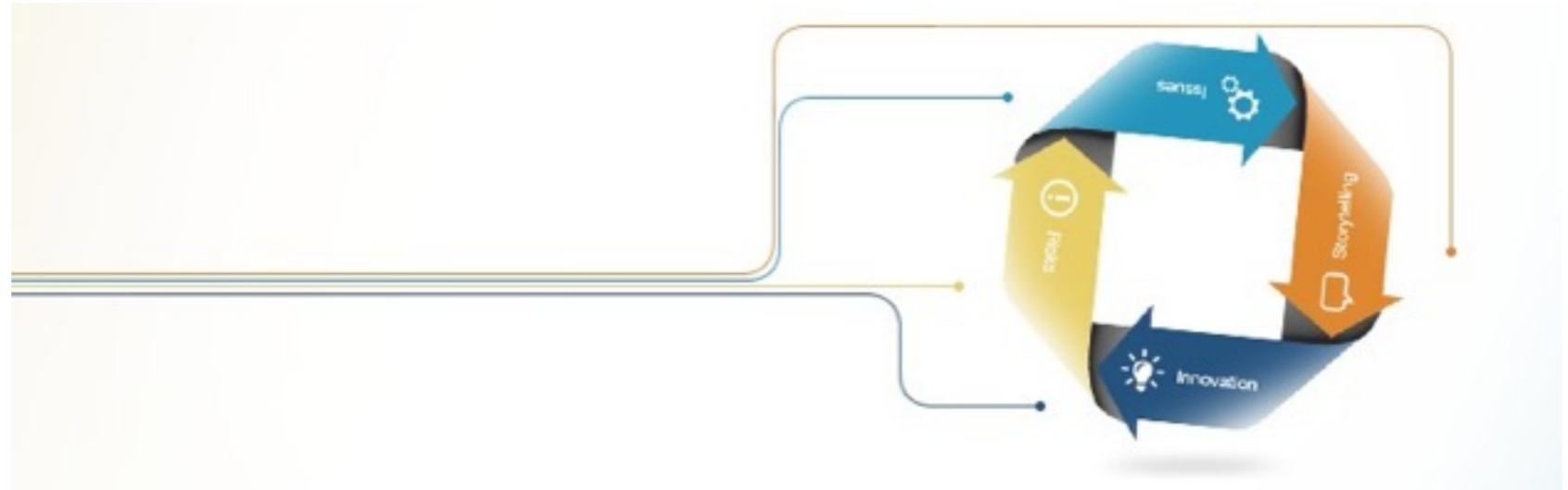


SOCIAL MEDIA MISTAKES

A SUSTAININLY TREND BRIEFING



Introduction



Reputation, in a world where social media is the mainstream, can no longer be seen as just a “hygiene” issue where corp comms and PR agencies handle a few annoying but easily identifiable stakeholders.

Instead, when the whole online world can see and comment on your dirty laundry, reputation actually becomes a fundamental part of sustainability. Not least because, all too often, the corporate transgression has a direct effect on the wellbeing of customers, greater society or the planet.

In Sustainly’s latest Trend Briefing we’ve analysed the short but volatile history of social media mistakes and identified 10 key points to help companies avoid the pitfalls of the past.

Because, when you look at the hundreds of social media failures that have taken place since the Kryptonite lock fiasco in 2005, the same faux pas keep happening over and over again.

Whether it’s Motrin underestimating the power of a new connected online movement (Moms in its case), Chevy Tahoe failing to see that crowdsourcing gives the public the power to define your brand or United Airlines being caught short by the speed of online outrage that can swell up when social and mainstream media come together, the lessons for better reputation management when things go wrong are clear and there to learn.

Of course, that won’t stop companies making a mess of things in the first place.

US Airways' Customer Diss-ervice



It's hard to spend a day online nowadays without some brand committing a social media faux pas.

That said, US Airways' "bumpy landing" Twitter #FAIL may go down as one of the most memorable social media screw ups. The explicit image that the airline posted on its Twitter feed of a naked woman making erotic use of a toy jet plane guaranteed that this particular story got worldwide publicity, offending some of US Airways' community even as it generated hilarity in other quarters.

It's yet another example of social media teams not having effective checks and balances on publishing and follows a long history of similar mistakes made by the likes of Vodafone and Chrysler.

Kryptonite's Achilles Heel



The first major social media fail. Back in 2004, a Kryptonite lock was picked apart with a Bic pen and the "how to" instructions was posted first on a bike message board, then a tech blog and finally by the *New York Times*.

The brand was slow to respond and it cost them millions in product recalls.

In theory, a social media failure of this type couldn't happen again given the extent that most brands now monitor online conversations about them and their products. That said, this failure didn't occur because Kryptonite was oblivious to the stunt. Rather it underestimated the influence of a new technology - a mistake that is bound to be repeated by another brand soon enough.

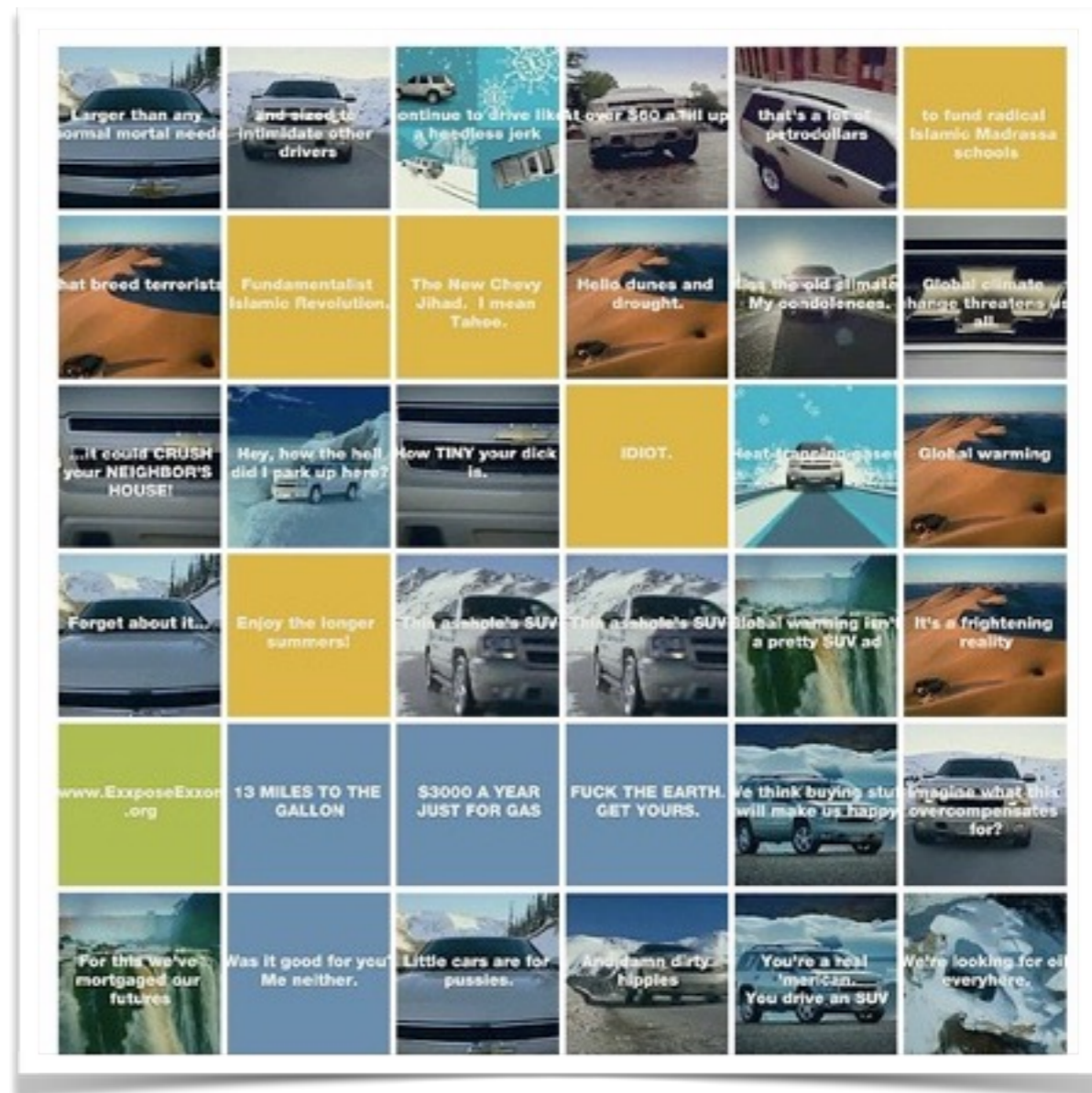
Motrin's Mommy Moment



Motrin's sassy 2008 commercial aimed at Moms backfired spectacularly after a Twitter-army of motherly discontent swarmed, claiming the brand was being patronising of motherhood. Parent company Johnson & Johnson quickly apologised and remade the commercial. It was the first time that such a niche yet vocal group of influential consumers had used the social media megaphone to such effect.

The episode demonstrated how, in a social media age, marketers need to anticipate and second guess online reaction to campaigns especially when they make fun of influential audiences.

Chevy Tahoe's Crowdsourced Headache



Chevy's 2006 Design Your Own Tahoe competition was one of the first attempts by a major brand to harness the power of crowdsourcing for a marketing campaign. It ended badly when environmental campaigners hijacked the campaign, vilifying the brand producing gas-guzzling SUVs.

This was one of the first instances of a big brand realizing it has no control over its message once it launches a campaign on social media.

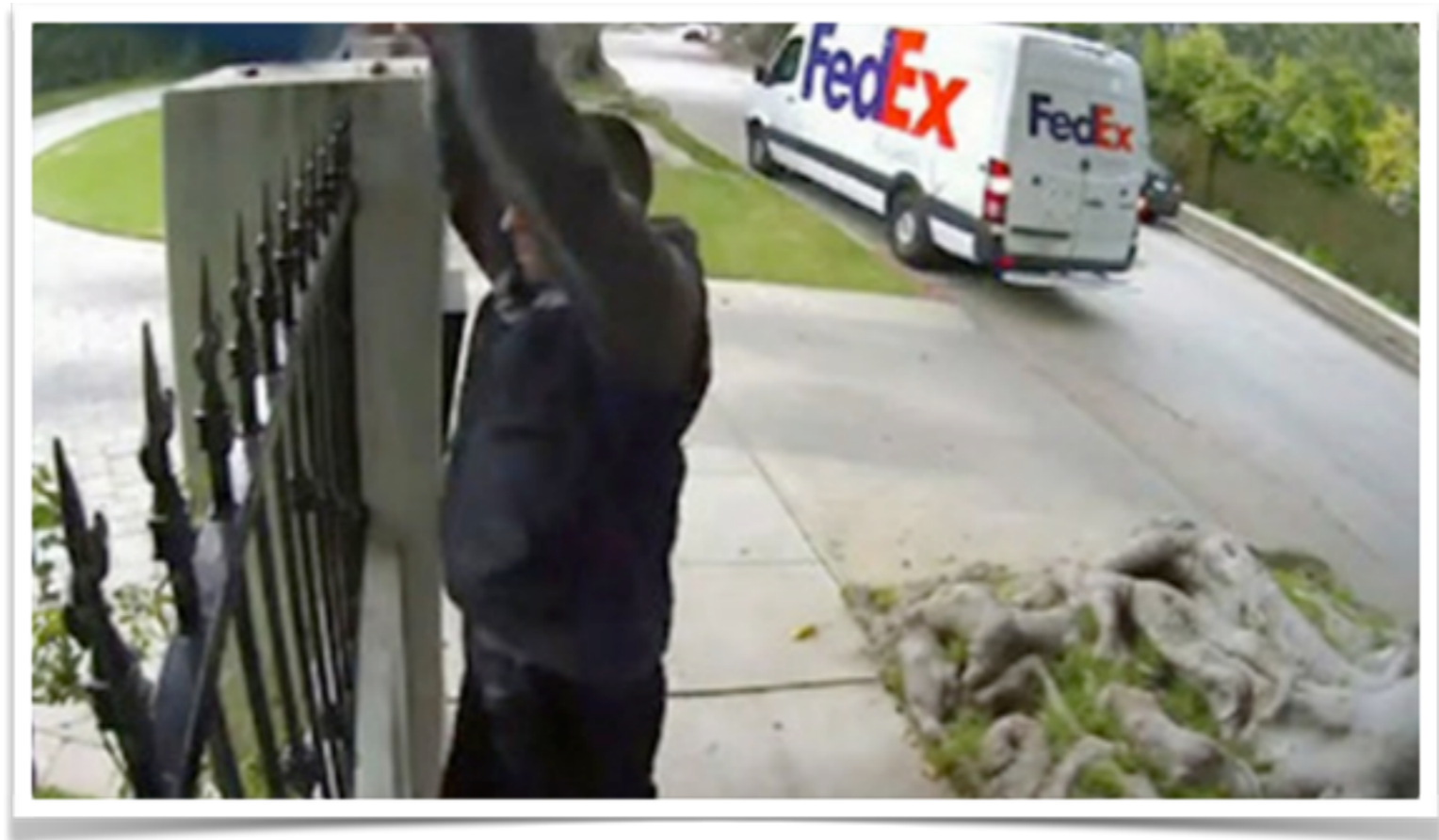
McDonald's Twitter FAIL



McDonald's launched a sponsored hashtag campaign, #McDStories, to get the public talking about the quality of a McDonald's meal. Instead, the campaign was overrun by animal rights activists who pointed to unsustainable conditions at some of McDonald's suppliers along with caustic barbs lobbed by other Mickey D haters.

Other companies like Chase and the New York Police Department have made the same mistake – forgetting that if you ask Twitter users to tell you what they think of your brand you have to be prepared for everything they are going to tell you.

FedEx Delivery Failure on Film




At some time or other we've all suspected our local delivery service is mishandling the parcels that arrive particularly worse for wear. In 2011, just before Christmas, one U.S. homeowner caught a FedEx employee doing just that thanks to footage from his home security camera. In this case the delivery item was a computer monitor that, as the surveillance video later posted to YouTube showed, had been unceremoniously thrown over a set of five-foot iron railings.

This sort of vigilante customer service was first seen back in 2006 when a New Yorker videoed a Comcast cable guy asleep on his couch. It would soon be repeated by UPS and more FedEx customers, not to mention a growing number of citizens who have recorded acts of police brutality on their mobile phones.

In our constantly connected digital world - your business will be televised!

Samsung's Bad Rap Sustainability Report



**SAMSUNG TV
TOMORROW**

TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
286,284 (2013)

The tech giant hired Korean rapper Mad Clown to do the honors

Tech giant Samsung announced its [sustainability report](#) just the way that a tech giant should: By hiring a [Korean rapper named Mad Clown](#) to rap about it.

Direct from the department of What Were They Thinking? When Samsung chose to promote its latest Sustainability Report the company asked South Korean rapper Mad Clown to put the reports' main points to rhyme.

The result was a must-watch (in a car crash kind of way) video. Unfortunately for Samsung the stunt was far more memorable than the message Mad Clown was trying to convey. Worse, the video was met with pretty much universal disbelief on the part of the world's media. Samsung definitely had second thoughts: it pulled the video from its YouTube channel after just a few hours but, as with everything in social media, nothing ever really disappears.

Samsung should be applauded for trying to create a novel and engaging way to talk sustainability. However, a rap version of a sustainability report isn't it.

United's One Child Left Behind



In 2012 United Airlines found itself in the social media crosshairs over its treatment of 10-year old Phoebe Klebahn, an unaccompanied minor who the airline lost at Chicago O'Hare airport while it was meant to be helping her reach a summer camp in Michigan. Phoebe's parents had to endure hours of uncaring, clueless outsourced customer service before finally locating their distraught daughter.

To begin with, Klebahn's parents complained in snail mail to United's CEO. But when he failed to reply the family went to a local TV reporter with the story and also handed a copy of the letter to prominent business blogger, Bob Sutton. Guess what happened next.

With social media lighting up about the episode and NBC news airing the story, United had to respond. First, an executive called the family to placate them. Then the airline posted an apology on Facebook.

Even though United had already been on the receiving end of one of social media's more memorable battering a few years with the United Breaks Guitars YouTube debacle, it appeared that the airline still hadn't realized that a single customer complaint - especially one as powerful as the Klebahn's - has the power to go viral in minutes thanks to the symbiotic relationship of social and mainstream media.

Kenneth Cole Puts its foot in it



In February, 2011, Kenneth Cole committed a classic hashtag crime: plugging its eponymous Spring collection with the #Cairo hashtag during the bloody Tahrir Square uprising.

It's hard to imagine what Kenneth Cole (it was the founder himself who took the keys to the company's Twitter feed, signing the offending Tweet with a "KC") was thinking when he Tweeted, "Millions are in uproar in #Cairo. Rumor is they heard our new spring collection is available online."

The same tactless Tweet included a link to the company's online store, revealing, yep, its latest collection of shoes, belts and handbags. No more than two hours later Cole was back with an apologetic Tweet but the damage was done. The fashion label lost loyal customers and had to contend with a fictitious @KennethColePR Twitter account that imagined similar KC sales promotions in Darfur, Nazi Germany and other regions of human suffering.

There's no excuse for exploiting Twitter conversations for crass marketing. In recent years CelebBoutique during the Aurora mass shooting tragedy, Gap during Hurricane Sandy and DiGiorno's pizza chain during the NFL Ray Rice fiance-beating furore have committed the same faux pas.

Smucker's censors anti-GM comments

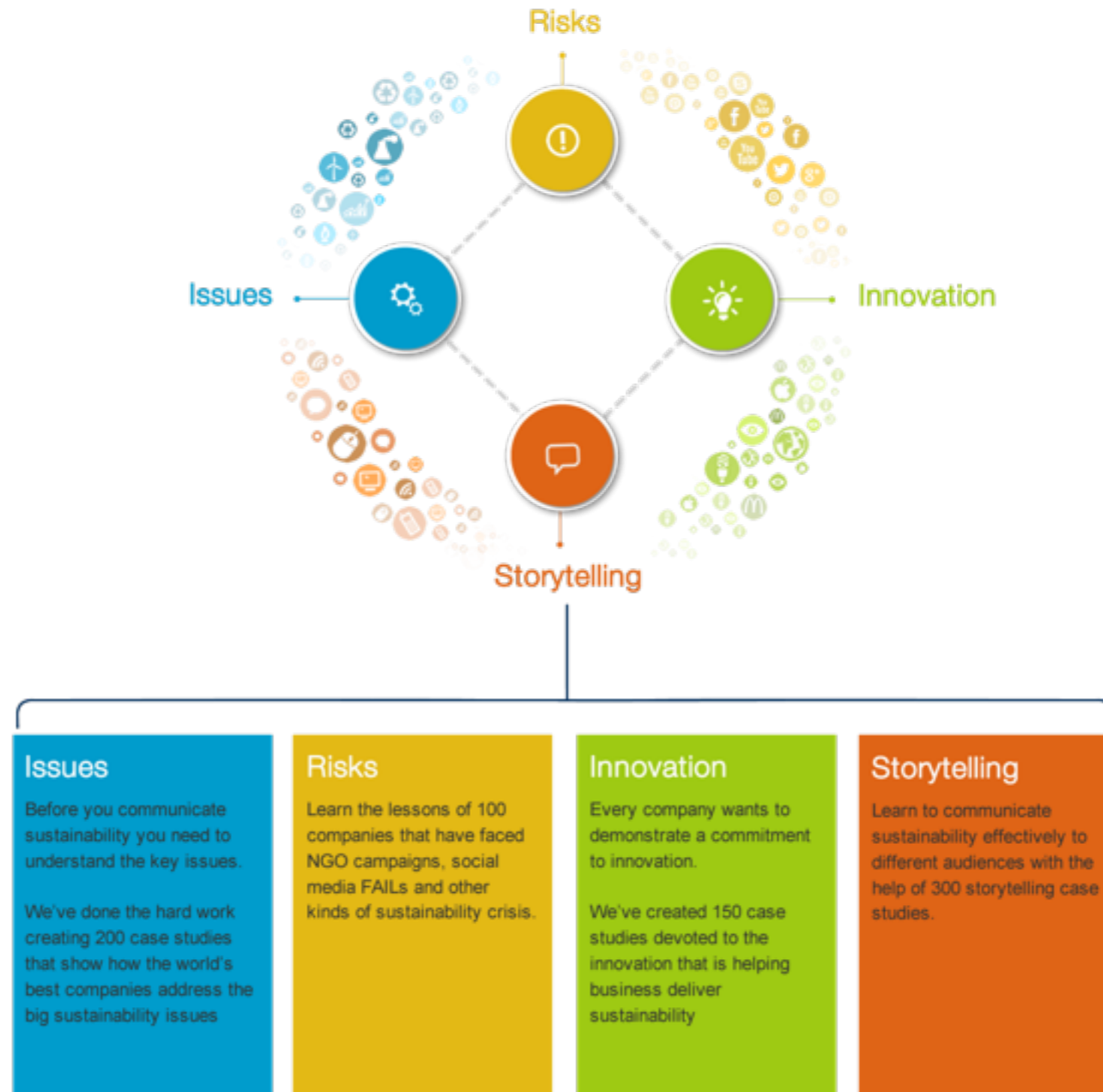


When it comes to transparent and authentic social media discourse there's one big no-no. That's deleting comments that you don't like. After all, the whole point of social media is that it offers a platform for two-way conversation and engagement. *If you don't want to hear what your customers have to say don't go on Facebook, Twitter et al.*

Apparently Smuckers didn't get this social media 101 advice. In 2014 it was accused of deleting a slew of critical comments left by anti-GMO food campaigners on its Facebook page. The campaigners countered by issuing a press release outlining Smucker's censorship that was published on Marketwatch and on food industry news sites.

Smucker's isn't the first major brand to try and silence online critics. Nestle brand, Kit Kat, famously invoked the ire of Greenpeace campaigners and its Facebook fans by doing something similar back in 2010. After a massive global backlash, Nestle learned it needed to engage, not ignore social media criticism.

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SUSTAINLY

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