

MAPPING THE STORM: IDENTIFYING KEY VOICES AND ACTIONS IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION

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Overview: When PR practitioners face a crisis, it is important that the response is delivered as accurately as possible and in a timely manner. To do this best, key stakeholders and voices as well as their most relevant characteristics should be identified. For this purpose, a visual mapping tool was developed and tested. Based on Facebook data, it identifies the key social media players in a crisis, and maps these together with the most relevant demographic information from all involved critics. The tool is tested on a crisis from 2016 involving a Danish bank.

The Case

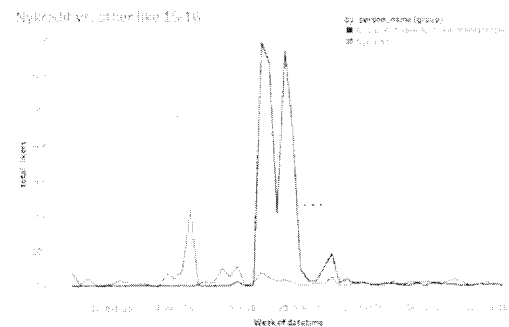
In February 2016, Nykredit, a customer-owned mortgage bank, announced that they would raise their rates on mortgage bonds with very short notice. The monthly payments increased significantly for the customers, but most were unable to switch to a competitor because they would have to pay large fees to do this.

Public reaction

Strong criticism followed immediately. Especially on social media, where the bank faced a firestorm of unhappy customers.

Soon after the case reached the traditional the media, and a group of customers - later calling themselves Critical Stakeholders in Nykredit and Totalkredit - created a Facebook page that quickly reached around 40,000 likes. That is three times more than Nykredit itself had on Facebook.

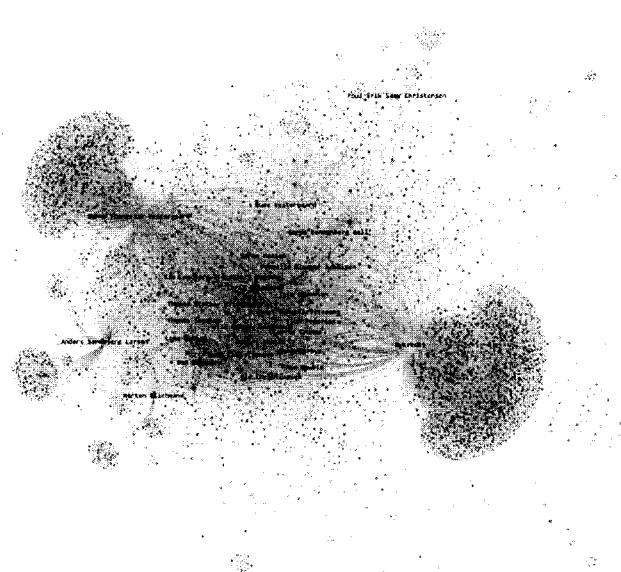
The activity on Nykredit's Facebook page increased exponentially, but most the likes came from critics' activity and not from Nykredit. The prolonged criticism also caused a broad selection of politicians to get involved and heavily criticize the banks. No attempt at accommodation was made from Nykredit. Some explanations were given, but they were not well received by their customers.



What the data reveals

Despite lacking formal leadership, the members of the Critical Stakeholders group quickly organically organize into hierarchies, which so key persons' suggestions and input are followed. After the first week, 21 key stakeholders drive most criticism and they manage the dialogue with 60% of the 45,000 people who like posts on the Nykredit page in the weeks following the crisis outbreak. At the second crisis spike, they drive 80% of the dialogue.

The key stakeholders help unite a broad political criticism of the banks that became more than just a classical leftist critique of capitalism. In Figure 2, we have mapped the entire conflict to identify the key players and to look at what political segments were engaged in the criticism. In the map, all the little colored bubbles represent a citizen who has interacted with Nykredit. The colors show the Facebook users' party affiliation with which they have 60% or more links. The more leftist the citizen is, the redder the bubble is. And the more right-leaning a citizen is, the bluer the bubble is. Somewhat surprisingly, the activity is not primarily driven by the leftist anti capitalists, but represent a wide range of political stances.



What's next?

In this case study, the visual mapping tool was used to analyze what happened after the main part of the crisis was over. However, we believe it can be very useful for future crisis situations. It allows crisis managers to quickly identify which stakeholders drive the criticism, and thus are most important, but also what characteristics the more passive critics have. In the given example, political stances were used, but in theory any characteristic that is available from Facebook's data can be included in the map. Getting this vital knowledge, would for example, make it easier for crisis managers to identify the factors in a crisis that determines what stance on Cancel et al's (1997) accommodation-advocacy continuum is best for limiting reputational damage.

Network Visualizations

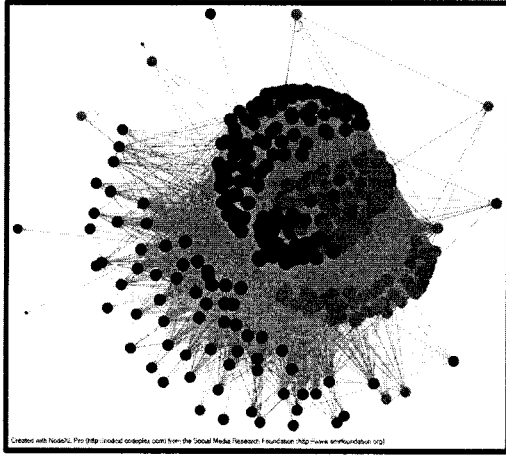


Figure 1: Clustering of the Alumni Network

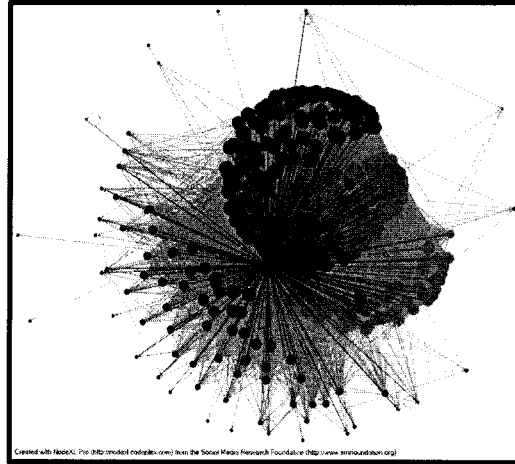


Figure 3: The Professor's influence in the network

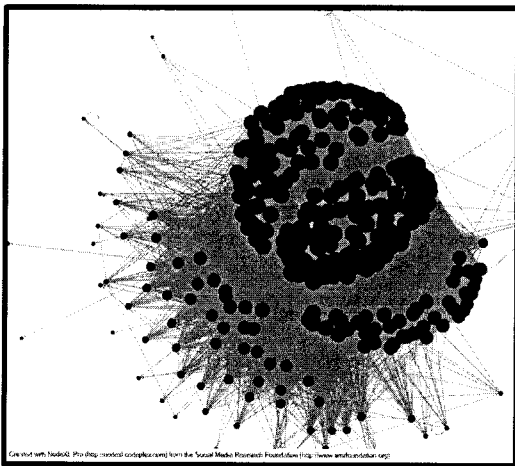


Figure 3: The network with the professor removed from the network

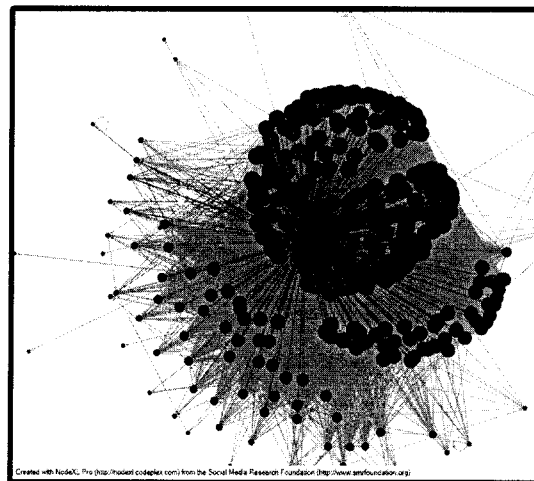


Figure 4: One member's influence with the professor

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