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How to Build Enterprise New Media Platforms with Hundreds of Millions of Followers? Post-print

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Abstract

The establishment and development of new media are receiving increasing attention from enterprises; however, how to effectively operate corporate new media, generate interactive value with users, and create effectiveness for corporate user relationships and marketing-driven growth constitutes an area for methodological exploration in corporate content production. The path to building corporate new media with hundreds of millions of users may offer insights and references for traditional media.

Full Text

Preamble

How Are Corporate New Media Platforms with Hundreds of Millions of Followers Built?

Abstract: As new media platforms gain increasing importance in corporate strategy, organizations face the critical challenge of not only establishing their presence but also cultivating interactive value with users that enhances customer relationships and drives marketing effectiveness. This paper explores methodological approaches to corporate content production, offering insights and lessons that traditional media may find valuable through examining the development path of enterprise new media platforms with hundred-million-user scales.

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1. Interaction Creates Value

New media platforms have opened new avenues for corporate marketing and public relations, with enterprises demonstrating remarkable sensitivity to these channels—often surpassing that of traditional media organizations. Our comparative analysis reveals a striking disparity: numerous corporate new media accounts have amassed hundred-million or ten-million-level followings, while traditional media outlets (newspapers, television, radio) struggle to achieve similar scale on platforms like WeChat and Weibo.

This sensitivity stems from new media’s transformative impact on corporate-user relationships. The previously distant connection, where the public could only access corporate information through intermediaries, has been replaced by direct, near-instantaneous communication. Companies now disseminate updates and marketing activities in real-time, while users provide feedback, lodge complaints, and participate in initiatives directly through these channels. This “zero-distance” communication humanizes corporations, making them appear more approachable and trustworthy.

Consequently, content marketing has emerged as a powerful tool. People naturally gravitate toward companies with compelling, “warm” stories—organizations that improve their daily lives and feel personally relevant. Over the past two years, an increasing number of traditional media professionals have transitioned to corporate new media roles. While their core content production skills remain largely unchanged, their audience, production methods, and value creation mechanisms have evolved significantly. The value generated through user interactions proves more authentic and effective than traditional approaches.

2. Classification of Corporate New Media

Corporate new media operations typically fall into three categories based on departmental placement and strategic objectives:

Marketing Department Model (Exemplified by Xiaomi): Most companies position new media within their marketing departments, charging it with user acquisition, market promotion, and even sales KPIs. In this model, new media primarily drives order volume and revenue through marketing campaigns. Xiaomi’s WeChat account regularly features product introductions and promotional activities, while Meituan and JD.com’s service accounts often bypass text posts entirely, redirecting users directly to H5 pages featuring various discount offers. For this model, the optimal platform combination includes WeChat

Service Accounts, Weibo, Toutiao, and Alipay Service Windows, with supplementary channels like UC Toutiao, QQ Service Accounts, and QQ Space when resources permit.

Brand PR Department Model (Exemplified by Didi): Companies prioritizing message accuracy and brand image, such as Didi, place new media under brand public relations. During its early stages navigating policy uncertainties, Didi required extremely cautious official communication to balance relationships with regulators, taxi companies, and ride-sharing drivers. Even after Didi-Kuaidi's merger and subsequent departmental restructuring, new media remained in the PR division. For this approach, the core platforms include WeChat, Weibo, Toutiao, and Zhihu, supplemented by Yidian Zixun, Phoenix Account, Tiantian Kuaibao, Sohu News, and Baijiahao.

Customer Service Department Model (Exemplified by China Mobile): New media has become a crucial customer service channel, with large-scale enterprises increasingly replacing human agents with platform-based support. China Mobile's "10086" account and China Merchants Bank Credit Card's service account exemplify this trend. The latter enables online card applications, progress tracking, information modification, credit limit and points inquiries, detailed billing, prize draws, and points redemption—all through automated responses that effectively resolve user issues. In 2016 alone, China Mobile's WeChat service added over 50 million users, ranking among the top five corporate WeChat accounts. For this model, WeChat and Weibo are the primary platforms.

Special Cases: Some companies adopt unique structures. Wanda's new media operates under corporate culture department, while Haier's has evolved into an independent subsidiary company.

3. Building Hundred-Million-User New Media Platforms

How can enterprises develop vibrant new media platforms that serve both corporate interests and function as effective user communication bridges? Analysis of Didi Chuxing's two hundred-million-user platforms offers valuable insights.

The foundation lies in strategic platform selection—prioritizing precision over scale. Didi maintains over ten new media platforms, each with distinct positioning and functions that collectively support corporate communications, marketing, crisis PR, user operations, and customer service.

3.1 Didi's WeChat Service Account: User Service (90 Million Users)

WeChat Service Accounts enable personalized operations based on user profiles but are limited to four monthly pushes, restricting timeliness. Dido's service account has yet to implement segmented 推送, as such messages don't appear in historical feeds—problematic given nearly 100,000 daily new users who expect to see active content upon following.

The Didi service account integrates ride-hailing functionality, online customer support, template message notifications for points updates, driver recruitment channels, and passenger discount coupons—addressing diverse user needs through a single interface.

3.2 Subscription Accounts: Information Dissemination (5 Million Users)

Subscription accounts, allowing daily pushes, serve as effective supplements for routine PR and marketing. Didi’s subscription account focuses on new business announcements, product features, PR communications, and supporting various business line marketing activities.

Didi has also built an independent WeChat matrix. The first tier comprises corporate service and subscription accounts managed by group new media. The second tier includes three segments: business accounts (Express, Premier, Taxi, Hitch, Driver Services, Bus, Enterprise) operated independently by each business line for refined user management; regional accounts (provincial and city-level) that understand local culture and hot topics; and departmental accounts (corporate culture, marketing, HR recruitment).

3.3 Zhihu Account: Connecting “High-Profile” Users

With 65 million registered users and 18.5 million daily active users, Zhihu aggregates China’s high-quality internet demographic—over 87% hold bachelor’s degrees or higher. The platform’s users are rational, analytical, and evidence-driven.

When Didi faced allegations of a driver using incapacitating drugs, Weibo users harshly criticized both the driver and company, despite official police debunking the claims. On Zhihu, however, users rationally attributed the incident to passenger car sickness or anxiety, exonerating Didi. This demonstrates Zhihu’s value for building tech brands: if a company’s capabilities withstand scrutiny from industry experts and scholars, it can earn high-profile user endorsements and enhance influence. Success on Zhihu demands genuine, substantive engagement.

3.4 Mobile QQ Service Account: Future-Oriented Layout

Mobile QQ’s user base skews younger, primarily comprising post-2000s generation users who haven’t yet established extensive social networks on WeChat. They prefer QQ Space for personal expression and gaming interactions. Didi targets these users with tailored coupons for Express and Hitch services, cultivating habits that may convert them into loyal customers upon entering the workforce. QQ and QQ Space thus suit companies targeting under-20 demographics or seeking to capture future users early.

3.5 Retaining Users with Quality Content

While platforms and channels determine user acquisition, content quality drives retention. Didi's two near-hundred-million-user platforms have elevated its new media operations, prompting greater emphasis on content production to maximize user value.

Effective corporate new media content typically falls into four categories: entertaining, useful, rewarding, and resonant. Successful accounts embody at least one characteristic. Didi's September 9, 2016 fourth-anniversary campaign, "Your Didi Four-Year Travel Bill," exemplifies this approach. The WeChat article garnered over 10 million reads, its embedded H5 page exceeded 10 million PVs, and the video surpassed 45 million views—setting Didi's historical records.

The H5 featured playful, cartoonish visuals using big data to generate personalized tags ("Travel Rookie," "Ride-Hailing Expert," "Laziness Syndrome Patient") and avatars. It helped users review their four-year ride history—total trips, kilometers spent, expenses, and longest journey—creating nostalgic, valuable insights. Each user received exclusive ride coupons as rewards, while the video told a relatable story of a Hong Kong woman receiving caring support from a "boyfriend" (personifying Didi) during her first mainland visit, eliminating her fear of unknown journeys and evoking emotional resonance.

3.6 Headlines Are Half the Battle

For new media operations, headlines are as crucial as content itself—like a restaurant requiring customers to taste its cuisine. Overly bland titles attract no readers, while sensationalist "clickbait" erodes trust and drives user attrition. Striking the right balance demands meticulous crafting. Professional teams like Mimeng's spend 15-20 minutes generating at least five headlines per article, sometimes up to twenty, totaling nearly 100 options per piece. Many companies unreasonably allocate days to content preparation but only 2-3 minutes to headline creation.

As corporate WeChat accounts grow to million and ten-million-user scales, new challenges emerge. Larger user bases mean longer 推送 times—Ten O'Clock Reading reportedly requires over an hour for full distribution, disrupting optimal timing strategies. This necessitates even more sophisticated operational approaches to maintain engagement at scale.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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