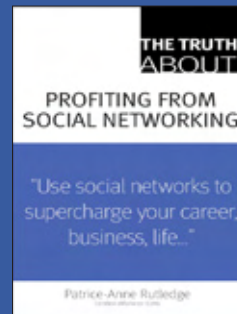
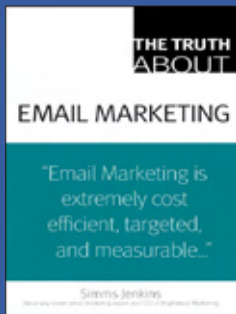
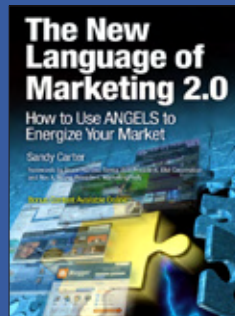
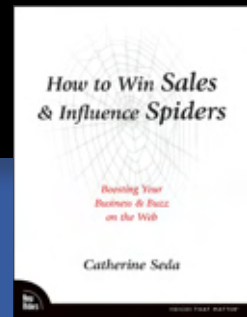


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Measure Your Search Marketing Success

It might seem backward to talk about how to measure the impact of your search marketing at this point. After all, don't you do that after the campaign? Well, yes and no. Certainly, you cannot measure what happened until after it has happened, but you must focus on measurements up front to justify the initial investment in search marketing. Unless you can project the value, you will never get that investment funded in the first place.

Defining your search metrics from the beginning helps you justify the investment, and it also focuses your activities. Too often, search marketing is treated as an art rather than a science—a set of arcane incantations that when repeated with fervor (and mixed with eye of newt and toe of frog) will somehow magically lead to success. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Although intuition is a normal part of anything you do, it should be the exception rather than the rule. Without measurable results, you cannot tell a skilled practitioner from a quack, or a successful campaign from a flop. When you painstakingly measure everything you do, you can do more of what works and less of what does not. You make these adjustments every day and gradually improve your results. Intuition can still be important, but even then, informed intuition is the best kind.

Enough philosophy! It's time to roll up your sleeves and get to work. Instead of just listing the search metrics and explaining them to you, we walk you through an example. At the same time, we encourage you to choose your own example—your first search marketing campaign—and work through the measurements in your own business.

In this chapter, we take several steps to understand search metrics:

- *Target your first campaign.* You can always change your mind later, but you will find that choosing the first target for search marketing now will make it easier to study search metrics. Most people find that learning with their first campaign in mind is highly motivating.

- *Assess your current situation.* The first use for search metrics is figuring out what shape you are in right now. Your assessment provides objective evidence of the importance of your search marketing plan—both the overall plan and each piece of the plan. Every task in your plan will be driven by what you find in your assessment. You will finalize your choice for your first search marketing campaign, and you will take action based on your own situation.
- *Calculate your opportunity.* Another use for search metrics is “what if” analysis that shows you how well you will be doing after you execute your plan. Although no one can promise exactly what your results will be, you can estimate your outcome to show the potential impact on your organization.

There are many more search metrics than we cover in this chapter, so we return to the subject of metrics in Chapter 15, “Make Search Marketing Operational.” In this chapter, however, we focus on the basic metrics required for you to show the business case for search marketing. Your first search marketing campaign is the place to start.

Target Your First Search Marketing Campaign

Before you dive into search metrics, you need to first choose a project to measure. To do so, you must decide the area of your site that you want to drive search traffic to. Which product sale? Which marketing program? A sign-up form? You have to pick something.

You might be saying to yourself, “How should I know where to start search marketing in my business?” Don’t worry. It’s not as hard as it sounds. And, you can always change your mind. As you read through this chapter, you might realize that you should have started search marketing somewhere else in your organization. If so, just retrace your steps and figure out the new campaign.

To choose your first campaign, go back to the goals of your Web site from Chapter 5, “Identify Your Web Site’s Goals.” If your site sells online, pick a top-selling product and try to raise sales. If you generate leads for offline sales, choose a hot new product and work on increasing leads. No matter what your site’s goals are, you can choose some area of your Web site and declare, “This is the best place to start.” After you choose the target area, you will then discover what search queries to target in your campaign.

Choose the Target Area of Your Site

What makes a particular area of your Web site the best place? After all, your first campaign is important. You want it to succeed and to persuade others that it succeeded. To choose your “best place,” follow these rules when you make your selection:

- *Pick something high profile.* If you want to get attention with your first campaign, don’t pick some sleepy product that no one cares about. If you do, you might execute a great search marketing campaign and still ring up few sales.
- *Make sure the business impact can be measured.* Using the methods outlined in previous chapters, you can measure almost any outcome and place a value on it. But make sure

that your organization already has those measurements in place, or that you can put them in place. If your first campaign delivers 50 percent more leads to the sales force, that is great; but it is not so great if no one knows how much a lead is worth. You have obviously succeeded, but it is hard to decide how much to continue to invest. That is a bad thing.

- *Keep it simple.* Your first campaign should not tackle difficult problems that we cover in this book. It is also easier if you avoid areas of your site that already have some paid search activity, because it makes your impact harder to measure. Leave the advanced topics for later and take on something manageable now. When you conduct your assessment, you will get a clue as to how hard your problem might be.
- *Make it practical.* If your top-selling product has a team that is always hopelessly busy with their own plans, maybe you should choose your #2 seller. If your #2 product team is located two time zones away, maybe the #3 team that sits in your building would be your best choice. Think about who maintains the content for your targeted area and pick a group that you can work with easily.

So take some time and think it over. Which part of your Web site offers the best tradeoff between business impact and degree of difficulty? Answer that question and keep that answer in mind as we explore search metrics. As you look deeper into your current situation, you might find that you have chosen a project too difficult for your first one. If so, you will realize it while you read this chapter, and you can always change your mind and circle back.

While you are thinking through your target project, we walk you through a fictional case study of our own. Imagine what you would do for Snap Electronics, a large consumer electronics manufacturer with a well-known brand name and an equally large Web site (www.snapelectronics.com) that does brisk online sales. (Snap is a completely imaginary company not patterned after any existing corporation.)

Snap Electronics has a long history of innovative consumer electronics designs ranging from TVs to DVD players to home theater systems. Snap is well known for its breakthroughs in ease of use—its tag line is, “Our products are a snap.” As you look at our rules for choosing the right product area to target, Snap’s evaluation is shown in Table 7-1.

Table 7-1 Snap Electronics product suitability. You assess the suitability of a product area for your first search marketing campaign according to a few simple rules.

Product Area	High Profile?	Measurable?	Simple?	Practical?
Televisions	Yes	No	Unknown	Yes
DVD players	Yes	Yes	Unknown	No
Home theater	Yes	No	Unknown	No
VCRs	No	Yes	Unknown	Yes
Digital cameras	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Yes

As we consider the contenders, we realize that most of Snap's TVs and home theater systems are sold offline, so it is harder to measure the impact of your search marketing campaign for those products. We also remember that the group that handles DVD players is redesigning its entire site for a launch in two months, so they are probably not in the mood to hear from us now. We dismiss VCRs because the technology is fading, so it is not as high profile as the others. But digital cameras might be promising.

Snap was late to the digital camera party, but introduced several innovative models under a new SnapShot brand that (as usual) were markedly easier to use than competing models. Snap blanketed TV and magazines with advertising touting SnapShot's easy design, raising brand awareness. But after the successful launch, marketing costs need to come down this year. Snap cannot continue to spend so much on advertising year after year. Each of these factors make SnapShot digital cameras a strong candidate for Snap's first search marketing campaign.

As we sum up the factors we considered in Table 7-1, we see that the digital camera product area is high profile, we can measure its online sales, and the product team seems practical to work with, but Snap's one concern is simplicity. No complicating paid search campaigns are underway for digital cameras, which is good. But it is still hard to judge the difficulty of changing the digital camera content to rank well in search, because we have not yet investigated the site deeply enough. We will have to wait for the assessment to find out how simple this campaign might be.

Focus on the Keywords Searchers Use

Perhaps you are not sure what searchers might enter into search engines when they want to buy a digital camera. Fortunately, there are lots of ways to find out, which we cover in Chapter 11, "Choose Your Target Keywords." But you do not need that much sophistication yet.

Which keywords do you think are the most popular for finding a digital camera? Kind of obvious that "digital camera" might be one of them, huh? After you have settled on one or more phrases, it's time to find variations. Again, you will learn much more about this process in Chapter 11, but for now, let's just find some keywords to target.

Start by pointing your browser to Google's keyword tool (<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>), and choose the country and language of your campaign. Make sure that "Descriptive words or phrases" is selected, while entering the phrase "digital camera" as shown in Figure 7-1. Then click the "Get keyword ideas" button to be shown a list of keywords that contain the phrase "digital camera" (or contain synonyms for that phrase).

You'll notice that in addition to the keyword variations themselves, Google shows bar graphs indicating the competition for each keyword, the average number of monthly searches, and other information. Later in this chapter, we show you how to use some of those numbers.

Most people search for “digital camera” by itself, but Google reveals that there are other variations on the phrase that get a lot of searches.

- digital camera
 - cheap digital camera
 - digital camera reviews
 - canon digital camera
 - digital camera review
 - nikon digital camera
 - digital camera sale
 - olympus digital camera
 - digital video camera
- Many of the queries are for rival brands...
- ...or for the wrong product...

...but the circled ones might be just what Snap is looking for.

Figure 7-1 Choosing your keywords. See the variants searchers use with a keyword such as “digital camera” to decide which ones are worth targeting.

It was easy for Snap to think of “digital camera” as the phrase searchers are likely to enter, but your site might be a bit harder than that. You might need to do some brainstorming. Ask other people, look at your Web pages, and check out your competitors’ pages. Think about what

words you use to describe your products to your family. What do industry pundits call this kind of product?

It is tempting to settle for the names your company uses for its products—sometimes those *are* the most popular names. (Searchers do use some brand names a lot, such as iPod or Windows.) But most companies are not blessed with a product whose brand name overshadows its generic name. Try to think of the generic (not proper name) phrases people use to find you—do not use the name of your company or your product. Brand names are also good keywords to target, but your goal with this tool is to identify variations on the most common search query, so try to think of the most popular way to refer to your product. In Snap’s case, the most popular query is “digital camera” rather than its brand name, “SnapShot.”

So, after you have amassed your generic keywords and variations, what do you do with this list? Well, it’s clear from Google’s Keyword Tool that many folks are searching for “digital camera” all by itself. All of Snap’s competitors are trying to rank #1 for the query “digital camera”—anyone in their business would want that—but maybe they are overlooking these other keyword combinations.

You might be dreaming about ranking #1 for “digital camera” (and someone does rank #1, so it *is* possible). But it takes quite a bit of work to get that top ranking because so many others want that ranking, too. Although we will not drop the idea of getting a high ranking for an extremely popular keyword such as “digital camera,” we need to look at less-popular queries, too. These less-popular queries generate plenty of traffic, but fewer companies target them, making it easier to get a high ranking for them. You will see that these medium-popularity keywords are often the perfect targets, generating just enough traffic to be noticeable but without the intense competition for high rankings that comes with the top keywords. Some of the queries on this list might be perfect for Snap, whereas others might not, which we will determine by analyzing each one.

So, let’s look at the list of Google suggestions shown in Figure 7-1. It’s disappointing that Snap’s competitors are being searched for by name—Canon, Nikon, and Olympus—but Snap is not. Searches for Snap’s brand names (such as “*snap* digital camera” and “*snapshot* digital camera”) are apparently lower on the list. Regardless, brand name phrases are important for Snap, both because Snap should easily rank well for them and because competitors *cannot*. What’s more, Snap will likely close sales with a far higher percentage of customers who are searching for their very own brand.

Next, we see that one of these queries, for “digital video camera” is not for the right kind of product. When you make your list of target keywords, you must be ruthless about eliminating keywords that, while valuable in and of themselves, are not part of this particular campaign. Video cameras can have their own campaign.

Snap didn’t stop at the most popular Google suggestions. They looked deeper into the list, finding some exciting possibilities, such as “compare digital cameras” and “digital camera comparisons” that might be perfect for their products.

What’s left? After wiping out the competing brands, accessories, and incorrect products, there are only a few left, but these are the most important keywords to look at:

- Digital camera reviews
- Best digital camera
- Digital camera comparison
- Compare digital camera
- Cheap digital camera
- Digital camera sale

For some companies, all of these might be good targets for search marketing. They all bring heavy traffic, and they all seem like queries that informational and transactional searchers use—those are the ones most qualified to sell to.

But for Snap, two of them do not belong—“digital camera sale” and “cheap digital camera”—because Snap is a premium brand with innovative but pricey designs that they never discount. To keep things simple, we’ll also combine the singular and plural forms of “digital camera review,” leaving us the list shown in Table 7-2.

Table 7-2 Snap Electronics keyword targets. You create your short list of keywords to target—these are the initial keywords for Snap’s first campaign.

Keyword Phrase	Search Volume	Query Type
digital camera	High	product category
snapshot digital camera	Medium	brand + product category
snap digital camera	Medium	company + product category
digital camera review	Medium	product category variation
compare digital camera	Medium	product category variation
best digital camera	Medium	product category variation
digital camera comparison	Medium	product category variation

Although the query for “digital camera” receives more traffic than the others, we’re fooling ourselves if we think Snap can swoop right in and get the top ranking for that keyword. Remember that the competition for these “mega-keywords” is fierce, so a top ten ranking is hard to achieve without a lot of work. Moreover, you recall that many of those searchers are seeking information about how to *use* digital cameras, rather than buy them, so those searchers are not as highly qualified as someone searching for “digital camera review,” for example. Each of these keywords gets enough traffic for Snap to target, and it is easier to get good rankings for less-popular keywords that have fewer other companies targeting them.

Take a deep breath. That wasn't too hard, was it? You can do the same thing with the area of your own site that you picked. Brainstorm the right words and come up with seven to ten phrases that will generate more traffic to your site. You will likely find that your top keywords fall into the same types: your brand name and a generic category name, along with a few variations. This is true regardless of whether you are driving traffic to a site for a product or not. The Police Athletic League will want to capture queries for "police athletic league," of course, but also wants to generate traffic for "boys' clubs" and "children's sports," too. Most of the time, your organization has a "brand" name (what you call it) and a generic name (what most people call it). You will rank higher for your brand name, but fewer people will search for it, so you need to target both brand names and generic names to maximize your success. Remember, prospective customers who are not searching for your brand name can find your site *only* if you target the generic name. Otherwise they will find your competitors.

Perhaps you are already so familiar with your Web site that you know your first campaign is simple to conduct, but many people cannot tell. They need to assess the simplicity of the campaign to be sure. Armed with our target keywords, now we're ready to assess our site on how well it draws search traffic for each of those queries.

Assess Your Current Situation

No two search marketing situations are the same, which is why you need to assess your situation on its own merits. No matter how little search marketing you have done up to this point, you are probably drawing some amount of organic search traffic. But regardless of how much or how little traffic you are drawing, you cannot tell how well you are doing unless you take a more systematic approach. The first step in your new system is to decide exactly which pages on your site you want the search engines to show when searchers enter a query.

Identify Your Search Landing Pages

It's not enough to choose the keywords that relate to your campaign. You need to identify pages on your site that you want those queries to lead to. When a searcher enters one of those keywords, which page from your site do you want shown in the search results?

COMING IN FOR A LANDING

At first, banner advertisers did not understand the importance of landing pages, but they do now. Let's look at an example to illustrate why.

If a digital photography site's banner ad offers "30% Off a SnapShot X5," that ad could simply be linked to the existing page on Snap's site for that model. When the ad is clicked, visitors would go to the regular SnapShot X5 product details page with "SnapShot X5" at the top of the page. They would see the detailed list of features and a picture of the X5. At the bottom of the page, they would see a small notice that says "Now 30% Off" next to the Add to Cart button. As we said, Snap *could* link its banner ad to this page, but if it does, that will not maximize sales.

Why? Because the product details page does not reinforce the offer in the banner ad. A better approach is to use a landing page that repeats the offer for this specific

To answer that question, it is useful to understand the concept of a **landing page**. Originating in banner advertising, the landing page is the place on your Web site visitors will go when they click a particular banner ad. **Search landing pages** are similar to banner landing pages—they are designed to reinforce the searcher’s intent. Search landing pages emphasize the keywords the searchers entered to get there, so that visitors to your site from search engines will know they are in the right place and begin to make their way through your site. One difference between search landing pages and banner landing pages is their longevity. Because banner ads are often tied to time-sensitive promotions and discounts, marketers frequently design a new landing page for each banner ad, because no appropriate page already exists. Marketers throw away these special landing pages at the end of the campaign. Searchers, on the other hand, use much the same queries month after month, so it is less important to design new search landing pages—many sites have perfectly appropriate existing pages that reinforce the searcher’s intent.

You must identify good search landing pages for each keyword that you picked—pages that reinforce the keywords they are searching for. Let’s go back to our example and see how to identify search landing pages for Snap Electronics.

As we look over our list of keywords, we see that several of them might share the same search landing pages. The queries “digital camera,” “snap digital camera,” and “snapshot digital camera” might all lead to the same place, perhaps the product category page that lists every model of digital camera that Snap sells. You can see this product category page in Figure 7-2.

Just as we saw that several queries above can share the same product category page as their search landing page, the keywords “digital camera comparison” and “compare digital camera” should also share a common landing page (because both are seeking the same information). But Snap’s site does not have any page that compares cameras against each other. We could try to use the same product category page used above, but that seems unwise because it contains mostly fuzzy marketing speak—these information seekers want detailed specifications and features. Snap must create a new search landing page to handle these comparison searches.

Our attention turns to “digital camera review.” Snap has a page titled “News and Awards” that lists several links to digital photography sites with positive reviews and awards for SnapShot cameras. That looks like a good choice for that keyword.

banner ad. When visitors click through from the ad, the banner landing page amplifies the offer—it says “30% Off SnapShot X5” in big letters at the top of the page, and it shows a picture of the X5 with its key features. At the bottom of the landing page, it provides buttons that let visitors go to the existing X5 product details page for more information or to add the X5 to their carts.

You will sell more when you employ landing pages, because you have reinforced what the visitors are trying to do. They clicked the ad because it said “30% Off SnapShot X5,” so when the landing page emphasizes that they are “in the right place” after they click, they are much more likely to continue reading about the offer. If the ad sends them to the product details page instead, they might be disconcerted as to whether they are in the right place and might not be sure they are getting the discount. If it takes time to figure out they are in the right place, many visitors will not take that time and will not take that offer.

Snap
Electronics
“Our products are a snap!”

TELEVISION
AUDIO/VIDEO
HOME THEATRE
CAMERAS

SnapShot Digital Cameras

SnapShot sets the standard in ease-of-use. Get one before they are gone!

- *clickpick.com* review (February 9, 2008)

SnapShot Point and Shoot

You'll point, you'll shoot, and you'll fall in love with our affordable introductory model.





SnapShot Pro

You can depend on this all-weather workhorse for outstanding image quality and reliability.

SnapShot SLR

Redesigned from the ground up, our most powerful model uses interchangeable SLR lenses.



Figure 7-2 SnapShot product category page. Informational searchers looking for “digital camera” want to land on an overview page.

That leaves the query for “best digital camera.” It is hard to know exactly what these searchers are looking for, because what makes something the “best” is subjective. After a little thinking, we decide to target the most expensive SnapShot model in the product line, the SnapShot SLR X900.

Summing up our analysis, we chose existing pages to serve as our search landing pages for most of the queries, but the two “comparison” keywords require a single new landing page to be created for them. Table 7-3 shows the complete list.

Table 7-3 Snap Electronics landing pages. You must choose an appropriate search landing page for each targeted keyword in your list—Snap’s are shown here.

Keyword Phrase	Landing Page URL
digital camera	www.snapelectronics.com/stores/Cat?cat=6&lang=1&cntry=840
snap digital camera	www.snapelectronics.com/stores/Cat?cat=6&lang=1&cntry=840
snapshot digital camera	www.snapelectronics.com/stores/Cat?cat=6&lang=1&cntry=840
digital camera review	www.snapelectronics.com/cameras/news
best digital camera	www.snapelectronics.com/stores/Prd?prd=9&lang=1&cntry=840
digital camera comparison	New search landing page needed
compare digital camera	New search landing page needed

See If Your Existing Landing Pages Are Indexed

Now that you have identified the best pages on your site for searchers to find for each of your targeted keywords, it is time to check whether those pages are indexed by the search engines. Certainly, if they are not indexed, they cannot be returned by the search engines for those or any other queries.

We decided earlier that the “comparison” keywords required that Snap create a new search landing page for them, so inevitably that page is not already indexed. Snap will have to ensure this page gets indexed when it is created. But let’s check out Snap’s existing pages to see where they stand.

Every search engine has a special inclusion operator you can use to see whether a URL is included in its index. For Google, you search for “allinurl:” in front of the URL (such as “allinurl:www.snapelectronics.com/cameras/news”) and Google will return the page in its result list if it is indexed, or no results if it is not. Table 7-4 shows the special search query to use for each of the major search engines to see whether your page is indexed—some are fussy about whether you enter the http:// prefix to the URL or not, so follow the syntax shown in the table. (Sometimes the syntax changes, so check the Help page for each search engine if you have any trouble.)

Table 7-4 Special operators to check inclusion. You use special search queries for each search engine to check to see whether your page is included in its index.

Search Engine	Special Inclusion Operator
AOL Search	allinurl:www.snapelectronics.com/cameras/news
Ask.com	url:http://www.snapelectronics.com/cameras/news
Google	allinurl:www.snapelectronics.com/cameras/news
Live Search	url:http://www.snapelectronics.com/cameras/news
Yahoo!	url:http://www.snapelectronics.com/cameras/news

It takes some time, but you can check each of your URLs in each search engine. Table 7-5 shows the results for Snap. For space reasons, we have eliminated the leading “www.snapelectronics.com” from the URLs in the table.

Table 7-5 Snap Electronics inclusion check. Each search engine indexes some of the pages from your site (indicated by “Yes”), but not others.

Target URL www.snapelectronics.com . . .	AOL Search	Ask.com	Google	Live Search	Yahoo!
/Cat?cat=6&lang=1&cntry=840	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
/cameras/news	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
/Prd?prd=9&lang=1&cntry=840	No	No	No	No	No
New page needed	—	—	—	—	—

The inclusion check for Snap yields some disconcerting results. We already knew that Snap needed to create one new page and get it included, but now we see that two of Snap’s other pages are also problems—only the “News and Awards” page is indexed by every search engine. We do not have any insight into *why* these pages are not indexed—we will have to wait until Chapter 10, “Get Your Site Indexed,” for that—but at least we know that there is some work to do. That is a critical part of our assessment. Some sites have difficult (and expensive) technical problems that prevent spiders from indexing their pages. Because there are only four pages that we have identified, the worst-case scenario is that we need to create a few new pages on the site that search spiders can find to replace the existing pages that they are not indexing. In later chapters, we will see that you *never* create special pages for your site for the sole purpose of ranking well in search (that is an unethical spamming technique), but you should replace pages that cannot be crawled with those that can.



Harkening back to the question of whether the digital camera area of Snap’s Web site is a simple enough choice for our first campaign, it appears to be. Some of the critical pages are indexed already, and we have identified other pages that we might get indexed. If we fail to get them indexed, we could create a few new pages to compensate. Overall, it seems to be a simple proposition, so finalize the choice for Snap’s first marketing campaign—it is the SnapShot digital camera.

Check the Search Rankings for Your Landing Pages

Now that you know which pages are in and out of which search indexes, it is time to see whether those that are included are ranking in the top ten, and if not, where they are.

There are two ways to check search rankings. You probably thought of the first way: entering the queries by hand and scrolling through the search results until you see your page. You can

do it that way, but checking multiple queries in several search engines can get old fast. So, you might want to try the other way of checking rankings—using an automated tool.

Automated rank checkers, as shown in Figure 7-3, can save lots of time by analyzing the search results pages for multiple search engines with no work from you.

General		Ranking Report		Print Info		About us	
Show/Hide details							
Google - Google Search							
Keyword	URL	Page (out of 10)	Position				
business productivity software	http://www.ibm.com	N/A	N/A				
collaboration software	http://www.ibm.com	1	7				
Title: IBM Lotus Software							
Exact URL: http://www.ibm.com/lotus/							
collaboration software	http://www.ibm.com	1	8				
Title: IBM Team collaboration software - Lotus Quickr							
Exact URL: http://www.ibm.com/lotus/quickr							
e-forms	http://www.ibm.com	3	28				
Title: IBM Lotus Team Collaboration, Content Management and E-forms							
Exact URL: http://www.ibm.com/software/lotus/category/team/							
electronic forms	http://www.ibm.com	N/A	N/A				
enterprise instant messaging	http://www.ibm.com	7	69				
Title: IBM software - IBM Lotus Sametime							
Exact URL: http://www.ibm.com/lotus/sametime							
enterprise portal	http://www.ibm.com	N/A	N/A				
instant messaging	http://www.ibm.com	N/A	N/A				
portal content management	http://www.ibm.com	5	49				
Title: Creating a Personalized Web Content Management System Using							
Exact URL: http://www.ibm.com/developerWorks/WebSphereLibrary/Tutorials/0308_zhang/zhang_req.html							
portal server	http://www.ibm.com	1	2				
Title: IBM Web Portal software from WebSphere							
Exact URL: http://www.ibm.com/WebSphere/portal							
portal software	http://www.ibm.com	1	4				
Title: IBM Web Portal software from WebSphere							
Exact URL: http://www.ibm.com/WebSphere/portal							
portal software	http://www.ibm.com	7	68				
Title: IBM Software Support - WebSphere Portal - Overview							
Exact URL: http://www.ibm.com/software/bpservers/portal/support/							
web conferencing	http://www.ibm.com	N/A	N/A				
web portal design	http://www.ibm.com	N/A	N/A				
web portal software	http://www.ibm.com	1	1				
Title: IBM Web Portal software from WebSphere							
Exact URL: http://www.ibm.com/WebSphere/portal							

Report generated by Agent Web Ranking Software

Figure 7-3 Search ranking checker. Agent Web Ranking’s rank checker shows where your site’s pages rank in search engines for your targeted keywords.

Whether you do it by hand or use a rank-checking tool, the basics are the same. You record the organic search rank (paid does not count) of your site’s page for the targeted search query. You start counting from the #1 organic result on the first page—that is the top result on page one (which may be underneath paid results in some search engines. For search engines that show ten results on a page, the last result on page one is obviously #10, with the first one on the second page #11, and so on from there.

Of course, the higher the rank, the better, but you might not realize just how critical it is to rank in the top ten. Consider, however, that only 5 percent to 40 percent of all searchers view results past the first page. Not many searchers are getting to result #11. Of those searchers who do click the first page, 60 percent of them are clicking organic results, so appearing in the top ten of organic results is clearly the place to be. Of course, searchers do not split their clicks evenly among the top ten, so the higher up in the list you are, the more visitors you will get. Table 7-6 shows the results that Snap Electronics found for its targeted keywords.

Table 7-6 Snap Electronics ranking check. Some queries return your pages at the same rank in different search engines, but others do not.

Keyword Phrase	AOL Search	Ask.com	Google	Live Search	Yahoo!
digital camera	45	—	45	—	—
snap digital camera	3*	2*	3*	4*	2*
snapshot digital camera	3*	1*	3*	1*	1*
digital camera review	—	44	—	34	31
best digital camera	—	17*	—	47*	22*
digital camera comparison	—	—	—	—	—
compare digital camera	—	—	—	—	—

* Page found from snapelectronics.com site, but not the targeted landing page.

One interesting thing to note in this table is that AOL Search and Google have the same rankings, because AOL uses Google's technology to enhance its search. Looking further into the rankings, we see that although the landing page for “digital camera review” was indexed in all the search engines, it was not found in the Top 100 in Google (or in AOL Search).

For “snap digital camera” and “snapshot digital camera,” the Snap home page was returned. It is not the page that was targeted, but it is better than being missing completely. Similarly, the page that was returned by Ask.com, MSN Search, and Yahoo! for “best digital camera” is a interesting one. Titled “The SnapShot Difference,” it explains why SnapShot cameras are better than all others—what technology is included and why SnapShots are so easy to use. This page seems better to target than the most-expensive camera's product detail page.

The bad news, however, is the dismal rankings of most of these pages. Unless searchers explicitly specify Snap’s company’s name or product’s name, they are not going to find snapelectronics.com with these keywords. We do not yet know *why* Snap’s pages are ranking so poorly, but we explore those reasons in later chapters of this book.

Check Your Competitors’ Search Rankings

If Snap is not getting the top spot, who is? It’s easy to take a look and see. Figure 7-4 shows the results for “digital cameras” in Google. You can see that the first page lists retailers and review sites rather than camera manufacturers such as Snap.

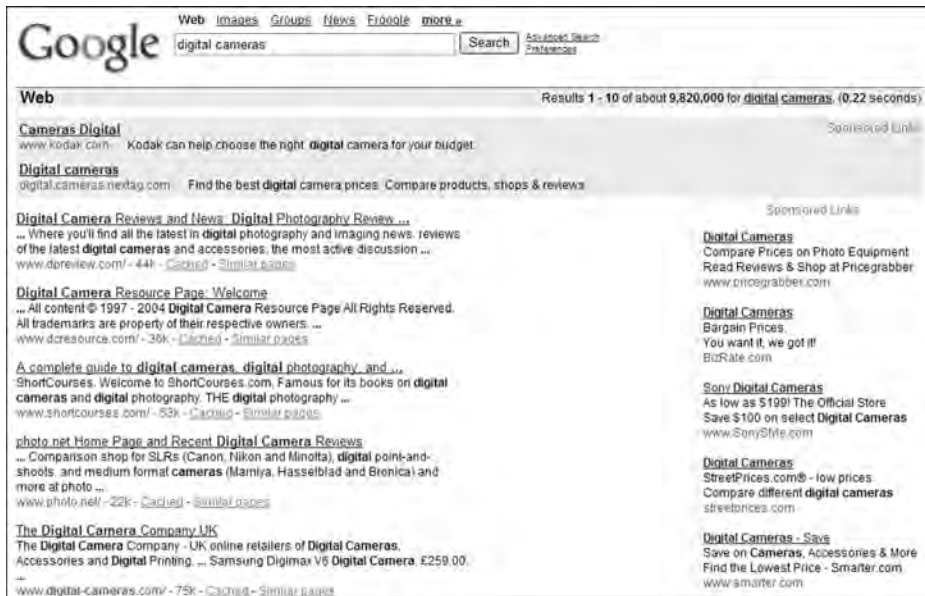


Figure 7-4 Google results for the “digital cameras” keyword. A broad keyword such as “digital cameras” returns many sites besides the camera manufacturers.

One look at the Google results for “digital cameras” tells you that this will be a difficult keyword to get high rankings for—none of Snap’s competitors are on the first page, either. But where *are* Snap’s competitors? Studying the Google results for a few of the targeted queries can result in a competitor-ranking matrix, as shown in Table 7-7. You can see where each competitor’s Web site ranks for each query. For example, the first page from snapelectronics.com returned by Google for the “digital camera” keyword is result #45, whereas Kodak has a page from its site ranked #12.

Table 7-7 Snap Electronics competitor-rankings matrix. Major digital camera manufacturers have wide variation in Google rankings for the primary keywords.

Keyword Phrase	Snap	Kodak	Canon	Sony	Olympus	Nikon
digital camera	45	12	15	21	42	46
snapshot digital camera	3	—	—	—	—	—
snap digital camera	3	—	—	—	—	—
digital camera reviews	—	—	10	6	22	19
best digital cameras	—	—	—	—	—	—
digital camera comparison	—	—	8	9	58	24

It is instructive to examine the results for the “digital camera” keyword. None of the manufacturers have even a top ten ranking, as we saw earlier. But is this the most important query for Snap to target if they want to attract potential camera buyers? Maybe not. Some searchers for “digital cameras” need help *using* cameras and are not looking to buy them. That means that searchers for “digital cameras” are not as highly qualified as those using some of the other keywords in the list.

Looking beyond the “digital camera” query, we find that the other keywords are more hospitable to manufacturers and suggest more qualified buyers. Focusing first on the searchers for Snap’s own SnapShot brand (“snapshot digital camera”), we can conclude that they already desire the brand and are far more likely to buy from Snap. We also see that Snap already has a #3 ranking, so perhaps part of Snap’s campaign should focus on moving up to #1.

When we look at the remaining keywords, we notice that, although only Sony has a top ten ranking, the rankings for the manufacturers look healthy. Despite this, Snap is missing in action for all but its own SnapShot brand name. Clearly, this competitor matrix is pointing the way to a search strategy of emphasizing those keywords favored by more qualified searchers.

The matrix has another value, too. When it is time to persuade other people in your organization to invest in or work on search marketing, showing your competitors’ rankings usually gets the competitive juices flowing. When you appeal to people’s competitiveness, they will want to win. Remember, too, every page that you get into the top ten pushes your competition down further—you are helping yourself while denying them exposure at the same time.

See What Traffic You Are Getting

All the rankings in the world don’t mean much if searchers don’t click through to your site. So although we know there is a strong correlation between high search rankings and high search traffic, we need to track that traffic to accurately measure the business impact of search marketing—tracking rankings is not enough.

So the next step is to check the traffic that Snap is getting for each keyword. As you saw in Chapter 6, “Measure Your Web Site’s Success,” Web metrics software can track page views, visits, and visitors, but they can also count which of those visitors came to your site from search engines. Metrics facilities determine where each visitor comes from by examining the **referrer**

for each page view. The referrer is the actual URL of the Web page that the visitor viewed before coming to your page.

Clearly, referrers can be used to see which visitors followed links to your page from other pages within your site or from pages on other sites. But metrics facilities provide special support for **search referrals**—referrals that come from a URL known to be a search engine (such as www.yahoo.com). Your metrics software comes with a list of the popular search engine URLs, and you can add any that are missing. This list is used to generate a report showing how many page views were referred from search engines.

But search referrals have even more information buried inside those URLs that you will come to rely on. Each search referral tells you more than what search engine it is from (www.yahoo.com). Metrics facilities also dissect these URLs to actually show you the search query that the visitor used to find you! Table 7-8 shows a few examples from Google, Ask.com, and Yahoo!, respectively.

Table 7-8 Search queries hidden in search referrals. You can see the actual search query used by any search visitor who comes to your Web site.

<http://www.google.com/search?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&q=digital+camera>

<http://web.ask.com/web?q=digital+camera&o=0&qsrc=0>

<http://search.yahoo.com/search?p=digital+camera&ei=UTF-8&fr=fp-tab-web-t&cop=mss>

Metrics facilities carefully accumulate these search referrals so that they can show how many visits your site received, or a page on your site (or even a set of pages) received from a particular search engine. They can also show how many visitors used specific search queries. Or how many used a specific query from a specific engine.

For example, Snap might want to know how many visitors they get to the Snap home page from Google, Ask.com, and Yahoo! (which the metrics facility adds up from the referrals shown in Table 7-9). But Snap can also find out how many people reached that page using the “digital camera” query, regardless of which search engine they used, by analyzing the same referrals.

Table 7-9 Snap Electronics visitors from search engines. Your metrics facility can add up your search referrals across all search engines for each targeted query.

Keyword Phrase	Search Referrals
digital camera	1,412
snapshot digital camera	5,278
snap digital camera	4,044
digital camera reviews	0
compare digital cameras	0
best digital cameras	0
digital camera comparison	0
Total Search Referrals	10,734

Snap Electronics does not have any paid search campaigns underway for digital cameras, but as you tabulate current search referrals for your own site, be aware of any paid activity. If you are using paid search, you need to assess that, too, because it affects your referral numbers, but we do not cover that until Chapter 14, “Optimize Your Paid Search Program.”

Assessing your site is a critical step, but knowing where you stand is just the beginning. Let’s see where you can go from here.

Calculate Your First Campaign’s Opportunity

It’s interesting to find out how many searchers are being referred to your site with the keywords you have targeted, but you also need to know how many searchers do *not* come to your site. Those are the people you want referred your way—they are your search marketing opportunity.

Obviously, although search marketing can drive new visitors to your site, you might need to make other changes to your site to increase conversion. Although marketing opportunities certainly exist, they are not particular to *search* marketing because your changes affect every visitor to your site, regardless of how they landed there. To go beyond search marketing, pick up Mike’s book *Do It Wrong Quickly: How the Web Changes the Old Marketing Rules*, which is loaded with ways to measure your Web site’s success and to make improvements.

Now you have learned enough to estimate the traffic increase a well-designed search marketing campaign can produce, and we do so through the next few pages.

Check Your Keyword Demand

The number of searches for any particular query is referred to as **keyword demand**. So, although search referrals tell you how many of those searchers clicked through to your site, keyword demand tells you how many searchers used that keyword in total. Keyword demand counts the people who chose a result from your site as well as all searchers for that keyword who chose to click someone else’s site.

We explain keyword demand in detail in Chapter 11, exploring several sources of keyword demand information, but we can give it a “once over” here. With Google’s tool, you can pick up where we left off in Figure 7-1 to see the keyword demand (which Google refers to as “search volume”). You can use the volume from the previous month or the average across the last 12 calendar months, which can be very helpful when dealing with keywords whose usage varies by season. Figure 7-5 shows an example of Google’s keyword tool in action.

To get total keyword demand across all search engines, you need to perform one more calculation—to divide by Google’s market share for your country. So, for example, if you’ve calculated 1,000 for your Google monthly keyword demand, and Google’s market share is 50 percent

in your country, then divide 1,000 by .5 to get a total keyword demand of 2,000 monthly. To simplify the calculation, visit Mike's Web site (www.mikemor.com/skinflintsearch/forecast.htm)—you'll also find a spreadsheet there that makes the whole calculation process a bit simpler.

Googles shows last month's demand and a running average from the last 12 months.

For estimation, change "broad" match to "exact"

Keywords	Advertiser Competition	Approx Search Volume: June	Approx Avg Search Volume	Match Type
Keywords related to term(s) entered - sorted by relevance				
megapixel digital camera	<div style="width: 50%;"></div>	301,000	246,000	Broad
digital camera 5 megapixels	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	2,400	2,900	Broad
10.2 megapixel digital camera	<div style="width: 0%;"></div>	Insufficient Data	1,600	Broad
1 megapixel digital camera	<div style="width: 10%;"></div>	2,400	2,900	Broad
10.1 megapixel digital camera	<div style="width: 0%;"></div>	8,100	8,100	Broad
20 megapixel digital camera	<div style="width: 0%;"></div>	170	140	Broad

Figure 7-5 Estimating keyword demand. Google's Keyword Tool gives you the historical information you need.

Discover Your Missed Opportunities

Although it is helpful to see how many searches are performed on your targeted keywords, you must remember that you are already getting some search traffic to your site. How many searchers are you missing? To answer that question, we must develop a **missed-opportunity matrix**TM.

Because every searcher who uses your targeted keyword is an opportunity to bring a visitor to your site, merely subtracting your search referrals from the total number of searches yields the number of searches where no one came to your site. You can also calculate your share of the search traffic by dividing the number of your referrals by the keyword demand. Table 7-10 shows how simple it is to calculate missed opportunities for Snap Electronics.

Table 7-10 Snap missed opportunity matrix. Juxtaposing the actual search referrals with the keyword demand shows how many searchers were missed.

Keyword Phrase	Keyword Demand	Actual Search Referrals	Share of Search Traffic	Missed Opportunities
digital camera	2,942,328	1,412	0.05%	2,940,916
snapshot digital camera	10,734	4,044	38%	6,690
snap digital camera	13,735	5,278	38%	8,457
digital camera reviews	157,533	—	0%	157,533
compare digital cameras	22,717	—	0%	22,717
best digital cameras	39,303	—	0%	39,303
digital camera comparison	26,099	—	0%	26,099
Totals	3,212,449	10,734	0.33%	3,201,715

Project Your Future Traffic

Now it is time to calculate what you really want to know: How many more search referrals can you reasonably obtain if you execute a strong first search marketing campaign? Although those searchers who failed to come to Snap’s site are literally missed opportunities, it is not realistic to expect that any one site could collect all the clicks for any query. The question then becomes how to estimate the *reasonable* number of clicks that can be achieved after a successful first search marketing campaign.

Before we begin our analysis of future traffic, you should know that it is impossible to accurately calculate something as nebulous as a “reasonable number of clicks.” Anyone who tells you that he can pinpoint the answer is oversimplifying the complexity of searcher behavior. But we can make **estimates** to help make a business decision on how to invest in search marketing. Although it will not be terribly precise, it will help you make a better decision than using the seat of your pants.

We know from Chapter 4, “How Searchers Work,” that 48 percent of searchers click a result on the first page of results and that 60 percent of those clicks are on organic results rather than paid. Multiplying those numbers together tells us that 29 percent of all searchers click an organic result on the first page.

Although helpful, that statistic does not tell us nearly enough for us to calculate our real opportunity, because searchers frequently click more than one result from the same search—first clicking on #1, then #3, and finally #4 before going off to do something else. So, although 29 percent of searchers click an organic result on the first page, there are more pages clicked than 29 percent. What we need to know is how many clicks there are *per search*. And honestly, no one knows, except the folks running the search engines themselves, and they consider the information

to be proprietary. Anecdotal evidence indicates that between 1.8 and 2.8 results are clicked for each search—if we take the more conservative 1.8 number and multiply it by 29 searchers, we get 52 clicks for every 100 searches.

So we have estimated 52 clicks per 100 searches as the average, but not all searches are average. Some produce more than 52 clicks and others produce less. But even that isn't all, because those 52 clicks per 100 searches are not spread around evenly. Far more of them are clustered at the top of the results page, where the highest-ranked pages are shown. The exact results that searchers click vary greatly from query to query. Table 7-11 shows four different distributions that all average 52 clicks, and there is no way to be sure what distribution any particular query yields.

Table 7-11 Distribution of clicks by search ranking. Although 52 clicks are the average number per 100 searches, they can be distributed widely for each query.

Search Ranking	Number of Clicks			
	Weak Informational Results	Strong Informational Results	Brand Informational Results	Navigational Results
#1	8	15	20	50
#2	5	12	9	5
#3	5	10	6	5
#4	4	5	6	4
#5	4	3	4	3
#6	3	2	3	2
#7	1.5	2	2	1
#8	0.5	1.5	1	1
#9	0.5	1	0.5	0.5
#10	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Totals	32	52	52	72

Although you cannot be sure of the number of clicks you can get, you can make some reasonable assumptions. The first two distributions shown in Table 7-11 are for informational queries, where the “weak” results list has no clearly superior result and the “strong” list has markedly better results at the top of the list. Contrast these two distributions with the last two, where a brand query (“snapshot camera”) might return the manufacturer (Snap Electronics) or a leading retailer (in the #2 through #5 slots, perhaps), leading to stronger clickthrough (especially at the top of the list). When searchers enter a navigational query (“snap electronics”) where there is truly a “right” answer for most searchers, we might see a distribution like the one in the last column where the #1 result gets the lion's share of the clicks.

So, by looking at the table, we can take some educated guesses as to how search ranking can affect the number of clicks to your site. If you rank in the top three, you might get clicks for 8 percent to 30 percent of the queries for a particular keyword. If your page ranks #4 through #10, perhaps you will get a click for 0.5 percent to 7 percent of searches. If your page shows up on the next two result pages (ranked #11 through #30), you will pick up a few clicks—maybe clicks totaling 0.25 percent of all searches. One quarter of 1 percent might not sound like much, but it is better than nothing, which is your likely fate beyond position #30. At the other end of the spectrum, some search marketers report getting clickthrough rates of more than 50 percent, especially when their listing is in the top three of both the organic and the paid placements for the same query. If we carefully examine the tail end of the table (the last few results), using the graph in Figure 7-6, we can see that seemingly small differences might be significant for popular queries.

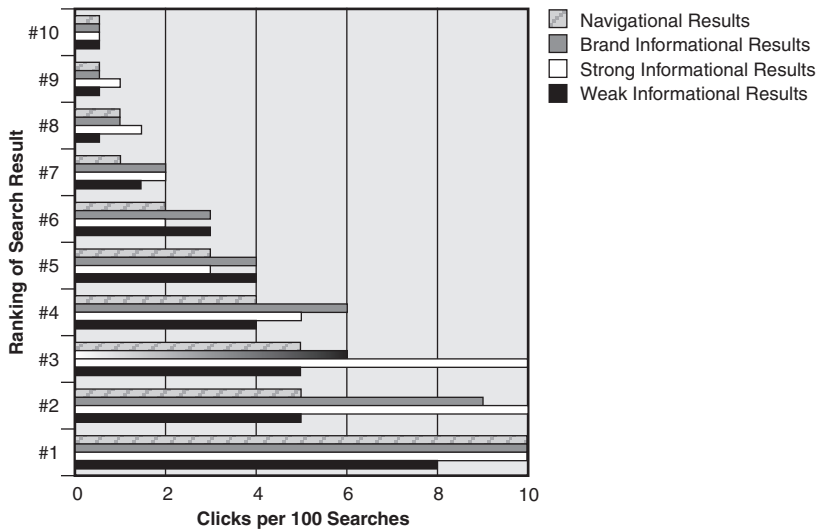


Figure 7-6 Little differences add up. The tail distribution shown in Table 7-11 varies a lot from query to query even though the numbers seem small.

If you are considering mounting both an organic and paid campaign, your clickthrough rate could be considerably higher than what is shown here. Recall that 40 percent of the 87 clicks (35 clicks) are for paid results. It is typical to get 5 percent clickthrough or more for a top three paid placement. If your plan includes a top paid placement bid for each keyword, you should add 5 percent of the paid clicks to the organic clicks you anticipate. Table 7-12 shows how the range of clickthrough rates dramatically affects the number of searchers who come to snapelectronics.com each month.

Table 7-12 Snap Electronics traffic potential model. You can use the estimated monthly keyword demand to estimate search referrals at various clickthrough rates.

Keyword Phrase	Monthly Keyword Demand	Estimated Monthly Search Referrals				
		0.25%	1%	5%	10%	25%
digital camera	2,942,328	7,356	29,423	147,116	294,233	735,582
snapshot digital camera	10,734	27	107	537	1,073	2,683
snap digital camera	13,735	34	137	687	1,373	3,434
digital camera reviews	157,533	394	1,575	7,877	15,753	39,383
compare digital cameras	22,717	57	227	1,136	2,272	5,679
best digital cameras	39,303	98	393	1,965	3,930	9,826
digital camera comparison	26,099	65	261	1,305	2,610	6,525
Totals	3,212,449	8,031	32,124	160,622	321,245	803,112

The next step requires a cold look at what your potential improvement in rank can be for each keyword. Let's haul out yet another table to show the potential improvements from a successful search marketing campaign. Table 7-13 shows a **projected-rankings matrix**, with the current rank for each of Snap's targeted keywords along with a guess at what the new improved rank might be.

Table 7-13 Snap Electronics projected rankings matrix. Snap and its competitors' rankings in Google today gives clues for where Snap could rank in the future.

Keyword Phrase	Current Rankings			Projected Rankings Snap
	Kodak	Canon	Snap	
digital camera	12	15	45	10
snap digital camera	—	—	3	1
snapshot digital camera	—	—	3	1
digital camera reviews	—	10	—	15
best digital cameras	—	—	—	30
compare digital cameras	12	15	—	8
digital camera comparison	8	17	—	10

When you develop your projected-rankings matrix, you are realistically assessing where your pages *can* rank—in this case for Google. (A more complete approach, avoided here for brevity, would be to analyze each of the major search engines and all major camera competitors.) Taking the phrase “digital camera,” we can see that it might not be realistic for Snap to get a top ranking—the current top results include no camera manufacturers, showing high-quality camera review sites instead. But it is entirely reasonable for Snap to move from “off the charts” to a respectable #10.

Similarly, when we look at the keyword “best digital cameras,” we see that all the camera manufacturers are missing in action. But there might be some hope here. We note that none of the other manufacturers use that phrase on their pages, possibly because large corporations do not want to appear boastful. Snap does not like to toot its own horn either, but many third-party digital camera reviews actually call the SnapShot the “best digital camera”—Snap can quote these reviews on its site without appearing boastful, and the search engines will find the words on Snap’s pages. Armed with this information, it might be reasonable to project that Snap can break through at least to the top 30 for this query where the other manufacturers did not.

When you develop your own projected-rankings matrix, you must make similar decisions, keyword by keyword, and you need to be as realistic as possible. You might find that your projections are conservative at times, but that is better than overpromising and underdelivering.

After you have decided what rankings you can achieve, you need to assign your clickthrough rate for each keyword, as discussed in Table 7-12. For each keyword, you need to decide what the right click distribution is across every organic search result, and then assign the appropriate percentage to your result based on the position you expect to achieve. Table 7-14 shows Snap’s decisions. Projected “top 30” rankings are valued at a 0.25 percent clickthrough rate, whereas a #1 ranking for a quasi-navigational query such as “snap digital camera” might get 20 percent clickthrough. Multiplying that rate by the estimated monthly searches produces the projected visits resulting from the search marketing campaign.

Table 7-14 Snap’s organic traffic model. For each keyword, Snap can project the percentage of clickthrough per organic search and project added referrals.

Keyword Phrase	Monthly Keyword Demand	Current Monthly Visits	Current Rank	Projected Rank	Projected Monthly Search Referrals	Added Search Referrals
digital camera	2,942,328	1,412	0.05%	45	10	0.50% 14,711 13,299
snapshot digital camera	10,734	4,044	38%	3	1	50% 5,367 1,323
snap digital camera	13,735	5,278	38%	3	1	50% 6,867 1,589
digital camera reviews	157,533	—	0.00%	—	15	0.25% 394 394
best digital cameras	22,717	—	0.00%	—	30	0.10% 23 23

Keyword Phrase	Monthly Keyword Demand	Current Monthly Visits	Current Rank	Projected Rank	Projected Monthly Search Referrals	Added Search Referrals		
compare digital cameras	39,303	—	0.00%	—	8	1.50%	590	590
digital camera comparison	26,099	—	0.00%	—	10	0.50%	130	130
Total	3,212,449	10,734	0.33%			0.87%	28,082	17,348

If Snap Electronics planned to place a top paid placement bid in Google, Yahoo!, and Live Search for every keyword, they could add as much as 5 percent to their clickthrough rates to generate a larger number of added referrals. But Snap wanted to take a more conservative approach. Rather than buying each of these keywords across three search engines, Snap decided to buy just *one* keyword in Google as an experiment. They chose the most popular keyword, “digital cameras.” This approach allowed them to gain experience with paid placement without having to make a big commitment of money and management time. Based on the results of the experiment, they will decide how to approach paid placement in the future.

Snap’s approach required them to project the added search referrals for paid placement for the “digital cameras” keyword, which was fairly easy. Snap took the keyword demand for “digital cameras” from Google’s Keyword Tool (1,337,422) and multiplied by a 1 percent clickthrough rate. Some paid placements yield 5 percent clickthrough rates or more, but Snap decided to make a conservative projection for their first paid campaign. Multiplying the keyword demand by that 1 percent clickthrough rate produced an additional 13,374 monthly search referrals from paid placement.

If we add the 17,348 organic search referrals from Table 7-14 to the new paid search referrals, it results in 30,722 new search referrals each month. That kind of number will draw the attention needed to get your search marketing program off the ground. It is hard for anyone running a Web site to turn down additional traffic, but you can make your case for search marketing even more enticing by projecting not just traffic, but conversions.

Project Your Future Conversions

Regardless of what your Web site’s goals are, you saw in Chapter 5 that you can choose certain visitor events as your conversions. Obviously, if you are selling your product online, it is easy for you to translate your conversions into revenue, but you saw in Chapter 6 that that you can translate most conversions into some kind of business value.

Continuing our fictitious scenario for Snap Electronics, we can project our digital camera search marketing campaign’s conversions and its incremental revenue. Snap needs to know a few numbers to do so:

- *Projected added search referrals.* As we calculated earlier, the estimate for the extra traffic to Snap's site due to successful search marketing consists of referrals from both organic and paid search. Snap's total comes to 30,722 more visits.
- *Conversion rate.* What percentage of visits results in sales? If Snap knows the conversion rate for digital cameras (the percentage of visitors to the digital camera pages who buy digital cameras), that would be the best conversion rate to use. But many companies, especially large companies, have trouble isolating individual product metrics. In Snap's case, isolating digital camera conversion rate is not possible, but they do know that their overall conversion rate is 2 percent. They can use that 2 percent conversion rate as a conservative estimate, because they expect that the digital camera conversion rate is higher than average.
- *Average transaction price.* What is the typical price paid for a digital camera? Snap should be able to monitor all digital camera sales and divide the total sales by the number of transactions to find out the average transaction price. In some cases, you need to use the average transaction price across all products, rather than the product you are targeting, but Snap happens to know that its average digital camera price is \$348.

After you have compiled the necessary numbers, you can put them together to project the incremental revenue from search marketing for digital cameras, as shown in Figure 7-7.

	Added Monthly Search Referrals	30,722
Multiply by:	Conversion rate	0.02
	Added monthly sales	614
Multiply by:	Average transaction price	\$348
	Added monthly revenue	\$213,672
Multiply by:	12 months	12
	Added yearly revenue	\$2,564,064

Figure 7-7 Projecting Snap's search campaign's revenue. A simple formula converts projected incremental search referrals into projected revenue.

As you calculate the opportunity for your own first campaign, you might be wondering how big the opportunity can be if you go all out with a site-wide search marketing program, consisting of many individual campaigns. In Chapter 8, "Define Your Search Marketing Strategy," you decide how broad your overall search marketing program should be, and in Chapter 9, "Sell Your Search Marketing Proposal," you will see how large the profit could be.

Summary

Search marketing is, after all, *marketing*, so you need to be armed with the business impact of your search marketing plans. No matter what your site's goals, you can use search marketing to drive traffic to your site to achieve those goals. In this chapter, you learned how to project the traffic your campaign will generate and how to translate that traffic into its business impact. Figure 7-8 summarizes the steps we took to get there.

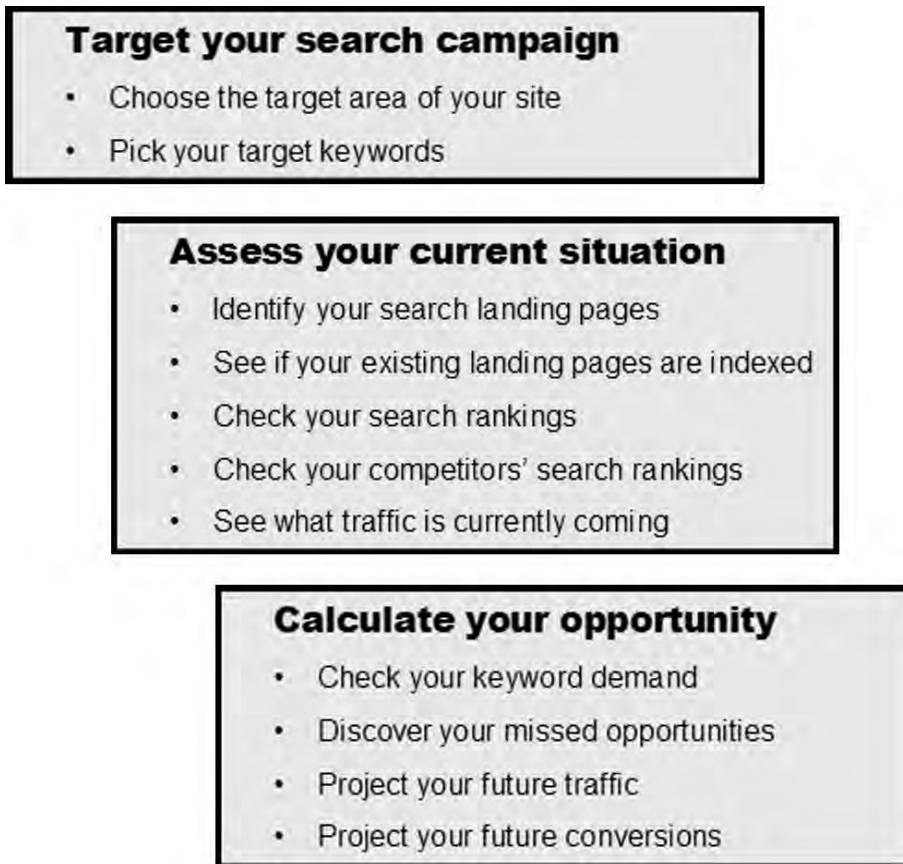
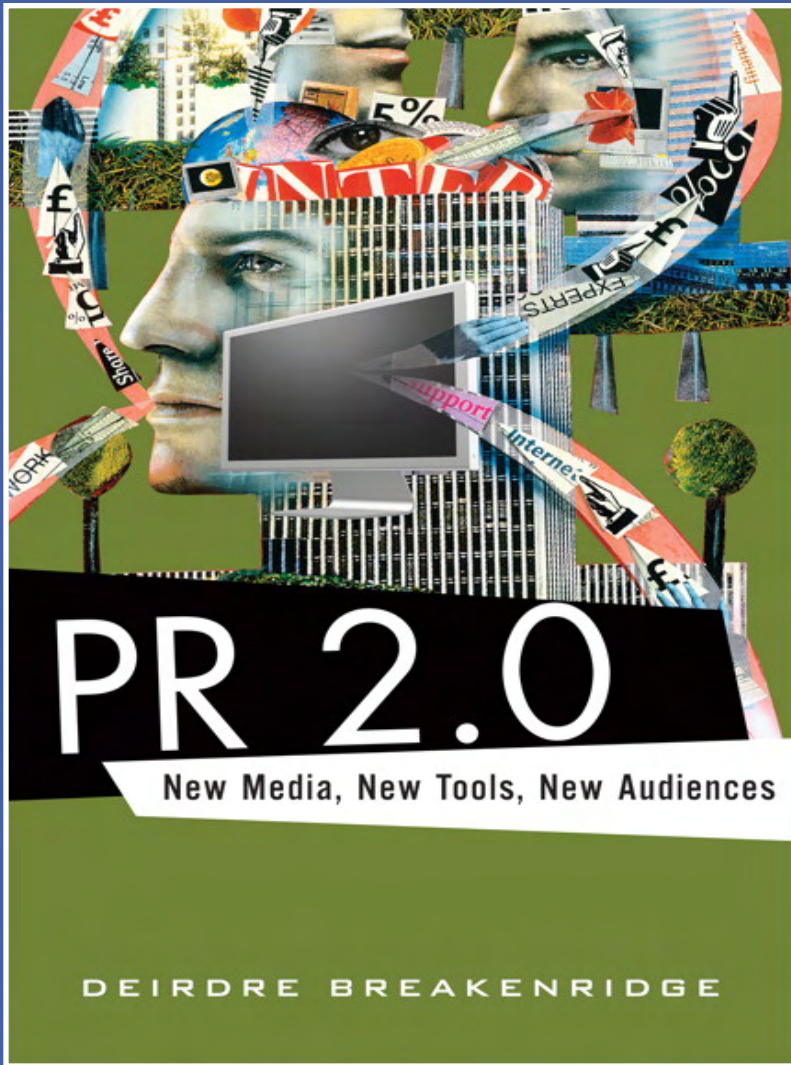


Figure 7-8 Measuring search success steps. For each campaign, you can define your measurements up front to show the expected value.

In the next chapter, we look past your first campaign and dive into your search marketing strategy. What are the tasks required? Who should perform each task? How large should your overall search marketing program be? What will your program cost? Read on and see how your opportunity can be realized.

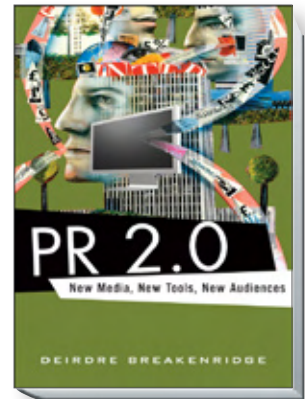


Learn how to master Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, social networking, online newswires, RSS technology and podcasts and use them to their fullest possible advantage in all your public relations work.

Deirdre Breakenridge

PR 2.0

New Media, New Tools, New Audiences



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Chapter 7

The Social Media News Release: An Overdue Facelift

The news release isn't dead. On the contrary, it's evolving into a PR 2.0 communications tool. The traditional news release has transformed into a much more technologically savvy resource for journalists and the public, with the recent development of the Social Media Release (SMR) template. According to an article by Tom Foremski in the *Silicon Valley Watcher* titled, "Die! Press Release! Die! Die! Die!," Foremski makes a dramatic call to action. He demands changes to the traditional news release. For him, news releases of the past are a "nearly useless" resource. According to Foremski, news releases need to move away from "...committees, edited by lawyers, and then sent out at great expense...to reach the digital and physical trash bins of tens of thousands of journalists."¹ Foremski, a former *Financial Times* writer, feels the need to break down the news release to make a better communications tool. Each publisher should be able to gather relevant materials within the news release framework, create their own news story, and assemble the information more efficiently through the use of an SMR. As a result, the targeted information collected and used by the journalist is much more valuable in the writing and the news reporting process. Foremski's call to action prompted a revolutionary transformation. Are you ready for the SMR to change the nature of reporting news in the 21st Century?

A New Format to Spark Conversations

This is a question faced by every communication professional, as there are different schools of thought on the subject. You might agree with Tom Foremski that it's time to implement a drastic change to the widely recognized news release that's been a standard PR tool for years. At the same time, there's another school of thought. On the opposite end of the spectrum are the professionals who aren't quite ready to see the tried and

true inverted pyramid style news release completely go away. For them, the traditional inverted pyramid format still carries value in reporting. The traditional Associated Press (AP) “newspaper” style news release served a valuable purpose for a very long time. It gave PR pros a communication tool that provided journalists with the “who, what, when, where, and why” of a story, all in the lead paragraph. Of course, there’s a group between the two opposing ends who are looking to gradually make social media changes to the old-fashioned newspaper style release format, but not the drastic changes called for by Foremski. Although many journalists might concur that the news release needs an overdue makeover, not every one of them is ready to transition completely into the social media template. However, what most journalists and PR pros can agree on is a news release tool that’s well written and extremely informative, with less of the corporate “speak” and more of the news that’s accurate and timely.

What school of thought do you attend? You’re certainly in good company if you feel that your brand’s stakeholders, including the media community, need information in a format that can be easily gathered, organized, and shared. In a Web 2.0 world, the traditional AP style release isn’t good enough to satisfy 21st Century reporting. However, the SMR is a communications tool that provides easy access to useful information, ensures accuracy of materials that have the “official seal” of a company, and offers the journalist content proactively before he or she finds it from a competitive source. In addition, if you are skeptical about social media, keep in mind that additional benefits include that it’s user-driven with content which can be reworked and reshaped continuously. With the ability to use social media for collaboration and shared-interests, communities are created instantaneously, connecting online audiences globally. Best of all, social media is easy to grasp. You don’t need years of technical training or an above-average aptitude to understand how to use this for effective communication.

Be Prepared for Social Media

Similar to the discussion about interactive newsrooms in Chapter 6, “Interactive Newsrooms: How to Attract the Media,” you can ask yourself a related question: Will you interact with every journalist who requires a

social media template, with the most advanced 2.0 features? Of course not; there are still many journalists who are not ready to use every 2.0 tool, and there are also those journalists who are just experimenting with this new format. However, all it takes is just one journalist who wants a sophisticated feature of an SMR to aid him in his reporting process. For that reason alone, you must be prepared. You need to understand what it takes to enhance your basic news release when you encounter a media professional who prefers sophisticated social media features, which might include

- Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds (direct news feeds on content related to the subject matter as well as links to content).
- Photo libraries with high resolution images. (These images are for download into a print publication.)
- MP3 files (a digital audio encoding method to reduce the size of an audio file for easy download) or a podcast.
- Video footage for Video-On-Demand (VOD).
- Links to previous coverage on a topic with the ability to use del.icio.us or Digg (www.digg.com) for social bookmarking. (Journalists can tag their favorite information by locating, classifying, and ranking noteworthy references and resources.)
- Technorati (www.technorati.com) is a leader in “what’s happening on the World Live Web.”² Because bloggers commonly link to other blogs, Technorati searches and organizes blogs, and tracks how blogs are linked together (recording the relevance of the links to your subject matter).

You’ve already learned that not all journalists share the same level of technological acceptance. Some are innovators on the cutting edge of what PR 2.0 has to offer, and then others might be Late Adopters of technology who wait for a technology to be widely tested and accepted by the general public. For you, as a communications professional, it is beneficial to be prepared with sophisticated tools in your news announcements, and there are several reasons why you would want to move toward a social media template. You should consider how it helps your media contacts,

your brand's customers, and how it directly affects the conversations about your brand in the market.

- A social media template enables you to present different types of communication regarding your brand (from the core facts to exciting multimedia that can really tell a visual story).
- With a social media news release, you can direct the journalist to the information you want to present and have him or her cover it in a story, which is a better way to control the brand communication.
- Because of the increasing ease of use for journalists, you are providing a better means for them to develop their stories, which might translate into more accurate and a greater depth of coverage on your brand.
- You are helping media outlets with little resources to “do more with less.”³ Your social media template helps journalists develop their stories completely and accurately, with access to more information in a much quicker period of time.
- The SMR is also a consumer tool that makes it easier for the public to identify and share interesting content in their social networking communities. The social media template enables your brand to communicate directly to consumers so that they will continue to talk among themselves, to further promote your news and information in their forums.

Getting Started with Social Media

When you first decide to use a social media template, you might want to start simple. Starting slowly by adding in uncomplicated resources to your news announcement is easy. Then, you can always advance your way to a more highly developed SMR, such as Shift Communication's (www.shiftcomm.com) social media news release template. Shift Communications, inspired by Tom Foremski's thoughts on the traditional news release, was the first communications firm to launch a PR 2.0 news release tool. The Shift “In The News” section of Shift Communication's

Web site states how the company, “believes that journalists and bloggers are now fully adapted to using the World Wide Web for research purposes. The ‘Social Media Press Release’ merely facilitates their research by using the latest tools (social bookmarking, RSS, and the like) to provide background data, context, and ongoing updates to clients’ news.”⁴ To review a great SMR, go to the Shift Communications Web site and download a PDF version of this template (the template is available free of charge, with no copyrights restricting its use). Clearly, you will see that the template is designed for the most advanced or tech-savvy journalist who has fully embraced all the incredible resources in a PR 2.0 world—he knows how to manage the social media interface and fully take advantage of the interactive portions of the SMR, all very quickly and with ease.

Remember, you don’t have to be a guru to manage the new PR 2.0 technology. That’s not to say that the true SMR abandons several of the original elements of the news release. Absolutely not! These new social media templates still contain a few memorable and meaningful components of the traditional release, including

- Client, spokesperson, and PR contact information
- A gripping news release headline and sub-head, if desired
- Main news release facts (however, core content is in a bulleted format)
- Approved quotes from brand executives, customers, partners, and industry analysts, if possible
- Company boilerplate information (standard approved verbiage that describes the main offerings of the company)

Let’s begin with the social media basics and a few guidelines for your SMR. First, you want to include links to more information on the topic of your release (for instance, if your company has written any papers or conducted recent research). Also, it’s important to provide the journalist with links to recent publicity on the subject. These links “click” to a media outlet’s site where an article is posted or one of your executives was quoted. You can offer tags in your release, including [del.icio.us](#) and [Digg](#), for journalists to bookmark their favorite blogs on related topics. Journalists are

also looking for photos to enhance their stories, so you can use embedded photos in your news release, if possible, or you can have a link to a photo library that has several high-resolution images for download. (It's also a good idea to include a link to download your brand's logo.) Last, journalists can build their stories quickly and more accurately if you offer them key words to other associated and interesting information to search on the Web.

One very important question should come to your mind: "How do I begin to enhance my news release template, whether only slightly or to its fullest 2.0 potential?" If you are just beginning and want to proceed slowly and with care, you can use simple programming methods—simple techniques to start the SMR process. You can do it yourself or work closely with your in-house programmer to get the job done. Once more, as a PR professional you will better control your brand communication by including the features and functions that will help to get your brand increased coverage from the journalists and bloggers who received your social media release.

You Don't Have to Be a Web Developer to Create 2.0 Tools

The ability to add in your own 2.0 resources was a concept unheard of during the Web's infancy and even in the beginning of Web 1.0. Only Web developers were trained and relied upon for these tasks. Until now, there was always a clear divide between the communications professionals and Web developers. Times certainly have changed. Of course, there will always be those PR pros who don't want to roll up their sleeves to learn new PR 2.0 tactics. They're perfectly happy enabling the Web developers to do the programming. But, for those who do want to learn, your new-found 2.0 knowledge makes you that much more valuable to your brands!

Some easy tips for you beginner PR 2.0 programmers follow:

- Familiarize yourself with the information that is accessible to journalists on your Web site.

- Use resources already available to you, which reside on your brand's Web site (whether the information is in the public domain or is housed on the backend of your brand's Web site). Your in-house programmer or Web site development team will be able to assist you in finding the backend resources.
- Cut and paste links from your Web site directly into your social media template, including links to site pages with
 - Photos
 - Bios of management team
 - White papers or research studies
 - Video clips, if already posted on your Web site
- Find and use resources on the Web, including links to the following:
 - Past or recent publicity discussing the topic, your company, or quoting an executive
 - Groups or organizations that have a similar perspective on a topic or are partnered with your brand on an initiative
 - Influential bloggers who are writing about your topic, your product, or your service
 - Other Web sites for journalists and bloggers to gather more information, including Yahoo! News and Google News
 - Links directly to del.icio.us or Digg for journalists and bloggers to bookmark interesting information

If you currently use a content management tool in your newsroom, you are not limited to the information that is currently posted on your Web site. Rather, you can develop your own content, specific to your news release topic or communications initiative. For example, for a product launch, you can prepare approved quotes from C-Level executives on a page, or endorsements from customers who use your product, or industry analysts researching how your product affects the market. Using the

content management tool, you can easily create pages with the new information and post these Web pages in your newsroom. When the pages are approved and are “live” for audiences to view, you can cut and paste the appropriate newsroom link right into your social media template. Journalists will click on the links embedded in your release and be able to access valuable information right from your Web site. Proficiency with the content management tool will enable you the flexibility you need to enhance your news release of yesteryear and make it more interactive and news-friendly for 21st Century news reporting.

When to Rely on the Experts

If you do not have the resources in-house to build your own SMR, once again there are Web 2.0 experts ready to assist you. There are a number of PR service providers, including PRX Builder (in conjunction with PR Newswire) and BusinessWire that are forging ahead with their social media templates. As a matter of fact, in PR Newswire’s release of October 10, 2006, they use a social media news-release template to unveil the beta testing of PRX Builder’s Social Media News Release Wizard. Using a social media template, the release offers a lead paragraph but then provides journalists the immediate ability to click on photo links and logos for download. The next section of the release is bulleted and provides the core content of the release. For example, the bullets discuss how the PRX Builder service “enables PR and marketing professionals to easily create Social Media news releases through a series of guided steps.”⁵ The PRX Builder Social Media Release costs only \$6.00 per release. The releases are created in a simple XML document format. Communications professionals are able to easily develop and preview how the Social Media Release looks prior to distribution through PR Newswire. PRX Builder’s Social Media News Release template also has approved quotes from the President of Whitley Media (the creators of PRX Builder) as well as approved quotes from Dave Armon, Chief Operating Officer at PR Newswire. Journalists (or anyone looking for quotes) do not have to wait for quote approvals as they have the approved quotes from executives right at their fingertips. For example, they are able to capture instantaneously what Mr. Whitley has to say about the PRX Builder service. One of the approved statements

includes “The PRX Builder service is designed to make the creation of Social Media News Releases as easy as possible. We’re excited about the prospects for expanding the use of social media services within the more traditional realm of press releases.” Other great features in this news release include related links, photo notes, and a Technorati search of blogs discussing this news release. The PR Newswire release truly represents the tremendous possibilities of the PRX Builder service.

Interview with an Expert

Business Wire launched its Smart Release because “target audiences—reporters, editors, consumers, and investors—are looking for multimedia news 2.5 times more often than text only news.⁶ The Smart News Release, just as it sounds, offers smart tools embedded in the news announcement. These resources range from text and photos to motion and sound. Business Wire developed the Smart News Release because the company thought it would be better for journalists who need quick access to multimedia. Journalists are looking for content that’s ready to download, and the Smart News Release has one-stop access to Web and print-ready photos, logos, graphics, and audio and video. If you select Business Wire’s Smart News Release, you will find the ability to track and measure the success of your announcement and a wider or “Smarter” reach.

Business Wire took the Smart News Release one step further with its EON service (Enhanced Online News Service). Business Wire and EON together offer PR pros the ability to use XHTML, Search Engine Optimization, social media, podcasting, RSS, and blogs in their news release formats. Laura Sturaitis, Senior Vice President, Media Services & Product Strategy for Business Wire, participated in a Q&A session on how EON truly enhances online news, reaching much larger audiences. Sturaitis heads up Business Wire’s Media Relations, Content Licensing, Product Development, and ExpertSource teams in the U.S. She is responsible for the comprehensive and timely delivery of Business Wire clients’ news release to print, broadcast, and online media organizations worldwide using Business Wire’s multiplatform delivery methods; and for developing new media tools and services for the distribution, availability,

and use of those news releases as part of Business Wire's file of breaking news content.

Q: Why did Business Wire enhance its news release template with social media?

A: Because of the proliferation of news online and all the places we deliver to; they are all multiplatform. We actually found very quickly that the visibility of those releases now better serve the audience that we reach. In addition, we're able to help clients enhance their releases and start thinking "bigger" about what the news release can do for them as they're writing it.

Q: Are news releases reaching more than just the media?

A: It's a new world. Today's news release goes well beyond just getting into the newspaper. We developed EON, which simply stands for our product called Enhanced Online News, a coproduction or a partnership we have with PR Web.

Q: Do you have to be a Web 2.0 guru to understand EON?

A: When we educate a client on EON, we start with the hardest and most advanced features first. In some cases many companies are already incorporating elements of EON, but might be missing subtle opportunities. For example, last year Business Wire began to deliver its files in XHTML. Many clients don't realize what XHTML is and how it serves an important function. Basically, clients already send us their releases in a Word format. Before they use a print version of that release, they often include different types of formatting, including bold, italics, symbols, sub-headlines, and the like. However, many times they forward to us a completely stripped-down version of the release because often they would see that once it was delivered on the wire, it was in plain text. Not because we delivered it that way; on the contrary, we delivered it very robust with lots of content. However, a lot of the media organizations,

newsrooms, or the online sites are not set up to display the release with all the bells and whistles we were sending. Some of them, frankly, had a policy against including things like anchor text or hyperlinks because they didn't want visitors who surf off their site to go elsewhere.

Now, we're trying to tell our clients, "We're reinventing you to put all this stuff back in again because not only is it something that makes that news release easier to read, but it makes it more user friendly, more like a page of Web content as you're composing it. Actually, that's how it's being viewed when you can display it with its XHTML. You should be using links, putting in bold, and using subheads because these additional features equal importance and relevancy to the search engine.

Q: Does including XHTML give you better results with search engine optimization? Will your audience be able to find your releases easier?

A: A hundred things can be done to a page of content that can make it more important to the search engine, and XHTML is a part of this. Bold, italic, and certainly the anchor text (if you use anchor text, you're just using the plain words, then you hyperlink it underneath), and hyperlinks are key parts of that search engine optimization. These are things that writers of the release sometimes might not utilize. When you think about a headline or a subhead, that's what you see on the Google results, and it's that headline or subhead that's going to convince you whether you want to click over to that full text or not. You need to remember this point when you're writing the release. We basically say to clients there might be 100 things you could put on a list of things that will help your search engine optimization. We also recommend the use of social media tags in news releases. Now this document is an interactive one because it's shown on Web sites that are not simply one-way street content but content audiences can interact with if they want. They can save it or even share it. Perhaps they might want to e-mail it to their friends, or they can Digg it—submit it to those social networks. It's no longer a straight communication from the communications department out to the media. A lot more back and forth happens because of the social media.

Q: What happened when Business Wire first introduced the Smart News Release in 1998?

A: When we launched the Smart News Release in 1998, it opened a whole new realm. When we incorporated the Smart News Release features (the video, audio, and graphics) a long time ago, it changed how that page was displayed and the click-through rate. When you have a multimedia, a graphic, or a logo running with the news release where it's showing alongside of the Google headline, people are going to click on it more. There's a much higher click-through rate for something that has a thumbnail next to it as opposed to a plain text headline.

Q: Would you say Business Wire is ahead of the curve because in 1998 not a lot of companies were jumping on board to see interactive video or audio?

A: We've always been very innovative. Actually, Business Wire was the first wire service to have a Web site. The very day we launched our site, we never launched for the story of Business Wire; rather every day from day one, the front page had news relevant to our customers.

Q: What do you think social media means for PR professionals?

A: It's very exciting, and it's very powerful. Right now, there's probably not a better time to be in PR. It's so funny when I hear people say it's the death now of the wire, or it's the death of public relations because now everybody has a voice and user-generated content. But, who's in a better position to capitalize on a world full of user-generated content than professional communicators and professional marketers, and those who have something to tell, a great story to tell, and the talent and skills to tell it.

Q: Are you finding that more Business-to-Consumer (B2C) companies are using EON or Business-to-Business (B2B)?

A: It's definitely started to be incorporated more quickly with the consumer companies. We have product announcements, rollouts, renovations, and updates. We have many different kinds of announcements, so it's "a no brainer" that brands will definitely use enhanced releases to tell

the story; to show or use visuals rather than just tell a story with words. For B2B, it's being used in earning releases; you have links to the Webcasts and conference calls. That's been going on for a long time. Now, it's just become more formalized.

Q: Because journalists are such an important part of social media, does Business Wire talk to the media, do you research their needs, or do you just take it from the communications person's perspective?

A: Oh no, we feel like we serve two masters at Business Wire and always have—there's the client side, but the media is equally important because they're the ones we serve and inform of the clients' news. We have a staff of 15 media relations professionals worldwide that do nothing but make sure the journalists can get the client's news in any form they want. That's why it's called multiplatform. If they want a customized email, RSS, if they want a feed directly into their newsrooms, if they want to go on the Web, anyway they want to slice and dice it, we'll get it to them the way they want it. We're serving print journalists, broadcast journalists, bloggers, and citizen journalists.

Q: When you take the polls of these journalists, do you find more and more are asking for the sophisticated social media tools?

A: I think the main thing is that 98 percent of journalists are going online to search just like everybody else. They're going to Google to find story ideas. They're going to blogs. So, as much as you have to be present, that's very important. As far as social media tags and other features, I think that there's an increasing amount of people who are utilizing RSS and social network tags, including journalists as they are trying to find information that covers their beat. It goes back to Media Relations 101: When you write newsworthy content that can easily be found, contains the concepts and interests, and is targeted, it's all good no matter how it's delivered (even if that's delivered by carrier pigeon). With the social media news release, there's kind of a component that gives all the information to you in pieces, and then journalists reassemble those pieces on the other side and build their own story.

Q: Do you feel most editors are set up to see video and anything that is advanced on the media side?

A: Oh, certainly at this point. They're seeing the releases in various ways, and we'd say multiplatform because they're so redundant. They're not only getting the feed on their desks, but we think that journalists are pretty savvy to get what they need and see information in a variety of ways.

Q: How does the EON platform work?

A: Through PR Web, we have a search engine-optimized platform; a place for those releases to live so it's easier for those search engines to find them over a longer period of time. That's the trick because relevancy and "recency" are equally important. You could have really relevant content, but if it's older, it's not going to compete as well with something that's new. We did some really clever things to accomplish that: Everything from including the keyword in the URL so it's another instance of the keyword, to having a PDF. You know when you get search results on Google and it asks whether you would like to view as an HTML or as a PDF, having that available right under the headline makes it portable in effect.

Q: What about blogs? Are you able to see if someone is talking about your news release topic?

A: Because of the nature of blogs and of social media, it is first important to recognize that you must be part of the conversation. It is not advisable to push your news release to a blogger without permission and certainly not without being familiar with what they blog about. Communicators are sometimes hesitant to engage with bloggers, but treating bloggers using the best practices of media relations can be a very valuable audience to cultivate and target, if you are willing to engage. You can use RSS news readers and other technologies to monitor the blogosphere the same way you monitor for clips in MSM (mainstream media). But, the fact is the conversation is still going on—it's better to know it exists and have the ability to monitor it and become part of the conversation.

Q: Do most clients want to monitor a conversation to see if it's increasing or decreasing and then take the appropriate action?

A: Yes, you can't get all worked up about somebody on a blog saying something wrong. The beautiful part about the interactive nature of blogging and social media is if you're engaged in a part of the conversation in the blogosphere...if you are present and clearly identify yourself as an interested party or company spokesperson, if you don't like what they're saying, you go to their blog and comment. The happy surprise is often when anybody is being treated unfairly by a blogger, members of the community, fans of the company, happy customers, and others come to your public defense or correct incorrect information or impressions for you because they are also part of the conversation.

These new tools, technologies, and delivery and measurement options for news releases has really served to put the "Public" back in Public Relations.

Social Media Template: A PR Pro's Opinion

Many communications professionals are weighing in on the subject of the social media template. According to Phil Gomes, Vice President of Edelman, although the name Social Media News Release has all the right buzzwords, in his opinion, a news release is not an inherently social concept. He instead prefers the term "New Media Release" as a more apt descriptor.

Edelman decided to make its own Web-based proprietary software wizard, dubbed "StoryCrafter," for its clients. One of the first Edelman clients to take advantage of the enhanced news release format was Palm. "They were the first to use our software publicly for their Palm Treo Accessories announcement," explained Gomes. The announcement was released in April 2007, and since then the Edelman client has been eager to try new communications tools, including blogging.

Gomes discussed how philosophically, companies *want* to explore new technologies and tools that are available. However, if you walk up to a

Vice President of a company and say, “You must blog and you must podcast,” you might be speaking in another tongue. When you discuss the news release and call it by name, everyone universally understands. Gomes stated, “There are wild eyed evangelists talking in *social media* terms instead of *communications* terms—regardless of the many voices, this isn’t necessarily going to move the peanut forward.”

Although there are success stories, Gomes feels that companies and communications professionals are still reluctant to embrace the social media release. After all, it was in October 2006 that BusinessWire celebrated the 100th anniversary of the news release. There has not been any attempt until now to give the traditional news release a facelift. He mentioned that although there have been significant improvements in distribution of the news release, there haven’t been any substantial changes to its format. “Now is a great time to take a look at social media in the news release and explore how the Web affects communication.” Gomes pointed out that the social media template makes multimedia a standard component and not an add-on. Additionally, communications professionals have complained for decades about the length and the language of releases; often news releases have become far too long and the language too technical to understand. When you use social media—for instance, hyperlinks in the body of the news release—you take the explanatory burden off the release as you can simply link your release to a data sheet with more technical product or industry information.

Palm’s StoryCrafter-based releases are full of useful resources for journalists following Palm’s news announcements. The template includes hyperlinks, multimedia, RSS, resources including del.icio.us and Digg, Technorati tags, track back, and comments on the release. Not all companies are ready to make the full conversion to social media, however many of the larger leading companies are paving the way.

Gomes believes that all industries will benefit from the social media template. The efforts seen in 2007 are mostly by the technology industry. However, just about any company can make a more useful news-release tool. “Eventually, professionals will begin to prepare their releases as they do B-Roll packages and will need to get used to telling their brand’s news quickly and be able to share the information with audiences on-the-fly.

Someday, we all might want to walk around with our handheld video camcorders. In the new PR 2.0 toolkit, a camcorder is in your pocket.” When asked if it will be more difficult and if it will take longer for larger companies to approve social media news releases with B-Roll video that’s “rough cut and on-the-fly,” Gomes commented that it depends on the organization’s investor relations or legal department. Approval might have “extra check boxes.” However, communications professionals will work with departments that touch regulatory issues and develop a series of rules for multimedia usage in releases. “Communications departments will quickly get hobbled if it’s a constant, protracted exercise of Mother May I,” mentioned Gomes. “The role of regulatory is critical, but at the same time, companies need to communicate quickly. A balance must be struck.”

Gomes talked about his perspective regarding the relationship between traditional media relations professionals and journalists. He’s spoken with several professionals who feel that new media is great; however, there’s the underlying feeling that new media takes away a touch point between the PR person and the journalist. Gomes disagrees, “Who will win the hearts and minds of the journalist? It’s the person who removes the barriers.” That’s exactly what social media does. Anything that makes a journalist’s job easier is a win-win situation for everyone involved in the story. Of course, with or without social media, the release must deliver in a format that is easy to understand, simple to digest, and most of all is well written. Gomes further pointed out, “No format will ever solve the fact that many professionals have lost the craft of writing.” For Gomes, the bottom line is that we improve the way we communicate. The social media template is a step in the right direction.

The news release’s first facelift was a big change in the communications world. Keep in mind the following points as you consider the use of social media in your news releases:

- Use a social media news release template to enable your intended audiences to gather relevant materials within the news release framework, create their own news story, and assemble the information more efficiently.

- Not every journalist wants or needs the most sophisticated SMR. You can begin to add social media to your releases slowly based on the requirements of your audience and their technological acceptance level.
- Be prepared at any time to upgrade your news-release template with new media tools, including RSS, podcasts, multimedia, hyperlinks, Technorati tags, and the like.
- The true SMR does not abandon several of the original elements of the news release. These new social media templates still contain memorable and meaningful components of the traditional release.
- You can use simple programming methods or techniques to easily start the SMR process yourself or work closely with your in-house programmer to get the job done.
- If you do not have the resources in-house to build your own SMR, there are PR 2.0 experts ready to assist you. Many PR service providers are forging ahead with their social media templates to help brands move forward with a better tool for communications.
- With a social media news release, you are assisting journalists with little resources to “do more with less.”⁷ Your social media template helps them to develop their stories completely and accurately, with access to more information in a much quicker period of time.
- By incorporating social media into your communications tools, you help to change the way that news is reported in the 21st Century.

Endnotes

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**THE TRUTH
ABOUT**

EMAIL MARKETING

“Email Marketing is
extremely cost
efficient, targeted,
and measurable...”

Simms Jenkins

Nationally known email marketing expert and CEO of BrightWave Marketing



This book reveals 49 proven email marketing best practices and bite-size, easy-to-use techniques that get results.



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The Truth About Email Marketing

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


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TRUTH

5

Don't be cheap:
Email cuts other costs,
so invest in it

 If you've been reading up until this point, you already know why email is more cost-effective than any other type of marketing channel. But just because email is inexpensive doesn't mean that you shouldn't invest in it. I'm not saying you have to go out and spend thousands of dollars straight out of the gate. I've already told you that email levels the playing field among businesses because of its low cost. However, I am saying that making an investment in your email program, whether it is with dollars, strategy, or a combination of the two, may help you cut costs in other areas.

Use email for test messaging and other marketing approaches

Dedicating internal resources to develop and implement a strategy (or better yet, taking some of your budget and spending it on email marketing) can uncover insightful data about your customers that may surprise you. An investment in email can help cut other costs by giving you a glimpse of what's working and what isn't. If you properly track email metrics, you'll be able to learn what your customers are responding to and what they're ignoring. You can determine which messages and creative elements they like or don't like or which products they are more likely to buy.

Until you can justify a large email marketing budget (I'll help you lay the foundation for this in Truth 6,) use your well-supported email efforts to help you save money on other channels. Consider the following scenario.

You have a new product to launch and have spent countless hours working on messaging. You finally get to the point where everyone in the company comes to an agreement, and you are ready to take it to market. Wouldn't you rather test your messaging through an email campaign before you invest thousands in an ad campaign that will give you little insight into how well it was received? Not to mention, going with email will allow you to make changes on-the-fly.

Making an investment in your email program, whether it is with dollars, strategy, or a combination of the two, may help you cut costs in other areas.

Or say you have two potential marketing messages for a new product or service. Email gives you the option of segmenting your list to test both messages. What other channel offers this at such a low cost and with such an immediate ability to analyze what performed better? This alone can save you thousands of dollars and ensure your other marketing campaigns have been properly tested and evaluated.

Directly cut operational costs with email

While driving sales and building relationships get the most attention when it comes to “showing off” email programs, one billion-dollar company that manages outsourced government programs demonstrates one of the smartest uses of email I’ve seen. This company has successfully used the channel to cut other costs, something I believe more marketers will be doing in the years to come.

As a company that manages many back-end programs for the government, it was utilizing many precious internal resources trying to maintain a call center that provided payment status information to inquiring Medicaid providers. Hoping to cut the cost of customer service representatives, the company decided to implement a weekly, personalized email message containing each provider’s current payment information. The email was sent on the same day and at the same time each week. This ensured that the providers had the information they needed in an easy and timely fashion, while allowing the company and its end client to save money and resources on the decrease in calls that resulted from the email program. Combine saving internal resources with a user-friendly email approach, and you have the best of both worlds: saving money and a subscriber base that gets the information it wants and needs. Other companies have increasingly tapped email marketing to reduce

Wouldn't you rather test your messaging through an email campaign before you invest thousands in an ad campaign that will give you little insight into how well it was received?

costs of traditional “*transactional*” (meaning related to your account with the company) communications for invoices, statements, and order confirmations.

Reduce other marketing costs

You can shave more dollars by reducing or eliminating costly catalogs and instead sending emails to subscribers and directing them to an online version of your catalog. The same can be applied to direct mail, which is another expensive marketing item. Email is a natural supplement or replacement for marketing communications previously delivered through the post office.

This is a powerful example of letting email do the work so that you can shrink costs and offer your customers more choice and control over how they receive what can often be critical communications. By taking this approach, the environmental benefits aren’t so bad either.



How to Win Sales & Influence Spiders

*Boosting Your
Business & Buzz
on the Web*

Catherine Seda

New
Riders

VOICES THAT MATTER™



Catherine Seda reveals how to attract new customers, search engine spiders and the press, simultaneously to skyrocket your sales while building your brand.



Google
Bookmarks



Delicious



Digg



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How to Win Sales & Influence Spiders

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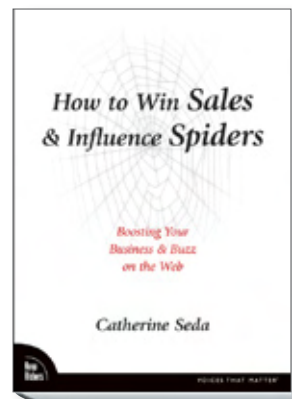
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New
Riders

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Blogging for Business

Everyone seems to have a blog. Your colleagues, your cousin, even your cat. Will your business die without one? No. Can a blog boost your business? Absolutely.

That is, if you create a smart blog marketing strategy. Otherwise, a blog is nothing but noise. Why? Because there are literally thousands of new blogs being created each day in the *blogosphere*, the universe of blogs. Just as with a Web site, you need to make your blog stand out from the crowd.

A *blog*, short for *weblog*, is an online journal published for the public to read. Typically, the author updates it frequently. At first glance, it looks like a Web site. Look closely, and you'll probably notice many fairly short posts organized by date. That's a blog. You can use tools such as Blogger, TypePad, Movable Type, or WordPress to create and manage your blog.

A blog gives you key communication opportunities. It gives you the ability to:

- ◆ Instantly publish timely information.
- ◆ Create a public, yet controllable, conversation with readers.
- ◆ Turn negative publicity into positive publicity.
- ◆ Build your status as an expert.
- ◆ Improve your organic search rankings.
- ◆ Get media coverage.
- ◆ Attract new clients.

And those are just a few of the benefits!

By comparison, a Web site seems stagnant next to a blog. Sure, you can update articles and press releases on your site. But it's not realistic to think that prospects and the press will bookmark your site to check back and see what's new with your company.

Even if you have an online newsletter, often called an *e-zine*, which is short for *electronic magazine*, only subscribers will see it. Although an e-zine is a powerful marketing tool, it's cut off from the rest of Web surfers—not to mention search engine spiders.

A blog, however, is a conversation out in the public space. Readers can stop in for a visit, sometimes post their comments, and even request direct delivery of your posts.

If you want to reach blog readers, simply spitting out company marketing materials won't work. Your blog must be personal, educational, and responsive.

Anyone Can Do It

Being responsive is becoming increasingly critical because blogs aren't solely published by companies. On the contrary. The popularity of blogging has skyrocketed because it's a quick and easy way for anyone to say anything. Everyone can be publishers. The question is: *What are bloggers saying?*

Some are saying nothing, some are saying something, and some are slamming your company. Wait. What? That's right. The blogosphere is a public relations powerhouse, which can work for you or against you.

The more visible your company is, the more likely it will be a target of good and bad press. Journalists aren't the instigators of negative news. Be on the alert for angry customers, consumer protection watchdogs, competitors, and anyone who just doesn't like you. Blogging is a highly visible outlet for unhappy people. A blog gets primetime visibility because it's juicy spider bait.

Search engine spiders scout out blogs because they are full of content that's constantly updated. Plus, blogs can attract links more easily than a Web site can. If you create a blog that serves the public, you'll continue to create a fan base that will link to your blog without you even asking them to. Because spiders love content-rich pages with quality links pointing to them, a blog can often be more appealing bait than a static Web site.

This discussion about engaging readers, responding to bad press, and baiting spiders should show that purely publishing a blog ain't marketing. Whether you already have a blog, or want to publish one, this chapter reveals sound strategies for leveraging supporters and complainers to get free publicity and new clients.

Stop Persuading, Start Engaging

First, let's start with what's on a blog. An author writes a series of posts or blog entries. Each post typically has the following features:

- ◆ Post title
- ◆ Permalink, the URL of the post
- ◆ Post copy
- ◆ Author's name
- ◆ Date and time of the author's post

If you let people post feedback, then you'll have a Comments section under each post. You might also show TrackBacks, which are links to other sites that mention your post.

To see a fun example of one, go to Park City Mountain Resort's Web site and click the blog link. (You'll see how the resort leverages its blog at the end of this chapter.)

Who Is the Ideal Blogger?

If you're a consultant, readers obviously want to hear from you personally.

A company's ideal blogger is the CEO, product developer, marketing manager, or someone whom readers would love to get the "inside scoop" from. You might invite several spokespeople to post. Each author could share a different peek into another side of your company. Having multiple authors also reduces the responsibility of any one person to keep the blog content fresh, which is one time management issue resolved.

Publishing your blog is not a job for an intern! Your authors are online PR spokespeople. These employees should embrace your company's values, have played on your team for a while, and understand what they shouldn't post in a public space that can reach millions of readers.

This isn't a job for your PR firm either. Blog readers want to hear from someone at your company, not your bodyguard who will publish prepared statements. Give your readers access to a real voice. And coach your blogging team to write as though they're having a casual conversation, instead of writing an article. Creating a casual conversation is an effective way to engage readers.

◆ **Note:** *A note to corporate executives: Your employees probably already have personal blogs, or will soon. Create a company blogging policy immediately. This generally includes a reiteration of your confidentiality contracts. And you should clearly state what should not be blogged about and communicate this information to your employees.*

What to Share

The beauty of a blog is its ability to grow your business without pushing a hard sales message at people. Yes, you should absolutely link your blog to your site, maybe even to specific products or services, if appropriate. But be careful. Overwhelming "Buy NOW!" content along with too many links to your own site will brand your blog as a big 'ole sales pitch in the eyes of your readers. You'll kill your blog.

Your job is to educate and engage. Do these two things and business will come your way. No sales pitch is needed. Leave that approach for advertising campaigns, not public relations ones.

Another blogging blunder is to regurgitate your company information on your blog. Save that for your site; it's not usually exciting stuff for a blog. To get, and keep, the attention of your readers you could share the following information:

- ◆ Quick "how-to" tips.
- ◆ Answers to a recent poll or survey you offered. (You could also offer a poll or a survey on your blog and ask readers to participate.)
- ◆ An interview with an industry celebrity or star.
- ◆ Comments about other blogs.
- ◆ Your opinion on a recent news story.
- ◆ Information about an event, conference, or trade show.

I'm sure you noticed that none of these are specifically about your company's products or services. You can certainly use your blog for company updates. Large corporations often use a separate blog to respond to customer service questions or announce updates to products that change constantly, like software. But assuming you're starting with one blog, think about creating content that's not always all about you.

Let's look at an example. Instead of solely talking about the products it sells, a pet supply store could write posts about:

- ◆ Seasonal pet health tips.
- ◆ Employees' personal stories about their pets.
- ◆ Animal adoption events sponsored by local animal shelters.
- ◆ A charity event the pet supply store will sponsor.
- ◆ Ways readers can help abandoned animals after a national disaster.

You really have an unlimited number of things you can write about—although, I'm guessing that if you don't already have a blog, you're worried about investing a huge amount of time to maintain one.

There are bloggers who post every single day, and they certainly get more exposure on the Web because they're publishing more content than other bloggers. Frequency is ideal. But if you're just getting started, try blogging monthly. (If you want, you can post comments on other people's blogs for a while before you create your own. You can get some good exposure this way, too). Then increase the frequency of your posts when you're ready.

Again, having multiple authors helps share the responsibility of keeping your blog updated.

Shorter posts help also. Understand that you're not writing an article. An effective post entry can be a few short paragraphs or even a few sentences. What you say, and how often you post, is more important than your word count.

An easy way to write often, while also keeping your content engaging, is to invite readers to participate. Ask a question. Ask for success stories. And ask for ideas. Although getting feedback might seem overwhelming, that's exactly what you want.

It's a Dialogue

A blog that doesn't allow people to post comments is a monologue. Boring. It can't truly be engaging unless you create an open dialogue. A dialogue is interesting.

Some blogging tools let you prevent people from posting comments altogether, or allow you to approve comments or even moderate comments before they're posted.

Jeremy Wright, author of *Blog Marketing*, strongly suggests that blog owners allow comments to be instantly posted. Otherwise, commentators could be confused or disappointed by not immediately seeing their comments live. For publishers who stay on top of their blogs, I see Jeremy's point. But I believe you should review and then approve comments before they're posted on your blog.

That's because if you're not constantly monitoring your blog or using a tool with anti-spam features, spammers can dirty a blog quickly with meaningless comments and links used to improve their search engine rankings or their clients' rankings. Unhappy customers or crafty competitors could post terrible things before you catch them. I say, check out comments before you publish them.

This sounds scary, I know. I didn't allow comments on my blog for the first few months of its life. While I was working away on a project, I freaked out thinking about reviewing comments at 1 a.m. when I finished working. I wasn't ready. It's okay if you're not ready either. As with any of the strategies mentioned in this book, take the steps you're ready to take. Publish a blog to get the feel of posting and discover your voice.

When you're ready, be accessible. Let people post comments. You get to learn what your customers need and want. You can even get instant feedback on an existing product or service, or one you're thinking about selling—free market research. This reason alone is why you, or a blog monitor you assign to the job, should keep an eye on your blog.

Ready to blog? Not quite yet. You know how to make your blog engaging. But before you type one word, be sure that what you write will get noticed by the spiders. If you do this correctly, they'll make your content visible to a whole new world of readers.

Emerging from the Clutter

The explosion of blogs makes it a challenge for new blog publishers to emerge from the clutter, but not impossible.

Start by making the search engine spiders work for you, especially since you don't have to pay them. How much of your blog you can optimize depends on your publishing tool. First, try and fit relevant keywords in these areas to seduce spiders:

Post Title

Placing keywords in your post title benefits you in two ways. First, because the title of a post is seen by readers, it's also seen by spiders. Don't use your core keywords in every title. That's spammy.

Remember how to create a keyword theme for your site from Chapter 1? Apply this concept to your blog. Use a variety of different keywords in post titles that support your blog's overall keyword theme. This technique helps attract readers who may see your posts' titles in the search results, as well as under a "Previous Posts" or "Archives" section on your blog. (Many blog publishing tools automatically file your posts under this kind of category, not to worry.)

There's a second way a post title can attract spiders. The post title might be used in the *permalink*, the URL of that blog post. For example, if the title of a pet supply store's post for its cat blog is "5 Steps for Raising a Healthy Kitten," the permalink for that post might look something like www.blogname.com/5-Steps-for-Raising-a-Healthy-Kitten. This is yummy spider bait. Hopefully,

your publishing tool creates unique permalinks for your posts. If not, it might be something you can change in your tool's settings.

Post Copy

Again, because readers see your post copy, spiders do too. So create relevant content. For example, a pet supply store's blog publisher shouldn't always post about his travel adventures without connecting his content back to pets. Irrelevant content isn't just confusing to readers, but spiders don't get it either. This pet store would have a tough time trying to rank well for pet-related keywords. The author isn't connecting his content to the company's keywords. Don't make that mistake, or it'll cost you valuable visibility in the search engines.

◆ **Tip:** *Feature your main point early in your post copy. When it's displayed in a feed reader (see the next section), people see your good stuff right away, even though they might not read the entire feed.*

Links

Blogs are great link bait, which basically means that you've got something worth linking to. Bloggers love linking to other blogs. If you've got valuable content and get the word out about your blog, you'll get links without asking. Of course, asking doesn't hurt, especially if your blog is new. Who loves links? Spiders do. As they're crawling the Web, spiders have a better chance of finding your blog if you've got a lot of links to it. And they'll reward your blog with a high link popularity score, too.

Don't forget to link to other blogs and sites. In your quest to brand your blog as an expert resource, you've got to link to others.

Blogrolling is the act of linking to other blogs. A blogroll is similar to a page of links you might have on your Web site. However, instead of creating a "Resources" page as you might for your site, a blogroll is generally placed in your blog's main navigation. You should definitely link to authority resources that are relevant for your readers. Doing this improves your status as an expert, which spiders notice as well. A blog or site with no outbound links seems awfully suspicious.

You just learned three essential steps for optimizing your blog. Simple, right? Optimizing your blog isn't radically different from optimizing your Web site. But because many business professionals don't realize this, they end up publishing a blog that's not spider friendly. Now that you know this, you can optimize yours so you can say "Come on in, spiders. This blog tastes great!"

Start with these techniques, and you'll easily attract spiders as well as the human audience. It doesn't hurt to push your content out to people. There are a lot of hungry blog readers out there—so feed them.

Set Your Blog Free with Feeds and Pings

You can't sit back hoping readers will return to your blog. A few loyal readers might. Most won't. Don't fret—they're not gone yet. You can invite them to subscribe to your *feed*. This allows you to deliver your posts to them.

There are two main types of feed standards: RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds and Atom feeds. Each is a format that collects and distributes content from various blogs and Web sites. You can offer one or both feeds on your blog. A feed reader or news reader is needed to display the RSS or Atom feed as readable content. Bloglines and FeedReader are examples of free feed readers.

Still with me? Offering a feed allows people to subscribe to your blog posts and receive them through their feed reader. It's kind of like a Web site visitor subscribes to your e-zine and must then check his e-mail program to read it.

I'm not going to talk about how to create an RSS or Atom feed because, well, I'm not that kind of girl. That's true geek speak; I'm only half geek. There are free resources on the Web, if you're interested in learning how to do this.

For example, FeedBurner, which is a feed management provider, offers a helpful "Feed 101" section on its site. Or you can hire an Internet geek for the implementation part. (Thankfully, feeds are built into most blogging platforms so you're not required to know how to do the technical stuff.) Let me tell you why these technologies are important and how they can be leveraged to attract sales, spiders, and status.

So far in this chapter, I've focused on attracting the attention of prospects and search engine spiders. What about the press? Getting quoted by them instantly improves your expert status and can immediately boost your business.

And if the publication is online, a link from that authority site to yours is priceless. Therefore, make your blog newsworthy.

Business professionals who understand blogging for the press are posting case studies, statistics, tips, special report summaries, and highly valuable information that is newsworthy. Please highlight this. I'm telling you what we, the press, really want. And the good news is that your prospects appreciate this information, too.

It's becoming increasingly important to offer feeds to hook journalists. Or at least post comments on blogs that do. Journalists watch blogs for story ideas and sources. In fact, many of them subscribe to blogs via news readers. If you want to increase your chances of being featured, feed the press. Because even if you've got direct access to them, sometimes your content isn't right. Other times, your timing isn't right. At some point, your news will be timely and relevant for someone's story. A feed keeps your new content in front of them.

Of course, journalists are searching the blogosphere, too. And there's another way to get their attention. Actually, you can reach spiders this way also. Ping them. It doesn't hurt them, I promise.

In the blogging world, *pinging* means telling other sites you've updated your blog. The blog publishing tool you're using might have a pinging feature. You can also use Ping-O-Matic or Pingoat, which are free services that will ping blog engines for you.

Okay, okay, you're not actually pinging the spiders of big search engines such as Google, MSN Search, and Yahoo!. However, because those spiders do crawl the results of blog engines, pinging indirectly helps you reach the major search engines. Besides, journalists as well as prospects are searching the blog engines anyway.

If you're new to blog marketing and this feels overwhelming, skip feeds and pings for now. You can come back to this section when you're ready to explore more ways to get your blog content out on the Web.

Blog marketing is taking off because it's fast and powerful. You can become famous overnight. However, there's good publicity and bad publicity. Because the blogosphere is fueled by consumer-created content, bloggers can play a significant role in your online reputation. This also means they can ignite an out-of-control fire that damages your brand without you knowing it.

Insider Insights: Jeremy Wright



*Jeremy Wright (www.ensight.org) is a blogpreneur, president of blog network b5media, and author of *Blog Marketing*. He writes for *Ensign* and consults on blogging.*

Photo: Jeremy Wright, CEO, b5media, Inc. (www.b5media.com)

What's the #1 mistake marketers make with blog marketing?

Blogs aren't like other marketing tools. There are different rules to play by and the audience, culture, and expectations for blog communication are completely different. The vast majority of blogs have no message and no authenticity. Engage your audience; the more you listen, the more you're listened to. And communicate in a real human voice. It's more like sitting around talking to friends at the dining room table than talking to peers at the boardroom table.

What's your favorite simple but powerful tip?

The first step to blogging is not to blog. Read blogs...for weeks. Understand what's going on, comment on articles you have an opinion on, and generally get involved in the small section of blogging that interests you. Then start a blog.

How has blog marketing helped your business?

My entire business is blog-based.

Attract Good Press, Fight Bad Press

The blogosphere is the wild West of the Web. People are posting—constantly. What bloggers are saying about your business can spread like wildfire. This can catapult your celebrity status or burn your brand. Because the rise and fall from stardom is highly visible online, reputation management is quickly becoming a critical part of Internet marketing. Pay attention to bloggers because they can support or slam your reputation.

In his book, Jeremy Wright sheds light on the frightening power of blogs. He shared that a blogger figured out how to pick a Kryptonite lock with a Bic pen and posted about his discovery. The post was picked up by Engadget, a gadget blog with over 250,000 readers a day. Then the *New York Times* and Associated

Press featured the story. Kryptonite was even hit with a class-action lawsuit. According to Jeremy, Kryptonite knew about the blog fire, but didn't respond because they were dealing with other issues of this crisis internally.

This horror story is every business professional's worst nightmare. While most companies will thankfully never experience this kind of painful publicity, it could happen.

You can stay tuned into the blogosphere with IceRocket, Feedster, Technorati, and other blog engines and directories. Search for your company name, product and service names, names of key executives, and your URL. You can also monitor these keywords through Blogpulse, which is a free monitoring tool that can be used to track blogs. It's quite handy.

To Respond, or Not to Respond

It's important to respond to unfavorable posts where appropriate. By posting your comments on blogs that say not-so-nice things about your business, you show that you're tuned in.

Your customers might be blowing up on blogs because your company didn't process their refund, answer their e-mail, or return their call. Frustrated, they're releasing their anger on their blogs. It's kinda like therapy. Try to find angry customers and let them know you care about them. Apologize, fix the situation, and tell them it's been fixed, or offer them a solution to their problem. Not only will your previously unhappy customers thank you for your response, but you'll also score major brownie points with those blog readers, who could become your future customers. Plus, the press watches blogs so your response could lead to a glowing PR opportunity. You never know.

Unfortunately, not all complainers are customers you can help. Some bloggers are simply unhappy people. For whatever reason, they decide to hurl general insults at you or your company from their blog. Other bloggers are competitors trying to smear your name. Still others are creating controversy as link bait.

Link Bait

Link bait is content created to attract links. A lot of links equals good spider bait. So, everyone should do link baiting, provided it creates valuable content

with readers in mind. But be aware that a blogger might attack you or your company as a link-baiting tactic.

To my horror, while wrapping up this book, I was personally attacked on a blog for an article I had written. The post wasn't just unprofessional—it was mean and untrue. I was upset. Then something beautiful happened.

Several of my colleagues, who are also recognized experts, immediately posted comments on that blog. They attacked the personal attacks on me, defended my article's editorial integrity, praised my first book, and mentioned my long-standing reputation in the industry. And several said the personal attack was just a link-baiting tactic. Wow! I couldn't have asked for better publicity.

I also responded, explaining my side of the story without responding to the personal attacks. Next, I invited readers to debate the content of my article. The buzz was over in five days.

A few authors have shared similar stories with me; they let others jump to their defense instead of responding.

If you find yourself in a similar situation, know that you have several options. You might do nothing. You could respond. Or you may use your own blog to publicize your side of the story and invite feedback from your community of readers. On that note—whenever you're blogging, think before you post.

Legally Speaking

As reported by *The Washington Times* on October 12, 2006, a Florida jury awarded \$11.3 million in damages to a woman who said she was defamed on an Internet message board. Currently, there are several lawsuits against bloggers.

Tempted as you may be to fend off a personal attack with a personal attack, or launch one, it's not a good legal or ethical idea to do so. Always be professional. What you say today might be available on the Web forever.

The bigger and more popular your blog, the better link bait and spider bait it becomes. Blogs are spider magnets. Much more so than your Web site. Although I don't suggest creating a blog solely to seduce spiders, higher organic rankings are a profitable perk. There's a dark side of blogging. Let's talk about spammers and sploggers.

Spammers and Sploggers

Wherever there are search engine optimization opportunities, there are spammers. Blog spamming is a favorite tactic because it's free, easy, and effective.

As a blog owner, you need to protect your blog from comment spammers. If you plan to hire an SEO professional, make sure you don't hire a *splogger*, someone who creates spam blogs as a way to get immediate organic rankings.

Most spammers aren't doing it for sport; they're doing it for money. Although spammers could be promoting their own company's products or services, they're more likely affiliates, ad publishers, or SEO service providers.

Affiliates promote other companies to get a commission for clicks, leads, or sales they generate. (If you have or want to launch an affiliate program, be sure to read Chapter 7, "Unleashing an Affiliate Force," first.) Spammers might also be ad publishers. For example, they could be Google AdSense or Yahoo! Publishing Network partners who get a commission when the ads on their site or blog get clicked. (Read more about that in Chapter 9, "Reaching Out Through Contextual Advertising.") Finally, there are SEO service providers who spam.

Remember in my first chapter on SEO I talked about the importance of a link strategy? Well, spammers have discovered a way to exploit it. Two popular blog spamming techniques include the following:

- ◆ Posting comments in your blog to embed a link to the company(ies) the spammer is promoting
- ◆ Creating splogs, or fake blogs used for spamming, to embed links to the companies the splogger is promoting

Blog Protection

Comment spamming has been around for several years. This practice was refined with guestbooks. Spammers developed a robot, or *bot*, that would search the Web for guestbooks and then post a generic comment in the guestbook, along with a link to the spammer's site. This program could post to thousands of guestbooks at a time. Compare that to running a "real" link campaign.

It takes weeks to identify relevant Web sites, ask for a link from their site to yours, possibly post a link to their site in return, and follow up to ensure your link has been posted on link partners' sites. And how many links could you

get this way—a few dozen? That took too long and was too much work for spammers. They played the numbers game. They developed a bot to post to thousands of guestbooks, which tricked the spiders into rewarding them for their link quantity, not quality. It was a temporary tactic, but it worked.

Guestbook spamming tools were the predecessors to blog spamming tools. Because blog spammers buy domains to burn, they don't care about being caught. If you're allowing anyone to post a comment to your blog immediately, you could get hit by their tools at some point—unfortunately, faster and more often than you'd expect.

Again, that's why I recommend changing your publishing tool settings to give you editorial discretion over comments. If you're going to be an active blog publisher, then follow Jeremy Wright's recommendation of paying for a management tool that has an anti-spam feature that removes the obvious spam.

Keep a careful eye on your comments anyway. Comments like "Thanks for sharing such great info" or "I love your blog" should get your attention. It'll be your call to remove something that seems suspicious if you're not sure. After all, some readers might give short and sweet compliments. To investigate, check out the URL included with the comment. If it links to a casino, erectile enhancement drug, or porn site, you've been spammed.

The Rise of Splogging

Sploggers create fake blogs littered with links to sites they're promoting. A recovering spammer told me that in no time at all he can program a bot that generates thousands of content pages optimized for the keywords the spiders were crawling the Web for—in real time!

This kind of program may have aided in the splogging attack on Google's free blogging tool, Blogger, and Google's free blog hosting service, BlogSpot, in October 2005.

According to CNET News.com's article on October 20, 2005, the previous week a splogger published tens of thousands of splogs. Many of the splogs included names of well-known bloggers, which clogged the RSS readers of the people who were tracking posts by the well-known bloggers. Not to mention the fact that the blogosphere and search engines were polluted by these thousands of splogs.

continues on page 56

Success Story

Park City Mountain Resort



URL: www.ParkCityMountain.com

Contact: Krista Parry

Title: Communications Manager

◆ Goals/Challenges

What were your goals for blogging?

First, we saw it as a way to set ourselves apart from our competition and to connect with our guests and team members in a new way. Second, we wanted our blog to be and sound authentic, and certainly didn't want it to seem like another marketing ploy. So, we utilized individuals in different departments and facets of our business to blog. We felt that having a cross-section of bloggers would allow our readers to better understand the scope of our business. Third, we wanted a way to respond immediately to positive and negative items concerning the resort.

What challenges/concerns did you face implementing the campaign?

Our toughest challenge was getting upper management to approve the campaign! We had to explain how a blog could help our communication with our guests and team members. We also had to address their time-management concerns about being able to keep the content fresh but not spend all of our time doing it.

◆ Strategy***Describe your implementation strategy.***

Although we didn't have a set schedule when we rolled out our blog, we did have a formal goal of having a daily post for the first few weeks after the initial blog rollout. From there we wanted to have a post at least every other day through the winter season. We did sit down with our principal bloggers to create a list of topics to post about, but we didn't set it up as an editorial calendar because we recognized that an authentic blog reflects topics that are as current as possible.

How long did it take to launch your blogging campaign?

Our initial launch took about one to two weeks. We did a soft launch; then after receiving positive feedback, we placed a link to our blog on our home page.

What problems or surprises did you encounter, and how did you resolve them?

With seven blog authors, consistency and management of who will post, when they'll post, and how often, have been our biggest challenges.

◆ Results***What results did you achieve?***

In two weeks of launching our blog, we saw our blog traffic increase by 2,000 percent. We also saw it as a tool to distribute information to our guests. When one of our chairlifts experienced mechanical problems and was closed down for five days, we used our blog as a way to provide our guests with real-time information.

What's your #1 recommendation for blog marketers?

The best technique for effective blog marketing is consistent communication. Know what you want your blog to achieve and then create timely and interesting postings that'll bring people back!

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While I hate search engine and blog spam, I hold the tiniest speckle of admiration for SEO spammers. They're brilliant, creative people. They're outlaws of the Web. It's dangerous to hire them, and it's annoying to deal with the chaos they've created, yet I find stories of their mayhem a little fascinating. I can't help it. Okay, this extreme clogging of feed readers is not cool. That's similar to e-mail spam, which is evil.

I'm sharing information on how comment spamming and splogging work because you need to get educated on this stuff. If you're informed, you'll be able to better protect your blog from spammers, and hopefully you won't accidentally hire a splogger.

There are legitimate ways of marketing your blog. Quite frankly, for a little more work upfront than spamming, the payoffs are significantly bigger. You'll create a community of prospects, customers, and press who will see you as the expert. Spiders will notice too, and will reward your blog with extra opportunities for visibility and resulting business.

Tips to Remember

You can participate in blog marketing in two ways: post comments on other people's blogs or become a blog publisher. Both are good. Yet when you're ready, launch your own company blog.

First, think about what your readers want to hear from you as a business professional. How can you add value to their lives?

Then think about how to blog in a way that will invite the press and spiders to check you out. When they notice you, they'll carry your message far beyond your current blog readers.

To up your buzz factor, jump into social media. Even though blogs are social media, I've dedicated a separate chapter to the social communities. These are networking communities with their own sets of tools and marketing opportunities. Let's head there next.

Steven Holzner



Facebook

Leverage Social Media to Grow Your Business

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Using true case studies, Holzner introduces powerful new techniques from today's smartest Facebook marketers...and helps you avoid pitfalls that can cost you money and credibility. You'll learn how to create bottom-up, "viral" Facebook marketing programs that achieve maximum results at minimum cost!



Steve Holzner

Facebook Marketing

Leverage Social Media to Grow Your Business



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Hosting Your Own Facebook Events

In this chapter:

- Welcome to Facebook events
- Understanding events
- Registering to attend an event
- Creating your own marketing event
- Using events to market your brand
- Spreading the word about your event

Welcome to Facebook Events

Facebook events give you a lot of value for your marketing dollar—in part because they're free. They're a great way to rally Facebook members around your product, brand, band, or company.

In Facebook, an event is a free page that publicizes an upcoming occasion of note for your company or group. You can use one to push marketing events, sponsored gatherings, corporate milestones, product launches, discount savings days, and more.

Each Facebook event gets its own page, and that includes by default (you can remove these items) a wall, a discussion board, links, photos, and videos. And you can display the profile photos of people who've registered to attend your event. That's great if you have a localized marketing event you want to publicize.

You can invite friends to your event. The invitation those friends receive is unlike the invitation to be your friend—it requests an RSVP. In fact, you can also add admins to the event, and they can invite their own friends as well.

All in all, Facebook events can be a great way to publicize what's going on with your brand or offering to many people, and to invite them to show up. Events let you manage your guest list, inviting new friends at any time. They're a great way to build community for many marketers.

Facebook events were designed to be restricted to a particular location. The idea is that each event corresponds to a place and time, and when you create an event, Facebook asks you to list the event's location, city, and state. However, that doesn't stop people from registering events that are not location-specific, such as "Inside Out Pants Day!," whose location is given as "Anywhere you wear pants!"

As a marketer, events are great if you want to get people rallied around, at a specific time and location. Say you have a factory opening, or a company picnic, or a big sale. All those can be popularized by Facebook events. The only requirement is that the event have a particular location and time.

Let's take a look at what you have in a Facebook event.

All About Facebook Events

On any logged-in Facebook page, you'll see a link at left for Events (along with the usual links for Photos, Video, Groups, Notes, and so on). Clicking that link opens the page shown in Figure 4.1.

That's your event manager page, which lets you handle and track your events.

Also note the Search for Events box, which lets you search for events by keyword, and the Create an Event button, which you'll see how to use in the second half of this chapter.

As you can see in Figure 4.1, I don't have any events added in this account. How can you find events of interest?

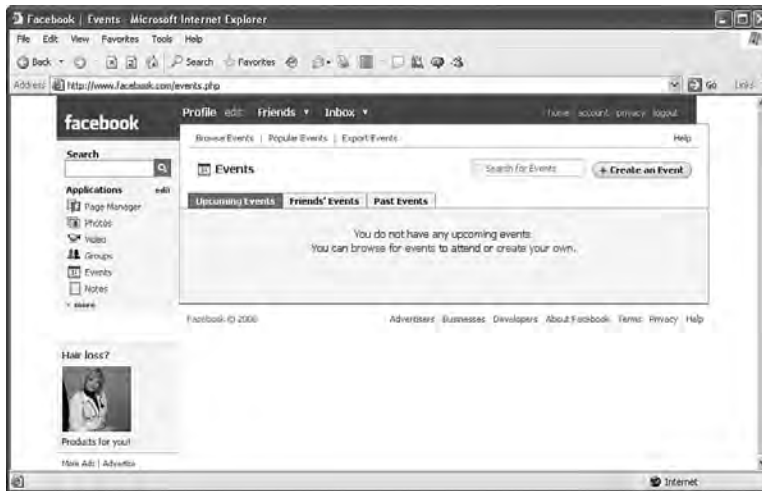


Figure 4.1
The event manager page.

Checking Out Your Friends' Events

The first thing you might do to find interesting events is to look at the events your friends have added to their list of events. As always in friend-driven Facebook, this is one of the fastest ways that word can spread virally about your marketing efforts. Everyone can check out their friends' events. This is probably second only to the New Feed, which displays new events that your friends have added.

Clicking the Friends' Events tab shows any events your friends have added to their events list, as shown in Figure 4.2.

As shown in Figure 4.2, you get significant information about the event:

- The title of the event (UMSL-Opera Theatre Presents "Dido and Aeneas")
- A tagline for the event (one night only come see the opera of Dido and Aeneas)
- The entity hosting the event (UMSL-Opera Theatre)
- The type of event, according to Facebook's list of possible types (Music/Arts - Performance)

- The location of the event (Touhill Performing Arts Center- Lee Theater)
- The time of the event (Today from 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm)
- Which of your friends have joined this event (Nancy Conner)



Figure 4.2
A friend's event.

Want to add this event to your My Events list? Click the Add to My Events link on the right of Figure 4.2.

Want more information about the event first? Click the View Event link, or click the event's title, or the event's photo. Doing so opens the page for the event.

Taking a Look at an Event

As an example, let's take a look at an event used for marketing. Taking a look at the UMSL-Opera Theatre's event opens the page for this event, as shown in Figures 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5.

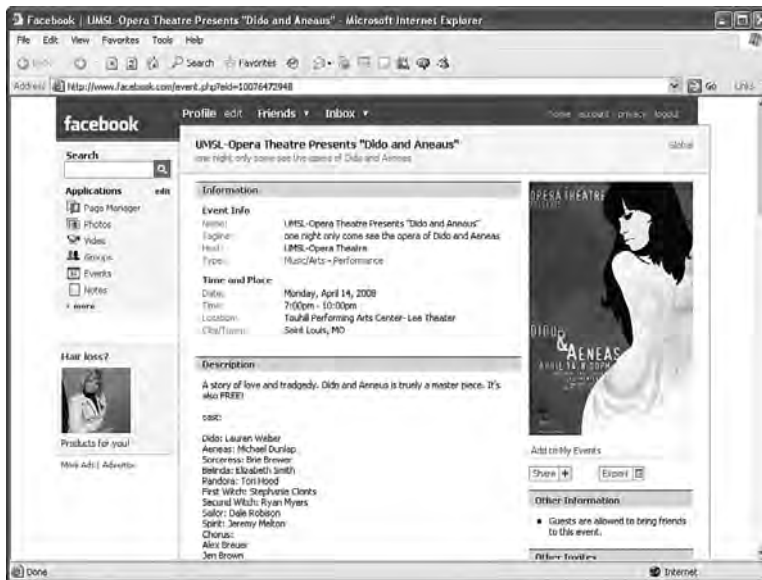


Figure 4.3
An event page, top third.

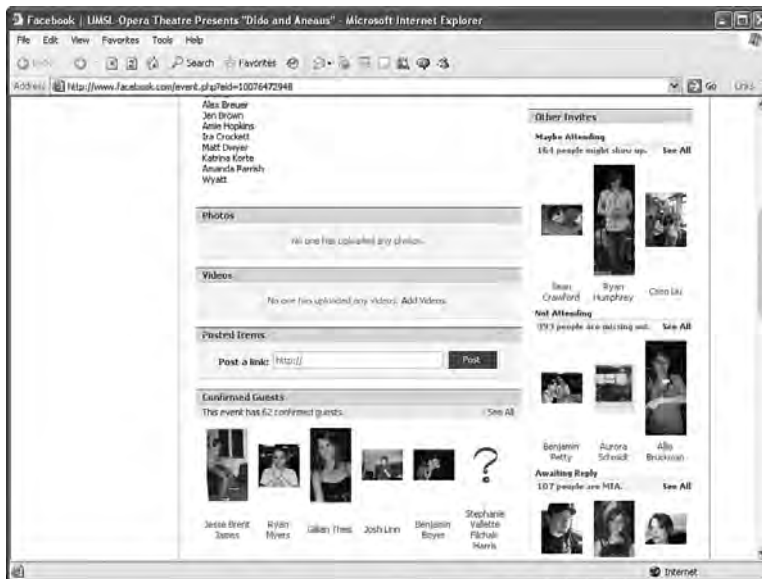


Figure 4.4
An event page, middle third.

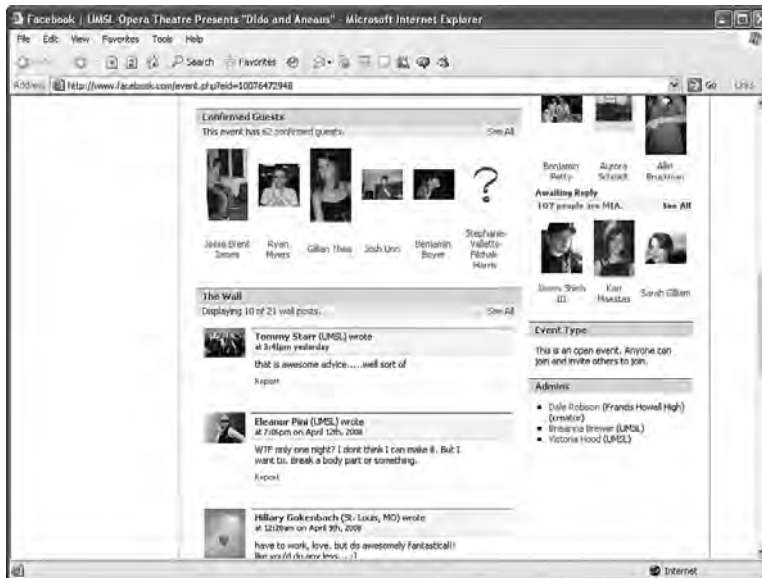


Figure 4.5

An event page, bottom third.

Let's take this event in stages, starting with the top third of the page, which appears in Figure 4.3. At the top of the page are the event's title (UMSL-Opera Theatre Presents "Dido and Aeneas") and tagline (one night only come see the opera of Dido and Aeneas).

The Information Section

We'll take apart the event's Information Section now. Under the title and tagline in this event is more data about the event in the Information section:

Event Info

Name: UMSL-Opera Theatre Presents "Dido and Aeneas"

Tagline: one night only come see the opera of Dido and Aeneas

Host: UMSL-Opera Theatre

Type: Music/Arts - Performance

and also the time and place of the event:

Time and Place

Date: Monday, April 14, 2008

Time: 7:00pm - 10:00pm

Location: Touhill Performing Arts Center- Lee Theater

City/Town: Saint Louis, MO

The Description Section

Under the event's Information section, you see the Description section. In this case it gives a short description of the opera and lists the cast.

On the right side of Figure 4.3, you see the image for the event and an Add to My Events link.

Under that, you see a Share box and an Export box. The Export box lets you export the event to applications such as Google Calendar. The Share box lets you tell friends about the event. This is one of the quickest ways that news can spread about an event you're hosting.

Clicking the Share box opens the dialog box shown in Figure 4.6. You enter the name of a friend and a message to send him. He's invited to join the event, with a link to the event.



Figure 4.6
Sharing an event with a friend.

You can also click the Post to Profile tab, which displays the dialog box shown in Figure 4.7.

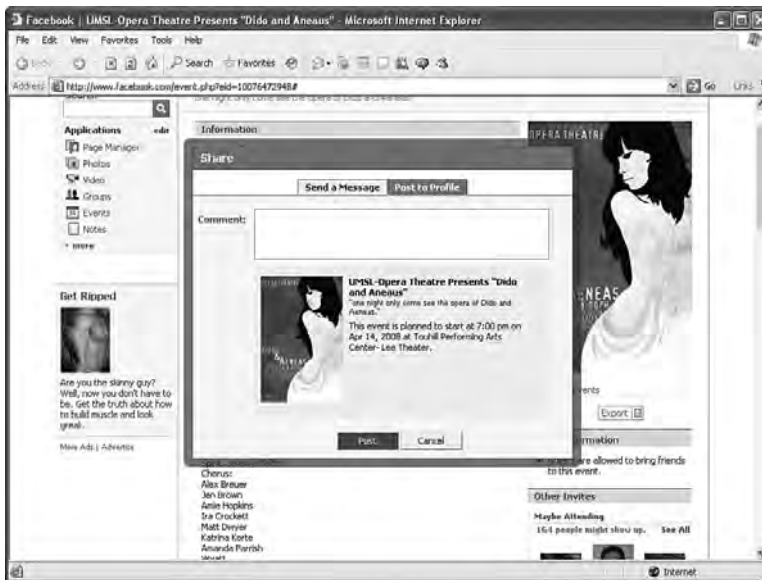


Figure 4.7
Posting an event to your profile.

When users post your event to their profiles, this gives your event an added boost. Figure 4.8 shows how this event looks posted to my profile. Note that it appears in the mini-feed.

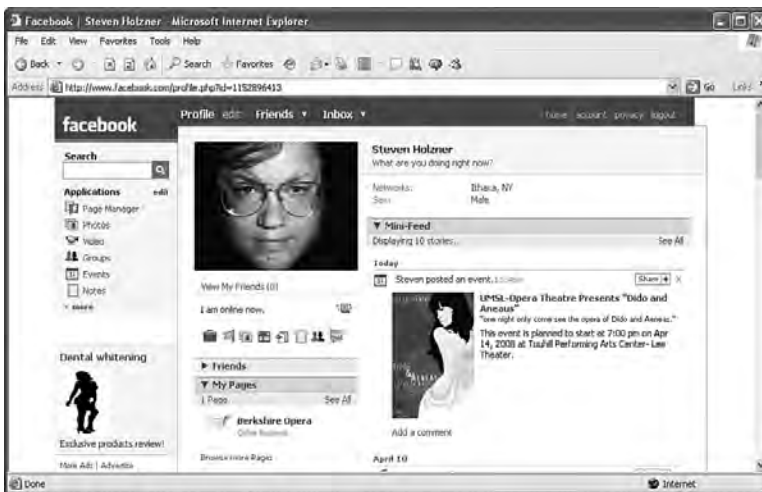


Figure 4.8
Adding an event to your profile.

The Other Information Section

Note that there's also an Other Information section, as shown in Figure 4.3. Here the admins can post additional information about the event. In this case, that's "Guests are allowed to bring friends to this event."

The Photos, Video, and Posted Items Section

Like Facebook groups, events can contain Photos, Video, and Posted Items sections, as shown in Figure 4.4. Frankly, photos and videos aren't of much use in typical events before they occur. You don't usually get photos and video until after an event occurs.

More importantly, event pages let you manage your guests, showing who's coming and who's not.

The Confirmed Guests Section

The guest management capabilities show the guests who have indicated they'll attend the event (see Figure 4.4). If a Facebook member sees a friend there, he's more likely to add the event.

Besides the confirmed guests, Facebook displays the status of other invitees, in the Other Invites section.

The Other Invites Section

Figure 4.4 shows the Other Invites section. This section has three subsections:

- Maybe Attending lists the possible attendees.
- Not Attending lists those who have opted out.
- Awaiting Reply lists those you haven't heard from.

Note the total number of people on Facebook who were invited to this event. You can get this number by adding up the confirmed guests, the maybe guests, those not attending, and those who haven't responded yet—726 people.

In other words, the opera company got the word out to 726 people in a very targeted way, and all for free. This is an excellent way to announce a local event, such as a free opera.

The Wall

There's also a Wall section in this event page, as shown in Figure 4.5. It's good thing that there's a Wall for this event, because it already has 21 posts.

You might think it risky to allow a Wall for your event, but bear in mind how Facebook works. Here, the users are in charge, not the promoters. One of the best ways to get more people to sign up—people who view your event page—is for them to see that other people are excited about your event, or at least positively engaged.

If reaction turns negative on your Wall, you can do one of two things as an admin: delete the Wall, or put up your own positive posts. But it's a fact that the more positive feedback that events have on their Walls, the higher their sign-up rates are.

The Event Type and Admins Section

The Event Type section lists the kind of event this is, such as whether it's an open event. As shown in Figure 4.5, the opera event is an open event, showing the text "This is an open event. Anyone can join and invite others to join." in this section.

You can also see the admins for the event in the Admins section, as shown in Figure 4.5. You can reach the admins' profile pages by clicking their names, letting you send them a message, poke them (which simply notifies them that they've been "poked," no response is required), or add them as a friend.

Now you know what an event page looks like. So how do you sign up?

What sneaky pieces of advice can you give? Something underhanded would work best here:

Facebook does not allow mass messaging to groups with more than 1000 members. If you have a huge event or news or product you want to advertise, either make a business page or make an event—you can message event attendees and nonattendees regardless of the numbers.

Sunmit Singh, CEO, RootsGear, Inc., www.rootsgear.com

Adding an Event to Your Event List

To sign up for an event, on the event's page, click the Add to My Events link, as shown in Figure 4.3. When you do, the link changes, as shown in Figure 4.9.

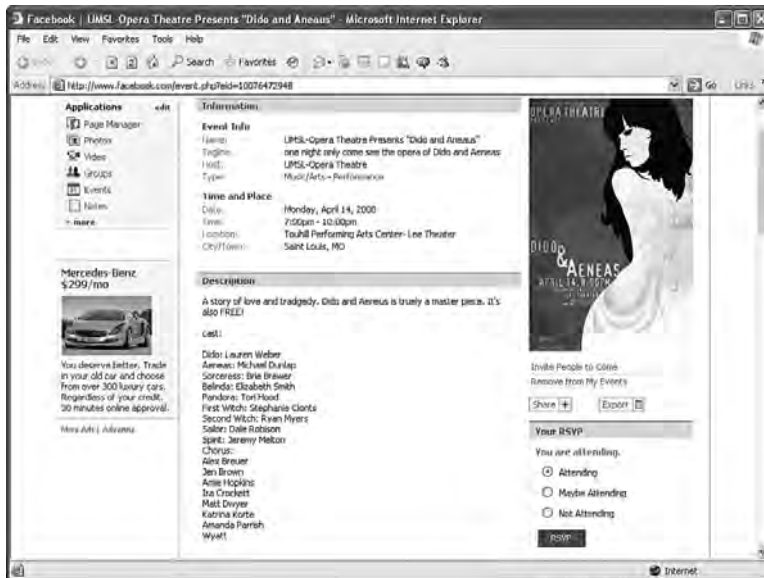


Figure 4.9
An event you've added.

There are now two links where the Add to My Events link was:

- Invite People to Come lets you invite Facebook friends—and others, off Facebook, via email.
- Remove from My Events removes this event from your event list.

Note also the Your RSVP section that now appears on the right. This section contains the following text:

You are attending.

And under this text are three radio buttons:

- Attending
- Maybe Attending
- Not Attending

By default, you're attending the event. If you want to change that status, click the appropriate radio button, and then click the RSVP button. You'll appear in the correct section on the event page—Confirmed Guests or Other Invites.

The new event also appears in your Mini-Feed, as shown in Figure 4.10.

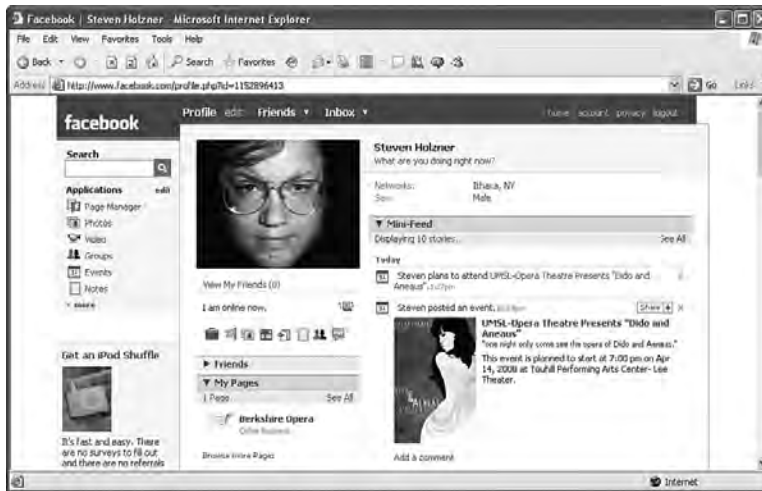


Figure 4.10
An event in your profile.

This new event also shows up in your list of events. Click the Events link on the left of any logged-in Facebook page, and your Events page appears, as shown in Figure 4.11. Click the Upcoming Events tab, and you'll see the new event.

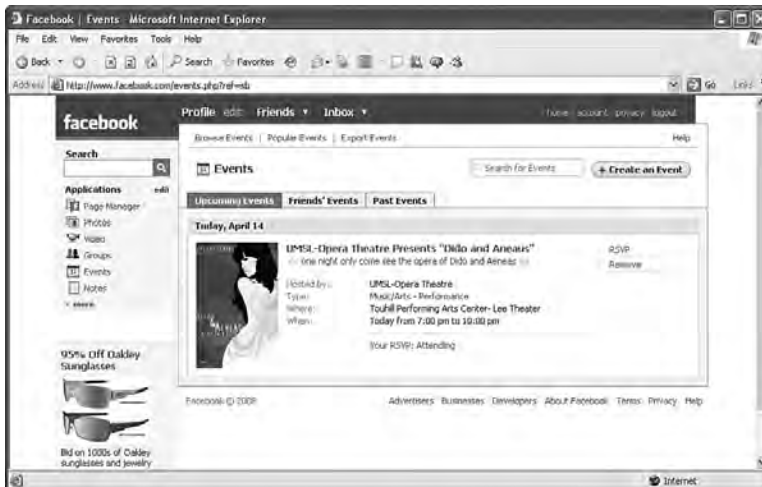


Figure 4.11
An event in your event list.

Note your options on the Events page. You can change your attendance status for the event with the RSVP link, and you can remove the event from your list of events with the Remove link.

Browsing for Events

On the page shown in Figure 4.11 (your Events page, which you get to by clicking the Events link in any logged-in Facebook page) you can also browse for events you might be interested in.

To browse, click the Browse Events tab in the Events page. You see the page shown in Figure 4.12, which allows you to browse events in your network(s).



Figure 4.12
Browsing for events.

To browse global events, select the Global item in the drop-down list box on the right in Figure 4.12. (Despite the name, “global” events are still expected to list a specific location.)

Searching for Events

You can also search for events using the search box that appears on your Events page. Figure 4.13 shows that I’ve entered the term “opera.”

The results—events about opera—appear in Figure 4.14.

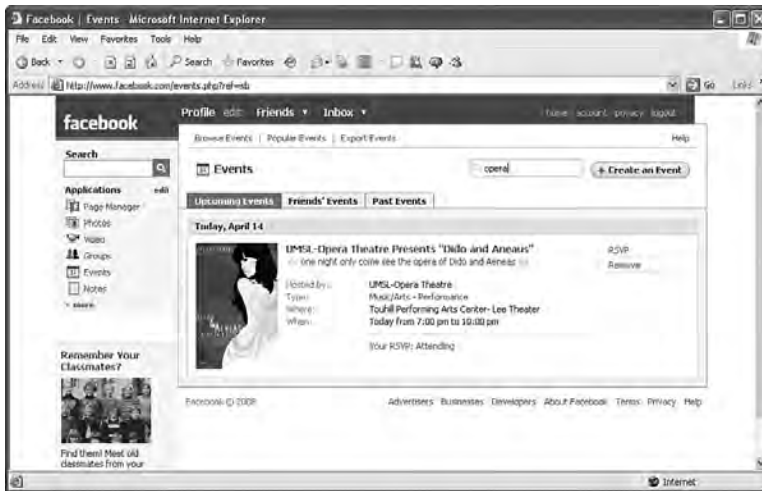


Figure 4.13
Searching for an event.

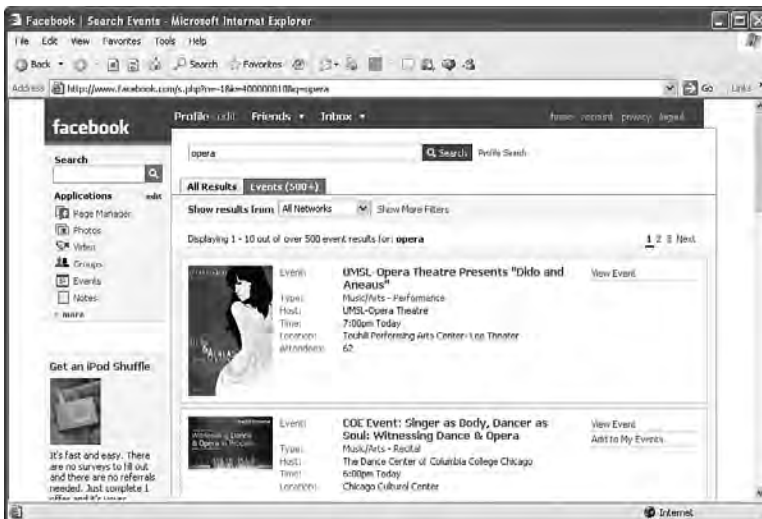


Figure 4.14
Opera events.

That gives you a good overview of events—how they work, and how to work with them. Next you'll see how to create your own events.

Creating an Event

How do you create a new event? You go to your Events page (by clicking the Events link on the left of any logged-in Facebook page) and click the Create an Event button on the right of this page, as shown in Figure 4.15.

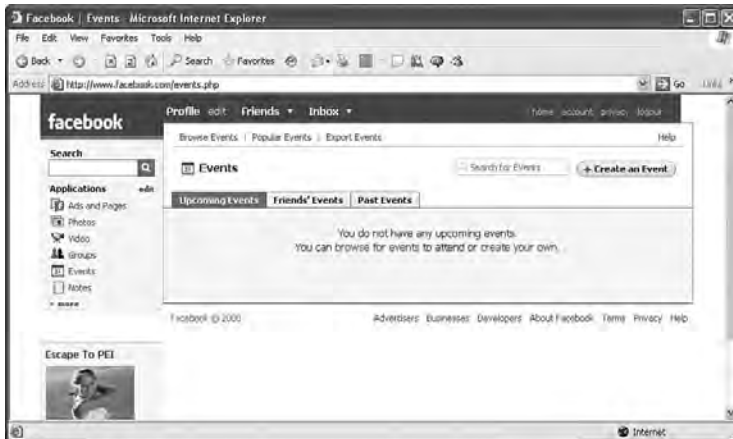


Figure 4.15

The Create an event link.

Clicking the Create an Event button displays the page shown in Figure 4.16.

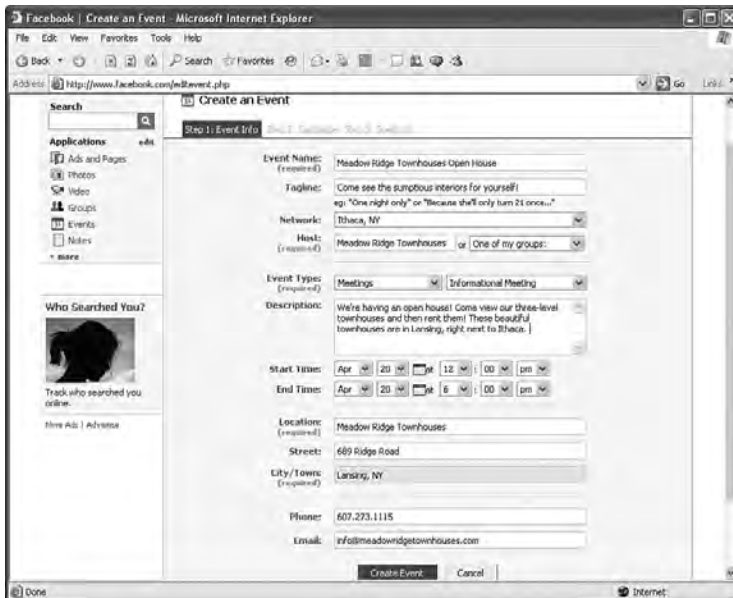


Figure 4.16

Creating an event, first page.

Here are the fields you fill out on this page:

- **Event Name:** This is the name of the event you're creating.
- **Tagline:** This is a one-line tag line that describes the event
- **Network:** You can choose the network for the event here, or make it a global event.
- **Host:** The name of the hosting entity.
- **Event Type:** Select from the following categories:
 - Party
 - Causes
 - Education
 - Meetings
 - Music/Arts
 - Sports
 - Trips
 - Your event also has a subcategory. The Meetings category has the following possible types:
 - Business Meeting
 - Club/Group Meeting
 - Convention
 - Dorm/House Meeting
 - Informational Meeting
- **Description:** This field gives you more of a chance to describe your event. You can type up to a paragraph of text here.
- **Start Time:** When the event starts.
- **End Time:** When the event ends.
- **Location:** This required field gives the event's location.
- **Street:** The event's street address.
- **City/Town:** The event's city or town.
- **Phone:** Any phone number associated with the event.
- **Email:** An email address where people can get more information.

Now, click the Create Event button at the bottom of this page.

Customizing an Event

When you click the Create Event button, you see the page shown in Figures 4.17 and 4.18.

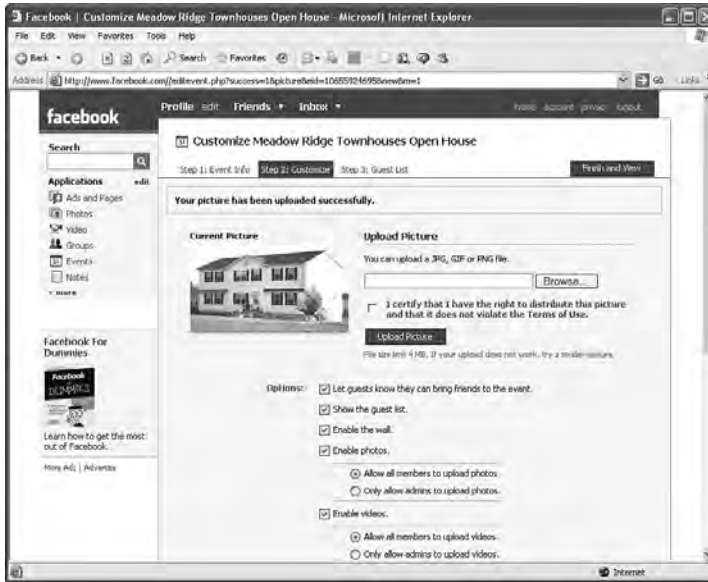


Figure 4.17
Creating an event, second page, top half.

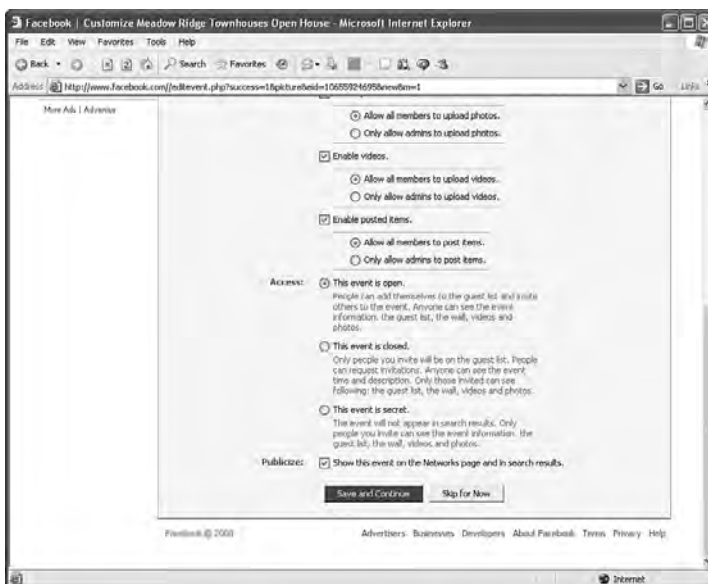


Figure 4.18
Creating an event, second page, bottom half.

You start the customization process by uploading a photo for your event. Photos are not mandatory, but I don't think I've ever seen a serious event that didn't have an image.

Uploading the Image for the Event

To upload an image, browse to the image on your hard disk by clicking the Browse button, and then upload the image by clicking the Upload Picture button.

Note that before you upload an image, you must certify that you have the rights to the image. Click the check box labeled "I certify that I have the right to distribute this picture and that it does not violate the Terms of Use." and then upload your image.

After your image has been uploaded, you see it displayed, along with the message "Your picture has been uploaded successfully." at the top, as shown in Figure 4.17.

Setting Event Options

Next, you set the options on the event customization page. It consists of a set of check boxes:

- Let guests know they can bring friends to the event: If you enable this option, an Other Information section is added to your event, telling guests they can bring friends.
- Show the guest list: This makes the guest list visible.
- Enable the Wall: This makes the Wall visible. This is usually a good idea, because it lets Facebook members interact with your event and brand.
- Enable photos: Click this if you want to allow photos to be uploaded. Two options are available if you enable photos:
 - Allow all members to upload photos.
 - Only allow admins to upload photos.
- Enable videos: Click this if you want to allow videos to be uploaded. Two options are available if you enable videos:
 - Allow all members to upload videos.
 - Only allow admins to upload videos.

- **Enable posted items:** This allows text to be posted to your event page. Two options are available if you allow posted text:
 - Allow all members to post items.
 - Only allow admins to post items.

That sets the event's options. Next, you set the event's access.

Setting Event Access

As shown in Figure 4.18, you can set the event's access on the event customization page. Here are the options:

- **This event is open:** Facebook describes this option this way: "People can add themselves to the guest list and invite others to the event. Anyone can see the event information, the guest list, the Wall, videos and photos."
- **This event is closed:** Facebook describes this option this way: "Only people you invite will be on the guest list. People can request invitations. Anyone can see the event time and description. Only those invited can see following: the guest list, the Wall, videos and photos."
- **This event is secret:** Facebook describes this option this way: "The event will not appear in search results. Only people you invite can see the event information, the guest list, the Wall, videos and photos."

Also note the check box at the bottom of the page:

Publicize: Show this event on the Networks page and in search results.

Select this check box if you want your event to appear in the event calendar section of the corresponding network. Doing so is usually a good idea for the publicity.

When you're done setting the options and access, click the Save and Continue link at the bottom of this page.

Inviting People to Your Event

Clicking the Save and Continue button brings up the page shown in Figure 4.19.

Here you can invite your friends, or whole friend lists. For example, clicking a friend, Nancy Conner, in the list of friends changes this page to the one shown in Figure 4.20.

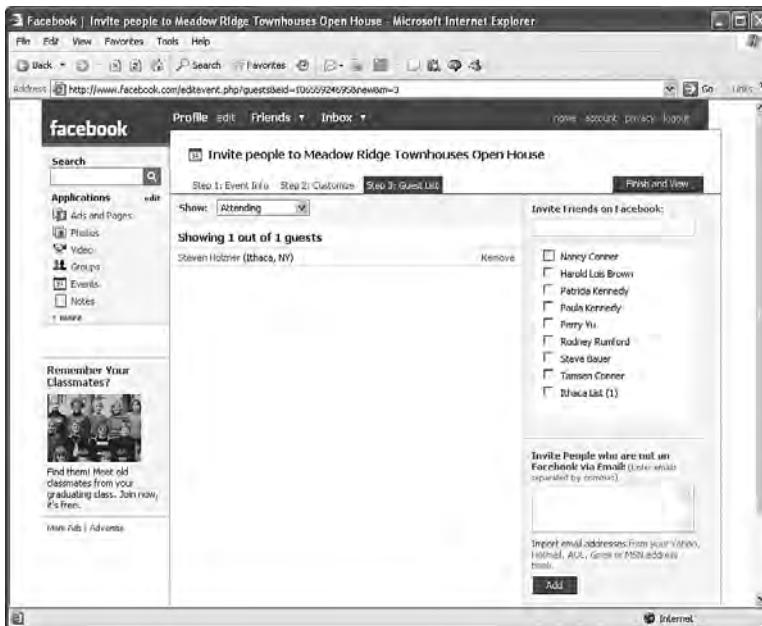


Figure 4.19
Inviting people to your event.

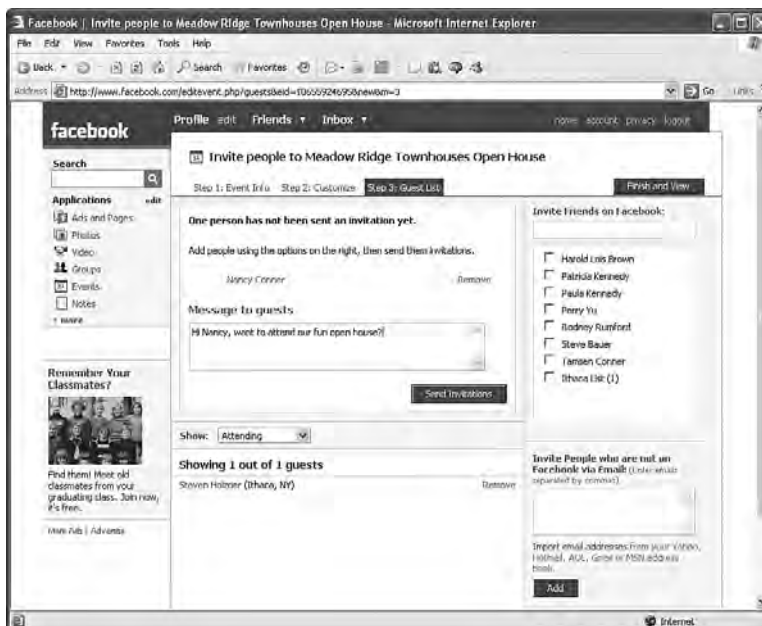


Figure 4.20
Inviting a friend to your event.

To send friends an invitation, enter a message, as shown in Figure 4.20, add more friends or friend lists by clicking their check boxes, and then click the Send Invitations button.

You can also send email to non-Facebook people by using the text area labeled “Invite People who are not on Facebook via Email: (Enter emails separated by commas).”

When you click the Send Invitations button, your invitations are sent. You see the page shown in Figure 4.21, with the message “Invites were sent to the following people.”

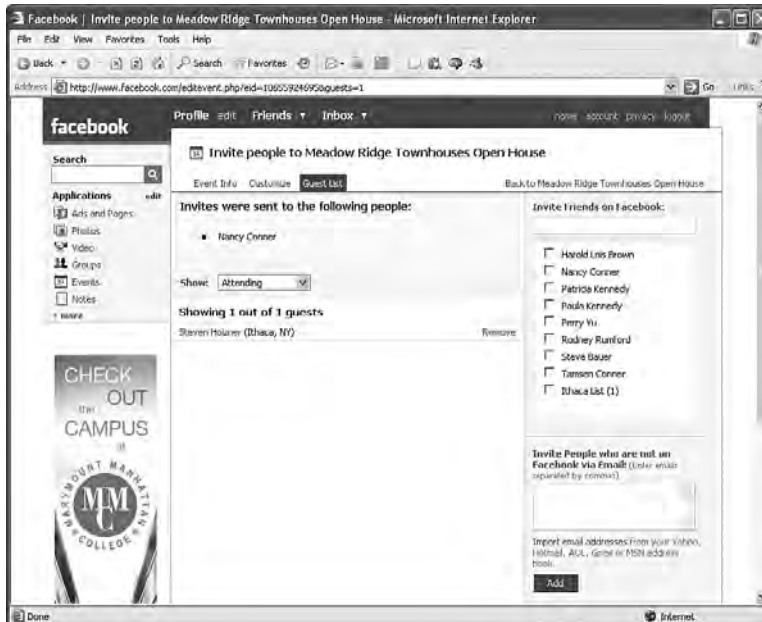


Figure 4.21
Sending invites to your event.

Because you’re an admin of the event, you can also invite more people or edit the guest list at any time.

Invites show up in a person’s Requests section of her Facebook home page. (If she doesn’t have a Requests section, it’s added to her home page.) She sees a link, “1 Event Invitation,” in her Requests section. When she clicks the link, this opens her Requests page, where she can accept or refuse your invitation.

Here’s the text that the friend you invited sees:

You have an event invitation.

Meadow Ridge Townhouses Open House

Sunday, April 20th, 12:00pm at Meadow Ridge Townhouses

You have been invited by Steven Holzner.

Add an RSVP note to the event profile: (optional)

Will you attend this event? [Buttons here say Yes No Maybe]

Remove from My Events

So how many people can you invite to your event? Facebook says:

“You can invite an unlimited number of people to events, but you can only invite 100 people at a time. Once you invite the first 100 people, you can then start inviting more. In addition, you can only have 300 pending invites at one time for an event, therefore some people will have to respond to your event invite before you can add more.”

If you're an admin, you also have the option of inviting all the members of a group. Here's what Facebook says about that:

“When viewing the profile of a group that you administer, you should see a link for ‘Create Related Event’ below the group picture. This will lead you to the Event creation page and establish your group as the host of the event. In order to invite all the members of this group to the event, go to the Edit Guest List page for that event and click on the ‘Invite Members’ button in the upper right of the page. Please note that this option is not available for groups that have over 1,200 members.”

Any special advice on targeting specific markets that you may have been involved with (e.g., nonprofits)?

Sponsor non-profit events like concerts, and so on. Giving away free product samples as prizes, and the like.

Sunmit Singh, CEO, RootsGear, Inc., www.rootsgear.com

Seeing Your Event

Want to see what your event looks like? You can see your new event by clicking the Back to Meadow Ridge Townhouses Open House link, shown in Figure 4.21. The more usual way is to click the Events link on the left of any logged-in Facebook page. This opens your Events page, as shown in Figures 4.22 and 4.23.

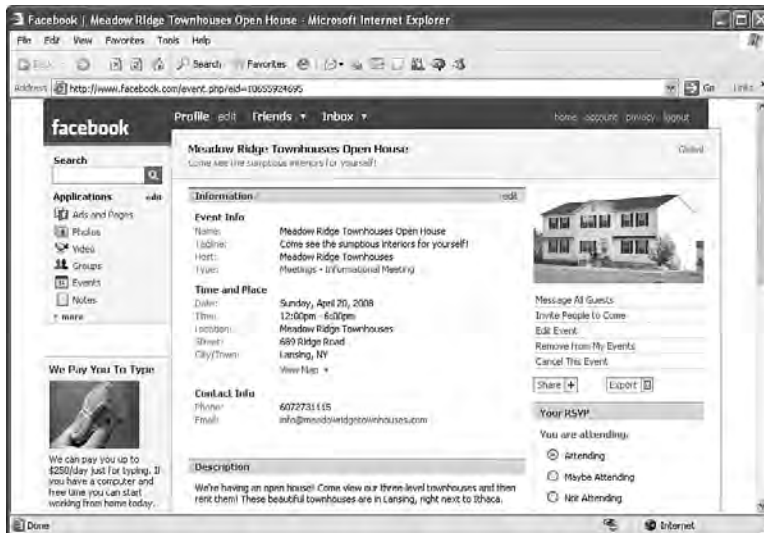


Figure 4.22
Your event as it appears in your Events page, top half.

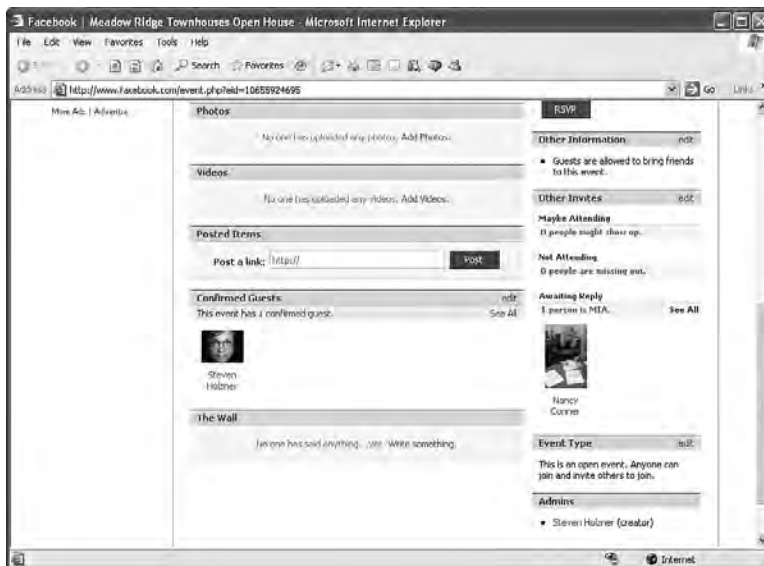


Figure 4.23
Your event as it appears in your Events page, bottom half.
As you can see in the figure, this new event has all the usual sections.

Managing and Publicizing Your Event

Because you're an admin, you have extra powers that are visible when you look at the new event's page.

For example, note that most sections in Figures 4.22 and 4.23 have edit links in their title bars, allowing you to manage the event's contents by, for example, editing the event information.

As an admin, you can also drag around the sections of the event page, dragging and dropping them in a newer arrangement that you find more pleasing.

Note the links that appear on the right of Figure 4.22:

- Message All Guests
- Invite People to Come
- Edit Event
- Remove from My Events
- Cancel This Event

We'll take a look at the first three of these links in more detail next.

Message All Guests

One of the best ways to publicize your event and keep it in everyone's mind is to message all your guests regularly. As an admin, you can do this by clicking the Message All Guests link on the event's page. Clicking that link opens the page shown in Figure 4.24.

To message all your guests, you only have to enter a subject and a message and click Send. As a marketer, you can keep in touch with everyone who says they're going to attend your event this way. And the good news is that you can message as many guests as you want, as often as you want—although they do have the option of reporting your messages as spam.

Invite People to Come

When you click the Invite People to Come link on your new event's page, the same page you used to invite people earlier reappears, as shown in Figure 4.25.

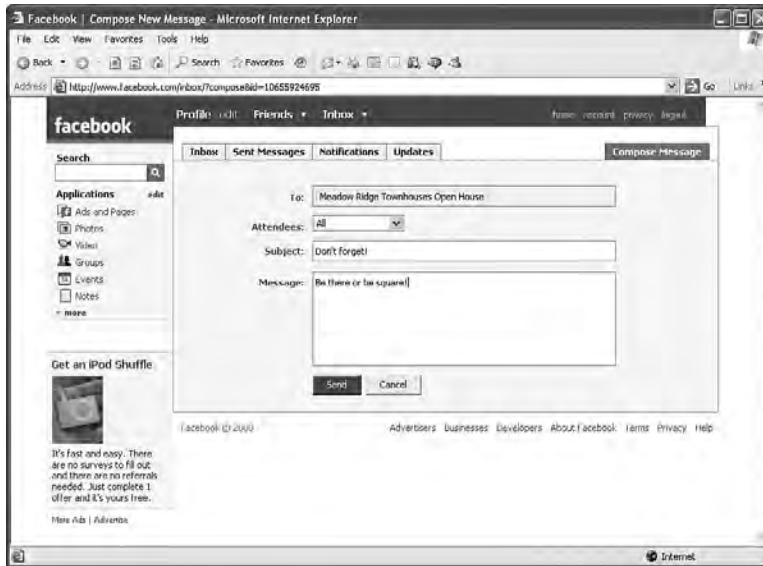


Figure 4.24
Messaging all guests.

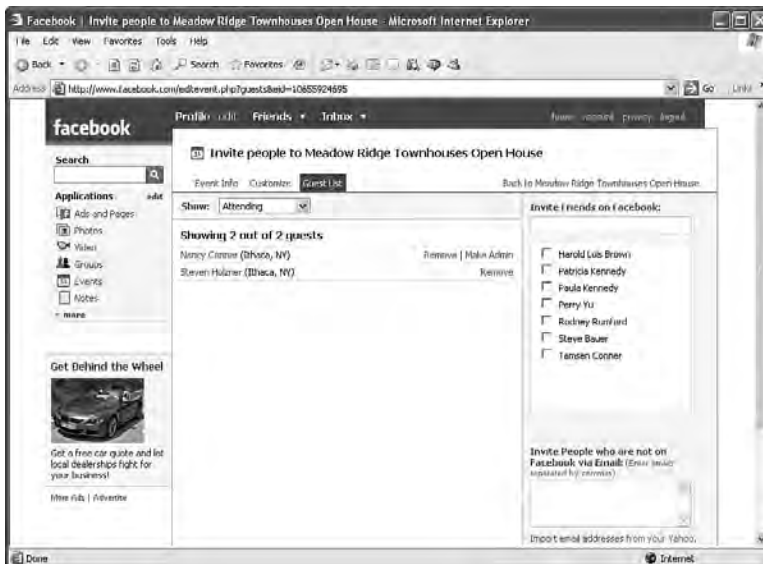


Figure 4.25
Inviting more people to your event.

Because you can invite only 100 people at a time, you might be visiting this page frequently.

When it comes to publicizing your event, don't forget to click the "Publicize: Show this event on the Networks page and in search results" check box when you're creating (or editing) the event. Doing so puts your event into the events calendar on the network's page.

Edit Event

Finally, you can also edit your event by clicking the Edit Event link on the event's page. This opens the page shown in Figure 4.26.

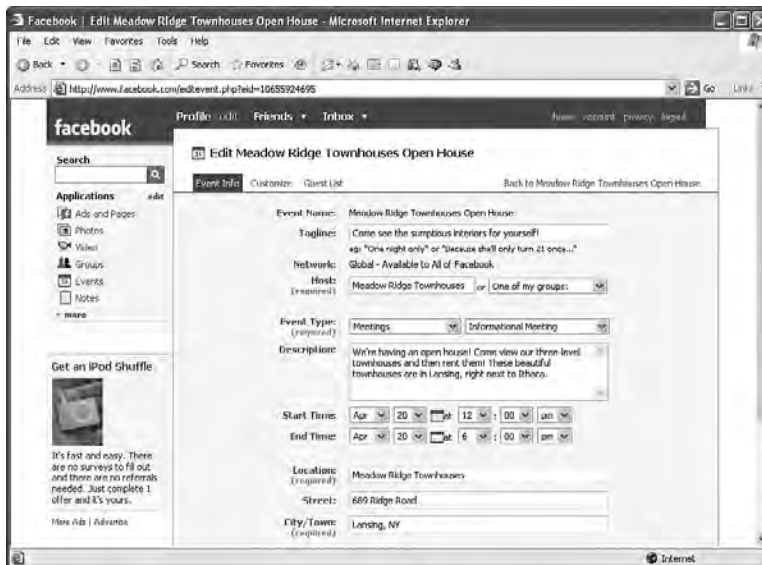


Figure 4.26

Editing your event.

This is the same set of pages, linked to by the tabs shown in Figure 4.26, that you used to specify your event information and customize it. Using the Edit Event link on the event's page, you can get back to these pages and change the event as you like (although some things, such as the network the event is in, cannot be edited).

Note in particular that clicking the Guest List tab opens the page shown in Figure 4.27, which lets you remove guests and specify other admins.

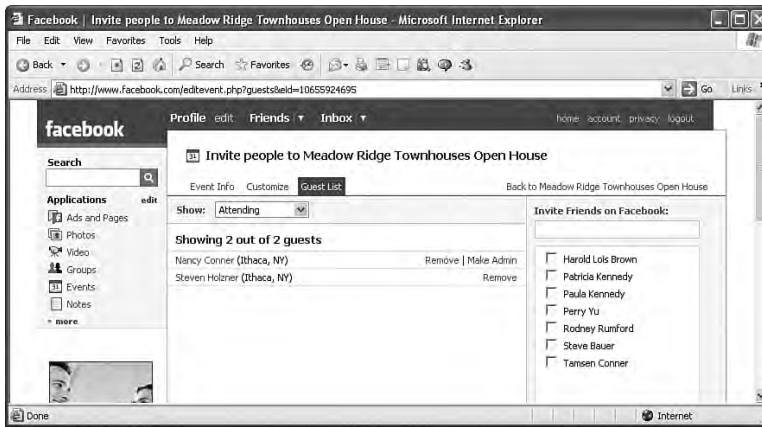


Figure 4.27
The Guest List tab.

To summarize, events can be crucial to any Facebook marketing campaign, especially if what you have to offer is limited to one or a few locations. Events can be publicized, keeping them in people's minds.

At this point, we've covered Facebook pages, groups, and events. Next we'll look at some raw marketing power—advertising.

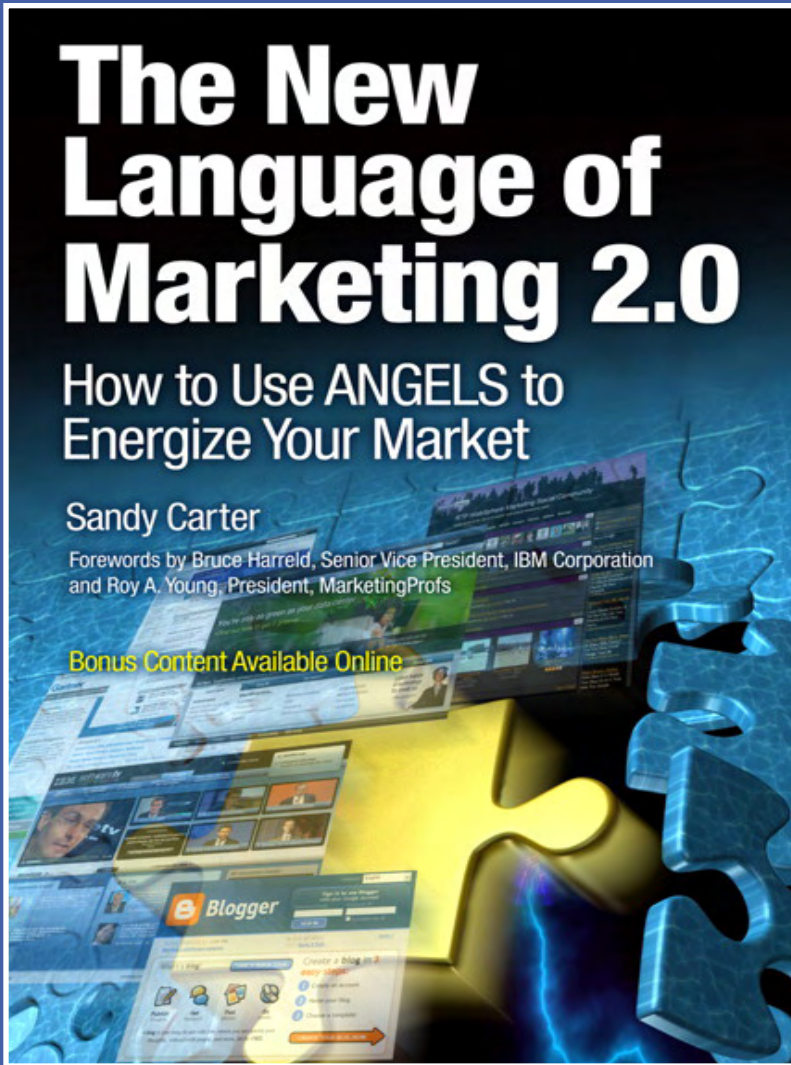
The New Language of Marketing 2.0

How to Use ANGELS to Energize Your Market

Sandy Carter

Forewords by Bruce Harreld, Senior Vice President, IBM Corporation
and Roy A. Young, President, MarketingProfs

Bonus Content Available Online



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From developing the right strategies to energizing your channels of communication, this book will serve as a useful guide to the new technologies that are driving change in marketing and unlocks the secrets to new methods of communicating: Blogs, wikis, video, viral marketing, e-mail and web communications.



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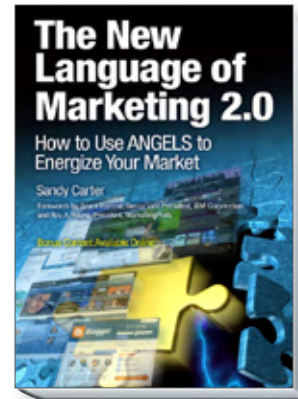


Twitter

Sandy Carter

The New Language of Marketing 2.0

How to Use ANGELS to Energize Your Market



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The New Vessels

Today we are beginning to notice that the new media are not just mechanical gimmicks for creating worlds of illusion, but new languages with new and unique powers of expression.

—Marshall McLub

As we look at the ways to drive success in business, the channel is a critical element and, therefore, needs to be energized around your portfolio. In Figure 10.1, you can see the energizing elements for the entire channel.

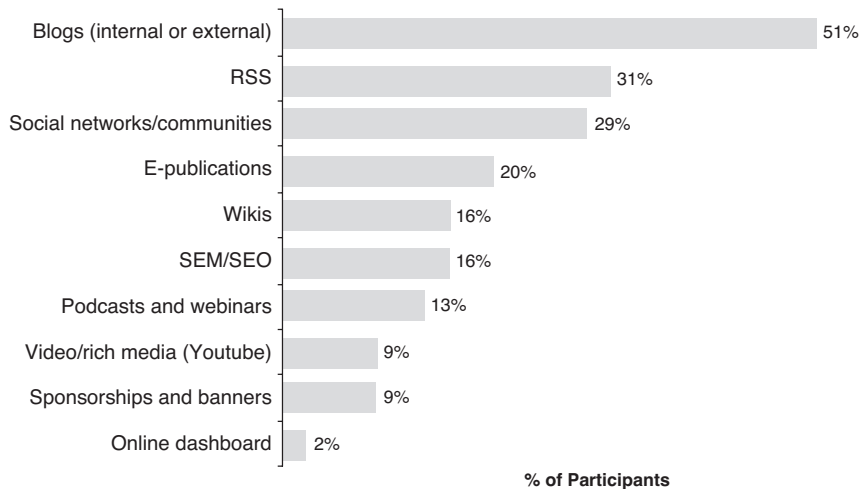


Figure 10.1 ANGELS framework—energize the ecosystem and market.

The channel is made up of your sales team, your partners, universities, and government agencies—basically your entire ecosystem of influencers. With all the competition in the market today, energizing your channel is an important driver of success. In this chapter, we talk about ways to energize and educate both your channel and marketplace. We focus on the newer

techniques, or vessels, that should be used in tandem with traditional marketing methods. (Note: What is not included here are the basics in execution of your GTM plan with your channel. This could be a whole book on its own!) In Figure 10.2, we see IDC Research that shows the most popular forms of these new marketing types as vessels for energy.

Q. Please describe any online and interactive marketing initiatives that your marketing organization intends to deploy in the next 12 months.



Source: IDC 2007 Tech Marketing Benchmarks Database (n = 45)

Figure 10.2 Interactive marketing or the new vessels.

Remember, interactive marketing is just the vessel for the content. What sets companies and marketing teams apart is the quality of the content and how effectively they use these vessels. The new vessels, which include blogs, games, social networks, and other Web 2.0 mechanisms, involve listening, cultivating, and participating in the continuous dialogue among customers and the entire ecosystem about issues relevant to the marketplace, either on or off a brand's digital properties.

Because we have covered how to drive the content through a focus obsession on the customer, we now talk about how to effectively use seven new digital vessels in the execution of your GTM plan for the channel, as shown in Figure 10.3.

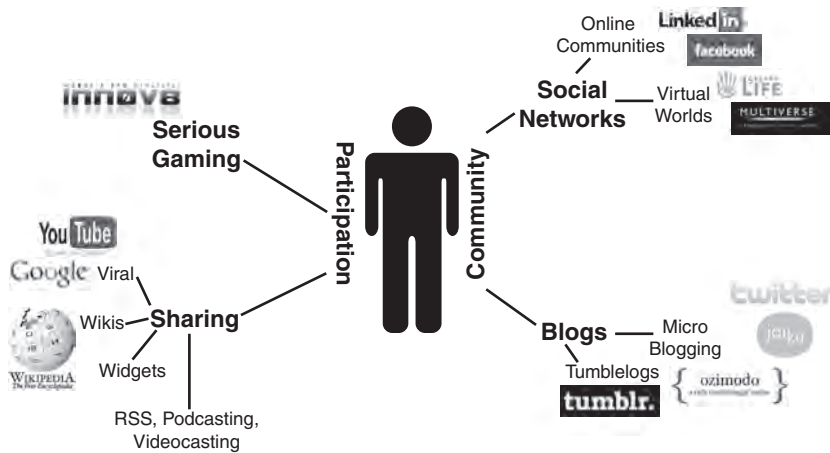


Figure 10.3 The new vessels linkage.

There are seven key new vessels to energize your channel that I will discuss in this book. While there are many more emerging (like Jellyvision and the like), this covers what my team and I have used and experimented with in the real world. Our Web site will have updates and results as we try out new media.

- Social networks with virtual environments, online communities including Facebook
- Participation with viral and serious gaming
- Sharing through widgets and wikis
- Blogging, including Twitter
- Really simple syndication (RSS)
- Podcasting
- Videocasting

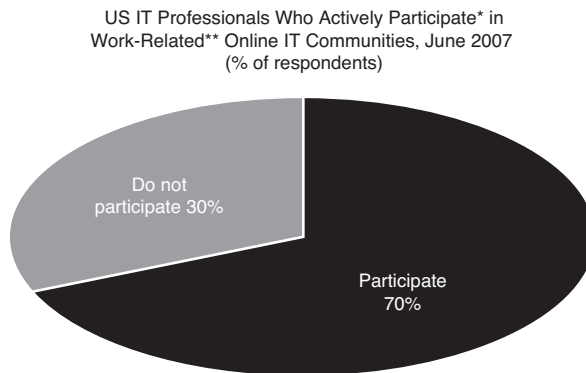
The commonality among these seven areas is that they form a platform for social and emotional connection to energize the market and ecosystem. Let's explore how to leverage them.

Focus on Social Networks: Online Communities

People are social beings. Since the earliest of times, communities have been alive and active in the world. The importance of the emerging social

networks that exist in our new online world should not surprise us. With so many people working from home, there is a societal shift of people being alone more than in the past. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of people who work at home full time rose 23 percent from the last decade. Time alone while working from home and being connected online but not in person has changed society to crave more communication with others and has given way to new online communities. Even my dad who is retired spends much of his time online. The results shown in Figure 10.4 are that more than 70 percent of people participate in online communities today.

These numbers will continue to grow in the future as online communities and social networks continue to grow.



Note: n=203; *by posting questions or contributing to discussion;

**focused on systems of security management

Source: King Research, "The value of Online Communities: A Survey of Technology Professionals" commissioned by KACE networks, June 2007 and eMarketer Inc.

Figure 10.4 Communities are growing in popularity.

People want to engage with others who have something in common with them, and the connections can be both personal and virtual. Remember high school, where kids grouped together by common interests? Even in the latest Disney movie, *High School Musical*, the kids sorted themselves by interests in sports, music, or science. People like to be a part of something, and they like to talk to others with whom they have something in common. This is one reason why communities are growing in their importance. Sharing commonalities and engaging in dialogue can be energizing and satisfying to the new-world customer. Communities bring to bear an engagement that causes customers to become passionate about your company and product.

What Is a Community?

A community is a group of people that has a shared interest. Communities can be two to three people or thousands; the people might connect in person, through electronic means, or both. Wikipedia, a community itself, defines community marketing as a strategy to engage an audience in an active, non-intrusive prospect and customer conversation.

Development of online communities has afforded us an opportunity to observe people interact with one another, express their own opinions, form relationships, and break relationships. These relationships might be with other consumers, with friends, with companies, or with products or logos; people form relationships with everything.

There are many ways to group communities. One classification is by who sponsors the community—a vendor company or a group of users. We will consider a classification by the common bond that causes the group to form and stay together.

Types of Communities

There are four major categories of communities: crowd sourcing, activity-based, obsession-based, and experience-based. Let's explore each type:

- **Crowd sourcing or definition communities:** These communities come together to design something, or they are created for the purpose of providing feedback to a company about its products or services. For example, Threadless is a community-based T-shirt company with an ongoing open call for shirt design submissions. If your design is chosen for print, you get paid for it. At IBM, we have communities that enable participants to input into the design of our products, such as our Project Zero. The company that produces WD-40, the lubricant used in thousands of households, formed an e-community for women, who were not buyers of its products. They formed this community to see what would inspire women to buy its product. They were told to make it into something women could carry in their purses, and so they did. Communities provide relevance in both B2B and B2C marketing as customers shape where the product and services will go or are going!
- **Activity-based communities:** These communities are brought together by a common love of an activity. It could be like Neopets.com, a community built around games, puzzles, and activities. Or it could be something like what IBM developed for a new business approach to

technology, such as SOA. We developed SOA Space for an activity-based group of developers around best practices in architecture. In SOA Space, you can chat to an expert, share your activities, and progress in your deployments, all based on role.

- **Obsession-based:** These communities seem to be more passion-based. They form out of a strong love of an area. We will see a case study about Harley-Davidson in Chapter 11, “Energize the Channel with Communities: OMG, Adobe and Rubicon Consulting, and Harley-Davidson.” However, other community groups exist, such as people who love Sudoku, and Sears has an obsession-based community for people who love their lawn mowers and tractors!
- **Experience-based:** These communities come together around a shared experience. Bebojjeans.com has figured out a way to create an emotional connection. Its site is Flash-driven; as soon as you see the site, you can tell that it’s oriented toward teenagers. It is relevant to its audience and includes splash screens and Facebook and MySpace tie-ins.

Communities also expand because of the capacity to create relationships with people in other countries. With globalization, being connected is not just about communities in your own country, but also those around the world. For example, for software developers in China, the best community is csdn.net. For general communities, MySpace is popular in China and for connections around the world. In China alone, the most popular local community is qq.com but it is for local Chinese, not for cross-language and cross-cultural groups.

An important choice as a marketer is to decide whether to start your own community or to influence and play in other communities that are of interest. If you choose to start your own community, it is critical that you start showing value to the larger group. In Figure 10.5, IDC shares three communities used to educate that are driven by the vendors. Quest leverages community sites by its product line; National has its own semi analog university. These vendor sites enable for tighter connection on content and for direct feedback that is trackable and usable by the company.

If you choose to play in other communities, you need to do so with care. You cannot dominate the community but listen and allow people to share their thoughts and ideas. In communities, people talk about the good and bad of your products; trying to “control” the conversation will be counterproductive and potentially harmful.



Figure 10.5 Building online communities to educate.

How do you find a community that might fit your needs? The answer is to use Google to research the topic and see if there are existing communities discussing your topic. For instance, if you Google the words dog and community, Dogster comes up. To use Google, be as specific with your query as possible. For example, if you were looking for SOA architects in Cincinnati, write a query like, “SOA architects Cincinnati.” If you know there’s some sort of community verbiage in the name, you can also include that.

If you can’t find an existing community, work to create one. Create a blog and index it with Google. If the topic is of interest to others, they will come. To create your own online communities, you can use Google tools, such as Google Groups. A great example of this is www.idrinkyourmilkshake.com. This site is driven by the lovers of the movie *There Will Be Blood*, and the name of the site comes from the movie’s famous line. It found a new audience of users interested in discussing the movie and the motivations of the main characters. It is truly a success story of communities rushing to join the discussions because they love the movie! Can you buy anything on the site? No, but it is driving movie tickets in an extremely clever way—through the community!

Top Five Lessons Learned for Communities

In working with communities over the years, the top five lessons learned for forming a community or social network range from getting started to whom to target. The list should provide a thought-provoking set of items for your formation or joining of the online community world:

1. **Know your communities:** Ensure you know which communities impact your company and influence your clients.
2. **Create communities for the long term:** If you have the time and patience for long-term results, sustained efforts in communities pay off. However, they are not a quick tactic. Communities are about energizing your ecosystem through stronger customer relationships created and engagement of active energy in your business.
3. **Communities can be internal as well:** Don't forget your own sales teams. Inside IBM, we view our sellers as a valuable community that we constantly dialogue with. As Lauren Flaherty, chief marketing officer at Nortel comments, "We look at our sales colleagues as a community. And we have learned what it takes to keep their interest in this new community portal and frankly they love the vessel. I've got a CNN crawl on the bottom of the portal so that we can tell them, 'Hey, here's what's fresh. Here's what's new, what's interesting, and what's funny. It's CNN.'"
4. **Start a dialogue:** Your dialogue can be about decisions you have to make on new products or features or just to provide an experience for your customers and ecosystem. Make sure you choose one or more ways to have the dialogue—the dialogue will continue with or without you!
5. **Great communities provide value:** Don't start a community just as a marketing tactic. Communities last because they provide real value, not just marketing messages. Make sure you have something they want and need.

Facebook

Because Facebook is such a popular and interesting community, this section is dedicated to this special community. According to Wikipedia, Facebook is a social networking Web site. It launched in 2004. The free-access Web site is privately owned and operated by Facebook, Inc. Users can join networks organized by city, workplace, school, and region to connect and interact with other people. People can also add friends, send them messages, and update their personal profile.

According to Forrester Research, there are between 40 to 50 million users today, with a growth of 134 percent to 200 percent or more in the last year. More than 40 percent of the users are more than the age of 35, and the average visitor stays about 20 minutes. The users are primarily in North America

and the Middle East and are primarily college educated. Forrester says that Facebook could eclipse MySpace in the number of active users in early 2009.

To explore Facebook, I turned to Jeremiah Owyang, senior analyst at Forrester Research who is focused on social computing. Because the primary use of Facebook is for members to share what they are doing or working on, this community is ripe for a marketing dialogue. As Owyang said, “Facebook is a ready-made marketing platform, which offers a vast tool set (with challenges); but, to succeed, brands must develop a strategy. In fact, according to Forrester, the top three uses of Facebook are to see what friends are up to, send a message to someone, and to post or update a profile. “

Owyang provides these must knows about Facebook:

- **Invites via e-mail spur growth:** Invites arrive via e-mails. At one point, Owyang received dozens in one week; this is a sign of mass group of people using email to grow their base.
- **Discussions:** Within the groups sections, questions are posed, answered, and discussed. If you're a believer in the Cluetrain Manifesto, this is a sign of a marketplace.
- **Business audience, not just college kids:** When Facebook opened up to the world, it extended its reach past college students. This might have been due to many of the original Facebook users graduating and moving into the workplace. Many of the contacts and friends within Facebook are senior managers, directors, VPs, and CEOs. Recent research indicated that the fastest growth segment is people more than 35 years of age.
- **Affinity groups:** Individuals with similar interests, problems, or traits are starting to self-assemble through their friend's network, or within the groups. All of these are opt-in, so these are engaged users who have self-selected: “Hey I belong here.” These are communities and are microsegments of marketplaces.
- **Opt-in:** Unlike traditional forms of advertising and marketing, Facebook has many opt-in features that let users review, approve, and accept invites for friends, applications, groups, and other features.
- **Limited search crawling**—Facebook is a “closed” network, and you can see most data only if you are logged in. Most individuals' pages are somewhat private to nonfriends. As a result, this limits the capability of traditional search engines like Google, Yahoo, MSN, Ask, and others to crawl and index the data. This will prove to be an interesting dynamic in the next few years.

- **High growth**—Facebook has one of the fastest growth rates and could potentially overtake MySpace if these rates continue.

WAL-MART'S FACEBOOK PRESENCE TARGETS STUDENTS WELL

by Jeremiah Owyang

Wal-Mart launched a Facebook group targeting college students getting ready to going back to school. There are links to a supply checklist and links that go back to walmart.com's music, green shopping area, and information about its new "site to store" service.

But the killer "app" on the site is Roommate Style Match Quiz, which asks questions such as, "What is your favorite way to study?" and "If your life were a movie, what genre would it be?" I took the quiz and it turns out I'm a "Brain-Stormer." Wal-Mart did a good job pegging me! What was interesting was the picture of my "room" that does look like my room! Books are strewn all over the desk and floor.

I think that Wal-Mart does several things well here, which is a nice change of pace given its previous forays into social computing (consider the social networking site The Hub and blogging with Wal-Mart across America).

Most importantly, Wal-Mart understands the interactive, social nature of Facebook. The Style Match Quiz not only enables me to take the quiz, but I can also post it to my profile and send it to friends. Ideally, it would also allow me to plug in the profile of a friend automatically (I have to do this manually given the interface). I also noticed that I can't mix genders in the roommate matching, but I can't blame Wal-Mart for not wanting to go down that path!

I'm going to watch the Wall comments very closely; there will certainly be Wal-Mart fans who come to profess their fandom, as well as detractors. It's also an opportunity to see if students begin posting questions about dorm life. Will other students respond or will Wal-Mart step forward and help address some of those questions?

Something else to watch is how Wal-Mart evolves the group after the initial back-to-school rush, especially because the roommate-matching quiz is set to run only through October. This is a relationship that Wal-Mart now needs to think about nurturing, not a campaign that can be turned "off" at a specific date.

Wal-Mart has the opportunity to build a community with these students, but has to resist the temptation of treating this group as yet another marketing channel. For example, the members of the Apple Students Group routinely receive promotion (spam) messages in the Facebook Inbox (the latest one I received has the subject line, “Buy a Mac. Get a FREE iPod nano”).

Top Five Tips for Facebook for Marketing

Facebook is an exciting new community for supplementing the traditional marketing mechanisms. As a new vessel, it is ripe for experimentation using the below tips for success:

1. **Use for Marketing 2.0 intelligence:** Owyang’s view is that profiles, network information, and public groups provide a way to seek insight online.
2. **Use for advertising:** A variety of ways to leverage the power of this community exist, including banner ads, news feeds, social ads, and flyer ads.
3. **Attract a new audience:** Because we heard from Anne Holland at MarketingSherpa that neither those under 25 nor those more experienced use e-mail, leverage this new social networking tool in place of e-mail.
4. **Experiment with fan pages:** These fan pages can be used in place of sponsored groups.
5. **Not a standalone:** Integrate your Facebook tactics with your overall strategy. If this is the audience that you need for your product and offerings, leverage it as part of the overall go-to-market (GTM) plan.

Social Networks with Virtual Environments

Virtual environments are a powerful alternative reality online. It is a way to imagine a new digital world. Some of the popular virtual worlds are Second Life, OpenSim, ActiveWorlds, Whyville, and Entropia Universe. In fact, the Chinese government has invested a set of engineers to its claim for

its own virtual world. Some of the differences in the worlds are their focus on games or business. For instance, Second Life has an economy for the business world and is trying to gear up for commerce.

When entering a virtual environment, you create an avatar for yourself. An avatar, as defined by Wikipedia, is a computer user's representation of herself in the form of a 3D model used in computer games. The term "avatar" can also refer to the personality connected with the screen name, or handle, of an Internet user. In Figure 10.6, you can see my avatar.



Figure 10.6 Soandy—my Second Life avatar!

I have made my avatar look like me, well kind of! Many people create an avatar that does not look like them; for example, if they have blonde hair in real life, they might choose dark for their virtual world. Active users on Second Life are around 50,000, which is up significantly from about 30,000 a few months ago. (Active is different from the millions that registered. With more than 4.8 million users existing in the digital network world, Second Life serves as a model for future online communities as they copy Second Life's formula for success!) Virtual environments are global. I have friends from all over the world, and we meet and talk in my SOA island.

What could you do in a virtual environment? Companies buy land, plan adventures, and participate in the economy. Digital characters walk, take vehicles, and even teleport. You can even start a church. Life Church, which has community church services, has planted swords around the virtual world, so that when you choose them, it sends you information about its church. (See Figure 10.7.)

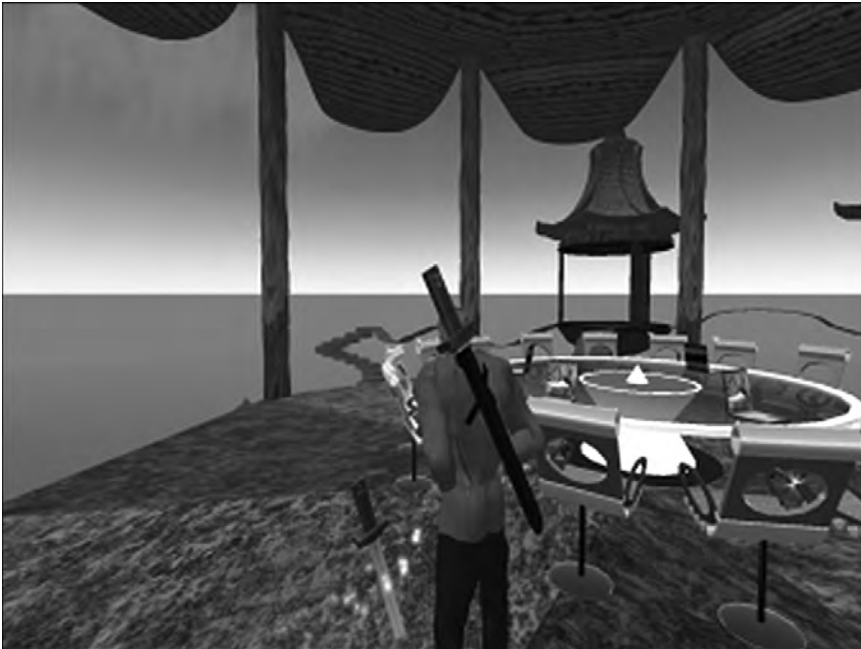


Figure 10.7 Virtual life marketing—swords from Life Church.

Second Life also offers complete customization, providing the opportunity for users, businesses, and brands to completely reinvent themselves. Creating a corporate Second Life persona enables users to participate and contribute to your efforts, experience a brand-oriented journey through the metaverse, or provide the opportunity to reinvent or reshape your product to fit into the metaverse community.

What is the value in marketing from virtual environments? There are companies that have storefronts in the virtual world sites to try and seek revenue. The Coca Cola Company has an interactive site where customers go to help the company design new ideas for its products, and Cisco has experimented with selling and measuring results. I've also seen a Second Life

Chemistry Set. This is a box of chemicals. You give it commands, and it creates molecular structures that hover in the air over the box.

The marketing value of virtual environments is being tested now; however, I do believe that if you are a best-practice company, you should buy land in a virtual environment and experiment with what works. In our case studies on The Coca Cola Company and IBM in the following chapter, you will see some of what the leading edge companies are doing in this alternative universe.

Top Five Tips for Virtual Environments

Virtual environments are very new but worth the addition to the GTM execution for energizing the channel. Following are five tips to assist in the metaverse:

1. **Know your virtual environments:** Explore the 3D worlds that exist today to explore the options. Even kids are playing with Webkinz, Build a Bear, and Shining Star sites. These sites allow them to learn about a variety of topics such as art, math, and even commerce! See what the future holds for some of your potential buyers! For businesses, some of the top virtual environments are Second Life, OpenSim, and ActiveWorlds.
2. **Customize your avatar and play in the virtual world:** If you haven't been there, it is hard to describe the potential and the feel of the world. Words don't do it justice. You can host a staff meeting to get the feel for it or even host a customer focus group.
3. **Pilot with some of the primary successful uses of virtual environments today:** I've seen the most success in using virtual worlds to educate, to hold events, and to solicit input and ideas. Or use your innovation to drive you to be the first marketer with success in an area. Go ahead and invest in some land or an island. I believe this is the way of the future. I would invest early.
4. **Be active:** There is a common thread here to all the new vessels. If you invest to put them into action, you must be willing to continue active participation in them. Content is king. Ninety percent of the time spent on developing for virtual environments should be focused on the content upfront; as with a Web site, without a unique, rich experience, click outs are inevitable.
5. **Quality and visual continuity matter:** Just like a theme park, the visual impression is a major part of the experience. Your brand quality

and identity has to be maintained even in a virtual space. Make sure you don't forget that this vessel is just another element in your branding.

You can read “Zen and the Art of Social Media in Public Relations,” by Kathleen Keating, Founder, FastStartPR, on the companion Web site at: ibmpressbooks.com/angels.



Focus on Participation with Viral

The term viral marketing has been used a lot, so I'd like to start with clarity around what I mean when I refer to viral. Viral is about leveraging either a preexisting social network or a set of friends to produce some sort of increase in brand awareness or demand generation through a self-replicating process. It exploits existing social networks by encouraging customers to share product information with their friends. There are lot of techniques and vehicles to produce exponential increases in brand awareness with viral processes.

Viral can be word of mouth delivered and enhanced online to reach a large number of people in a short term. The key intent is to create energy, intrigue, and curiosity. Most viral activities include video clips, interactive Flash games, images, and even text!

Viral marketing is more powerful than third-party advertising because it conveys an implied endorsement from a “friend.” Why is viral marketing taking off today and why is it so successful? From IBM's recent market intelligence study, viral is a top influencer in the decision-making process.

There are four critical areas that are key influencers in B2B marketing. The first biggest influence is customer references or customer stories. The second is an external influencer such as an industry analyst or industry advisor. If you're B2C, think consumer reports; if you're B2B, think about some of the typical analysts such as an IDC or a Gartner. The next influencer of a sale is demo downloads, which include how you experience the product such as downloading some sort of simulation or code if you're in the IT space.

The biggest one, though, across every tier, is a colleague or a peer who recommends your particular product or service, and in fact, it's 40 percent of the influence regardless of who your customers are, regardless if they're B2C or B2B. This buzz factor or the friend factor can make a difference in the GTM plan. See Figure 10.8.

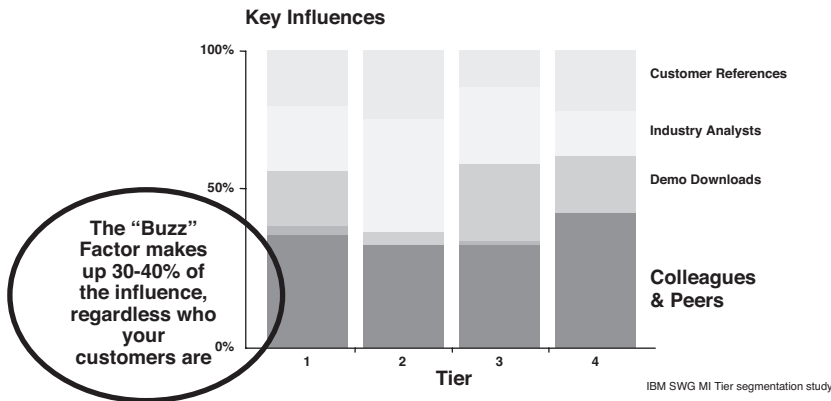


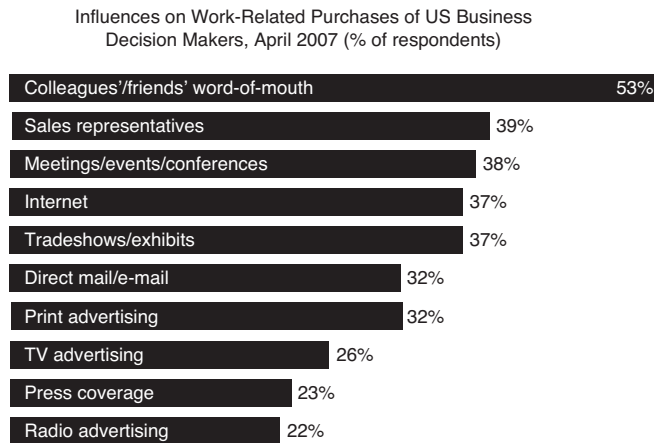
Figure 10.8 Why is viral marketing buzz so important?

When we think about some popular tactics used such as viral marketing to get that buzz factor, prioritization is needed. The latest MarketingSherpa report contains some nuggets to assist in prioritizing for your GTM execution. In its most recent study on viral marketing, MarketingSherpa found that the best viral tactics were microsites, which is not your own site but a separate site that is independent from your company. The second one is video clips, such as those that appear on YouTube. We saw an example of this viral video in Chapter 6, "Lightly Branded: EepyBird, The Coca-Cola Company, and Mentos." The third is online games, quizzes, or polls where you compete and manage the challenge back and forth. Now, the top three moderate results for viral marketing include

- Tell-a-friend boxes on the site
- Encouraging e-mail forwarding, such as, "Take a look at this and forward it on to your next best friend"
- Audio clips

The reason that viral is so effective in the channel is that you have a greater reach and a global reach. Viral breaks through the online and e-mail clutter, mostly because it's cool. The trick is to create viral marketing that is so fun, shocking, or provocative that the user will adopt the experience as his own and send it to a friend for bragging rights. You might be thinking that word of mouth has always been there. In fact, word of mouth has now moved from anecdotal to actionable because it is measurable in the marketplace.

In Figure 10.9, we see that viral marketing through friends and colleagues is the number one way that businesses use to decide who to purchase. “Word-of-mouth marketing is gaining more traction than ever before, and according to growth predictions, we’re seeing just the beginning of a huge surge of both interest and word-of-mouth marketing activity,” said Amanda Van Nuys, co-chair of WOMMA’s Communications Council and vice president of Corporate Marketing at Organic Inc. “All this growth and increased curiosity makes a resource like WOMMA’s Case Studies Library extremely valuable. So many marketers are looking for examples of how they can put this phenomenal thing called ‘WOM’ to work, and, of course, the Wommie winners stand out as the best of the best.”



Note: n=288

Source: Jack Morton Worldwide and eMarketer Inc.,

"Driving Word-of-Mouth Advocacy Among Business Executives", by Keller Fay Group May 2007

Figure 10.9 Word of mouth is a key influencer in business purchasing behavior.

Let’s just talk about how a viral campaign might potentially work. At a highest level, you tell a story with strong content on the Web and include the opportunity to pass it along and share the Web site. So for instance, I do a lot of shopping on Bluefly.com, and I’ve watched little snippets about fashion on that Web site. The video at the end sometimes provides news of the opportunity to pass and share that video along, or you can do it with YouTube. My IBM team posted a set of “What is SOA?” videos on YouTube, and we used the mechanism there to pass that along. In this example, the Web is your organic interest, so someone has to find the video and then pass

that video along. The best practice is combining viral with traditional marketing (as shown in Figure 10.10) to leads to greater success in doing one or other that's not integrated.

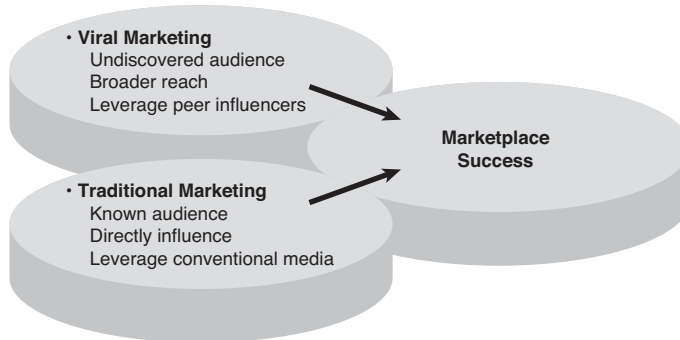


Figure 10.10 Enhancing the traditional approach with viral marketing.

Top Five Tips on Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is both agenda setting and cost effective. It provides the best of the goals of marketing. The following is a list of some of the top elements to drive through your viral strategy:

1. **Create something clever:** This should be something worthy of being passed and relevant. People will share good experience. Make it catchy; for example, use Flash in you Web banners and dynamic rotation.
2. **Use videos to tell your story:** This is a great medium if you can afford to use it and create fun videos. Videos can convey your marketing message by painting a video picture of the topic using humor or just grabbing the viewer's attention.
3. **Keep your offers simple and visible:** For example, for an e-mail signature, include a catchy tagline and a Web link. We are doing this now in every e-mail signature with IMPACT 2009. Use "Tell a Friend" with e-mail, Webcasts, and Web site visitors and let your prospects forward your marketing message.

4. **Participate in user forums:** This is free and you can touch people interested in your specific area. Forums are indexed by search engines and their posts increase exposure.
5. **Keyword buys with Google and Word Tracker:** Keep refining and optimizing your AdWord buys. If you can't afford to do word buys, submit your URLs to Google for search retrieval. It's free using Google Webmaster tools!

Focus on Participation with Serious Gaming

A shift in demographics has pushed a post-dot-com generation to seek an online experience with an emphasis on entertainment. Serious gaming is a new way to capture the channel for education and enablement. With the number of people growing up with gaming as part of their heritage, gaming can be a familiar way to teach new concepts.

Who is this gaming generation? According to the Entertainment Software Association, the average game player is 33 years old. Forty-seven percent of all gamers fall in the 18–49 age range. Twenty-four percent are more than 50 years old. The average age of MBA students varies by school, but they are generally in their late twenties for a full-time program and late thirties for an executive MBA program. There are already more Gen X and Gen Ys, where the primary thrust of the gaming generation exists, than there are baby boomers.

Author's John Beck and Mitchell Wade wrote a book called *The Kids Are Alright: How the Gamer Industry is Changing the Workplace* about how gamers are impacted by games. A few leading-edge companies are using games for training. In the government market, we see examples, including training for military and first responders. Healthcare examples include Remission, a game designed to teach kids about cancer and simulators that teach surgeons how to perform a particular procedure. And one of my favorite places to eat ice cream, Cold Stone Creamery, has a retail service game to teach the retail fundamentals.

How does gaming translate to training? In Figure 10.11, we see why gaming matters.

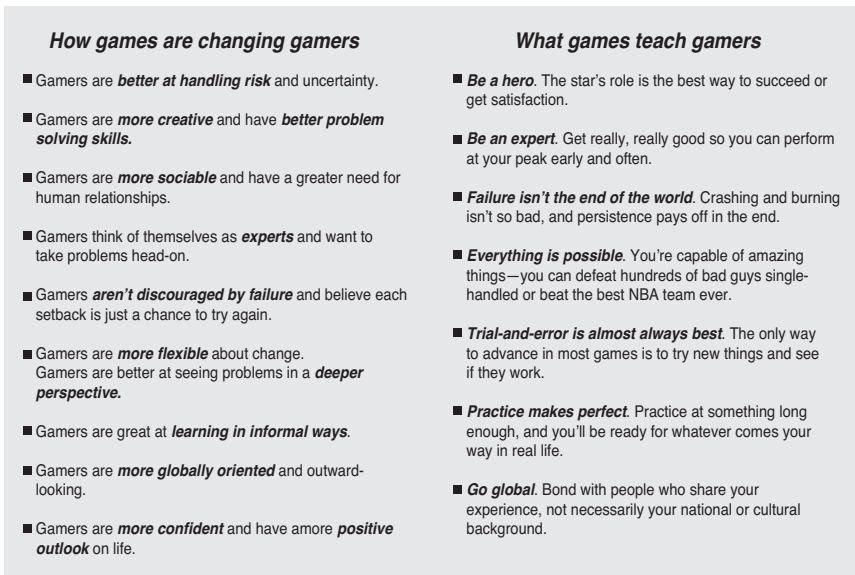


Figure 10.11 How gamers are impacted by games.

According to *The Kids Are Alright: How the Gamer Industry is Changing the Workplace*, to succeed in training gamers, one must create a curriculum which

- Aggressively ignores any hint of formal instruction
- Leans heavily on trial-and-error (after all, failure is nearly free, you just push “play again”)
- Includes lots of learning from peers but virtually none from authority figures
- Is consumed in very small bits, exactly when the learner wants, which is usually just before the skill is needed
- Allows for people to take risks in a safe environment
- Allows for players to achieve a skill or talent that is not only meaningful but also perceived as having value

So gaming and marketing intersect in that marketing needs to enable and train the channel and ecosystem. Your channel and ecosystem is most valuable when they are knowledgeable and excited about your products and services. Serious gaming enables universities, partners, and your own sales team to learn the portfolio in an innovative yet valuable way. The unique platform facilitates the presentation of complicated material in a way that is engaging.

Before you start with a serious gaming effort, make sure you define your objectives. Are you going to use the game for teaching 101 fundamentals? Will an interactive learning-lab experience be included? From my experience, our complementing lab was a best bet for the success of our gaming solution. Also, you are probably currently doing traditional types of training. Make sure your gaming efforts are complementary to and incorporated within existing and institutional curricula. We also found the institutional groups helpful and, in fact, found gaming was most effective in conjunction with face-to-face classroom debriefs.

In addition, define your initial target audience. Will you target MBA, Executive MBA, or undergraduate business and information systems customers? Will you first go to partners and your ecosystem or to universities? Make sure you think through your planning in this area. Because serious gaming is new, read through, digest, and play the Innov8 game that is featured in my case study for IBM in Chapter 17, “Innovation, Engagement, and Business Results: adidas Group, ConAgra Foods, and Tellabs.” For a sneak peek, see Figure 10.12!



Figure 10.12 Innov8! from IBM.

Top Five Lessons Learned for Serious Gaming

Serious gaming is an opportunity to teach, drive interest, and “show,” not just tell your potential customers about your products. The focus here is new, so explore the following tips for serious gaming, but know that these will evolve with the market:

1. **Determine your demographics:** Does gaming fit your target audience? There is a generational divide that challenges marketers today. Selecting the right way to educate will be a combination of new techniques such as gaming with continued focus on traditional training like classroom and online. Gaming is for one of the segments of our society that likes to learn via activity.
2. **Pick core areas to focus on with your gaming training:** There are more natural areas to focus a gaming scenario. Make sure you are planning the areas of your business that work well in this Marketing 2.0 technique.
3. **Spend time on the teachable moments:** Think through your scenarios as teachable moments. For IBM’s game, we spent more time in the scenarios and keypoints that gamers would have to grasp than on the actual development of the game. Leverage the teachable moments and the way to learn in bite-size chunks.
4. **Take the gaming concept to the limit:** Have a protagonist, hero, or heroine, and have the game in a competitive mode. Don’t skip the cast, the story, and the theatrics. Have fun!
5. **Work with universities to understand how to train:** They add so much value to the thought process of your channel education plan.

Focus on Sharing with Widgets and Wikis

A widget is a mini-Web application that can be put onto a Web page, desktop, blog, or social profile that streams information in a more consumable fashion, usually containing some visual information. It is a dynamic, customizable, and convenient innovative medium. There are many possibilities for desktop widgets to assist a user in his area of work by delivering relevant, filtered information right on the user’s desktop. A valuable widget is to present the most relevant information that someone uses daily. According to Niall Kennedy, “The Google gadget ecosystem received 960 million page

views last week, a 36 percent jump from just one month ago.” For some examples, see Figure 10.13.



**“Suddenly Everything’s Coming up Widgets: Breaking Down the Web into Small, Portable Pieces is the Smart Trend that Everyone from Nokia to Google is Betting,” Om Malik, *Business 2.0 Magazine*, October 2, 2006.

Figure 10.13 The world of widgets

For a widget to be successful, it cannot just be an advertising mechanism; it needs to be a vessel to deliver your brand promise. For example, Shervin Pishevar, cofounder and CEO of Social Gaming Network (SGN) and board member of Free Webs, shares an example of Acura. Acura is commonly regarded among the autorati as having the best navigation systems on the market. It’s developed the Acura RDX Traffic widget that delivers real-time traffic flow (and ebb) to a user’s computer. It’s a highly useful application, and because of Acura’s positioning, it reaps more benefits from this widget than its competitors would. Shervin presents another great widget example from Amsterdam. The Rijksmuseum has developed a widget that is updated daily with a new picture from the world-famous museum’s impressive collection. An icon on the picture spins it when clicked, revealing the piece’s title, artist, date, some historical background, and a link back to the museum’s Web site. Currently, the widget is just a desktop widget, but the fresh content it delivers each day would make it appealing to site owners and citizen publishers if it is ever available in that format.

With widgets, you need to ensure that you get it to your audience’s desktop, and you need to ensure it stays there. To get the widget to someone’s

desktop means that the person has to want it there. Going to an already existing community to further inscribe your brand loyalty is a great way to leverage and use widgets. There are many examples of leveraging demand generation to get someone to use a widget. Jeremiah Owyang, senior analyst at Forrester Research: Social Computing, gives an example of Sony leveraging prizes for a widget, in this case, Rock You's vampire application. He writes, "Sony didn't beat the three million existing users with heavy advertising over the head, instead it offered value by giving away prizes and tied in a movie that already existed."

Getting the widget on the desktop is one thing, but then it was to provide value and be continuously updated with CNN-like tidbits of relevant and valued information. One of the things I learned doing our Smart SOA (trademarked) widget was to leverage a specialized firm that had experience with widgets. They provided me a great-looking widget (see Figure 10.13), and I provided the great content that I wanted to get out to my widget users.

Other uses for widgets that energize your market and channel include the following:

- **Customer support mechanism:** A widget can be designed in a manner so that the end user can ask a question or report an SOA problem, and the appropriate parties with the company can see that inquiry and respond accordingly, for example, putting a consultant in touch with the client or answering the question directly, and so on. Today, support chat rooms and e-mail question forms are often utilized, but this requires additional human effort to locate the appropriate division or person within a company to resolve the issue.
- **Document approval processes:** Often a presentation deck or other document needs to be reviewed, updated, and approved by various people located in various parts of the world. Today, Web applications, e-mail, and Lotus Notes® databases are leveraged to try to provide an approval hierarchy, but often the communication of key feedback and so on is lost or misconstrued along the way. The concept of a widget providing real-time information via RSS feeds can be leveraged to ensure everyone has access to the latest document of interest; additionally, the appropriate persons can provide feedback (written or verbal) that can then be tracked alongside that item's entry in the widget. Upon approval, the item and its feedback records are stored in a more permanent location (because most widgets are not designed as a long-term document reference repository).

The real beauty of widgets is that they narrow your scope of information and bring it to you rather than the other way around. It is so easy to become overwhelmed by all of the information out there. Strange as it might sound, sometimes going to a Web site is too much work. For example, take the blogs on my RSS feed. There's no way that I will go out and visit each of them once a day. I don't have that kind of time. However, if I take a quick look at my RSS widget, I can not only see the titles of any updated postings, but I can also read a selection from that posting, and then I decide if it is worth it for me to visit that Web page.

Companies should work with widgets to cut through the clutter of the marketplace and energize their channels.

The Collaborative Web Site: Wikis

Now let's turn our attention to wikis. A wiki is software that enables users to freely create and edit Web page content using any Web browser. Wikis enable you to create a place to store information. Wikis are special in that the organization and content can both be edited. Anyone can add, create, or edit a wiki page. Even nontechnical users can create their own information repositories. For internal use, wikis are an "interactive" repository of information, comments, and insights. They are a simple intranet that can be used by everybody in a simple way. Figure 10.14 features the IBM Super Women's Group for our group of outstanding female leaders in IBM. This internal wiki enables us to share information in a dynamic format.

Externally, wikis are like Web sites, but the interactivity makes the difference. On the outside, there is the risk that people can add content that is not useful or even inaccurate. It requires strong tracking and control. Wikipedia is one of the best-known wikis and has a great system to ensure the content is accurate and relevant.

Businesses install wikis to provide affordable and effective intranets and for knowledge management. Ward Cunningham, developer of the first wiki, WikiWikiWeb, originally described it as "the simplest online database that could possibly work." How might a wiki be used in marketing? To provide information to your sales team or your customers and ecosystem in a constant refresh state.

For example, I produce and publish to my internal and external community an award-winning newsletter. My editor, a brilliant woman by the name of Ally Jimenez Klopsch, sets up a set of links to the SOA wiki that my team manages. The newsletter has no bulk or size to it and is a brilliant piece of art

going out the door. The wiki affords me the ability to have information sent without a huge size and to provide constantly updated data and information. I use the wiki for both my internal and external views of the data. In Figure 10.15, you can see the version of our newsletter that goes out to the distribution list of more than 100,000 people.

This newsletter and approach won a MarCom Award for Excellence in Marketing Communications from the Association of Marketing & Communications Professionals. This wiki keeps my ecosystem energized in that it always have access to the freshest content around!

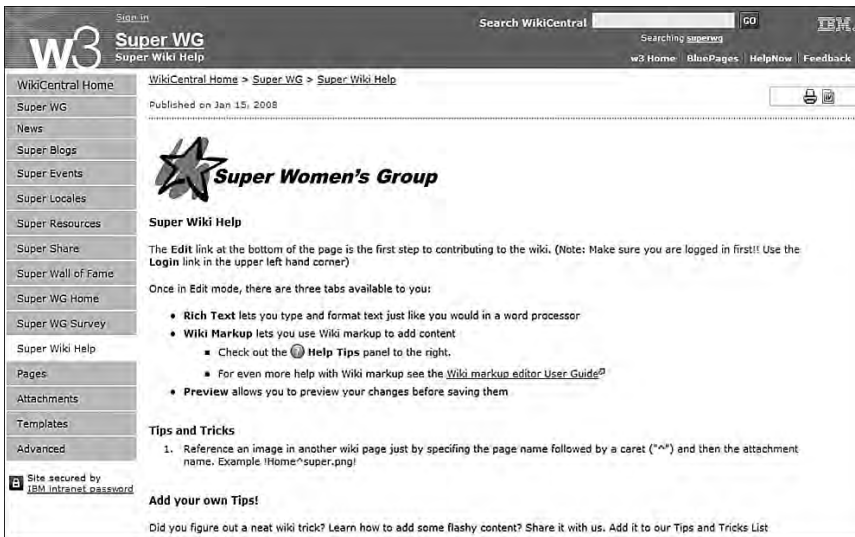


Figure 10.14 The Super Women's Group internal wiki.

Top Five Lessons Learned for Widgets and Wikis

I combined our top tips for both widgets and wikis as they tend to be similar in lessons learned to date. The following are the focus areas for success:

1. **Widgets are here to stay:** Pilot or play with a use now and learn from it. It can be a powerful extension of your brand and an energizer for your ecosystem.

SOA Newsletter #66
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Tech Corner	New book: Executing SOA - practical guide for the service-oriented architect → Plus, SOA crash course, more
SOA Webinars	May 29 - Accelerate agility & lower costs by virtualizing and governing your SOA → Plus, May 28 - Can you afford to stand still with your IT investments?
IMPACT 2008 Photos	You asked for them, here they are → Impact 2008 photos available to view, copy & order prints on Flickr
SOA Email Signature	Update your Notes email signature → Use new footer to continue to promote Smart SOA initiative

Figure 10.15 The SOA Newsletter supported by a wiki

2. **Use a professional for widgets:** Focus on your core competency of marketing and the content that will entice the ecosystem to come back, and use a professional for the production of the actual widget application
3. **Brings information to the user:** If the widget merely contains a collection of titles and hyperlinks, it is really no more useful than a Web page. Things such as scrolling titles to breaking news, videos that play within the widget, and information tailored to the user are examples of valuable widget features. It should be something that a user can glance at and see that it is compelling.

4. **Be creative in your use of wikis:** Leveraging the power of constant updates and small file size is of value in newsletters and other interactive forms of communication with your audience. Wikis are powerful enough for both your core channels inside your company and outside your company.
5. **Content is king:** In both widgets and wikis, the value is in the content being fresh and new. Don't invest in this vessel for your ecosystem and not invest in the upkeep and passion for the content.

Blogging Including Twitter

Blogging is a Web-based discussion tool that enables individuals or groups to directly and easily communicate their thoughts, experience, opinions, feelings, and observations for all to see! Blogs espouse a worldview with the voice of the author reflecting her ideas (either knowledge or a unique perspective) that might influence perceptions and an overall position of those opinions in the marketplace. Blogs create great opportunities for shaping messages, but they also create risks if there is propagation of inaccurate or proprietary information. They foster discussion, debate, and even a sense of community.

Depending on the source, there are millions of bloggers throughout the world, although the number of active bloggers (those posting twice a week) has slowed a little with all the new choices of Web 2.0 technology available. (Remember that blogging actually began as Weblogs back in 1997.) For example, IBM's internal blogs have posting from those in more than 73 countries and saw 60,000 page views on the main blog story on IBM's intranet. IBM has more than 160 external blogs and group blogs. IBM blogging guidelines are well established across the business world (see Chapter 9, "Influencer Value: The IBM Case Study," for how the guidelines were created).

Blogs can create awareness and buzz. They can create positive word of mouth and interest in new products and establish interaction and relationships with customers or prospects.

They present a new way to frame and influence public discussion and form a new economic and social space for learning and collaboration. As blogs are text-heavy and frequently updated, they can be leveraged with search engine tools. For example, several blog search engines are used to search blog contents (also known as the blogosphere), such as Blogdigger, Feedster, and

Technorati. Technorati provides current information on both popular searches and tags used to categorize blog postings.

A tumblelog is a type of blog. It is focused on being simple and short versus some of the longer blogs that have become known in blogging. People who write tumblelogs use a lot of visualization, such as pictures, videos, audio, and links. The primary focus of tumblelogs is typically to share experiences and discoveries of the author, not as much to focus on a topic or area of interest. Often there are few words but lots of extras!

Microblogging is also a short form of a blog but more in text form. A lot of the content comes from instant messaging and mp3s or even texting. Often these blogs are restricted to a small set of friends.

The most popular service is called Twitter. Twitter is free social networking and microblogging site that enables users to post their latest updates. An update is limited by 140 characters and can be posted through three methods: Web form, text message, or instant message. Twitter is interesting in that the younger generation is enamored with it! A friend's son uses it as an "efficient" way to keep track of his "crew." They use Twitter to log what they do all day, and then instead of calling each other, they check out Twitter to keep up to date on their friends' lives.

The increase in the use of Twitter is amazing. Web visits have increased eight times in the last year. Compete shows about 900,000 U.S. monthly Web site visitors. Comscore puts the worldwide number at 1.3+ million unique monthly visitors. Twitter can be used to virally spread information to your intended audience and provide them with simple instructions about how to sign up for a free account and follow your stream. Customers, prospects, partners, and colleagues can view your updates. It is a good idea to follow those who follow you in turn because now that you have a portable broadcasting channel, you can do a variety of things.

For example, given the opt-in model Twitter uses, and because people choose to follow a Tweet stream based on the quality and relevance of its content, Twitter presents an ideal way to reach and foster a real-time community of brand evangelists and key influencers. Because IBM Lotus also drives to raise the brand's legitimacy and relevance in the world of Web 2.0—making the case that "IBM really gets it"—it is imperative that our efforts to market our own social software products embrace such emerging communities and channels.

A recent example is a trade show where Lotus Connections scored a big win with its customers. We were able to keep the chatter going and push the story to our fellow Tweeters, and the groundswell of follow on blogosphere

and press activity served as a proof point to Twitter’s capability to help us build a story’s momentum. Lotus had about 350 followers on Twitter, with more following each day. As Jeff Schick, IBM’s vice president of Social Software commented, “We have learned that Twitter can play an important part in our communications efforts and can be a keystone as we raise brand and product awareness/credibility in these nascent communities of purpose.”

Goals of blogs vary for marketing purposes, as you see in Figure 10.16.

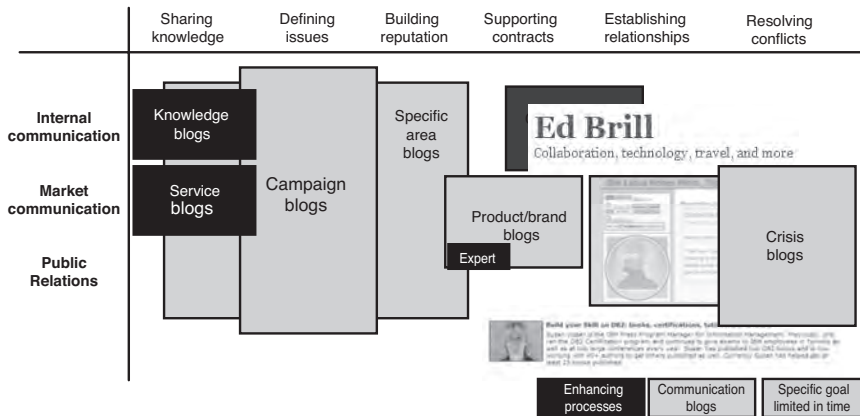


Figure 10.16 The range of options for bloggers.

Some blogs are used for sharing knowledge and to inform. Some blogs tee up key issues and discussion areas. Others are used for extending your brand reputation or, most importantly, to build relationships and put a face on your company. Subject-matter and product-expert blogs help drive traffic, product awareness, and brand loyalty. They can be used internally, for the market, or even drive public-relations activities. They serve as tools and extend networks to collaborate and share knowledge.

Blogs have an impact on businesses. They often beat the mainstream media to major stories and serve as corporate watchdogs and quality control. Overall, they serve as an alternative source of information and company viewpoints. For example, IBM started a group blog called HeathNex. It is a group of IBM healthcare and external experts discussing the transformation of medicine and human health. It is often covered in the news and has led to the awareness of IBM’s significant involvement in healthcare technologies.

From my viewpoint, blogging is an innovative PR media with strong influence when the bloggers are part of the community/group you need to influence, inform, or seduce. In Figure 10.17, we see a sample from IBM

Lotus's blogger Ed Brill. Ed helps Lotus' 46,000 customers with their sense of community and commonality and refutes its competitor's fear, uncertainty, and doubt (FUD). He shares news and information about Lotus and has decreased the distance between IBM and its customers.

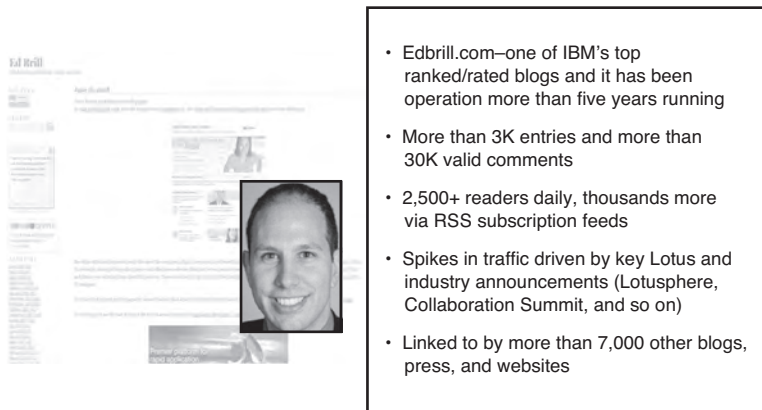


Figure 10.17 The IBM Lotus example.

The key challenges you face are similar to the other vessels we discuss. How do you get people to your blog? How do you keep your content fresh, relevant, and exciting by combining different techniques, methods, and vehicles? Creativity is again one of the secrets of success! One example of how to get your blog read is to subscribe your blog in different directories to help disseminate and improve search engines so that more people will get to your blog. I have been a blogger on IBM's blogsphere for about two years and still host one of the top ten blogs. I use it to share information with my readers and linkers. It is part of my marketing mix where I disseminate messages, especially where other bloggers link into my site. My channel loves my blog, and I receive e-mails from around the world about the topics that I choose to focus on.

Top Five Ideas for Better Blogging

The top tips for blogging can make the difference in your success in the marketplace in leveraging this area for better marketing gains.

1. **Identify your key bloggers inside and outside your company:** Work with the bloggers to influence the marketplace. Set up your own blog

- through Wordpress, Typepad, Blogger, or other blog-hosting services. Setting up your own blog will teach you “on the job” how blogging works, the technology behind it, and get you involved in the community.
2. **Content is king:** Note this trend on a lot of the digital media types. This is one reason I have started hiring writers. The digital world needs great communication and creativity skills. If using Twitter, share bites of knowledge from events and receive other people’s impressions.
 3. **Use multimedia types:** Videos, links, and pictures make your blog more readable and fun. You can broadcast meet-up places on Twitter and provide an online streaming video or audio channel for those who are not on the ground to join you live. (This is a nice touch for customers.)
 4. **Be personal:** Bloggers share personal tidbits about their lives. Remember that your blog gets you closer to your customer. It strengthens the relationship.
 5. **Think through it:** Try out Twitter or just blog. Voice your opinion and participate in the conversation. You can’t see the impact until you start, but make sure whatever you write is fit to go on the front page. Because anything out there could end up on the news, use it as a tool to gather feedback on your reports from the road by asking questions and interacting with your audience.

RSS

According to Wikipedia, RSS is a Web-feed format used to publish frequently updated content such as blogs, news, and podcasts in a standard format. An RSS document, also called a feed, contains a summary of content from an associated Web site or the full text. RSS makes it possible for people to keep up with Web sites in an automated manner that can be piped into special programs. RSS has been around for at least five years. It is one of the simplest technologies to date that enables users to keep tabs of the content they care about without the hassles of always browsing all the Web sites.

The value of RSS feeds for marketers is that they provide a way to keep up-to-date fresh content flowing to your customers. A global survey of internal and corporate communications professionals found that more than half use blogs, online video, and RSS or plan to do so in the next 12 months. Instead of holding off for another two to three weeks for the next e-mail blast, with RSS, marketers can post content instantly.

For example, at IBM, our developerWorks® site allows experts to create their content, relate their knowledge, keep others informed, and connect with the broader developerWorks community that share their interests. There has been more than 100 percent year-to-year growth in RSS feeds on developerWorks.

Top Five Lessons Learned for Success on RSS

RSS feeds are powerful ways to drive your message dynamically into the market. The following are the top five tips for your RSS strategy:

1. Determine the content to distribute with regularly updated content, customized feeds, notifications, and alerts.
2. Build the feeds.
3. Use feeds to expand market by making RSS links easily available and visible and enable one-click subscriptions to RSS aggregators.
4. Build promotional applications with feeds.
5. Measure the feeds and their impact.

Podcasts

According to Wikipedia, podcasting is defined as a series of digital media files distributed over the Internet for playback on portable media players and the computer. The term *podcast* can refer either to the series of content itself or to the method by which it is syndicated. Podcasting (think “iPod” and “broadcasting”) is similar to a radio show transmitted over the Web. The advantage over radio is that anyone can make a podcast, and the people can listen to the episodes whenever they like. People who download the podcast can listen to it on their computers or transfer the files to a portable player (such as an iPod). Podcasts are presented in a series and often have a theme so that the subscribers have an idea about what to expect when they sign up to receive the podcasts. Videocasting is used for the online delivery of video clips.

There is a lot of value in podcasting for marketers. eMarketer estimates that there was a 285 percent increase in the size of the U.S. podcast audience in 2007, which was a growth to 18.5 million. Furthermore, that audience will increase to 65 million in 2012. Of those listeners, 25 million will be “active” users who tune in at least once a week. We have also seen this growth inside IBM; our podcast series targeting developers has grown more than 200 percent since 2007.

Capturing and disseminating conversations can be a powerful tool because the listener can hear the excitement. A marketer's opportunity is to share knowledge through a proven medium (audio recording) but in a new and more personal way (fast download to a personal audio player). Like e-mail, instant messaging, and blogging, podcasting can break down barriers and deliver a personal touch.

To launch a successful podcasting program, think of podcasts as well-crafted, engaging radio segments delivered through the Web. Using radio segments as the model, podcasts should be short, focused communications or small nuggets of learning for customers, clients, partners, and employees.

Top Five Lessons Learned on Podcasting

Podcasting is fun and is powerful as a marketing play. Here are the top five tips for your podcasting strategy from my discussion with IBM's podcasting experts:

1. **Plan your podcast:** Podcasts require planning to determine the audience, the purpose, the format, and whether the material is appropriate for audio only. Talking to the IBM podcast experts, they recommend ten minutes as a target. This can be hard to do when you work with interesting topics and engaging subjects. Seek the opinions of your colleagues when editing your content and edit aggressively. Brevity is a powerful tool when dealing in spoken-word audio recording.
2. **Stylize your podcast:** Decide whether you want to do an interview or a one-person presentation. IBM's podcast experts advise booking the most knowledgeable person you can find on your subject and making sure you have chosen someone who can speak intelligibly with clarity and warmth. If you or your guests simply read your messages, chances are you will not get much of an audience. On the other hand, if you and your guests improvise with authority and intelligence, you will have a winning program.
3. **Podcast in a series:** Why a series? Well, this is the hallmark of what makes a podcast a podcast. Podcast users expect a continuing series that they can follow, not just a one-off file.
4. **Combine with interactive blogs:** After the demand for podcasts expands and your experience deepens, consider combining podcasts with interactive blogs to get an even higher level of interaction with your audience.

5. **Use for internal and external purposes:** Remember, your employees are a key carrier of your brand. Consider a podcast series on your company's brand value!

Videocasting

Videocasting is used for the online delivery of video clips. It is basically video online. Probably the most popular videocasting example is YouTube. Anyone with a camera and a computer can begin his own videocast.

INFORMATION ON DEMAND'S YOUTUBE

by Nancy Pearson, Vice President of IBM Information on Demand

This is a best practice in Viral Videocasting from IBM's Data Management group. The purpose of the viral video project was to increase awareness of the Data Management segment of our IBM Information Management business, both in the market and internally. The video series highlights key segment messages in a storyline about a corporate video project gone awry. The story was delivered in a series of three videos, with each video showing the progression of the fictional project. The series was shared through social media venues, including YouTube and IBM TV Channel. The goal was to make these videos smart, entertaining, and creative to enable a viral effect.

Step-by-Step Process

The approach was to post the video and share it with internal and external audiences, leveraging the viral effect of social media sites to promote it further. The thought process for increasing awareness was to initially seed selected internal and external audiences; for example, if 100 people watched the video, they expected that those 100 people will tell 50 other people, and those 50 will tell 25, and so on. Each week a new video was released, continuing the story and creating anticipation of the next release.

The viral effect goal was to reach the "whitespace" audience. The IBM team did their homework. Although videos are important, fewer than 10 percent get more than 1,500 views, 3 percent of videos get more than

5,000 views, and 1 percent of videos get more than 500,000 views! To date, in the three weeks since release, the videos collectively in the series have been viewed more than 6,000 times.

Lessons Learned

Doing series of three videos rather than three separate videos gave the team a better chance to hook the audience and create something viral.

This storyline had to have the right tone to have a viral effect. In this case, the tone is dry and deadpan, and therefore, it's funny, as the tone highlights the absurdity of the discussion at hand (trying to find ways to "personify" corporate message points into some kind of dramatic narrative).

The media enables the team to come out and blatantly state the message points (as part of the brainstorming), yet then immediately juxtapose them with ironic counterpoint (a smart and self-deprecating move appreciated by the audience and showing that we don't take ourselves too seriously).

The series strategy provided the opportunity to create recurring characters that will resonate with the audience.

The agreed on storyline has potential for a longer shelf life and can be reused in the future to create new scenarios.

Results

The viral videos were posted to YouTube and ChannelDB2 on June 12, 2008. In a short three weeks, the following occurred:

- The videos in the series have been viewed collectively more than 6,000 times on YouTube
- Linked to by five other sites (viral growth)
- Listed as a "favorite" on YouTube 18 times
- Scored a content rating of 4.5 stars (out of 5)

Top Five Lessons Learned on Videocasting

A picture is worth a 1000 words, especially online. Videocasting as a new vessel is a powerful add to your GTM execution for energizing your channel. Below are five tips on how to be most successful in its usage:

1. **Have a script:** Make the script informative and entertaining, and make sure you connect with the audience. This might seem like Marketing 101, but sometimes when a camera is around, people forget to keep it simple and targeted. Remember, do not read from the script!
2. **Editing is crucial:** Editing software is inexpensive these days, and editing can make or break your video. Make sure you shoot some “B-Roll” without sound. The editor will use this footage to enhance the video and make it much easier to edit. Maybe it’s your subject walking around the location, doing or demonstrating some task if appropriate; maybe show the person interacting with others (without sound).
3. **Make sure you tag it correctly to get picked up:** A feed needs to be created for each videocast series, enabling users to subscribe to it. This feed is then submitted or registered with sites such as iTunes or Yahoo, and it will show up in their listings and searches.
4. **Call to action:** Just because it is video doesn’t mean you can skip this step. Your videocast needs to have clear direction at its closure.
5. **Make it an experience:** Video is different from podcasting. Make sure you maximize the use of pictures and imagery to make your story become an experience.

Putting It Together—The Marketing 2.0 Starter Set!

I highlighted seven of the new interactive vessels for brand and product content. As you can tell, there is a lot of learning, experimentation, and success occurring in the marketplace today. I recommend that with these new tools, you focus on the goal that you need to accomplish within your integrated plan of both traditional and nontraditional elements. Begin by educating yourself on the social tools and experiment with small projects. Also, observe how the community works and its rules. Then, incorporate a few elements into your overall plan, such as a Facebook fan group around a product or a widget to share new information with your partner community. Learn what makes sense for you to measure and track. Then advance to a point where you increase your funding, your participation, and your integration of the social aspects into your overall strategy. Although this is new, try it first, but don’t wait too long to jump in with both feet.

Make sure you start social bookmarking. There are more than 15 billion Web sites on the Internet, so you need help to sort through all the information sources. Step into the new Marketing 2.0 world using social tagging. There are some great ways to help you organize all your social news. Dogear

(aimed at businesses and enterprises), del.icio.us, Digg, reddit, and Newsvine offer a similar system for organization of “social news.” Because this is social bookmarking, these are meant to be shared! Get started by signing up for a service (maybe de.licio.us), start bookmarking with tags, and finally, socialize your bookmarks and see what others are looking at!

As Daryl Plummer, managing VP and Gartner Fellow writes, “In SOA, the least important word is Service. With Web 2.0, the most important word is community. When the two come together and systems start delivering services to communities, real phenomena begin to emerge. Large numbers of people coming together to use services will generate the next innovations for new business. If you ask me, the way to the next billion-dollar company goes through figuring out how to let a community of customers serve themselves while you allow the community to grow and take your money from the people who want to deliver services to them. That is the essence of the emerging ‘Cloud’ and rising successes of MySpace, Flickr, and many others.”

For my business at IBM, we set up starter kits to help our clients get started in an easy fashion. Because my IBM clients love the starter kits for technology, here is our virtual starter set for your new vessel approach to Marketing 2.0. It is just a suggested way to get you going on your journey. From the above chapter and previous chapters, the following is my recommended Marketing 2.0 Starter Set!

Go to ibmpressbooks.com/angels to get a look at the Starter Set.



- **Listening:** Google reader
- **Social networks:** Facebook
- **Virtual environments:** Second Life, OpenSim, and ActiveWorlds.
- **Widgets:** Google, Yahoo
- **Wiki hosting:** PBwiki
- **Microblogging:** Twitter
- **Blogging host:** Wordpress, Typepad, and Blogger
- **Mobile blogging:** Utterz
- **Linking and tagging (blogosphere):** Technorati, Google Blogsearch, and LinkedIn

- **Audio hosting:** iTunes
- **Video hosting:** YouTube

Conclusion

Today is an exciting time in the marketplace as new vessels invade the marketers' toolkit. These new tools invite the trusted customer to speak on our behalf and energize the customer to be our brand advocates. Leveraging the new vessels with the channel provides us a way to listen, respond, and leverage the power of the ecosystem.

However, it is also scary the number and choices of new media and interactive marketing. The vessels that we use to energize our channel are abundant and cost effective. The new digital age lets us network with virtual worlds and online communities, actively participate with viral techniques and serious gaming, share through widgets and wikis, and blog for top media coverage and brand extension. Vessel success is based on strong and relevant content and creativity. The goal is to leverage these vessels to energize your market and channel. It brings the customer and ecosystem closer to your company with a personal digital face. Try them for marketing value in your ecosystem but have a coordinated and integrated plan about how and when to leverage them. Now is the time to experiment to see what works in this Marketing 2.0 world.

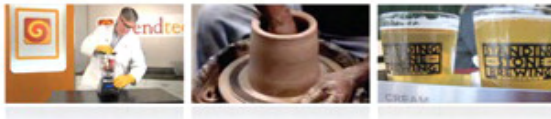
The growth of new media vessels reflects large-scale changes in organizational structure and work styles, and these changes will impact the future of the enterprise. College students use MySpace, and this is how they expect to interact. Blogging and gaming has invoked a feeling that credibility is bestowed by the community, not by title or position. The bottom line is that this isn't just about seizing marketing opportunities, but it is about remaining relevant in a changing dynamic.

For an example of an SOA newsletter, additional content on widgets, Twitter linkage, Smart SOA Social network flash, and a Marketing 2.0 Starter Kit, go to ibmpressbooks.com/angels.



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QUE[®]

Michael Miller

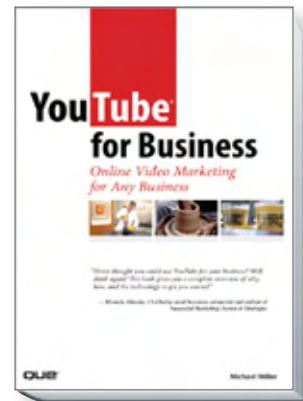


This book uses profiles of successful businesses to show you how to make YouTube part of your online marketing plan—and drive traffic to your company's website.

Michael Miller

YouTube for Business

Online Video Marketing for Any Business



ISBN: 9780789737977

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1

How YouTube Can Help You Market Your Business

YouTube is a site where you can watch just about any type of video imaginable. There are videos of cute kittens, indie rock bands, standup comedy routines, stupid human tricks, vintage television commercials, high school musicals, film school projects, home movies, breaking news clips, personal video blogs—you name it. Users have uploaded literally millions of video clips, and everyone can watch them in their web browser at no cost.

Most of the videos on YouTube are amateurish, produced by non-professionals with simple webcams or consumer camcorders. But within the mix are an increasing number of more professional clips, designed to promote a particular product or business.

That's right: Businesses small and large have discovered YouTube. In fact, YouTube is the hottest new medium for online marketing; if your business has an online component, you could, and should, be promoting it via YouTube videos.

A Short History of YouTube

If you've never visited the YouTube website (shown in Figure 1.1), you've missed out on the hottest thing on the Internet today. In fact, YouTube has become so pervasive and so innovative that *Time* magazine named it Invention of the Year in 2006—which is pretty good for a site that came to life only the year before.

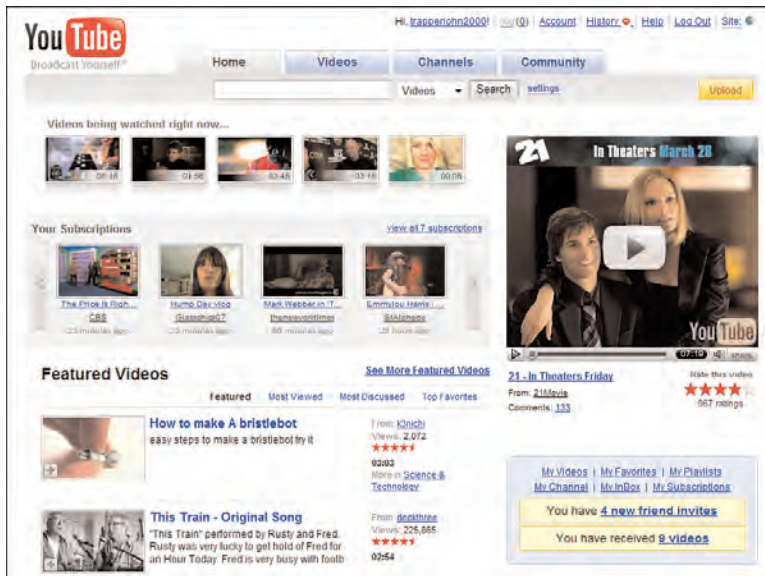


FIGURE 1.1

The YouTube site—home base for all your online video marketing.

YouTube: The Early Days

YouTube was the brainchild of three former PayPal employees: Chad Hurley, Steven Chen, and Jawed Karim. The three founders had left their former company and were looking for a new business opportunity. After exploring a few less interesting ideas, they eventually realized there was a real need for a service that facilitated the process of uploading, watching, and sharing videos. Hence the development of YouTube.

The trio registered the domain name YouTube.com on February 15, 2005 and then started developing the technology for the site—in Hurley’s garage. Chen, the programmer of the bunch, worked with Adobe’s Flash development language to stream video clips inside a web browser. Hurley, a user interface expert, adopted the concept of *tags* to let users identify and share the videos they liked. Together they came up with a way to let users paste video clips onto their own web pages, which expanded the reach of the site.

The development work done, a public beta test version of the site went live in May 2005. After a few months of working out the kinks of the site, the three men officially launched YouTube in December 2005.

YouTube Launches—And Gets Acquired

YouTube proved immensely popular from virtually the first day in business. Site traffic that first month was three million visitors, which is pretty good for a startup. The number of visitors tripled by the third month (February), tripled again by July (to 30 million visitors), and reached 38 million visitors by the end of the site's first year in business. That made YouTube one of the top 10 sites on the Web, period—and one of the fastest growing websites in history.

That kind of growth didn't go unnoticed, especially by competing websites. The biggest of the competing sites, Google, set out to buy the company, and did so in October 2006. Google paid \$1.65 billion for YouTube—an incredible sum for such a young company, and one that had yet to generate significant revenues.

This put YouTube smack in the middle of the mighty Google empire. That said, YouTube continues to operate independently of the mother ship; the site looks and acts pretty much the same today as it did in the pre-Google days. The only big difference is volume. The number of videos and users on the site continue to grow, which is great for businesses looking to take advantage of the opportunity.

YouTube Today

How big is YouTube today? According to the market research firm comScore, YouTube consistently rates in the top five of all websites, with close to 80 million visitors per month. And those visitors are watching a lot of videos—more than three billion videos a month, or a third of all the videos viewed on the Web.

Not surprisingly, it appears that YouTube is replacing traditional television viewing for many users. According to Google, an average YouTube viewer spends 164 minutes online everyday; in contrast, viewers spend just 130 minutes per day watching traditional television. Where would you rather put your marketing message?

Is Video Right for Your Business?

Large businesses have long embraced video marketing in the form of traditional television advertising. But television ads were outside the purview of smaller businesses unless they could afford a late night spot on a local channel.

Thanks to YouTube, however, businesses both large and small can effectively market themselves via online videos. The cost of posting a video to the YouTube site is zero; the only cost is the expense of shooting and editing the video. This makes YouTube marketing affordable for virtually any business.

But is video the right way to promote your business? If you've never produced a video or television ad, you might not be sure. But in many cases, a short video can have a tremendous positive effect on your website's traffic or in orders generated via an 800-number.

Let's face it: Consumers love to watch videos. We're becoming less a society of readers and more one of watchers; the average consumer would rather watch a video than read a text-based advertisement. Like it or not, you need to be aware of and adapt your marketing mix to this trend.

And here's the thing: The more interesting the video, the bigger the audience it will attract. You can include a lot of information in a short three-minute video, and you can present that information in an entertaining and engaging fashion. People like to be entertained, educated, and informed, and online video can do all three things—and, in the process, provide a clear picture of the product or service you're offering.

DoubleClick conducted a survey in 2006 that codified the benefits of online video advertising. Here's what it found:

- A high percentage of audiences interact with video ads, via mouseovers, use of the video control buttons, and so forth.
- Viewers click the Play button in video ads twice as often as they click traditional image ads. In addition, click-through rates are four to five times higher than with traditional text or image ads.
- Viewers actually watch video ads. On average, video ads play two-thirds of the way through.

Here's how Rick Bruner, research director at DoubleClick, assessed the results:

Online video ads are quickly becoming the medium of choice to drive both brand awareness and sales. The results show that there are clear ROI advantages to placing video ads. We expect to see strong growth in the number of companies reaping the benefits of online video advertising in the coming months and years.

Done effectively, a YouTube video can add a viral component to your company's website. You see, when you post a video to YouTube, that video

takes on a life of its own. It will be viewed by thousands of YouTube users, posted to numerous websites and blogs, emailed around the Internet—you name it. Just make sure you tailor your message to the YouTube crowd, and you can start generating traffic from the millions of people who frequent YouTube each day. Any user watching your video is now a potential customer—assuming that you include your website’s address or other contact information in the video.

What Types of Businesses Can Use YouTube?

It doesn’t matter what type of business you run or how large that business is. You can create effective videos that will attract YouTube viewers and drive more business to your website or 800-number. All types of businesses are getting into the YouTube scene: local businesses, major national marketers, ad agencies, real estate agencies, consultants and motivational speakers, Internet-only retailers—you name it.

For example, Nike (www.youtube.com/user/Nikesoccer) enlisted Brazilian soccer star Ronaldinho to produce a gritty clip that the company then uploaded to the YouTube site. Word-of-mouth quickly built, and YouTube viewers started to email the video to friends and embed it in their blogs and MySpace/Facebook pages. The video was viewed more than 3 million times; all that exposure cost Nike next to nothing to produce—and absolutely nothing to distribute.

Of course, you don’t need to be a big company like Nike to benefit from YouTube marketing. Take, as another example, A-Cappella.com, an Internet retailer of CDs, DVDs, sheet music, and books for unaccompanied (a cappella) singing groups. During the 2007 holiday season, a video of Indiana University’s Straight No Chaser vocal group took off on YouTube, registering 400,000 views per day. Captivated viewers found A-Cappella.com, which offered a DVD of the group’s performance. The company, which normally handled about 60 orders per day, suddenly found itself swamped with orders—eventually selling more than 5,300 copies of the group’s DVD. And it all happened without spending a penny on advertising.

Other companies, large and small, have benefited from the exposure of YouTube videos. H&R Block, Intuit, Levi’s, Mountain Dew, MTV, Smirnoff, and Warner Brothers are just a few of the recognizable names promoting their products and brands on YouTube; hundreds of smaller companies are also making YouTube part of their marketing mix.

Companies of all types market on YouTube. Movie studios and record labels were some of the first to jump on the YouTube bandwagon, but you can find videos from companies in all manner of industries, from travel agencies to pottery shops to real estate agencies. If what you're selling is in any way visual, which almost everything is, YouTube is a perfect medium for your company's advertising message.

What Kinds of Videos Can You Produce?

What types of videos do companies use to market their products and services on YouTube? There's a lot of variety, depending on the type of business or product marketed. You can find everything from television commercials, movie trailers, and infomercials to product demonstrations, video blogs, and real estate walk-throughs.

The key is to offer a video that YouTube users actually want to watch. That means a video that has some sort of entertainment, educational, or informational value. In other words, your video needs to entertain, educate, or inform—or no one will watch it.

Inform and Sell

One way to do this is to create the YouTube equivalent of an infomercial; that is, a video that shows the viewer how to do something useful, functioning as a teaser for the additional products and services you sell. For example, let's say you sell automobile parts. To promote your product, you create a short YouTube video about how to change your car's oil or how to adjust the engine's timing. At the beginning and end of the video you display a title card or graphic with your website address and maybe even your company's toll-free phone number. Because the video is rich in informational content (the how-to info), it attracts viewers—some of which will be interested enough to click through and purchase the parts you have for sale.

The key is to provide enough useful information to be of practical value to viewers, and then make it easy for those viewers to click through to your site for more information or to purchase what you have for sale. It can't be a straight advertisement; it has to be real information, presented in as direct a fashion as possible.

Educate and Sell

Another approach is to create a how-to video—that is, show the viewer how to do something useful. For example, if you sell appliance parts, you could create a video showing how to change the water filter in a refrigerator or the light bulb in a dryer. If you offer custom woodworking services, create a video showing how to build a bookcase or install wood trim. If you own a tire store, create a video showing how to check tire pressure or change a flat. You get the picture.

The key here is to offer truly useful content. Nothing theoretical or ethereal; down-to-earth practicality is what attracts YouTube viewers. Make the task common enough to draw a large audience, produce an easy to follow step-by-step tutorial, and then use the video to sell other goods and services.

Entertain and Sell

Informing and educating are important and will draw a fair number of YouTube viewers if you do it right. But everybody likes to be entertained, which is why pure entertainment videos typically show up at the top of YouTube's lists of most-viewed videos.

What's entertaining? Well, that depends on what you do and what you offer for sale. I like the example of Blendtec (www.youtube.com/user/Blendtec), a small company that sells high-end blenders. In a creative spurt, the company came up with a concept it calls "Will It Blend?" that it turned into a series of videos that spread across the Internet like wildfire. The videos, all extremely entertaining, showed the company's founder placing various objects—a video game cartridge, marbles, light bulbs, a can of soup, and so forth—into Blendtec blenders. A flip of the switch, and the viewer quickly discovered the answer to the question. The result was an Internet phenomenon as the videos turned viral—and all produced on a budget of less than \$100.

note

Read a profile of Blendtec and its YouTube marketing immediately following Chapter 3, "Tips for Producing More Effective YouTube Videos."

Blendtec's example shows how a company can benefit from a creative idea, executed in an entertaining fashion. There is nothing particularly informative or educational about the "Will It Blend?" spots, but they are fun to watch. And as YouTube continues to prove, videos that are fun to watch get watched—a lot.

How Can You Use YouTube to Market Your Business?

Different companies have different goals for the online component of their marketing mix. Maybe they're trying to generate brand awareness. Maybe they're trying to promote a particular product or drive sales to their retail store or website. Whatever your goal, YouTube can and should be an important part of your overall marketing mix.

In addition, you can use YouTube for purposes other than sales. For example, you can incorporate YouTube as part of your product or customer support mix, use videos for product training, and even incorporate YouTube for recruiting and employee communications. Anything you can say in person or to a group of people, you can say in a video and distribute via YouTube.

YouTube for Brand Awareness

Large national companies and major advertisers often use YouTube to enhance the awareness of their brands. Instead of focusing on individual products or services, these videos push the company's brand, often in the same fashion used in traditional television advertising.

In fact, online videos are better at imparting brand awareness than are traditional TV ads. A Millward Brown study found that online viewing led to 82% brand awareness and 77% product recall, compared to just 54% brand awareness and 18% product recall for similar television ads.

Experts believe this is because online viewers are more engaged than television viewers; the Web is a more interactive medium than the passive viewing inherent with television.

Brand awareness videos are typically entertaining, using a soft-sell approach to ingrain the brand's name and image in the minds of viewers. The Coca-Cola Company took this approach in 2006, creating a Holiday Wishcast mini-hub on the YouTube site. This hub employed the company's famous animated polar bears and other holiday branding, subtly pushing Coke as the drink of choice for the holiday season.

YouTube for Product Advertising

If you can use YouTube to push an overall brand, you can use it to push individual products, too. This requires a more direct approach, although it's still important to make the video informative, educational, or entertaining.

To promote a product, you want to show the product in your advertising, as Blendtec did with its blender videos and Nike did with its clips for Tiempo Ronaldinho shoes. You can show the product in action or used as part of a demonstration or tutorial. Just make sure you include lots of close-up product shots and link back to your own website—where more product information is available.

YouTube for Retail Promotion

You can also use YouTube to promote a company's retail stores. These videos can be general in nature (which gives the videos a long shelf life), or more specifically targeted to shorter-term promotions ("check out this weekend's specials!").

But a video that is nothing more than a store advertisement probably won't attract a lot of viewers. A better approach is to find a way to showcase the store without resorting to claims of 20% off and "this weekend only" specials. For example, you might want to record a short store tour or highlight individual departments or services within the store. Make the video informative, and you stand a better chance of grabbing eyeballs.

YouTube for Direct Sales

YouTube is a terrific channel for generating direct sales for products and services. All you have to do is show the product in action or provide a clip of the service in question, and then ask for the sale by directing the viewer to your website.

One of the best ways to showcase a product is in an instructional video—the online equivalent of an old-school infomercial. Do you remember Ron Popeil's late-night TV ads for slicers and dicers? Create a shorter version of said Ronco ads, but focusing on the useful attributes of your product, and you'll gain YouTube viewership.

The key to converting eyeballs to dollars is to generously highlight your company's website address or 800-number within the body of the video. Put the contact information at the front of the video, at the end of the video, and overlaid at the bottom of the screen during the body of the clip. Make it easy for interested viewers to find more information or place an order. (And, to that end, there's nothing wrong with mentioning the product's price somewhere in the video.)

YouTube for Product Support

Not all companies use YouTube to generate new business; some companies do so to support existing customers. Consider some of the most common customer problems and questions, and produce one or more videos addressing those issues. If you can help your customers help themselves, you provide them with a useful service and reduce your company's support costs—all with a free YouTube video.

Let's say that, for example, you sell do-it-yourself DVD racks—the kind that have to be assembled. Let's also assume that some of your customers have trouble putting the racks together, resulting in a flood of calls to your customer support center. If you record a short video demonstrating how to put one of your racks together and post that video to YouTube, you can direct your customers to that video if they have problems. For that matter, you can embed the YouTube video into your website, using YouTube to host the video. It doesn't matter where customers view the video, YouTube or your site; what matters is that they get their problems solved at little or no expense to you.

note

Learn more about embedding YouTube videos on your company's site in Chapter 11, "Incorporating YouTube Videos on Your Own Website."

The same goes if you have specific product support or technical support issues. If you're a computer manufacturer, you might create a video showing users how to install more memory or connect an external hard drive. If you're a car manufacturer, you might create a video showing drivers how to change a brake light or check their car's oil level. You get the idea—use YouTube to turn a problem area into a public relations victory.

YouTube for Product Training

Your company can also use YouTube for internal purposes. Take, for example, the issue of product training. You have a new product to introduce and a sales force to train. How best to reach them? In the old days, you'd fly salespeople from around the country to a central office and put on a day's worth of hands-on training. Doing so, however, is both time-consuming and expensive.

Instead, consider using YouTube for your product training. Create a series of short training videos, upload them to YouTube, and provide access to all your company's salespeople. Sales force personnel can watch the

videos at their leisure, without losing valuable sales time trekking back to the office for training. You save money, your salespeople save time, and you create an archive of product information that anyone can access at any time.

note

If you create a video for internal use, make it a private video so that it won't be viewable by the public. Learn how to do this in Chapter 9, "Uploading Your Videos to YouTube."

YouTube for Employee Communications

You can use YouTube for all manner of company communications. Instead of holding a big company meeting just so that the big boss can give his yearly state of the company address, have him record the address and post it on a private channel on YouTube. Employees can watch the prez say his thing from the comfort of their own desks, while they're on the road, or even at home.

In fact, many companies find that YouTube is a fast and effective way to disseminate all kinds of employee information. Done right, it gets information out there in near-real-time, with all the benefit of face-to-face communication, which is a lot better than sending impersonal memos via email.

YouTube for Recruiting

Finally, don't underestimate YouTube as a recruitment tool for new employees. If you have a company welcome video, post it on YouTube and make it public. Think of this as a PR exercise to attract new talent to your company, which means doing it up right—it's as much a marketing project as it is something from the HR department.

You can link to the video from all your recruiting materials, even from any traditional ads you place. Don't limit yourself to a single long puff video: Produce separate videos for individual departments, as well as to illustrate company values, employee benefits, facilities, and the like.

tip

Your current employees are your best recruitment tools. Include plenty of employee interviews in your recruitment videos to help personalize your company and to put a friendly face on the corporation.

The Big Picture

As you can see, there are lots of ways your company can make use of YouTube videos—from traditional brand and product marketing to customer support and employee communications. In almost all instances, you don't have to spend a fortune doing it; as you'll learn, you can produce YouTube videos in a quick and inexpensive fashion. And, of course, you don't have to give a penny to YouTube; everything you post on the YouTube site is completely free of charge.

The key is to not over think or over analyze the opportunity. Don't be afraid to get started, even if your first videos are modest with little budget behind them. YouTube makes it easy to dip your toes in the water; you can't reap the benefit until you get online! ■

When Push Comes to Pull
in a Web-Made World

THE OPEN BRAND

KELLY MOONEY

*author of *The Ten Demandments**

AND **NITA ROLLINS, Ph.D.**

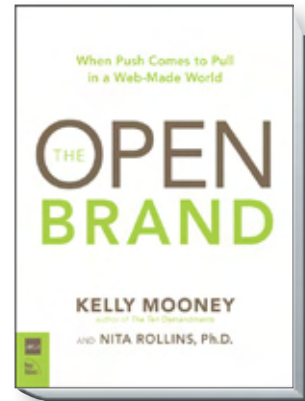


The *Open Brand* illuminates both the risks and immense rewards of consumer involvement in a brand's messages and offerings, and describes the essential consumer experiences that are requisite for cultural relevance—On-demand, Personal, Engaging, and Networked experiences, representing the chief values of the web-made world.

Kelly Mooney
Nita Rollins

Open Brand

When Push Comes to Pull in a Web-Made World



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02:

O.P.E.N. for Business

In a web-made world, “open for business” doesn’t mean what it once did. In fact, it now means “never closed.” But in updating the sign that adorned storefronts for generations—to make it truly a sign of the times, it would have to read O.P.E.N....





O...IS FOR ON-DEMAND.

Whatever today's consumers are seeking, they want it—and often get it—“right now.” In a world where instant gratification is a way of life, on-demand is consumerism taken to its logical extreme. Overwhelmed by choice online and off, time-starved consumers demand accessibility, immediacy and findability. Of course, being an on-demand brand isn't easy: the logistics, infrastructure and resources needed are infinitely complex and costly, from just-in-time inventory systems to in-store pickup services to rapid information delivery to mobile commerce. But brands can no longer opt out of being on-demand if they want to capture the hearts and wallets of today's quicksilver consumers.

P

P...IS FOR IS FOR PERSONAL.

Just as it was before the web proved itself a serious channel for brand-building and sales, the online landscape remains the province of the people, not companies. People online leave behind traces of their unique personalities, preferences and behaviors, both through passive clicking and surfing, and active participation and sharing. These vast realms of identifiable, unique individuals negate the old idea of target markets broadly bucketed by age, gender, income or education level. That's why, to be open, a brand must get personal—not with one market of many but with many markets of one—building relationships through constant consumer dialogue and effective cross-channel profile management that bring the brand closer to each consumer's real-time needs, wants and expectations.



E...IS FOR ENGAGING.

Brands once competed for consumers' mindshare by pushing out mass market messaging they thought would appeal to their audience. Now, that audience has taken the stage, and brands must share the spotlight with creative consumers whose **long tail** of personal narrative, niche expertise, and mixed media productions can make a standard TV spot look static and self-absorbed. Marketers must develop content that is immersive, participatory and relevant in order to earn a place in the social web and consumer conversations. Interactivity is key to deepening consumers' emotional connection with a brand, so open brands must provide meaningful and engrossing experiences that foster consumer relationships online—and off.



N...IS FOR NETWORKED.

A single consumer has exponential brand potential when she goes online. She has a lifetime value, as she always has, but she also has **viral** value as she engages with her various online communities, as both the message and the medium. Open brands become part of social networks by marketing to the niche of communal consumers who interact with other like-minded consumers online. Though niche marketing is hardly new, the network effect of online word-of-mouth marketing is. So the more the brand works the network, the more the network works for the brand.

INTERNET AS CHIEF OPENING OFFICER

The good news is that companies don't have to hire yet another chief to get O.P.E.N. The internet is already working on your new strategic imperatives, though maximizing its potential might call for a business realignment. Brands need to move the digital channel toward their internal center of gravity, where it can radiate out to integrate and improve all consumer touchpoints.

A well-designed web site with interactive content can invite more consumer dialogue. Online promotions can drive foot traffic and increase offline sales. Web sites with visualization tools can provide in-depth decision support. Targeted online advertising and microsites can extend the reach, experience and impact of broadcast, print and out of home (OOH) advertising. E-catalogs and e-coupons can reduce analog costs of distribution. Mobile campaigns can deepen a brand relationship fueled by the web. Self-explanatory, easily navigable web sites can offset call center costs. And so on, as benefits emanate outward from the digital hub to every channel and every consumer.

The internet as chief opening officer doesn't need a corner office but it does need a central location within the enterprise to integrate otherwise disjointed business processes, customer marketing and operations. Once the internet becomes a brand's hub of interaction, consumers gain the fluid, responsive and expansive brand experience they crave. And you don't even have to pay an annual bonus.



The internet is a platform that integrates all customer touchpoints, elevating the entire customer experience. Forrester Research predicts that over \$1 trillion in offline sales will be web-influenced by 2012.

Do It Wrong Quickly

How the Web Changes
the Old Marketing Rules

Mike Moran

Foreword by
Geoffrey Ramsey
CEO and Co-Founder of eMarketer



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Today's marketing winners don't get it right the first time, instead they start fast, change fast, and relentlessly optimize their way to success; this book points the way – step by step and in detail.

Mike Moran

Do It Wrong Quickly

How the Web Changes the Old Marketing Rules



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Customers Vote with Their Mice

“You can observe a lot just by watching.”

—Yogi Berra

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Imagine that you are responsible for your company's product catalog business. It's your baby. (You rock it.) You have spent weeks on the project, and you've finally completed it. So now it's time to tell your boss what you've done. And this is what you say:

We completed the catalog on time and under budget. We redesigned it from the ground up, which was long overdue, and we used a completely new printing process that provides better quality than ever. We also used a new binding process that lets the catalog lay flat when it's opened—that makes it far easier to use. And the customers love it—they say it has never looked better. We are following up with a survey of all catalog customers to confirm that this is our best catalog yet, but it looks very good so far.

What do you think your boss would say? Maybe something like “Get out! Get out! What are you, crazy? That's the dumbest status report on a catalog I have ever heard in all my years in the business! You better well have shipped it on time and under budget! Who cares how you produced the \$^#% thing? And who cares what customer surveys say? What are the *sales*? Better than last year at this time? How many inquiries are we getting? How many orders? What are the *results*, you twit?”

That was a silly story, wasn't it? No sane catalog marketer would ever talk to his boss that way. But suppose I change the story just a little bit. Suppose you are reporting to your boss about a slightly different project:

We completed the Web site re-launch on time and under budget. We redesigned it from the ground up, which was long overdue, and we used completely new software and servers that provide better quality than ever. We also used a new content process that lets us have different navigation bars for each part of the site—which makes it far easier to use. And the customers love it—they say it has never looked better. We are following up with a survey of all Web customers to confirm that this is our best design yet, but it looks very good so far.

Hmmm. Why doesn't that sound just as dumb as it did for the catalog? It's because we are accustomed to thinking about Web sites as some kind of technical project that we're proud just to complete. But who cares how we produce the #^\$% thing? And who cares what customer surveys say? What are the *sales*? Better than last year at this time? How many inquiries are we getting? How many orders? What are the *results* (you twit)?

Results. That's what we are in business for, but too often we are working through some kind of technological tour de force, and we forget why we are in business. I have personally provided that kind of status report for a redesigned Web site and been given an award for a job well done. (I am slightly ashamed, in retrospect, but I *did* cash the check.)

Maybe you can get away with giving that kind of report, too. Today. But that's going to change. The only question is whether you figure it out before your boss does.

In Chapter 4, “Going Over to the Dark Side,” we reminded ourselves what our Web sites are for. In Chapter 5, “The New Customer Relations,” we reminded ourselves that the customer is in control. In this chapter, we’ll talk about results. What are the results of all this technological investment? And, more importantly, how can results improve?

It all goes back to satisfying your customers—and your customers vote with their mice. Every e-mail you send, every Web page you show, every move you make, they’ll be watching you. But will they click you?

That’s what *you’ll* be watching, using the techniques covered in Chapter 4, and you’ll be changing what you do in response, using the knowledge you picked up in Chapter 5. This chapter talks about how to do it wrong quickly.

Some of you might be uncomfortable with the idea of doing it wrong at all, much less *quickly*. It just feels better to deliberate and slowly decide the right thing to do. You’re more comfortable with a style of “do it right slowly.”

Except that you probably *don’t* do it right, certainly not all the time and maybe not even most of the time. At those times, when you get it wrong despite your best efforts, your philosophy turns out to be “do it wrong slowly.” Gee, that doesn’t sound comforting. We’re getting it wrong, but we make up for that with a plodding pace. Not good.

It’s actually worse than that, however, because the slow, deliberative style often results in watching your competitors do things before you, giving them the advantage of being known for something that you can only copy. Once Dell became known for allowing customers to build their own computers, no one else got any credit for doing so. Once Starbucks changed what people expected from coffee, Dunkin’ Donuts could only match them.

Maybe you had the idea first, but if you didn’t *do* it first, you’ve forever lost the advantage of making your mark. To your customers, it doesn’t appear that your philosophy is “do it right slowly.” To them, it seems like “don’t just do something—stand there.”

Maybe you’re still not convinced. Ask yourself: Is there a company whose marketing you truly admire? Coca-Cola? Apple? It doesn’t matter exactly which company it is, really—just think about them for a minute. Think about what it is you admire about them.

Now think about what it’s like to work there. Do you have this idealized vision that everything just goes oh-so-smoothly? That the people there somehow *know* what to do? Coca-Cola famously dumped their market-leading product in favor of New Coke. Apple struggled for years until it realized that it should be selling music.

Why am I dwelling on mistakes made by these great marketing companies? Because mistakes are the point. One of the reasons these companies are great is that they try things—even dumb things, sometimes. And their employees often have no idea what the right thing is to do—just like in your little screwed-up corner of the world.

We’re all screw-ups.

Not one of us knows what we're doing all the time. You'll take a step forward if you admit that and reach out for experimentation instead of correctness.

Do you have a clear goal? Do you have what it takes to do it? And, finally, are you ready to adjust *all* your means to that end? That's what doing it wrong quickly is all about—knowing what you want to achieve, knowing how to do it, and changing, changing, changing until you get results.

Naysayers tell you that change is complicated. There was no greater naysayer than social critic H.L. Mencken, who liked to say, "For every complex problem, there is a solution that is simple, neat, and wrong." It's a nice quote, but isn't that simple, neat solution still the first thing to try?

Of course it is.

Especially when *no one* knows what the right answer is. When you are dealing with something as new as online marketing, you are always experimenting, whether you like it or not. Trying all kinds of ideas is the only way out.

If you keep shooting at the sky, eventually a duck will fall. I'm not advocating that you shoot randomly—but we're all more likely to spend a lifetime aiming at ducks without shooting, just to avoid the embarrassment of a single miss. Instead, we need to keep shooting, even if we aren't sure of our aim. Each time we shoot, we can assess how far off we are before the next shot. (Those poor ducks...)

You don't need to be a nuclear physicist to see the logic of experimentation, but if it gives you more confidence, nuclear physicist Richard Feynman once said, "...it doesn't matter how beautiful your theory is, it doesn't matter how smart you are—if it doesn't agree with experiment, it's wrong."

Are you experimenting? Are you making mistakes? How far off was that last try? How do you know? That's what we are going to talk about. You should be able to change a font on a page at 9 am and know by 5 pm whether it was a mistake or not. Exaggeration?

Let's look at a real-life example as told by Andreas Weigend, Amazon's former Chief Scientist. Amazon.com is famous for its personalized customer experience, but personalization is not the real secret of its success. Its real secret is doing it wrong quickly. As Andreas tells it, some Amazon designers thought the shopping cart panel should be on the left. Others thought it should be on the right. At many companies, these designers would have argued back and forth until some manager, who knew even less about the issue than the warring designers, put his foot down (or in his mouth) and made a decision.

Not at Amazon.

At Amazon, the customers decide. They vote with their mice. Amazon tested each design with a random set of customers. The shopping cart panel on the right yielded one percent more revenue than the one on the left. So on the right it went. Controversy ended because the customers had spoken.

Is that how that kind of controversy would be decided in your company? Or would you gather both factions into a conference room and have them argue with each other until they reach consensus? A friend of mine described one such gathering as “a meeting that resulted in a net loss of information.” But most of us still make decisions that way.

You’re not going to reach consensus over which side of the page should contain the shopping cart. You can’t compromise by running it down the center of the page or by having it switch sides on alternate days. There are two opinions, and either one could be “right”—even the one that is “wrong” probably isn’t wrong by much. Letting the customers decide is the only way to go.

Let’s you think that one percent isn’t that big a deal, remember that this was just *one* example. Amazon does tests like these every day, which is why their customer experience is the best in the business. It’s amazing how smart you look if you do what your customers tell you.

So how do you do it wrong quickly? Let’s break it down.

To do it wrong quickly, you need to know what *it* is. You need to know where to start. How do you know what to try? In Amazon’s case, they had an argument to settle, but what if you don’t? We’ll talk about how you know what to try first.

To do it wrong quickly, you need to be able to measure just how *wrong* it is. How do you know it is wrong? Is it better or worse than what we had—than what we expected it to be? In Amazon’s case, they had already decided the metric they cared about—revenue per visit. Amazon calculated the percentage of people that ordered with each design and the average order size and found that the “right” one yielded one percent more money. We’ll talk about how you know what it’s worth.

To do it wrong quickly, you need to be able to change things, well, *quickly*. You must have the ability to experiment constantly. In Amazon’s case, they could show different designs to different sets of customers, but that’s not required for most tests. You *do* need to be able to try one design for a week and another design the next week or two different variations of an offer or a different navigation. If you need to justify a change request to the architecture board each time you want to turn a knob, you’re not going to make too many changes. We’ll talk about how you accelerate your pace of change.

Let’s start with the start. (Seems like the right approach, huh?) How do you know what to try first?

Where Do You Start?

What’s the “it” in “do *it* wrong quickly?”

Unfortunately, we often choose the wrong place to start. We try to think of the “right” way to do it and then amass all of our resources at that distant target. Let’s take a simple example to illustrate this. Suppose your business has no Web site at all. How should you start?

Well, you could try to do it the “right” way:

- **You need to choose your domain name and buy it**—A great deal of discussion revolves around choosing the right name, how the best three names are already owned and will cost a lot to buy, and which of the cheap names (that you really don’t love) is the best one.
- **You need to choose a Web hosting company**—Big decision here with all sorts of information that you might not understand about which operating system you want. (What are FrontPage extensions, anyway? And what exactly is FTP?)
- **You need to choose software to make pages**—You see big differences in pricing, and you’re not sure you would know how to use any of them.
- **You need to actually build your pages**—Gee, you don’t really know how to lay out or design a page or how to do the pictures.

Small wonder that most people drop out along the way and decide, “Maybe we are not ready for a Web site yet.” Still others decide to hire someone to do it all for them, but even picking the consultant leads them into gobs of complexity and a hefty bill.



These are the right things to do to build a professional Web site, but that’s not where someone with no Web site should start. Instead, do it wrong quickly. Maybe you should start small, by trying to write a blog. You can get a message out there for people to see, you don’t need to know very much, and Blogger and Typepad (and others) offer free hosting and easy startup.

Or maybe you just need a page that shows what you sell and where you’re located or how to contact you. You can buy a listing in Verizon Superpages or some other Internet Yellow Pages site for a few bucks a month.

If you have no Web site, don’t set out to create a professional Web site. An “unprofessional” one might work just fine. It’s simple. It’s cheap. And you can see how it works before you invest more time and money into it.

You probably already have a Web site, but are you improving it wrong quickly, or are you constantly planning large, costly redesigns as the only way forward?

Think about Web improvement the same way you consider home improvement. How often is it the right thing to knock down the entire house and build a new one in its place? Only if you really hate your house, you have a lot of money, and you can stand a huge disruption in your life. Most improvements should be small, like adding a new piece of furniture or repainting a room, but sometimes it makes sense to rip out a bathroom and put in a new one. Once in a while it makes sense to do something major, such as expand the house so your mom can move in with you. But it’s rare that you should tear your house down and start over.

Your Web site is no different from your house. Most Web sites have relatively happy customers, but like most houses, can always be improved. Unfortunately, some people’s approach is usually to tear the site down and build a new one where it

“BUT I HAVE NO WEB SITE!”

Nancy Fish was fishing for a way to attract new clients. The Bergen County (New Jersey) psychotherapist had a successful practice but felt unable to market herself to expand further. She did not, at first, think the Web was the way to do that.

I felt totally out my league when thinking about creating a Web site. I am not very computer savvy, and I also was very skeptical about this form of marketing helping build my practice. I also thought the price would be prohibitive.

A computer-savvy friend came to the rescue, suggesting Nancy use a free Squidoo lens—a simple one-page Web site that is easy to create and update. Her friend told her to “provide a lot of biographical information” and to “write about some of my areas of specialty,” which were then used as the content for the Squidoo lens, as shown in Exhibit 6-1. The whole process took just a few hours of work.

Nancy found the update process so easy that she started making her own edits to her lens and said that she feels “relatively confident” doing so. So she had achieved her goal of creating a Web site, and now she waited for results.

Within a few weeks, Nancy’s lens was being found in Google and other search engines for “Bergen County psychotherapist,” and she had already snagged two new clients, who simply called the phone number posted in her lens. Afterward, Nancy professed shock that people really use the Web to choose a psychotherapist, but she’s extremely happy that they do:

I would definitely recommend this approach and don’t think people need to spend an exorbitant amount of money marketing themselves on the Web. At this point, I am very happy with the Web site and don’t feel I need to make any changes or additions.

Nancy was not afraid of giving something a try, so she was already attracting clients by the time the people who “do it right” would still be picking a Web hosting company. Remember the old saying that “The smallest deed is better than the greatest intention.”

stands—which is called a “site redesign” or a “major re-launch.” They don’t repaint a few rooms or even put in a new bathroom. They hire a new set of designers and information architects and do something dramatic to justify the cost.

But is that what customers want?

Some companies have learned the hard way that their customers prefer more subtle evolution in their user experience. For example, eBay changed its yellow background in favor of the more typical white and received so many complaints they felt compelled to change it back.

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Bergen County Psychotherapist by nancy

Rating: ★★★★★ (by 4 people) Your rating: ★★★★★

Family Tree Lookup
Lookup Your Past Ancestors & More! Begin Your Ancestry Search Here.
[Gov-Records.com](#)

Family Tree
Find lost relatives, get current address and phone, instant results!
[www.usa-people-search.com](#)

Ads by Google

My name is Nancy Fish and I am a licensed clinical social worker and psychotherapist.

I received my MSW and MPH from Columbia University in 1984. I also received a BA from Barnard College.

I have had a private practice for 10 years. I work in Northern New Jersey and provide short-term psychotherapy for individuals, couples and families.

I use an eclectic approach combining psycho-dynamic, cognitive behavioral and family life cycle therapy. I cover several areas including **anxiety, breast cancer survival, infertility, depression, anger management, bereavement, pelvic floor dysfunction, parenting education, chronic illness, couples therapy, and individuals and families with disabilities.**

I have conducted several presentations on the topics of individuals with **special needs**. Some of the topics include "Challenges for siblings of special needs individuals" and "Advocating for your special needs child."

I enjoy public speaking, especially on the topic of individuals with special needs. I have a child with a disability and truly understand the overwhelming challenges families face.

I presently conduct a support group for parents with severely disabled children and have conducted groups for parents of premature babies and individuals coping with cancer.

I also specialize in **bereavement counseling**. I am particularly skilled in this area in helping people cope with all kinds loss such as divorce, adjustment to a special-needs child, illness and death.

Exhibit 6-1 Web sites can be free and easy.

Now, did those customers really have some intrinsic problem with white backgrounds? Doubtful. White is the most common background of Web pages today. What eBay heard from its customers is that they like the eBay site and don't want anyone mucking around with it. It's an emotional connection with customers any marketer would envy.

So eBay did something very clever—gradually removing the yellow one shade at a time until eventually they had that white background they wanted. This evolutionary approach went unnoticed by customers.

Could eBay apply what it learned to other kinds of changes? Yes. When eBay discovered improvements they could make to the forms on their site based on user testing, they had a dilemma. If customers complained about something as innocuous as a color change, what would they say about modifying the forms that were used millions of times each month?

The personnel at eBay decided to leave it up to their customers. They introduced a new form link on their page that showed each customer the improved version and allowed customers to adopt the new form for themselves. When eBay saw how many people chose the new ones, they developed the confidence to replace the old forms sitewide.

Why does this work? Think of it as the “right turn theory.” In countries where traffic stays on the right side of the road, studies show that far more accidents occur when drivers make left turns in front of oncoming traffic than when they make right turns. Big changes in your Web site are left turns. Yes, you get where you are going faster, but left turns are riskier. Instead, make three right turns. You get to the same place, but you’ve taken in a bit more scenery along the way, and it’s much safer. So remember, two wrongs may not make a right, but three rights make a left.

Use a gradual approach when making changes. You can offer new experiences as “beta”—giving your customers the choice of what they want. Usability expert Jared Spool says, “The best teams not only design the changes, but design the process for introducing the change...to overcome the users’ natural resistance to change.”

Google is one of the biggest practitioners of “beta” experiences—it introduced its Gmail and many other ideas just that way. Google goes even further by testing tiny changes with small groups. If you ever notice that your Google search screen looks different from one shown the person next to you, it’s because Google is testing a new feature on a random subset of searchers.

You, too, can tweak your experience a little at a time, rather than gutting it and replacing it every few years. What happens when you don’t keep tweaking? One marketing director laments:

So we’re in the situation now where we built our Web site in 2001 and 2002 and it was a great Web site at that point and it provided a really nice jumping off point for individual brands to layer on campaigns and support for their specific business objectives. Well, nobody invested in keeping that foundation solid and current—and online the landscape changes so quickly. We are now in 2007 and we need to spend a ton of money simply to rebuild the foundation. That’s a big lesson we are trying to impart to people. We are not going to do a Web design project and walk away from it. We need to turn this project into a program.

Learn from this. Every time you make a change to your Web site, you need to measure its results and make it better. When most people think the project’s over, you need to know it’s just starting.

If you make small changes, it’s far easier to measure their effects. First, you have less data when your change is confined to a small area on your site. Second, if you

change only one thing, then any effects can be attributed to that particular change—making multiple changes muddies the waters.

The trick is to make a small change with a large impact. Start with a single page but make sure it is an important page—one that directly leads to conversions. Make it a page with lots of traffic. Later in this chapter, we'll show you the simplest ways to set up an experiment.

Where do you start? That depends on where you are now.

Once, after a speech, a woman approached me and lamented that her small company just couldn't do it wrong quickly. Their Web site was *so* old and so bad that it just had to be redone from the ground up (perhaps even from the basement below ground). Her story of how awful it was reminded me of a description of a sleepy old town: "It was built in 1925 and never repainted." But she despaired of fixing it because they had no budget to upgrade their dowdy old Web site.

So I questioned her: "What is the absolute *worst* thing about your site?" She warmed to the idea and described how the company knows that they get two kinds of visitors, people looking to hire and people looking for work, but that the home page is a mish-mash of links that make it hard for each kind of person to get where they need to go.

I asked her what was stopping her from changing the home page so it highlighted two big buttons—one saying "Looking for a Job" and the other saying "Looking for an Employee." After all, how much can it cost to change one page?

She started to understand. "Yes, and I can check the before and after clicks to the underlying pages and see if I got more people there! And then I can start to rework *those* interior pages to see if we get more employers signed up and more resumes on file!"

That's the idea, and once she starts to show how the Web site is delivering those kinds of business results, she just might get the boss to spring for a designer to do a face-lift.

The idea of "starting small" works at big companies too. Computer manufacturer Sun Microsystems took a big risk by introducing customer ratings and reviews for its products. Curt Sasaki, Vice President of .SUN Web Properties, knew that some people at Sun would be nervous about this idea. "My notion was to start small" with just one product line. "We took that 90-day experience and went to the [next product] group. They were very skeptical but agreed to a 30-day pilot." By building support slowly, the project's success became apparent without the risk of doing something across all product lines that would cost more and be more embarrassing if it failed.

You can do the same thing with *your* Web site. You *can* start with your home page, but you might be better off picking a less-politically charged page that has a single goal, such as a page in your shopping cart experience. Small changes can have big effects, showing people the importance of the whole approach. Whatever you do, make sure to start as small as you can, while still demonstrating some kind of business impact.

Just change *one* thing.

Maybe you should test whether changing the visual design of a page improves your results. Remember, the page's look is the fourth most important part of your Web marketing. If you're now asking yourself, "What are the first three?" STOP! Stop listening to everyone else about what's important! (Yes, stop listening to me, too.) Start trusting your own wisdom about what to try. Start listening to your customers to see if what you tried worked.

Change the design and see what happens. Didn't work? Then change it back. Try something else. Do customers now click through more than before the change? Then see what changing the look of a *group* of pages does.

"HOW CAN I CHECK MY NAVIGATION?"

If you're like most companies, you spend a lot of time obsessing over your home page but maybe not enough time on your destination pages. What's a quick way to check out the information architecture of those pages? Use Keith Instone's Navigation Stress test (www.instone.org/navstress)—Keith is the lead information architect for IBM's Web team.

To start the test, pick any destination page on your site and print it in black and white all by itself (with nothing else on the page, not even the URL). Then pretend that this is your landing page for your first visit to the Web site and answer the following questions:

- What's this page about?
- What does each set of links represent?
- What site is this?
- What are the major sections of this site?
- Which section is this page within?
- What's one level "up" from this page?
- How do I get to the top page for this section of the site?
- How do I get to the site's home page?
- How could I get back here from the home page?

Don't be upset if your pages usually fail this test. Keith reports that he's been doing these tests since 1997, and most pages fail. The questions are designed to test the three major questions customers have when they land on your site: where they are, what is here, and where they can go.

When your pages pass the Navigation Stress test, your customers experience a lot less stress.

You might surprise yourself as to how much you can change over time if you start small and keep at it. For example, if your site does not have a consistent look, you can fix that gradually. Choose one of the designs you have or a new one, if you're ambitious, and start using that one each time you change a page.

Just start *somewhere*. Make a change—maybe you'll get lucky. (But don't call it luck; it sounds better to say "inadvertent competence.") Try a new idea every day—test and adjust—and try again tomorrow. If you're just starting out, perhaps you have a shortage of ideas, so try a few on for size:

- Change your content. Your offers. Your imagery. What happens when you do? Do you show the prices of your products? (Your customers want you to.)
- Are you easy to contact? Do you respond?
- Do you measure how quickly you deliver what you promise? Do you bill people properly? Are your orders being received on time? Can buyers check the status online?
- Can people buy directly from you? Should they be able to? Do you need to put in e-commerce? If people don't buy directly from you, is your downstream experience one that satisfies them?

Start out by making sure your Web site is a store that people want to buy from. When you've turned your Web site into a lean, mean conversion machine, then it's time to start driving traffic there. Focus on search marketing first—it's the most cost-effective way to attract visitors. Once you're drawing your share of searchers, it's time to look at e-mail, blogs, and anything else that seems to work. Try things out and stick with the winners. Treat every page as a landing page. Decide how many different page types you need, what each type should look like, and what content it should contain.

After you do all that, you should have a successful Web site that is drawing lots of visitors. Now it's time to improve your relationships with those visitors.

Get people to *subscribe* to your content so that you can contact them regularly—newsletters, blogs, podcasts. Get them to opt in, and maybe even tell you something about themselves. Cookie them so you know when they come back.

Larger companies should mobilize their employees to do their marketing for them. Set policies for customer e-mail, for employee blogs, and for participation in message boards and other conversations on the Internet. You can encourage employees to get out there with customers while training them in best practices. Monitor the blogosphere and the rest of the Web to see what others are saying about you.

Some marketers can go further.

Use dynamic navigation to make your site more responsive. Let people tell you where they want to go with multifaceted search and start to collect information about people that you can use to show personalized offers.

Start e-mailing them about things they care about. Start personalizing your site in bigger ways. Consider using a portal. Set up a wiki for your best customers to collaborate on strategy—kind of an online customer advisory board.

We've used many examples from the Web because every company needs a Web site, but you must apply this thinking to any Internet marketing work you do. Don't make a six-month commitment to a banner ad network—try it out for a few weeks and see how it works. Don't run the same paid search ad for a month; see if different copy and different keywords bring you a higher return on your investment.

Just start your blog instead of waiting to figure out what you have to say—if it doesn't work, you can always stop. When I started my Biznology newsletter and blog, I had no idea what I was doing. In fact, my first blog entry was about...wait for it...blogging. (And when I was a kid, I enjoyed looking into a mirror that faced another mirror.) I'll probably never be an A-list blogger, but I have found an audience, and that's what I wanted.

At all times, remember that Internet marketing is a game of experimentation, just like direct marketing. In fact, Internet marketing is really direct marketing on steroids—you can do more, measure more, and change faster than with offline direct marketing.

Perhaps e-mail marketing illustrates this quality the most. CompUSA, the U.S. technology retailer, uses recontact e-mail marketing techniques, as described in Chapter 5, and does so in a big way. CompUSA sends e-mails to customers that abandon shopping carts, purchasers who might later be interested in a related product, and purchasers who might (years later) be in the market for a replacement product.

But they didn't start out doing it on a large scale. They started out with a very simple experiment, targeting one market segment (purchasers who might be interested in adding another related product) for one product line (personal computers). Only when that worked did they move on to other customer segments and more products.

As we saw in Chapter 5, U.S.-based ScottsMiracle-Gro, maker of fertilizer and other lawn care products, offers personalized lawn care advice, with 125 different geographic regions and multiple grass types (because different grasses require different weed control products). But Scotts worked its way up to this sophisticated service a little at a time, according to Joel Reimer, Director of Interactive Marketing. "We started out by sending a different e-mail to each of our 18 distribution regions—these regions meant nothing to our customers, but at least we knew the product that we were recommending was available in that region."

At its inception in 2001, Scotts' customers liked the service immediately, and Scotts knew they needed to find a way to do more. They automated their e-mail system to more easily send out the personalized messages, allowing them more time to concentrate on improving the content itself.

Scotts shows that personalization doesn't have to be complicated to be effective—they were not afraid to do it wrong quickly. They tried an idea in the easiest way

possible, and when they saw it was effective, that's when they invested more heavily and did it right.

Let's recap. We're trying to approach our Web sites and our Web marketing in a brand new way—one that emphasizes incremental improvement over sweeping changes. Evolution over revolution. And we are adopting a new mindset of deciding what is the one thing we should change given where we are now.

Stop embarking on “big bang” site redesigns. Yes, once in a while you need to redesign the appearance of your Web site, but you need to change it a lot more often than that. The problem with site redesigns is that they are *too* big. Because they are done infrequently, you throw in a *lot* of changes, which throws off your customers—they knew how it worked already. (It's well-known that customer satisfaction frequently drops even after a *good* redesign, while customers take stock and adjust.)

You throw in a lot of changes because you do redesigns so infrequently. And because your redesign includes several changes, it always takes longer than you think it will. Your team ends up exhausting themselves from working 80 hours a week to make the deadline. Then everyone falls over the finish line and goes to sleep for a month—during the most critical time for customer feedback.

That first month will tell you how wrong it is. You need to be ready to fix it then—not have everyone on vacation. The project doesn't end when you launch. In many ways, that's when it *begins*. Launch is not the finish line—it's the starting line.

That's why continuous change works better.

Eric Raymond, author of *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*, advises us to “release early and often.” You don't need to squeeze a zillion changes into this week's update because you will be doing another one next week. So you don't need to drive your team to get everything in before the deadline because they'll have another chance soon. And whatever is messed up can be fixed the next time. You can see how customers react and fix it next week.

For your situation, what is the very next step?

The answer helps you decide what to do—the “it” in “do *it* wrong quickly.” But *why* are you doing it? And *how* do you keep score? You need to know what it's all worth and how far off you are with each attempt.

How Do You Know How Wrong It Is?

“Strategies without metrics are only wishes,” says Charles Phillips, President of Oracle. But which metrics are important?

Earlier in this chapter, we saw how Amazon used revenue (in the form of increased orders and order size) to decide which side of the screen should contain the shopping cart. *ACM Queue* magazine quotes Amazon CTO Werner Vogels: “Customers tend to vote with their wallets, so if there is a clear negative result, we know what to do with that.”

How does *your* company keep score?

Our friends at Scotts lawn care used a different approach than Amazon. Not being an e-commerce company, they weren't sure how to tie revenue to their personalized lawn care advice, so they surveyed their customers. They found that subscribers to the personalized lawn care advice service make 2.7 applications of Scotts products each year, compared to 1.7 for non-subscribers—a 59 percent increase.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT REALLY IS WRONG?

You know that the “wrong” part in “do it *wrong* quickly” is an exaggeration—we all are doing what we believe is right at the time. But usually what we do doesn't turn out exactly right, and we need to fix it.

Once in a while, you might try something that turns out to be *really* wrong. Dead wrong. What happens then?

Let's hear how the Senior Director of e-commerce for American technology retailer CompUSA handled just such a situation. Al Hurlbaeus thought he had a great idea back in 2004.

“Our home page had a large block we called the ‘Feature of the Day.’ It had become very text-oriented. I thought more graphics would catch the customer's attention and encourage more clickthrough and better conversion.”

So like any company with a new idea, they tried it.

Al describes the results: “We found that it reduced clickthroughs, and we had fewer customers moving into the sales environment. I think we let it run for a month and then slowly put the text back in.”

This isn't usually the kind of success story people like to tell, but Al was gracious enough to share it. Why is this story important?

It shows what happens when you try something that really is wrong—it's not a disaster. You use your metrics to figure it out, and then you do something else.

The difference between Al's company and most companies is that CompUSA is willing to experiment and to be wrong. Only through this experimentation do they come up with the breakthroughs that really make a difference.

Some other company might have made the same kind of change but suffered with it for months or years because they weren't measuring results or because the boss had such a big ego that he wouldn't admit he came up with a clunker.

Because Al measures everything he does and because he abandons the clunkers quickly, CompUSA continually improves its online marketing results.

Suppose you're marketing cereals for children. You can track enrollments in your Web site's game club as your Web conversion, and you can measure coupon redemption as your sales conversion. After tracking for a while, you might find that club members buy two more boxes of cereal a month than non-members, demonstrating the value of expanding the membership rolls.

Whatever you use, choose a measurement that most people will find persuasive before you make a change on your site. Then check the before and after metrics to see its effect. How do you decide the right metrics for the change *you* want to make?

If you heeded the advice to start small, you can use the metrics from Chapter 4 to analyze each change. Understand your activity metrics—impressions, selections, and conversions—and use the before and after comparison to decide whether the change in question is working.

Sometimes marketers with large Web sites don't feel they can go page-by-page—they need to make many changes at the same time. If you find yourself in this position, you can measure conversions by tracking the mini-conversions with your Web Conversion Cycle. If more people move from Learn to Shop and from Shop to Buy, then you are doing the right thing globally. You can use your metrics system to aggregate all the Learn pages, separating them from Shop and Buy pages, for example, and see the holistic view of what your customers are doing.

Looking at these big numbers across your site can be more useful than a traditional “funnel report” from a Web metrics system. Most funnel reports assume that your customers move around your site in step-by-step fashion—your Web Conversion Cycle assumes they *don't*. You still need to look at individual impressions and clickthroughs to draw conclusions on specific decisions, but this approach lets you change many things simultaneously, while still tracking overall improvement.

Whether you are making big changes or small ones, you need to think in terms of testing and measuring. So far this chapter has talked about how you can decide what to try first, as you tweak your Web marketing. Keep in mind that testing and measuring go on forever and ever, so you can use your metrics system to help you decide what to test next and then measure *that* result (and use it to test again).

You need a metrics system to guide you because you won't catch everything by yourself. Just because you notice when you lose a sock doesn't mean it's the only clothing you ever lose. Similarly, you might be losing lots of conversions without ever noticing. Your metrics can show you what you are missing.

So do your tests. Avinash Kaushik, author of *Web Analytics: An Hour a Day*, says that one test can try out “seven of your ideas and show you which one is wrong very fast.” Later in this chapter, you'll see how to design a test, but now let's focus on which metrics to use in your tests.

In Chapter 4, we analyzed metrics such as conversions (for tracking transactions) and subscribers (for measuring relationships), but we didn't look at what it's all worth. We didn't discuss money.



That's what we'll do now. To really measure how wrong your change is, it's best to think in terms of money. Your company might already measure itself using revenue, for example. If so, use that. Perhaps you use profit margin. Fine. Although there are better measurements to use, it's best to use the standard measurements in your company at the start. Sure, it would be great to use the best metrics, but do it wrong quickly by accepting the imperfect measurements and start fixing your marketing and your Web site.

If you have a choice of which metrics to use, it's best to evaluate conversions in terms of profit and to measure customer relationships using Lifetime Value (the next few pages explain how you do that).

Before we dive in, however, a warning: Don't ever believe that your Web site's value can be summed up in a single number. It can't. Even if you use the best metrics, such as profit and Lifetime Value, your Web site is more valuable than what they show. Some conversions, such as a successful customer support experience, have no easily-measured profit value. Branding value is also difficult to quantify.

Baseball player Toby Harrah put statistics in their rightful place when he said, "Statistics are like bikinis. They show a lot, but not everything." (And if you ever saw Toby's batting statistics, you'd know why he wanted to persuade you of that.)

Don't throw up your hands just because no numbers are perfect. Instead, resolve to use the best numbers you can and pay attention to factors that can't be neatly quantified.

We look at how to determine the value of conversions and customer relationships next, which is followed by advice on how to set up and execute tests in simple and inexpensive ways.

How to Value Conversions

In Chapter 4, we learned how to identify and count conversions, but now we need to know what they are worth. When we do, we'll know what our marketing expenditures should be, and we'll know the value of every change we make in our marketing and Web experience.

There's just one catch. Calculating what each conversion is worth ain't easy. That's never stopped us, though.

Let's start by looking at conversions in terms of revenue. Granted, some of your conversions (such as solving a customer support issue) are difficult to express in terms of money, but most marketing is eventually reduced to sales. Our first step is to identify the sales revenue for Web conversions.

If your sales occur online, that's easy. You know exactly how many orders you took, and you know the order size of each one, so you know your revenue. But offline sales are trickier.

Chapter 4 discussed many ways of tracking offline sales back to their origin on your Web site, including special phone numbers, discount coupons, and more. By identifying

each offline sale as emanating from your online marketing, you can discretely total the revenue, too. Just as with online sales, you can identify each order, and you know each order's size, so you can add up the offline revenue driven by Internet marketing.

For example, if your company collected 10 orders for aluminum siding where customers presented your "5% Off" coupon printed from your Web site, you know the Web was the catalyst for those 10 orders. If the totals for each of those invoices is \$340,000, that shows the value of your Web site.

For some businesses, that's all you'll ever need. If your company has a sales-driven culture, no one might look beyond those orders coming in. If marketing expenditures in your company are merely eyeballed and loosely tracked by sales, then this might be all you need to measure.

But most businesses need to do more. Most of you will want to know much those discounts cost—those discounts reduce the revenue you report on your financial statements. In this case, if each customer presented the "5% Off" coupon, the real revenue collected by your company is reduced to \$323,000. For the sake of simplicity, we'll assume that none of your customers will cancel or get their money back, so that \$323,000 represents what accountants call *net sales*. (Your company also takes into account—literally—that some customers will not pay their bill, but we'll ignore such complexities to keep the examples simple.)

Real life is messier than this example from the aluminum siding business because most Web sites have multiple conversions that can each lead to a sale of your product or service. Let's look at a more realistic example of a large kitchen cabinet refinisher, called Skin Deep Refinishing.

Skin Deep has a Web site that covers the Learn stage of the customer buying process, closing all sales offline. Skin Deep's Web site offers three different Web conversions:

- Receive an online price quote by entering the number and sizes of the cabinets into a Web form.
- Call a special phone number listed only on the Web site for all customer questions.
- Use a Web form to make an appointment with a salesperson.

Exhibit 6-2 shows what we learn when we look at the metrics. By creating a way to tie the offline sales back to the Web site, you can see that Skin Deep's Web site was the catalyst for \$100,000 in July sales.

Once you can measure the conversions of your Web site, you can do a little math to express your goals in purely monetary terms. Exhibit 6-3 shows how to monetize each Web conversion so that you know the value to your business.

July Average Order: \$2,000	Web Conversions	Sales Conversion Rate	Offline Orders	Sales Revenue
Online Quote	400	2.0%	8	\$16,000
Special Phone Number	500	2.4%	12	\$24,000
Sales Appointment	100	30.0%	30	\$60,000
Totals	1,000	5.0%	50	\$100,000

Exhibit 6-2 Your Web conversion paths have revenue value.

July Average Order: \$2,000	Web Conversions	Sales Revenue	Sales Revenue per Conversion
Online Quote	400	\$16,000	\$40
Special Phone Number	500	\$24,000	\$48
Sales Appointment	100	\$60,000	\$600
Totals	1,000	\$100,000	\$100

Exhibit 6-3 Each individual conversion has revenue value.

Because they needed to get 1,000 Web conversions to get the 50 sales adding up to \$100,000 in revenue, you can divide that revenue by 1,000 to find out how much the average Web conversion is worth (\$100). Further, although the average Web conversion is worth about \$100, each type of conversion (quote, phone, or appointment) can have its own value calculated.

Every time Skin Deep persuades a Web visitor to receive an online quote, it's worth about \$40 in revenue. Persuading someone to call is worth about \$48, while sales appointments are worth about \$600 each. That's because they know how many people must take these actions to get one order, so they can divide up each sale by the number of people needed to take the steps before the order—dividing \$60,000 by 100 conversions yields \$600, for example. You can see how improving Skin Deep's Web site directly affects sales by prompting more visitors to take these actions.

You can also see how changes that drive more sales appointments are more important than those designed to increase phone calls or online quotes. Perhaps a great first project would be to make the appointment mechanism so compelling that more people would choose that over a phone call. Or perhaps most phone calls are tire-kickers who want to know how much a refinishing job usually costs, so posting the average price on the Web might free up your call center to do more selling.

That's the beauty of monetizing your conversions—it helps you focus on what's really important. But there's more that you can do. If you return to the Web Conversion Cycle modeled in Chapter 4, you can determine how much each visit to the Web site is worth in revenue. Exhibit 6-4 runs the numbers.

July Average Order: \$2,000	Total	Conversion Rate	Sales Revenue per Event
Web Visits	50,000	100%	\$2
Web Conversions	1,000	2%	\$100
Orders from Web	50	5%	\$2,000

Exhibit 6-4 Your Web conversion cycle shows each visit's value.

You can divide total sales (in this case \$100,000) by the number of orders (50) to determine that the average order size is \$2,000. Using the same logic, you can divide sales by the number of Web conversions to learn that each conversion is worth an average of \$100. Similarly, if you take the same calculation back one more step, you can divide total sales by the number of Web visitors to see that each visit to your Web site is worth about \$2 in revenue.

Why are all these numbers important? Because you can use them to project the value of your marketing efforts. For example, a campaign expected to drive 5,000 more visits to Skin Deep's site projects to earn an extra \$10,000 in revenue (because 5,000 visits worth \$2 each adds up to \$10,000). Or if Skin Deep believes that a change to its Web site would double the number of people who requested online quotes, those additional 400 quotes represent an incremental \$16,000 in revenue (400 quotes at \$4 a quote). This technique can be used to justify the cost of any Web marketing effort and can be checked against the actual results afterward.

If the flinty-eyed accounting types at your business don't need any more than this, then consider yourself lucky. Go get the money to make your first Web improvement or start your first online campaign. Most businesses, however, need more.

Some businesses use a measurement called *return on advertising spending (ROAS)*. In Skin Deep's case, they are trying for an ROAS of \$20, meaning they want to receive \$20 in revenue for each \$1 of advertising. Because each visit to their site is worth just \$2 in revenue, Skin Deep can spend just 10¢ per visit (\$2 divided by the ROAS of 20). So, for example, if Skin Deep wants to buy per-click paid search terms, they'd need to average just 10¢ per click to stay within their ROAS guidelines.

When you see that your revenue per visit is as low as Skin Deep's, it usually means that you should focus on improving the conversions you get on your site before going all-out to drive more traffic. That two percent Web conversion rate is too low for the ROAS that Skin Deep requires, so raising the conversion rate is the first step. If Skin

Deep could double its Web conversion rate to four percent, it could double its per-click limit to 20¢ while staying within its ROAS guidelines.

Some companies stop at this point, making their marketing decisions based on revenue, but many go further. They might make decisions based on *profit margin*, the percentage of revenue left over when all costs are paid. If Skin Deep's profit margin is 25 percent, then their \$100,000 in revenue yields \$25,000 in profit. Exhibit 6-5 shows the same calculations done earlier, except based on profit rather than revenue.

<i>July</i> Average Order: \$2,000	Total	Conversion Rate	Profit per Event
Web Visits	50,000	100%	\$0.50
Web Conversions	1,000	2%	\$25.00
Orders from Web	50	5%	\$500.00

Exhibit 6-5 Using profit to determine each visit's value

We see that each visit is worth 50¢ per visit in profit (as opposed to \$2 in revenue). What that means is that Skin Deep can decide how much of their profit margin they want to spend in marketing to close more sales. By examining profit margin, Skin Deep might decide that the per-visit spending limit of 10¢ calculated earlier based on ROAS might be too conservative. They could decide to raise that number to be more aggressive about driving more business.

Why would they do that? Because optimizing *profit margin* is not as good as optimizing *profit*. If you cut your profit margin but sold so much more that you made more money in the end, that is the way to go.

Unfortunately, most businesses can't easily measure the profit impact of a marketing campaign or a change to their Web sites. That's why they use stand-ins that are easier to measure, such as ROAS or profit margin.

Some businesses optimize on *return on investment (ROI)*. Often batted around in common usage, ROI is calculated as the percentage of profit returned from your spending, so \$200 in profit divided by \$20 in advertising spending (paid placement fees) yields an ROI of 1000 percent. Like ROAS, ROI can identify your worst expenditures so that you can eliminate them or reduce them. Conversely, if your budget increases, the highest ROI investments might be the ones you should test to see if higher bids result in higher profits (even if ROI decreases) because the highest ROI does not always lead to the highest profit.

Other businesses use *cost per action (CPA)*. If you can't measure profit, you might settle for minimizing costs. For companies selling a single product, minimizing the costs required to generate each action (Web conversion) might work out just as well as maximizing profit, but there are dangers. Remember that your ultimate goal is to

have the highest amount of profit—not the lowest cost for each item sold. You might minimize cost per action with small investments that generate far fewer sales than you could profitably make. CPA is calculated as the advertising costs divided by the number of actions, so 20 conversions that cost \$20 in click fees yield a CPA of \$1.

If you engage in pay-per-click search campaigns, you'll find that *bid management* software can use any of those formulas to adjust your bidding minute by minute. You can instruct the software to optimize your bids to maximize profit margin, for example. Just be aware that because the highest total profit is your ultimate goal, none of these stand-ins will necessarily provide that. Exhibit 6-6 shows an example.

Metric Optimized	Sales	Profit Per Sale	Ad Fees	CPA	Profit Margin	ROAS	ROI	Overall Profit
CPA	20	\$10	\$20	\$1	10%	\$100	1000%	\$200
Profit Margin	20	\$10	\$20	\$1	10%	\$100	1000%	\$200
ROAS	20	\$10	\$20	\$1	10%	\$100	1000%	\$200
ROI	20	\$10	\$20	\$1	10%	\$100	1000%	\$200
Overall Profit	50	\$6	\$250	\$5	6%	\$20	120%	\$300

Exhibit 6-6 Optimizing for different metrics yields different results

If you have no accounting background, you can see that this can quickly get complicated. In truth, this treatment isn't even as complex as an introductory Accounting 101 course. The table shows all the same values each row, except for the final row, optimizing overall profit. In real life, you're likely to get what you optimize for, so a marketer optimizing for CPA will likely end up with lower costs per action than a marketer aiming for return on investment. If you'd rather have higher profits than any of these other measurements, then you better start thinking about how to optimize for *that*.

You need to work closely with your financial advisors to see how to apply these principles for your company. The idea behind all of this analysis is to spend your marketing budget wisely. By analyzing the Web Conversion Cycle, Web metrics, and financial results for your business, you can run your business by the numbers to increase your success.

How to Value Customers

As complex as it is to value conversions, you ain't seen nothin' yet. Driving more conversions is always a good thing, but you might want to differentiate between driving more purchases from existing customers and acquiring new customers. Both are important to any business, but conversion value is too simple to help us differentiate. Let's look at why.

To decide how much to spend on increasing conversions from existing customers, conversion value metrics work just fine. Suppose the goal of your campaign (or of a change to your Web site) is to raise the number of orders or to increase the order size of existing customers. In that case, optimizing for profit (or profit margin, or ROAS, et al) is exactly what you want to do. You want to spend a bit more on marketing to those customers and take in well more than you spend.

But new customers are worth more than the value of their first order with you.

For most businesses, you can assume that once you've sold something to a customer, you have a better chance of them buying from you again. If they like what they got from you, then they might be back. Certainly there are some businesses where repeat business is unusual, but most industries live off their repeat customers.

Repeat customers are easier to persuade to buy if only because they have fewer questions. In some cases, they require no marketing at all. Because that is true, it stands to reason that the value of acquiring a new customer should take into account more than the initial order.

Suppose you manage a car repair business that specializes in BMWs called Car Groomers. Your Web site attracts many of your new customers, who are looking for the absolute best care for their pricey cars. Your site explores why BMWs need special treatment and how your staff is trained to provide it. You offer a free 150-point inspection as part of the first service for any appointment made on the Web.

Because of that free offer, the first service appointment is quite low in profit. You really start to make money when the customers come back, especially when they eventually need major repairs. So how do you know what you should budget for each new customer?

Get to know *Customer Lifetime Value*—usually called simply *Lifetime Value (LTV)*. LTV calculates the total profit that a new customer is worth to your business.

Car Groomers can use LTV to think about their new customer acquisition costs. Suppose their profit on an initial appointment is only about \$20, but they average \$80 on subsequent appointments.

How do you decide what a lifetime is? If it really stretched for a human lifetime, you wouldn't be able to calculate it until your customers were dead. (At that point, you might not be as interested.)

If you've been in business a while, you might be able to estimate the length of a "customer lifetime." Car Groomers' records show that the average customer returns regularly for three years after the initial visit—averaging four times each year—before disappearing.

No one at Car Groomers knows exactly why people stop coming back. Perhaps some have bought a new Mercedes instead of a BMW. A few might have been turned off by a bad experience. Others move away. No matter. Some people are regular customers for many years, while others drop out after one or two visits. The average is three years, so Car Groomers can use three years as the duration of a lifetime. If you

don't have this information for your business, take a guess—but be conservative because that keeps your spending lower (and more likely profitable).

So how could Car Groomers calculate LTV? Four visits per year multiplied by three years gives you 12 visits in a lifetime. The profit on the first visit is \$20, but the other 11 visits provide \$80 of profit each (\$880), yielding a total value of \$900.

But it's not that simple, unfortunately. Although the numbers total up to \$900, the truth is that \$900 payable over three years is not worth \$900 today—it's worth less. The question is, "How much less?"

Net Present Value (NPV) tells us *that* answer. I won't show you the formula for NPV because it has been known to frighten small children (and math-averse adults). You can find NPV calculators on the Web that ask you for your cash flows and your *discount rate* (which you can think of as inflation or interest rates—it's the cost of money over the three-year customer lifetime). With a three percent discount rate, the NPV of \$900 paid over three years is around \$850. That means that \$850 is the Lifetime Value for a new customer—if Car Groomers spent \$850 in acquisition costs for each customer, they'd break even. Every dollar saved becomes more profit.

As with valuing conversions, calculating Lifetime Value is not always easy, especially in a large company where it can be hard just to get everyone to agree to the same formula. Some people believe that you should consider the attrition rate of your customers for each repeat purchase, rather than just using the average number of purchases from a customer over a lifetime. Others argue that new customers referred by that customer have value that should be counted. I chose to present the formula as simply as possible here, ignoring these complicating factors.



Despite the roadblocks, some companies, such as Hewlett-Packard and Bass Pro Shops use LTV to measure their online marketing. Instead of arguing about the complexities, I recommend that you "do it wrong quickly" by using these principles if you can, even if the metrics themselves are not as accurate as you'd like in the beginning.

Remember that the \$850 we calculated for LTV is an average. Some of Car Groomer's customers will be worth more than \$850 (because they deliver more than \$900 in profit over the three-year customer lifetime), and some will be worth less. You'll raise your profits if you can concentrate on acquiring more of the customers that are above the average.

To concentrate on the high end of the market, use the RFM analysis we did in Chapter 5. Some of your marketing tactics will draw customers who show higher recency in the first few months. For example, Car Groomers might notice that more customers acquired through paid search have returned for their second visit, while other customers have not. So they might shift more of their marketing budget to paid search.

This example demonstrates a larger truth about LTV (and most marketing metrics): The more you can segment your customers, the more valuable the measurements become for decision making. In this case, segmenting customers by the way they were acquired helps you to make a better budget allocation decision.

If you use a multichannel marketing approach, you must constantly decide how to allocate the budget among competing marketing tactics. Imran Khan, Chief Marketing Officer for Internet lender E-LOAN, uses a portfolio approach to determine which tactics get “credit” for each new customer.

E-LOAN spreads 70 percent of its marketing budget across TV and search marketing and uses rules to determine which gets the credit for a new customer. When people who have never been to the site before search for the word *e-loan*, they must have heard the name through an awareness channel such as television. Therefore, E-LOAN credits any conversions from that search to its awareness marketing channels, rather than to the search marketing channel. On the other hand, when people search for a generic non-branded term, such as *home equity loan*, the search marketing channel gets the conversion credit because that customer would never have found E-LOAN if it did not come up in the search results.

The tactics that get more credit become larger parts of the marketing mix over time. “To do a good job of budget allocation, we need to do a good job of credit allocation,” Imran says.

Some marketers use *matchback systems* to allocate credit across channels. By matching information known about those making purchases (such as names and addresses) with information known about those targeted with promotions, matchback systems can allocate credit to the marketing promotions likely to have influenced the sale. In this way, printed catalogs might get credit for Web sales, while e-mail marketing might be credited for in-store sales. Matchbacks do have drawbacks. Many marketing messages are delivered anonymously on the Web, so matchback systems can’t credit those channels accurately for the sales they drive. Even if no one can identify the searcher looking for your product, search may still be driving a lot of sales (both online and offline). Use matchback systems to provide you with more accurate data but understand their limits as you make decisions.

Now you have two different ways of knowing the value of the changes you make. You can calculate your return per *conversion* or per *customer*. Either can show you what worked and what didn’t.

Just don’t go overboard by using metrics to replace your good judgment. Few situations allow optimizing based on a single metric—you need to control costs and maximize revenue, both short-term and long-term. And even if you have perfect information about what to do, it won’t last. Isn’t it always that way? Just when you figure out the meaning of life, they change it.

Your only option is to keep testing so that when they change it, you’ll figure it out right away.

Test, Test, and Test Again

Yes, I am going to talk about testing again. I know by now I must sound like a broken record (MP3s don’t break, thankfully), but testing *is* the best way to get feedback on a

new idea. Remember what British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli once said: “To be conscious that you are ignorant is a great step to knowledge.” The question is: How do you design the right tests to elicit that knowledge?

It all starts with your theory of what your customers want.

At the risk of sounding overly scientific (as opposed to just scientific enough), you need to formulate a theory to test, just like a scientific experiment. For example, your theory might be that customers get confused by too much text on your home page, so you’ll create a version of your home page with more pictures and fewer words. Then you can test which variation works better.

To test the theory, you must decide what to measure—just what it means to “work better.” You can use business results such as revenue, profit, or Lifetime Value, or you can use customer activity, such as conversions or selections (clicks). Everyone involved in the decision must agree up front on which measurement you’ll use to keep score.

How much improvement will be considered a success? Any improvement over the present? Improvement that is worth more than the cost? A certain level of improvement? Decide these questions when you design the test.

For example, everyone might agree that if the less-text version of your home page causes fewer customers to abandon the site, that’s a success. Or you might decide that if more conversions come from the less-text home page visitors, then *that’s* a success. Or you could do a survey of which version people like better.

Regardless of what you decide, that’s what you need to stick with *after* the test. You might personally like the new home page better, but if it doesn’t succeed according to the criteria set for the test, you shouldn’t leave it up.

In general, it’s easier for everyone if you try to use the same kind of success metrics for as many tests as possible. In the previous section, we looked at how to value conversions and customer relationships—if you can pick one of these metrics and stick to it, it will simplify your testing. More importantly, it produces more persuasive results because people will become comfortable with the same measure of success for each decision.

Why is that? Economist John Kenneth Galbraith once said, “When people are least sure, they are often most dogmatic.” If people don’t understand your metrics or are not moved by them, they’ll fall back into their own preconceived notions—exactly the opposite of what you want. So if you consistently measure your marketing campaigns based on profit, you’ll prompt fewer questions each time you show test results. People will gradually become comfortable with your methodology.

Sometimes, of course, you’ll have to make exceptions. Even if you use profit to measure your conversions, your TV ads designed to increase brand awareness might demand different measures. It’s OK to decide that. For this one test, we’ll check the increase in search keyword usage for the name of the new product the day after the TV ads run. You can use profit, too, to see how those keywords drove conversions, but if

the main goal of the campaign was to raise your public profile, then you should measure whether it did.

The hard part in all of this? Giving up on being right. Although you are formulating a theory of what's going on, you need to let the test show what's *really* happening. You can't design tests to prove yourself right. You need to listen to what customers say regardless of whether they prove you right or wrong. You don't make assumptions. You test them.

For example, you could just assume that it doesn't matter which search engine your customers find you with—that searchers who use the same search keywords convert at the same rate, even if some are coming from Yahoo! and others from Google. The best marketers, however, don't make such assumptions.

Internet lender E-LOAN theorized that different search engines might attract different kinds of searchers, so they tested conversion rates across Yahoo! and Google. They found that Google searchers converted at far higher rates from search ads with the tag line “Perfect Credit Not Required,” while Yahoo! searchers responded better to “Bad Credit OK.”

The best marketers know the truth of what metrics expert Jim Sterne says: “Ask good questions because we have all the answers.” An overstatement? Sure, but that's what makes it quotable. Regardless, it's the right attitude to have.

Your job is to ask those good questions and to develop those intriguing theories—and then devise the tests that show what the answers are. If, as too many do, you start by poring over your metrics reports, trouble lies ahead.

Let's take an example. The first time you look at the “most popular pages” report from your fancy Web metrics system, it will likely show that your home page attracts the most page views. (This is the Web equivalent of learning that “Is this thing on?” is the question most frequently uttered into a microphone.)

Of course your home page gets the most page views. But does that mean that your home page should get most of your attention? No. Your home page, in fact, is frequently a difficult page to improve because the customers arriving there have many different goals. If you perform too narrow a test, you might improve one goal's conversion rate but decrease another's. Which goal is more important? Home pages often require optimization for multiple goals.

On the other hand, your newsletter subscription page is dead simple. Your customers want to subscribe, and you want them to also. It's easy to make a few changes to the page to see if subscriptions go up—you can be sure that you've improved. Typically, the pages closer to the actual conversion events are easier to test and improve than top-level pages such as your home page because those conversion pages have only one goal.

It's still a good idea, though, to improve your home page, but most companies spend too much time thinking about their home pages and not enough time on the

other areas of their Web sites. Don't focus solely on your most popular pages. Many companies have found focusing on conversions to be more valuable.

What's the easiest way to start a testing program at your company?

First, don't get hung up on having large numbers of test subjects. Usability expert Jakob Nielsen advises that usability tests with as few as five people can often tell you the major flaws in whatever you are testing. For that same reason, when you change something in your Web marketing or on your Web site, you don't need a mountain of evidence to draw a conclusion.

Even if you're not dealing with big numbers, have someone with a strong statistical background on your test team if possible. Remember, there are three types of statisticians: those who can count and those who can't. When it comes to the big decisions, statisticians can help you know when a one percent improvement is something you can count on.

But you don't need a statistician in most situations. Most of the time, you can simply accept what the raw numbers tell you. Sometimes, the numbers will lead you in the wrong direction, but the great majority of the time, they will tell you what you need to know.

You can have confidence that if you follow the numbers over and over again, you will gradually go in the right direction. Sometimes the numbers will lead you astray, but usually they won't. It's not important to be right for each individual test—you need to trust the methodology of experimentation and correction to work in the end. As mathematician Charles Babbage noted, "Errors using inadequate data are much less than those using no data at all." So trust that you'll make both fewer and smaller errors with metrics than without.



Now then, what do you make of all this? It's simple. Do your testing wrong quickly, too. Don't immediately go out and spend half your budget on a big metrics package and then wallow in data. Instead, pick one thing to change and decide what results you are looking for.

Those results don't have to "wow" a statistician, and they don't require huge investments. Google Analytics is a free metrics package that allows you to track activity simply and easily. Of course, those big metrics packages still have their place. As your testing program matures and your site grows, you'll need those high-end packages to test more and more—but don't start there.

Start with simple *A/B Testing*, so named because it pits two choices ("A" and "B") against each other. You can design almost any test around two choices. Just decide on your criteria at the start—such as "the one that gets more clicks wins." Then run your test.

You can send out one version of your e-mail to a small part of your mailing list and send a different version to another subset of the list. You can provide two different landing pages to catch the clicks and simply count which ones attract more. Once you have a winner, you can mail that version to the rest of your list.

You can do the same thing with a paid search ad. Run one version of the ad this week and run a different version next week. You can see which one gets more clicks (or more conversions, as you wish) and use that ad going forward.

A/B testing works for more than e-mail marketing. Design two versions of a Web page—they could use the same copy but different designs, or vice versa. Use one version for one week and the second for another and see which one puts up better numbers. Or if you have a personalized Web site, you can use one version of the page for a small randomly-selected set of visitors and another for a different group, showing both versions at the same time.

If you can test both versions at the same time, you get more reliable results because you eliminate other variables. For example, you might design a lovely test of two different versions of a Web page, but during the second week of your two-week test, your top competitor announces a new model. Traffic to your site drops by half. Can you be sure of the results of your test?

It could be that visitors you attracted in the second week are different (more loyal?) from those of the first week. Testing both versions at the same time (through personalization techniques) would have made the test more reliable.



So if you can't test choices "A" and "B" at the same time, then just don't bother testing, right? Well, no. Instead, do it wrong quickly. Do the best testing you can—one after the other, if that's the best you can do. Over time, you'll end up in a better place than if you just gave up.

Testing is very important, but it doesn't answer all questions. Too often, tests are designed around a single metric, but perhaps that is not the only purpose of your Web page. For example, your home page might be just as important for answering customer support questions as it is for selling things. If you measure only sales conversions, you might mess up the support end of your business without even knowing it. Make sure your tests are designed with your whole business in mind.

You must also aim to test the true causes, not just whatever you happen to think of. Sometimes that's hard to do, but it's critical.

For example, suppose I tell you that I performed a test that proves that using more text in the name of a link causes more customers to click. Does that mean we should start adding words to all of our links?

No. The reason that longer link text garners more clicks is because the really bad examples of link text ("Click this") tend to be short. *Those* cases get few clicks, thereby skewing the results. A better finding would be to avoid *dumb* link text, not short link text.

Despite our focus on testing, we must recognize that it's merely a tool that tells us which alternative works better—it does not uncover unmet needs. Use customer surveys, focus groups, and other qualitative sources of customer "wants" to find the holes in your experience. Keep in mind the advice of management guru Peter Drucker:

“There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.” Make sure you’re doing the right thing the wrong way before improving it.

Similarly, testing shows you only the best of what you tested, so you run the risk of what statisticians call “sub-optimizing”—picking the best choice among essentially similar alternatives. To break out of the trap, it’s best to try something crazy once in a while. It’s only a test, so it won’t kill your results. Cultivate a culture of innovative thinking that tests the strangest ideas in addition to what consensus tells you are the “best” ideas.

By now, you should understand how to choose “it” and how to measure how “wrong” it is. But can you do it “quickly”? Can you efficiently experiment and measure and experiment again? If your marketing process is too slow-footed to keep up with the pace of today’s business, the next section is for you.

How Do You Speed Up?

Did doing all that testing sound easy? If you keep testing, it’s true that you’ll eventually lurch into the right answer for whatever question you have. Unfortunately, “eventually” can take quite a while for thorny questions. Sometimes you have to kiss a lot of frogs to find one prince.

So how can you find your prince faster? By finding more frogs and kissing them faster and faster. (Geez, this analogy is really starting to break down.)

Do companies really work this way? More and more, the answer is “yes.” Netflix, the DVD rental company, changes its site every two weeks. It might surprise you to know that they consider 90 percent of what they try to be wrong.

But Netflix has such a great site! How can 90 percent of what they do be wrong? The only way to improve is to stick with the 10 percent that works. By ruthlessly dumping every “wrong” change immediately and building on the ones that do work, you’ll be amazed how much progress you can make.

When you see how the odds are stacked against even the smartest companies, such as Netflix, you can see how important it is to speed up your pace. If you try 10 changes a year, and 90 percent are wrong, then you find only one good idea each year. If you try 10 changes a day, you’ll find 365 good ideas a year, even if you still get only 10 percent of them “right.”

So every day you decide to live with your existing marketing is a day you didn’t learn anything. Every day you avoid the hard decisions of changing is another day you missed a new idea. Today is the day to start the experimentation. Don’t procrastinate. You should, uh, anti-crastinate.

Inventor Thomas Edison once said, “I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.” That’s the attitude you must take towards experimentation. You must speed up the pace so that you can find those 10,000 wrong answers as quickly as possible.

Each time you find a “wrong” answer, you try something new. You don’t sit around wondering what else to do. You don’t leave it broken while you are thinking—you launch Plan B, C, and Z until you figure out something better. Confucius says, “A man who has committed a mistake and doesn’t correct it is committing another mistake.” (I’ve always wanted to write, “Confucius says...”)

You learned in Chapter 4 how to measure the results of what you do. In Chapter 5, you learned what kinds of things you can change. Now, let’s see how to do everything faster. You need to quicken your company’s metabolism.

If you don’t, you’re just a sitting duck for a competitor that does. The faster pace is starting with highly successful Internet companies, such as Netflix, Google, Amazon, and eBay, but it’s coming to an industry near you.

Change is the new *status quo*. (OK, I don’t know what that means either, but the ISO standard for business books requires at least one slogan like this.)

As you embark on Marketing 2.0 in your company, you must focus on speeding up three things. First, you need to accelerate changes in *targeting*—you must use technology to target new customers and target more relevant messages to your existing customers. Second, you need to quicken changes in *messaging*—you must use technology to tweak messages for maximum effectiveness. Last, you must accelerate how you collect customer feedback so you can act on it even faster.

So pull up a chair (I can’t believe you were standing up all this time) and learn how to quickly change your targeting for any campaign.

Speed Up Your Targeting

Direct marketers obsessively fine-tune their address lists so that they send their catalogs and mail pieces to the people who they believe will be most profitable for them. The most sophisticated marketers segment their lists based on which products and messages customers have responded to in the past.

Internet marketing allows even finer-grained segmentation.

You already know that Internet marketing is cheaper than offline direct marketing because printing and mailing costs disappear—it costs next to nothing to send e-mail to even those who don’t buy. You already know that personalization and multifaceted search techniques allow customers to segment themselves. But you can apply even more segmentation techniques, and you can use them more efficiently than any offline marketer ever dreamed.

To understand how to speed up targeting, we can return to its basic meaning. *Targeting* is the selection of a marketing message for a particular person or segment. So to speed up your targeting, you can speed up selecting the person or selecting the message. Let’s focus on the person first.

The most striking example of people selection is for e-mail marketing. Just as with direct mail and catalogs, e-mail marketers have an explicit list of people to target. What can be done to speed up e-mail targeting?

Most marketers store their mailing lists in databases so that they can perform “pulls” of targeted lists for particular campaigns, based on demographics or other characteristics stored in that database. But targeting takes thinking, and e-mail marketers don’t have as much time to do that as they need because they typically have not automated some basic tasks that waste time.

The first time waster is *list suppression*—removing from your list the e-mail addresses of anyone who has opted out. In the United States and in other countries, sending an e-mail to someone who has opted out can be illegal, so you need to perform list suppression—you just want to do it in the least amount of time. The second time waster surrounds bounced e-mails. Every e-mail campaign results in “bounced” (returned) e-mails—it takes time and effort to scrub those invalid e-mail addresses from your list.

Coping with these problems falls under a category known as *list management*. All e-mail marketers must continually update their mailing lists (their targets) to suppress opt-outs, to correct or remove bounces, and for other reasons, but for most marketers, it doesn’t come easy. A 2004 Jupiter Research study showed that 69 percent of e-mail marketers struggle with e-mail list churn, which is not surprising.

What is a bit baffling is that only 35 percent of e-mail marketers focus on list management functions when selecting an e-mail vendor. If e-mail marketers make list management features a top priority when choosing their e-mail vendors, they could free up more time to do better and faster targeting.

Marketers that buy e-mail lists or acquire them from affiliates and other partners have even more daunting list management issues—they are counting on the original list creator to inform them when a customer opts out. Luckily, some companies, such as UnsubCentral, are now providing clearinghouses of opt-out lists that you can use to synchronize opt-outs across your sources of lists.

Internet retailer Motorcycle Superstore found that automating its list management improved its delivered e-mail rate from 85 percent to over 99 percent. The retailer used ExactTarget, an e-mail services provider, to do even more. By automating delivery and watching the resulting conversions, they discovered the optimum delivery frequency was weekly, not monthly, which increased sales.

Every minute you spend using duct tape and bailing wire to address these common list management tasks is one less minute you’re spending to target your customers more effectively. And you might find that improving your e-mail automation helps you improve the frequency of mailings also, speeding your feedback on what is working and what is not.

Now let’s turn to other online marketing tactics. Unlike e-mail, most tactics don’t involve people selection—searchers and Web surfers segment themselves, as we discussed in Chapter 1, “They’re Doing Wonderful Things with Computers.” Even so, you can speed up targeting within these groups also. You can use personalization software, covered in Chapter 5, to efficiently target your Web visitors by segment. For

paid search, you can use bid management software to remove most of the drudgery from keyword selection.

SET PAID SEARCH ON AUTOPILOT

If you have any experience using paid placement in Google, Yahoo!, or other search engines, you've experienced the pain of *bid management*. Although the major search engines all use click rate and other factors to help decide which ad is shown first, your pay-per-click bid still carries most of the weight.

Because your competitors are constantly adjusting their bids, you might need to adjust yours to continue to drive your profits. Most paid search marketers use *bid management software* to drastically reduce manual monitoring and adjustments.

If you use only one paid search vendor (just Yahoo! for example), you can use that vendor's free tool to manage your bids. However, if you use more than one search engine or you have a large paid search budget, you'll probably want to use a third-party bid management tool that can monitor bids across search engines and provide enhanced tracking and adjustment of bids. If you are working with a search marketing agency, they might handle the tracking and reporting for you, so you need not choose a tool yourself (25 percent of search marketers go the agency route).

The best bid management tools can adjust your per-click bids moment-to-moment based on the success metrics talked about earlier in this chapter, such as cost per action (CPA), profit margin (PM), return on advertising spending (ROAS), and return on investment (ROI). To date, however, no bid management tools monitor total profit or Lifetime Value.

Bid management software can raise your efficiency while reducing your workload but can't completely eliminate human monitoring. For example, they might lower your bid to the minimum amount if it gets few conversions, but it won't drop the keyword completely, which might be the best thing to do with a real loser. Regardless, the higher your paid placement budget and the more competitive your keywords, the more you'll need a strong bid management tool.

And the less time you spend monitoring your bids, the more time you can devote to deciding which keywords to target and adjusting those targets for maximum benefit.

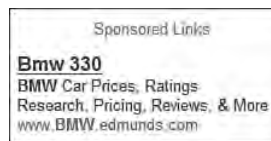
As I said earlier, you can speed up selecting the person or you can speed up selecting the message—either one will quicken your pace of targeting. We've discussed choosing different landing pages for different search keywords—that helps you select

different messages for each segment. But the use of *dynamic content* allows the quickest means of selecting a targeted message.

Dynamic content is nothing more than words and pictures that are generated by a program when the message is needed. A dynamic Web page is one that is pulled together from different content objects at the time the page is displayed—perhaps your personalization software selects the best ad for each customer depending on what market segment they occupy. Or maybe your e-commerce system can show your product's standard description but remind your customers of personal purchase histories on the same page.

Dynamic content offers even more possibilities. It allows e-mails to be generated with personal salutations (“Dear Louie”) or personal information (“We noticed that it has been three months since you’ve had your 2006 Acura serviced...”). Dynamic content allows you to write the copy for a single paid search ad but insert the keywords that the searchers used into that ad to make it appear more relevant, as shown in Exhibit 6-7.

Some searchers look for “bmw 330” and others for “bmw 330i”—but they are served the exact same ad for each one.



Dynamic content capabilities insert the keyword used into the title of each ad, making each look more relevant.



Exhibit 6-7 Dynamic content in paid search ads

Perhaps the most common use of dynamic content is to speed up changes to your messaging—we’ll look at that next.

Speed Up Your Messaging

To “do it wrong quickly” you must be able to make fast changes to your marketing messages. In the old days, you had several ideas for your direct mail or catalog copy. You test mailed them and found which one was best, but it was expensive and time-consuming. The testing took a few weeks, and you could only afford to test a few variants before deciding which one you would send out for real.

For each change that you contemplate, you must have backup plans—alternate changes ready to go if the original is unsuccessful. Unlike traditional direct mail, you can’t wait weeks to get your feedback. You must accelerate your speed of experimentation.

To understand how to quicken your pace, you need to know how computers assemble content—let’s take a Web page as our example. Every message, including a Web page, has three distinct parts: the text itself, the markup of that content, and the formatting style, as shown in Exhibit 6-8.

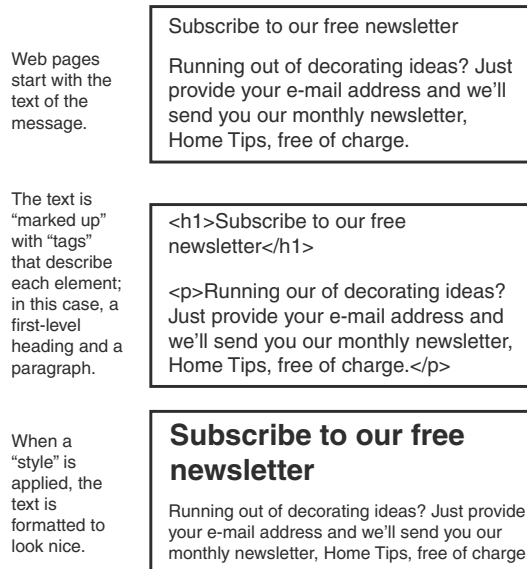


Exhibit 6-8 The anatomy of a marketing message

Your Web pages use what geeks call a *markup language* (called *HyperText Markup Language*, or *HTML*). Markup languages describe the elements of text, such as a heading, a list, or a paragraph. Your Web pages are “marked up” using HTML, using tags, such as “<h1>” for the most important heading on the page.

Most Web sites consist of what’s called *static content*—the text and the markup are all brought together in an HTML file. It sounds simple, but because many of your pages share content (mastheads, navigation bars, ads, and other stuff), having those elements copied over and over into files makes them hard to change. Many of those files contain not only the content, but exact formatting instructions on how the content should look, which then makes the appearance hard to change, too.

The better way is to separate the text from the markup from the style. Start with the styles, which work the same way as styles in a word processor. *Cascading Style Sheets* (CSS) define how that heading looks in the browser—what typeface, size, color, and many other factors. Get your Web team to remove the formatting instructions from your HTML files and to use style sheets instead—that way you can change the look of your pages quickly and often, based on customer feedback.

Next, get the techies to create one master copy (called an *include file*) of content items used on many different pages, such as your ads. Once you do, you'll be able to update every page that contains a particular ad simply by editing its master copy. You can accomplish the same ends using dynamic content, as discussed earlier, but including files is a cheaper way to do it for small sites.

If you've got lots of content, you can use a *content management system* to keep all your content items straight and a *portal server* to assemble and display the items in Web pages and other messages. Large companies need high-end systems to manage their huge collections of multi-lingual content assets, but small companies can use inexpensive tools to serve their needs.

SPEEDY IN ANY LANGUAGE

How can you make quick content changes when you have to translate into other languages at the end? Well, the first tip is: don't wait until the end. Get your translators involved early so they don't object later—German needs a lot more space on the screen than English, for example.

To increase speed and control costs, many Business-to-Business marketers use a *tiered globalization* approach—each country site, for example, is assigned to a tier that defines how much content is translated. So the countries that garner your highest sales might be fully translated, the second tier might have only your top products translated, while the lowest tier has only the home page and a few high-level navigation pages in native language (with the rest possibly in English).

When you translate any page, make sure that you re-engage your search marketing experts to use the popular keywords in the new language; otherwise, you risk getting a semantically correct translation, but you aren't using the words that most people will search for.

Most multilingual sites use on-staff or contracted professionals to do their translation, but a few pioneers have asked volunteers to do it—Google is probably the most famous example. Library Thing, an Internet cataloger, offers no money for volunteer translators but displays an honor roll of those who have translated the most phrases. You need a rabid following to work this way, and you probably can't have a great deal of content. If you go the volunteer route, you might need to control what types of people you allow to volunteer. For example, a pharmaceutical site might prefer to be translated by medical professionals rather than by hypochondriacs.

But maybe you don't want to change the content itself—you want to experiment with the design. Some aspects of your content's design are specific to a particular page, such as the choice of what image to show on a product page, but the overall look

can be standardized and managed centrally—that’s what those style files are for. Style files can be used for Web pages, blogs, wikis, e-mail, and other content.



The power that style files provide allows you to do it wrong quickly—your designers can make changes across your Web site, and they can make them quickly. You can change your style files, see how it affects your conversion metrics, and then decide to keep the change or change it back—or change it to something else. Style files allow you to change your site’s design both quickly and frequently.

In fact, the quick change process possible with CSS points out another advantage for dynamic content: *templates*. Templates can be thought of as the structure of your message—the guts that define its layout. With dynamic content, you can change your template to change the structure of every page on your site. With simple HTML files, you’d have to change each file to get the same effect, which slows you down.

And why is a slow pace of change such a problem? Miguel de Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote* (and maybe a closet Web designer), said that “Delay always breeds danger and to protract a great design is often to ruin it.” He wasn’t tilting at windmills—speed is an important part of listening to your customers. If it takes six months to do what they said, don’t bother because they want something else now.

Speed Up Your Feedback

We’ve examined how you can watch what your customers do and how you can listen to what they say, but how can you do each of them faster? How can you get information sooner than you do now? First, let’s think about the way you gather feedback now.

You probably use focus groups. Focus groups are expensive, so you don’t do too many of them. And they aren’t exactly quick—they take weeks to plan and execute.

What focus groups tell you is inherently limited, like a description of the scenery viewed through a straw. Pretend for a minute that you head marketing for a food company entering a brand new market in a poor country. You have no idea which of your vast product line will be the best first choice for you, so you ask each of your product managers to commission focus groups.

The first results come in: “They loved our meat. They couldn’t get enough of it. They raved about the quality. They said no one else has meat like this.” The second group’s results come in: “They went crazy for our bread. You should have seen them.” And on and on it goes, as marketers argue about which food to offer to starving people.

Often we don’t know when our customers are starving for something—when they would take what we’re selling in any of ten different ways. We try a couple of ways and fixate on what the focus group said, even though we might really have several better ideas that we didn’t try.

Focus groups have their place, but you can’t learn everything that way. Focus groups can be invaluable for finding out *why* customers do something, but they are a very expensive (and often inaccurate) way to find out *what* customers will do. We’ve already talked (in Chapter 3, “Marketing Is a Conversation”) about monitoring your reputation

by listening to what customers say on blogs and elsewhere. But how else can you listen to customers? How can you get customer feedback that's accurate and fast?

- **Interviews and surveys**—Make polls and feedback mechanisms a prominent part of every campaign. Create a customer advisory board you can e-mail or call when you need an opinion.
- **Use paper testing**—To find out what features are most important, use *card sorts* (in which customers rank order ideas or nomenclature from most to least important) and *paper prototypes* (mocked-up drawings of what a campaign or Web site could look like, with none of the expense of actually building it).
- **Use surrogates**—When it's too expensive or time-consuming to test with real customers, use employees or friends. Do it wrong quickly—what you lose in accuracy you might make up in speed. You can always bring in one or two groups of real customers at the end to double-check your conclusions.



And, as we've been saying throughout the book, there's no substitute for testing new ideas in real campaigns and on your real Web site. You can take any two alternatives—A/B tests—and find which one is better. You can do that day after day, but what if you could test alternatives far faster than A/B testing can?

In the 1950s, Japanese engineer Genichi Taguchi improved on A/B testing, describing a process now called *multivariate testing*. His insight was that testing just two possibilities against each other was very slow when you had many different variations to test. Taguchi showed how you can test several variables at the same time by carefully selecting different combinations so that the total test reveals which version of each variable is best. For example, if you want to test five versions of the copy and five versions of the image on your mailing piece, you can use different combinations of each so that you can test all 25 combinations at the same time, getting your answers for both variables at once.

But even Taguchi might be blown away by what computers now do with his original idea. Because computers can combine dozens of variations for dozens of variables, it's multivariate testing to the third power. Computers can assemble every permutation of a page—dozens of copy and image variations for a dozen places on your Web page. The possibilities can be in the billions! Even a site that has heavy traffic can't test even a thousand variations for a page unless you use multivariate testing software.

Multivariate testing software can select which version of each variable should be tested on each page and can boil down those billions of possibilities to a few dozen. After testing those few dozen, you can run a second multivariate test with a dozen versions and then get it down to three or four for the last wave before you decide the right variants for every variable.

But does multivariate testing really work?

Ask Time-Life, the publisher of books and other media that spends a great deal of money on direct response TV ads. Time-Life decided to use multivariate testing to improve the sales of their compilation album called “70s Music Explosion.” They found that their ads drew traffic to their Web site, but few people added the album to their cart, and even fewer actually purchased. They designed a multivariate test that could yield a better design of this part of their Web site.

Time-Life identified ten variables they wanted to test, with several different variations of each. They had different copy they wanted to test, different images, and different offers. They wanted to know if showing a seal with their “money back guarantee” caused more sales (it did) and whether the order of the content mattered (it did).

Over a period of a couple of months, Time-Life took literally a billion possibilities and tested in a few waves to identify two different winning designs that improved the number of shoppers that dropped the album into their carts by 75 percent and increased actual sales by five percent.

There are many more examples of the success of this approach. Internet recruiter monster.com tested two alternatives for each of seven different variables in a software download experience using multivariate testing. In less than three weeks, the best design was chosen, which resulted in a 35 percent increase in downloads.

Internet lender Quicken Loans has also seen striking success. Regis Hاديaris, a Team Leader at Quicken Loans, teases the value of multivariate testing by asking, “What if you could walk into your CMO’s office and confidently say, ‘I can show you how to grow revenue 30 percent—are you interested?’”

Let’s look at a detailed multivariate testing case study. ReallyGreatRate.com is an American online financial lead generation company that connects lenders to people looking for student loans, debt consolidation loans, and home mortgages. The company does all of its marketing online, passing loan applicants to up to four lenders (getting compensated for each valid lead passed). You can imagine how valuable it is to increase the number of leads passed, which requires convincing more people to complete the online application form.

But how do you do that? Everyone has an opinion about what should be changed. Multivariate testing boils those opinions down to testable sizes. ReallyGreatRate.com started with the submission form you see in Exhibit 6-9. The president of ReallyGreatRate.com, Matt Schaub, worked with Optimost, a leading multivariate testing vendor, to identify 13 separate areas on the page that could be modified and came up with seven or eight different treatments for each area.

For example, the masthead at the top of the page was one such area. Matt worked with Optimost to come up with several variations, such as changing the location of the image to the left side, changing the words in the tag line, and many others.

ReallyGreatRate.com started with a good page...

Really great \$ Rate.

Get the Lowest Mortgage Rates for Monday, December 18th.
Simply fill out the fields below and receive up to 4 competitive quotes – absolutely no obligation!

LOAN INFORMATION

Desired Loan Type: Refinance
House Type: Single Family
House Value: Select One
1st Mortgage Balance: Select One
Desired Loan Amount: Select One
Credit Status: Good
Interest Rate Type: Fixed
Current Interest Rate: 8%

CONTACT INFORMATION

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
Street Address: _____ Email Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Home Phone: _____ AL: _____ Work Phone: _____

Best Time to Call! Evening
 Please contact me when other great offers become available in the future through ReallyGreatRate.com

All Credit Welcome! **SUBMIT**

...but ended up with a great page, after testing.

Refinance and SAVE!
HOME REFINANCE CENTER

Really great \$ Rate.

Start Here- It Takes Just 30 Seconds!
Receive up to 4 competitive quotes – it's free!

"ReallyGreatRate helped us find a terrific lender who lowered our monthly payments"

Mortgage	Rate	%
30 Year F2D	8.14%	-0.22%
15 Year F2D	8.72%	-0.42%
8:1 ARM	8.31%	-0.77%
5:1 ARM	8.48%	-1.19%
7:1 ARM	8.22%	-1.10%

Source: Freddie Mac
© MyFinancials.com
Rates vary by lender and are updated daily

LOAN INFORMATION

Desired Loan Type: Refinance
House Type: Single Family
House Value: Select One
1st Mortgage Balance: Select One
Desired Loan Amount: Select One
Credit Status: Select One
Interest Rate Type: Fixed
Current Interest Rate: 8%

CONTACT INFORMATION

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
Street Address: _____ Email Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Home Phone: _____ AL: _____ Work Phone: _____

Best Time to Call! Evening
 Please contact me when other great offers become available in the future through ReallyGreatRate.com

All Credit Welcome! **SUBMIT**

Exhibit 6-9 Multivariate testing in action

Optimost ran several rounds of testing to cycle through each variant, identifying the ones that seemed to outperform the rest—the ones that correlated with more loan applicants pressing that “Submit” button. Within four months, a winning design was chosen.

It doesn't look all that different, does it? It's a bit less cluttered on the left side, removing some things that proved more distracting than helpful, and the most noticed text in the middle of the screen has been reworded to emphasize starting the process. But it looks very similar to what Matt already had.

Here's what wasn't so similar: Form completion went up 116 percent! A new form that didn't look all that much different than the old one had dramatically different results. Without testing, even experts might not know which of those two forms would produce better results. And, remember, thousands of different variants were tested, which no expert could do either.

So now Matt is happy he's got the best one, right? Wrong. “I'm starting a new round of testing this week,” he told me. “I'm going to constantly change my form. You have to! What works now might not work next month.”

Such is the essence of “Do it wrong quickly.” Experiment. Measure. Keep what is working and change all of it, working or not. Matt advised all Web marketers, “Never get complacent.”

Don't be left behind in the optimization race. Multivariate testing is your best ticket to higher conversions for your Web site. And if you think you can't afford this technique, think again. Google has begun offering a free multivariate testing tool called Website Optimizer.

Just as when Google began offering the free Google Analytics traffic metrics service, some people have questioned whether marketers should allow Google access to the highly valuable multivariate test results provided by Website Optimizer. When a company you buy advertising from also knows how much you sell—and what it is about your site that sells it—are you letting the fox into the hen house? For most small businesses, “free” is of utmost importance to them, but larger marketers concerned about data privacy can opt for fee-based analytics and multivariate testing tools instead.

No matter how you try to speed up getting feedback, *listening* to that feedback is what's most important. If you aren't acting on the feedback you get, there's no point in getting it faster. There are those who look at things the way they are and ask why. I look at my metrics reports and ask why aren't they clicking?

You might have noticed a pattern in the advice for speeding up your targeting, your content changes, and your feedback mechanisms—automation. Applying new technology is the primary method of increasing the pace of marketing. Unfortunately, technology is something we all do wrong frequently—and not very quickly. You'll have to wait for Chapter 8, “This Won't Work Where I Work,” to see how to increase the speed and effectiveness of technology at your company.

Summary

No Web site is ever done until its customers are all dead. The same is true for any marketing campaign. To cope with these facts, the advice is simple: When what you're doing isn't working, try something else. And the corollary is this: If what you're doing *is* working, try something else anyway because you can always improve.

Technology consultant Bob Lewis, author of the *Keep the Joint Running* newsletter, says that "There is no best practice. There are practices that fit best." The only way you discover a best practice for your company is to experiment—to do it wrong quickly.

In this chapter, I broke up our mantra of "do it wrong quickly" into three parts:

- **Where do you start?**—We looked at how you choose the "it" in "do *it* wrong quickly." Where *do* you start? How do you decide what to do next? Well, it depends on where you are today. You need to look at your Web site and your marketing campaigns and start somewhere. Instead of embarking on a massive overhaul, just change one thing.
- **How do you know how wrong it is?**—When you do it *wrong* quickly, just how far off are you, anyway? We looked at several new ways to quantify results in business terms, whether it was cost per action or profit based on conversions, or lifetime customer value based on relationships. We also covered how to design tests that allow you to choose the best alternative to be a little less wrong every day. Inventor Thomas Edison summed it up when he said, "I am not discouraged because every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward."
- **How do you speed up?**—Finally, we addressed our need for speed—how do we do it wrong *quickly*? We reviewed technology for speeding up e-mail and other targeting. We covered tools and techniques for adjusting marketing messages every day. We also saw how to use new testing methods to accelerate the rate of feedback we can collect and act on because customers vote with their mice.

And that wraps up Part 2. You've learned how to watch what your customers do and what you can do about it. And you've learned how to do it wrong quickly. More important than any specific technique is your mindset—can you now go out and start experimenting? In Part 3, we'll take on the roadblocks that stop you from acting on what you know. If you have the knowledge but don't know why you can't get seem to get started, read on.

**THE TRUTH
ABOUT**

PROFITING FROM SOCIAL NETWORKING

“Use social networks to
supercharge your career,
business, life...”

Patrice-Anne Rutledge
Certified eMarketer (CeM)



This book reveals 50 proven social networking principles and bite-size, easy-to-use techniques that show how to “social network” your way to success on Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and beyond.



Google
Bookmarks



Delicious



Digg



Facebook



StumbleUpon



Reddit



Twitter

Patrice-Anne
Rutledge

Truth About Profiting from Social Networking

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TRUTH 4: With social networking, change is the only constant

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TRUTH 6: LinkedIn is the place for business

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TRUTH 8: Facebook extends beyond the collegiate crowd

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TRUTH 45: Knowledge is the key to safeguarding your privacy online

PART XII—The Truth About the Future of Social Networking

TRUTH 46: Social networking will expand exponentially the next decade

TRUTH 47: Social networking is going mobile

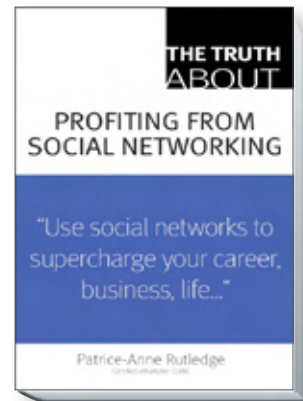
TRUTH 48: Not all social networking occurs on social networking sites

TRUTH 49: Creating your own social network is easier than you think

TRUTH 50: You don't have to follow the trends just because they're there

References

About the Author



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
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PART V: THE TRUTH ABOUT NETWORKING YOUR WAY TO
BUSINESS SUCCESS

TRUTH

19

A social networking
marketing plan is not a
traditional marketing plan

 If your social networking goal is to market your business, launch a product, or generate awareness for your cause, you need a plan. But not just any plan will do. You need a plan tailored to the unique nature of social networking.

If you're a marketing professional or have ever been responsible for marketing or PR duties, you've probably worked with marketing plans in the past. To succeed with social networking, however, you need to do more than just tack on a few bullet points dedicated to social networking and forge ahead. You need a comprehensive plan and strategy that analyzes

- Your target audience and their preferred social networking sites
- Your goals and how to meet them
- Your competitor's presence on social networking sites
- The types of content you can include on each potential social networking site, and how this impacts your campaign on each
- Your target audience's technical skill and adoption of social networking features
- The best way to increase sales without overt selling
- A plan for converting customers into viral marketing evangelists who promote your products for you

If your social networking goal is to market your business, launch a product, or generate awareness for your cause, you need a plan.

To get an idea of this process in action, let's take a look at Monica, the product marketing manager for an eco-friendly nutrition bar that targets women. One of Monica's goals is to develop a comprehensive social networking marketing campaign to help launch this new product as the must-have nutrition bar among a sea of competitors. Her target audience is women between the ages of 20 and 50, many of whom are health-conscious, eco-conscious mothers.

To tap the largest audience, women in general between the ages of 20 and 50, Monica decides that MySpace is a good target for reaching this vast, generalized demographic, noting that more than half of MySpace visitors are now age 35 or older. Monica's social networking marketing plan includes creating a custom MySpace presence filled with engaging content that encourages viral marketing. Her MySpace plans include

- A blog with posts of interest to women who are both health-conscious and eco-conscious
- Content about and links to two partner nonprofit organizations
- Bulletins with health, fitness, and eco tips geared to women
- An interactive game that helps women discover the true nutritional value of food they eat
- Links to discount coupons for purchasing the nutrition bars at local retailers
- Short videos, also available on YouTube, that cover topics of interest to the bar's target audience

The game Monica develops, What's In What You Eat, is the focal point of her MySpace campaign. Designed to be fun and informative, the game's content is updated every month to keep it fresh and "sticky." The game provides information about the wholesome, organic ingredients found in this new nutrition bar and emphasizes its eco-friendly packaging, but it does so in a way that makes this information an inherent part of the game and not a sales pitch for the product.

One of the powers of social networking is that its collaborative nature makes it a natural for word-of-mouth marketing. Monica makes it easy for the bar's MySpace friends to forward information to their friends through the strategic use of "send to a friend" links, banners, and buttons.

One of the powers of social networking is that its collaborative nature makes it a natural for word-of-mouth marketing.

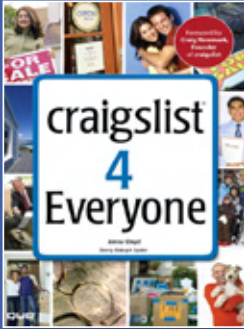
From there, Monica develops similar plans for creating a presence on YouTube as well as on smaller, niche social networking sites that cater to women, mothers, and the eco-conscious.

Making social networking a viable marketing platform requires a solid knowledge of how social networking works, strategic thinking, and a campaign that focuses on engagement over advertising and interaction over sales. In the end, a solid, well-planned social networking marketing campaign should deliver what it's capable of—a marketing payoff that's driven by the collaborative nature of the web.



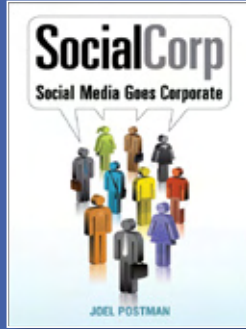
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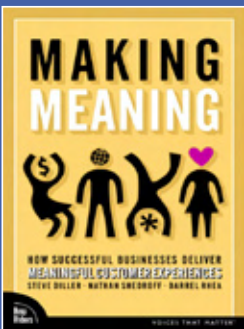
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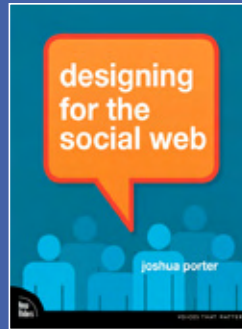
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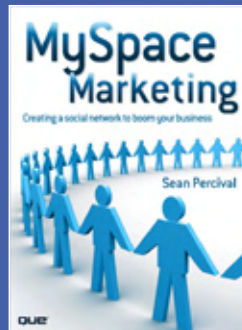
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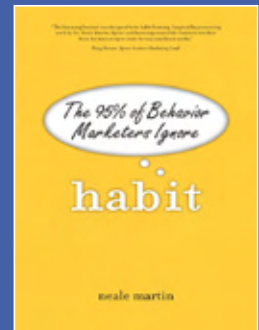
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TAP ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS

to Build Better Products,
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and Sell More Stuff



Every decade since the advent of computing there has been a disruptive innovation that fundamentally transforms business: mainframe computing in the 1970s, the PC in the 1980s, and the Internet in the 1990s. Online social networks — such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google OpenSocial — are the fourth revolution, with important implications for marketing, sales, and how businesses are run.

The Facebook Era is here, and whether you're in sales, marketing, recruiting, or some other area of business, online social networks are completely transforming the way businesses are run. For leaders who can understand, navigate, and leverage this phenomenon, there is tremendous opportunity to gain a competitive edge. This book explores the online social graph phenomenon and the steps everyone from the CEO down to the entry-level information worker must take to best leverage this new and growing trend.

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About the Author

CLARA SHIH joined salesforce.com in 2006 and is currently the product line director for AppExchange, an online marketplace for software-as-a-service business applications. In this role, Clara oversees product marketing, product management, and product strategy functions for the site, described by *Forbes Magazine* as the "iTunes of business software" and one of the top innovations of 2006.

Independently, Clara is also the creator of Faceforce. Independently, Clara is also the creator of Faceforce, the first enterprise social networking mashup. Faceforce, which the author designed, developed, and rolled out in September 2007, integrates the Salesforce customer relationship management (CRM) application with Facebook. It has received widespread attention and coverage by the top bloggers, research firms, and software developers, sparking tremendous interest and discussion on how businesses can tap online social networks to achieve better targeting and results.

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