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the
**social media
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The Social Media Marketing Book

by Dan Zarrella

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[TM]

*Gramma and Grumpa,
I am who I am today because of you guys.
Thank you.*

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Something strange is happening. Your advertising doesn't work anymore, at least not like it used to. You used to be able to buy some TV time or put an ad in a newspaper, but nowadays everyone has TiVo or a DVR and gets their news online. The conversations that took place under industrial broadcast media about your products happened in small groups, and their words disappeared as soon as they were spoken. Now the conversations happen in front of millions of people, and they're archived for years to come. Not only is your brand no longer the host, most of the time you're not even a welcome guest.

But it's not all doom and gloom. You don't have to try to outspend the biggest companies anymore; now you can outsmart them with viral videos. You don't have to spend thousands on sterile focus groups; you've got your market's pulse at your fingertips with quick Twitter searches. And you don't even have to do all the work yourself; the stuff that your fans create will blow you—and your competitors—away.

More than 250 million people are active Facebook users. More than 346 million people read blogs, and 184 million people are bloggers themselves. Twitter has more than 14 million registered users, and YouTube claims more than 100 million viewers per month. More consumers are connected than ever before, and every second your company is not engaging them in social media is a wasted opportunity. So, get on board.

What Is Social Media Marketing?

Social media is best defined in the context of the previous industrial media paradigm. Traditional media, such as television, newspapers, radio, and magazines, are one-way, static broadcast technologies. For instance, the magazine publisher is a large organization that distributes expensive content to consumers, while advertisers pay for the privilege of inserting their ads into that content. Or you're sitting down, watching

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Figure 1-1. Burger King's Facebook application was so successful that it had to be shut down.

your favorite sitcom, and suddenly you're interrupted by commercials (luckily, you have a DVR, so you can fast-forward through them). If you disagree with something you read in the newspaper, you can't send the editorial staff instant feedback. And good luck connecting with your morning radio on-air personality.

New web technologies have made it easy for anyone to create—and, most importantly—distribute their own content. A blog post, tweet, or YouTube video can be produced and viewed by millions virtually for free. Advertisers don't have to pay publishers or distributors huge sums of money to embed their messages; now they can make their own interesting content that viewers will flock to.

Social media comes in many forms, but for our purposes, I'll focus on the eight most popular: blogs, microblogs (Twitter), social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn), media-sharing sites (YouTube, Flickr), social bookmarking and voting sites (Digg, Reddit), review sites (Yelp), forums, and virtual worlds (Second Life).

Big Brands and Social Media

IBM owns more than 100 different blogs, a dozen islands in the virtual world of Second Life, several official Twitter accounts, and a popular forum called developerWorks. It publishes a *machinima* series (a cartoon video made in Second Life) on YouTube, and several employees upload presentations to the media-sharing site SlideShare.

Dell has tapped the power of social media with its hugely popular IdeaStorm website, where users add ideas for new product lines and enhancements, vote them up or down, and comment on submissions. Because of the site, Dell has started to ship computers with Linux installed, and has added community support. Starbucks has also started to use this model to some success with its My Starbucks Idea site.

Burger King has made headlines time and time again with its innovative viral and social marketing campaigns, most recently with the “Whopper Sacrifice.” The burger chain offered Facebook users a free Whopper coupon if they would “unfriend” 10 of their social network connections (see Figure 1-1).



Figure 1-2. Viral videos demonstrated how to pick Kryptonite bike locks with only a Bic pen.

Cable giant Comcast has begun to salvage its tarnished reputation with a customer service outpost on Twitter led by Frank Eliason, Comcast's "Director of Digital Care," and his @comcastcares account. Whenever someone tweets negatively about the company—and that happens a lot—Frank jumps in to offer whatever help he can. This has led to some of the only positive press the brand has gotten in a long time. The shoe retailer Zappos, which most people already love, also has an awesome customer service presence on Twitter.

U.S. President Barack Obama has been called the first social media president, and a strong argument could be made for the label. As a candidate, he had one of the most popular Twitter accounts and Facebook pages, and his website contained a social media section where his supporters could create profiles and connect with each other. The campaign was also present on YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn, MySpace, and Second Life.

Big brands have also faced embarrassment on social media. One example is shown in Figure 1-2. In another example, two Domino's Pizza employees posted a video to YouTube showing them defiling food that was to be delivered to customers. That video was watched more than 1 million times in the first few days, and was the subject of thousands of tweets.

Motrin released a commercial that offered its product as a solution to the pain women experience when carrying babies in harnesses attached to their torsos. A day later, a small but vocal group of mommy bloggers had made the commercial the most discussed topic on Twitter, mostly expressing outrage. These moms made critical videos and blog posts and called for a boycott of Motrin. Eventually, the company apologized and withdrew the commercial.

The image shows a screenshot of a YouTube video player. At the top left is the YouTube logo with the tagline "Broadcast Yourself™" and "Worldwide | English". Below this is a navigation bar with links for "Home", "Subscriptions", "Videos", "Shows", and "Channels". A search bar contains the text "will it blend iphone" and a "Search" button. To the right is an "Upload" button. The video title is "Will It Blend? - iPhone". The video player shows a close-up of an iPhone being crushed inside a Blendtec blender jar. The text "Instant Replay" is overlaid on the video. Below the video player, there are 5 stars, "18,183 ratings", and "7,126,792 views". There are buttons for "Favorite", "Share", "Playlists", and "Flag". Below these are "Digg", "Send Video", and "Facebook" buttons, along with a link for "(more share options)". At the bottom left of the video player area is a "Statistics & Data" link. To the right of the video player is a sidebar for the channel "Blendtec", which was created on "July 10, 2007". It includes a "Subscribe" button and a description: "Everybody knows that the iPhone can make phone calls, play movies & music, surf the web, and a lot more. But, Will It Blend? That is the question." Below the description are fields for "URL" and "Embed". A section titled "More From: Blendtec" lists several other videos with their view counts: "Will It Blend? - Glow Sticks" (4,821,482 views), "Will It Blend? - Diamonds...as far as you" (2,842,053 views), "Will It Blend? - iPhone3G" (3,564,789 views), "Will It Blend? - Mario Kart" (1,044,866 views), and "Will It Blend? - Bic Lighters".

Figure 1-3. Blendtec's "Will It Blend" series was a social media hit.

Small Business and Social Media

As indicated previously, social media is a great equalizer: big brands can be outsmarted without making huge investments, and small brands can make big names for themselves.

Blendtec was a relatively unknown company selling \$400 high-performance blenders. After seeing CEO Tom Dickson testing the machines by blending two-by-fours, Marketing Director George Wright had a brilliant idea for a series of viral videos. He started to blend everyday objects—glow sticks, iPhones, Rubik’s Cubes, and television remote controls—and posted the videos to media-sharing sites such as YouTube (see Figure 1-3). The videos have now been watched more than 100 million times and have garnered the company a ton of press and buzz.

A small specialty baker in New Jersey, Pink Cake Box, leverages nearly every type of social media that exists to build a substantial brand. Employees write a blog that features images and videos of their unique cakes. They post the photos to Flickr and the videos to the company’s YouTube channel. Pink Cake Box has more than 1,300 followers on Twitter, and more than 1,400 fans on Facebook.

The software startup I work for, HubSpot, has invested a lot of energy in social media marketing with some success. Our blog has more than 19,000 subscribers (fueled by appearances on Digg, Reddit, and StumbleUpon), our company Twitter account has more than 16,000 followers, our LinkedIn group has more than 34,000 members, and our Facebook page has more than 6,000 fans. We’ve launched a marketing forum, and have a lot of fun making amusing (and sometimes serious) videos for YouTube.

Social Media and You

Whether you are part of a small, medium, or giant business, or are an individual entrepreneur, your customers are using social media, and there's no reason you shouldn't be, too. It costs almost nothing, it's easy to get started, and it can have an enormous financial impact on your business.

This book will teach you everything you need to know to pick the right tools and get started. While writing this book, I spoke with some of the most brilliant social media pioneers, including people from Flickr, Yelp, Mashable, WebmasterWorld, Second Life, and Scout Labs. They shared their wisdom on how you can—and should—be working with social media.

Your customers and your competition are already involved in social media. Why aren't you?

Takeaway Tips

- Virtual worlds offer an opportunity to engage your audience in immersive experiences.
- Spend a lot of time in-world to understand the culture before you start promoting.
- Second Life is a tricky place to support marketing efforts; find an experienced resident to help you.
- Customize, customize, customize. Ensure that your land, avatar, and objects reflect your brand.
- Find already successful things in-world and leverage them like IBM did with Ballet Pixelle.

Strategy, Tactics, and Practice



Introduction

Strategy and tactics are inseparable. You can't design a strategy without deep, firsthand knowledge of the tactics you'll be using, and tactics are aimless without a strategy to guide them. In the preceding eight chapters, I introduced you to eight different categories of social media tools and how you can leverage them for marketing. Now it's time to start thinking about them as parts of your whole marketing mix.

If you've been doing other kinds of marketing for your business, you'll have some understanding of your "brand" and positioning in your market. This is your vision, and your social media strategy should fit with your established identity. But don't let the dead hand of history limit the new ideas you're willing to try out or the risks you're willing to take. One of the worst mistakes a new social media marketer will make is to apply the same strategies from the offline broadcast world to the social Web.

Before you launch into a social media conversation, listen. As you do when joining a new forum, lurk in every medium you're going to enter to get a sense of the rules and customs, and of who the influential people are.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Pipes web interface. At the top, the 'pipes' logo is on the left, and navigation links for 'Home', 'My Pipes', 'Browse', 'Discuss', and 'Documentation' are in the center. A 'Create a pipe' button is on the right. A search bar contains the text 'Search for Pipes...'. Below the navigation, the user is logged in as 'z4n_id (logged)'. The main content area displays a pipe titled 'Social Media Monitoring'. The pipe's description is 'Click to add description.' and its web address is 'http://pipes.yahoo.com/danzarella/monitoring'. Below the address are buttons for 'Edit Source', 'Delete', 'Unpublish', and 'Clone'. A 'Configure this Pipe' section contains a text input field with 'zarrella' and a 'Run Pipe' button. Below this is a 'Use this Pipe' section with buttons for 'Get as a Badge', 'MY Y! Keyword', 'Google', 'Get as RSS', 'Get as JSON', and 'More options'. A 'List' button is highlighted, showing a list of 620 items. The first item is titled 'WTF is Social Media: Lo que debes saber y no olvidar leer.' and includes a paragraph of text. The second and third items are titled '26 Top Search Marketing Blogs By RSS Subscribers' and also include paragraphs of text. The fourth item is titled 'The Anatomy of #WatchItSpread' and includes a paragraph of text.

Figure 10-1. I entered “zarrella” for the keyword I wanted to monitor in Yahoo! Pipes.

Monitoring

Whether you're a local business or an international brand, chances are good that people are already talking about you on the Web. But before you can get involved in those conversations, you have to start listening. You can't respond if you don't know what is being said, where it is being said, and who is saying it. Monitoring social media is an ongoing process, and you should use multiple systems to be sure nothing slips through the cracks—the right (or wrong) story can come from anywhere and blow up in your face. You don't want to get caught off guard.

The first tools you should be using allow you to search for your name, business name, and product names; you should then subscribe to the search results via RSS. Set up an account on Google Reader (or your feed reader of choice) with these feeds, and check the account once or twice a day. For simplicity, I mashed up all the sources in the following list using Yahoo! Pipes, so you can just enter your keyword into the form at <http://pipes.yahoo.com/danzarrella/monitoring> and subscribe to one RSS of the results. Do this once for each word you'd like to monitor. I recommend your company name, your product names, your name, and key employees' names.

- Technorati Search
- IceRocket Blog Search
- Google News Search
- Twitter Search
- Google Video Search
- Digg Search
- BoardReader.com Search
- BoardTracker.com Search
- SocialMention.com "All" Search
- Reddit Search
- BackType Blog Comment Search

Figure 10-1 shows the results I received after entering the keyword *zarrella*.

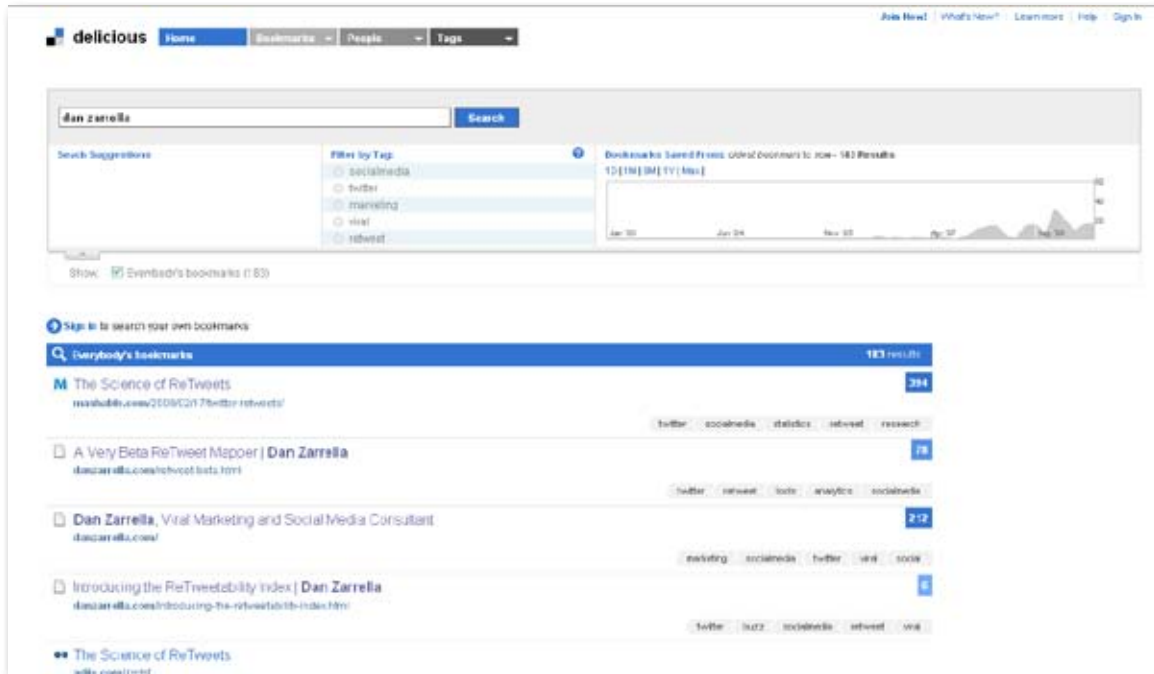


Figure 10-2. Delicious doesn't offer feeds of keyword searches, but you should visit it regularly and conduct a manual search.

The sources in the preceding list are a great start, but there are a few important sites that don't offer feeds of keyword searches. Visit these sites on a regular basis—perhaps once a week—and do a manual search:

- Delicious (see Figure 10-2)
- StumbleUpon
- Smaller social news and bookmarking sites in your niche
- LinkedIn Answers

Google offers a free service called Google Alerts that will send you an email whenever a new result appears in the search listing for certain keywords. Set up alerts on the names you're monitoring, as this will help you catch anything else that gets through the rest of your searches.

Don't forget to monitor your industry, niche, and competitors' keywords. This way, you can learn what problems your potential audience has with existing products, what features they wish they had, and what they love most about your competitors, so you can stay ahead of the game and are better prepared to ward off future problems. Think of social media as your focus group. When I spoke with Jennifer Zeszut, CEO of Scout Labs, she described monitoring strategy as a hierarchy of needs, with crisis management at the bottom and market intelligence near the top (see Figure 10-3).

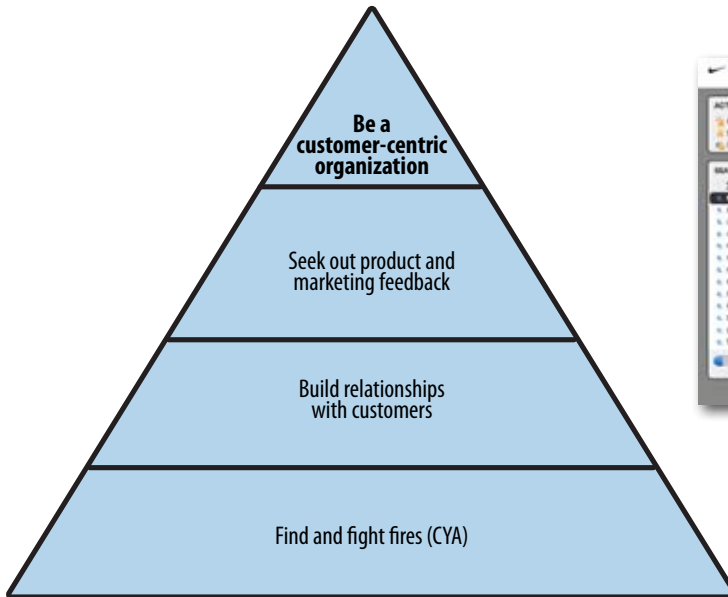


Figure 10-3. In Scout Labs’ social media hierarchy of needs, crisis management is at the bottom and marketing intelligence is near the top.



Figure 10-4. This screenshot of Scout Labs’ paid monitoring process shows what percentage of mentions of “Nike” come from Nike itself.

Paid Monitoring Tools

A number of paid options are available if your brand is large and gets lots of mentions. These tools can be helpful to identify positive and negative buzz, as well as to delegate responding duties within your company. Paid tools can make your life much easier if your brand is talked about frequently, as the free versions can get overwhelming and provide little organization.

Here are some of the more popular paid monitoring tools available today:

Radian6 (<http://www.radian6.com/cms/home/>)

Radian6 is an enterprise-level social media monitoring system that monitors a variety of sources and features workflow functionality that allows you to delegate response tasks in your organization.

Scout Labs (<http://www.scoutlabs.com/>)

Scout Labs is a less expensive alternative social media monitoring package. Starting at \$99 per month, Scout Labs' charges are based on the number of terms you track, not the number of people at your company using it. Scout Labs also has integrated a number of natural language processing features to provide qualitative analysis alongside the more traditional quantitative data (see Figure 10-4).

Trackur (<http://www.trackur.com/>)

Trackur is the least expensive of the three options mentioned here, and it offers many of the features of the others. Its pricing levels determine how often your searches are updated, from once every 12 hours to twice an hour.

YouTube Broadcast Yourself™
Worldwide | English

Sign Up | QuickList (0) | Help | Sign In

Home Videos Shows Channels Community

Search Upload

Disgusting Dominos People - Domino's Responds



Patrick Doyle
President, Domino's USA

0:04 / 2:01

★★★★★ 4,056 ratings 738,968 views

Favorite Share Playlists Flag

MySpace Facebook Twitter (more share options)

Statistics & Data

Video Responses (0) Sign in to post a Video Response

dominosvids
April 15, 2009
(more info)

Patrick Doyle, President, Domino's U.S.A., responds to video of (now former) Domino's team members. Follow us at <http://twitter.com/dpzinfo>

URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76SA40d>

Embed: `<object width="425" height="344"></object>`

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77,444 views
NationalGeographic
1:32:04
- Untamed and Uncut: Orangutan Terrorizes Zoo**
383,236 views
AnimalPlanetTV
3:29
- Gowanus, Brooklyn**
298,079 views
57

Figure 10-5. Domino's responded to the negative YouTube video on YouTube.

Responding

Once you've identified a conversation about you or your brands, you must decide whether to engage and what to do when and if you decide to join in. Speed is vital, so start planning your response as soon as possible.

If a negative comment or conversation is something that your customer support team can handle, by all means, let them take care of it. If the problem is more of a public relations or brand crisis event, you need to decide whether your public response will draw more attention to the problem than it would have gotten naturally. Err on the side of responding, but at least ask yourself whether your response will draw unnecessary attention to the conversation.

Remain calm when a potential social media crisis begins to break out; follow the same protocol I talked about when responding to a negative comment on a review site. Becoming angry or defensive won't help your cause—it will only make matters worse. Do what you can to fix the problem that led to the gripe, and detail what you're going to do to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Responses to negative feedback should be communicated in the same medium in which the feedback was communicated; so, if someone posts an embarrassing video to YouTube—such as the video I mentioned in Chapter 1 showing the Domino's employees defiling food that was to be delivered to customers—your official apology should also be posted there (see Figure 10-5). If the original video was tweeted a lot, be sure to also spread your video on Twitter.



Figure 10-6. Quantcast's demographic information can help you get to know your audience.

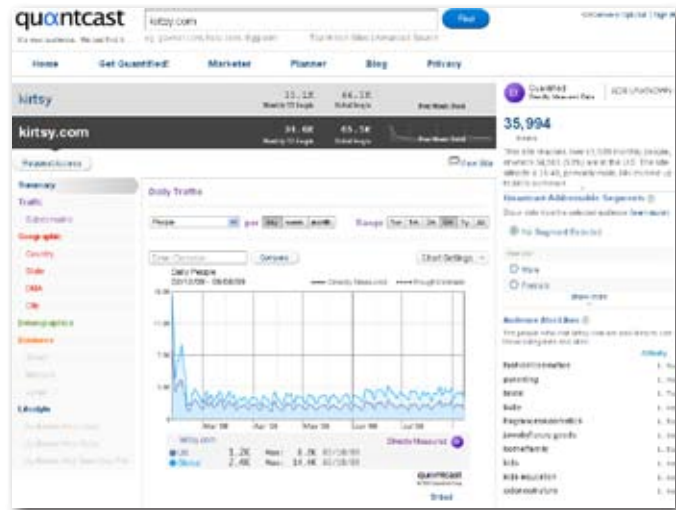


Figure 10-7. Quantcast's content preference data indicates which category of sites Kirtsy users tend to frequent.

Research

Once you've started to monitor what is being said about you and your brand, you should get to know your audience. You want to know who they are, where they hang out online, and how they use the Web.

You're probably in your target market personally, and if not, you likely know a few people who are. Start with them (or yourself): ask them what their favorite sites are and what blogs they read. Build an initial list of these sites as starting points. Say you want to reach an older, more affluent female audience. Head on over to Quantcast and look at the data on sites from your initial list, such as Kirtsy, Sugarloving, BlogHer, and StumbleUpon. You'll see that of these sites, Kirtsy best matches your target audience (see Figure 10-6). Quantcast also gives you some great content preference data indicating which categories of sites Kirtsy users tend to frequent (see Figure 10-7):

- Fashion/Cosmetics
- Parenting
- Bridal
- Baby
- Fragrances/Cosmetics
- Jewelry/Luxury Goods
- Home/Family
- Kids

You'll notice that for some sites, Quantcast even offers links to other sites that share the same audience, which you can then use to further expand your seeding site list.

Another great place to find blogs about your topical niche is Alltop.com. This "virtual magazine rack" has over 700 categories of blogs covering nearly every subject.

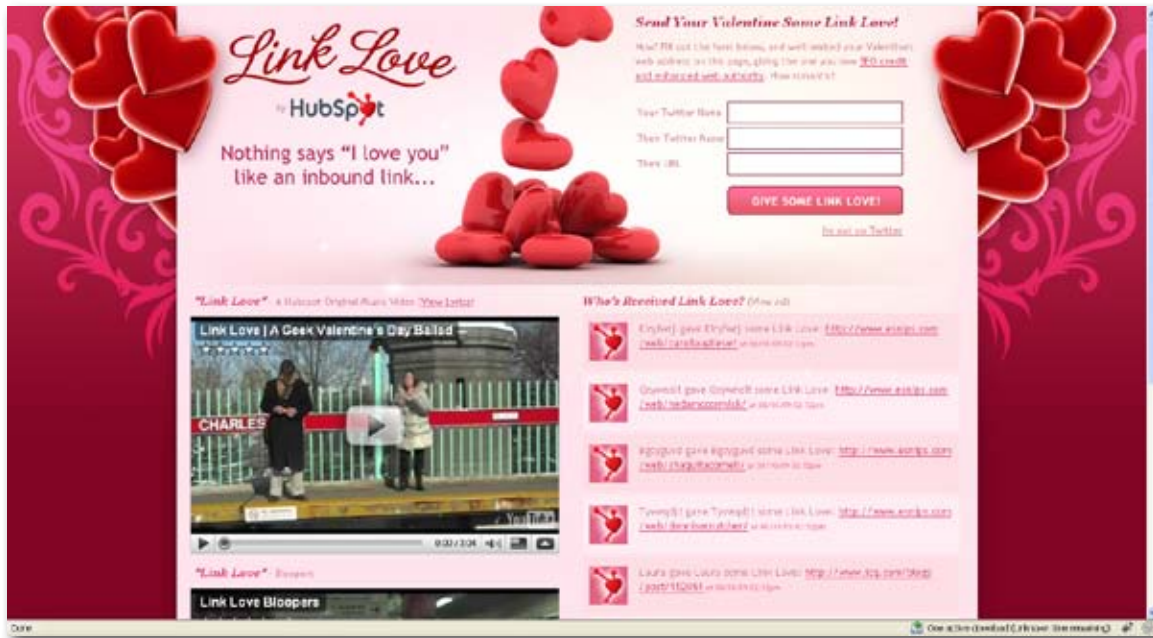


Figure 10-8. Valentine's Day can be a great seasonal event on which to base a social media campaign.

Campaigns Versus Ongoing Strategy

The actual work of social media marketing can be divided into two types: ongoing strategy and campaigns. Your *ongoing strategy* is the stuff you're doing on a regular basis: blogging, tweeting, contributing to forums, and so on. This is what you should be doing before your monitoring strategy finds an erupting crisis. Your ongoing work builds your brand and reputation.

When you've built a foundation of social media engagement with an established blog, Twitter account, and reputation on various social networks and sites, you can start launching *campaigns*. These should fit within your ongoing strategy and have specific goals and finite timelines. Viral videos, contests, and product launches should all be supported with dedicated campaigns. Seasonal and timely events are great things on which to base campaigns (see Figure 10-8).

Campaigns are the kinds of social media efforts that result in large but temporary spikes in traffic. I'll detail how to encourage those new users to become repeat visitors a little later in this chapter.

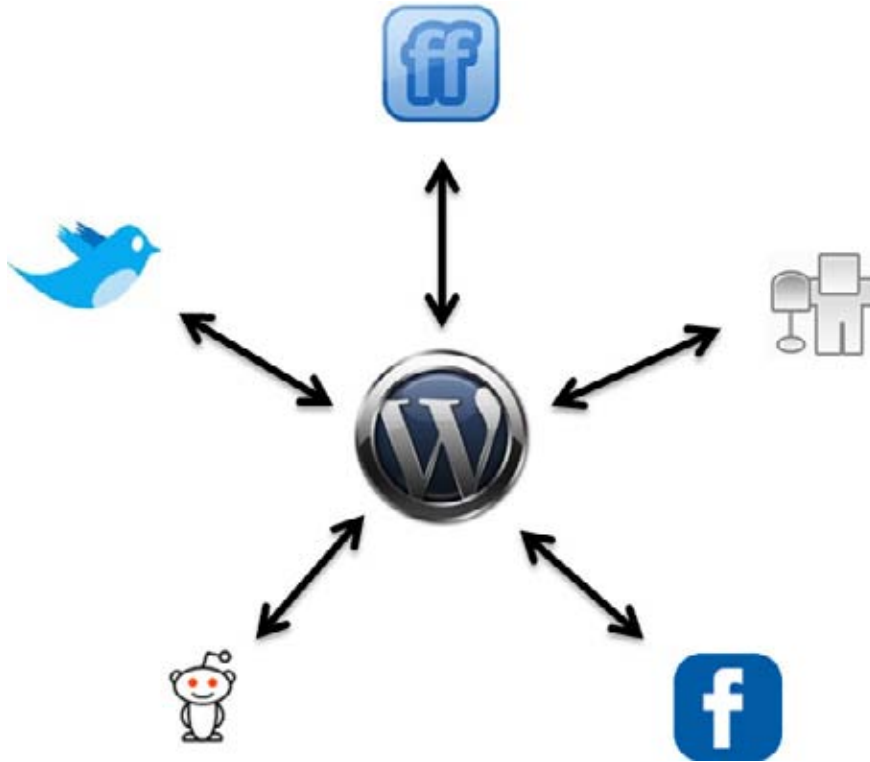


Figure 10-9. Your social media efforts should be integrated, and your blog should be the hub.

Integration

One of the central tenets of Web 2.0 is the idea that web applications should be able to share data and play nicely together. As Figure 10-9 shows, nearly every part of your social media marketing effort can integrate with at least one other part, and users of one kind of social media are likely to be users of other types; it makes sense to invite those who interact with you on Twitter to join your page on Facebook. Here are several examples:

- Your Facebook page can be connected to your Twitter account to pull in your tweets.
- Your LinkedIn account can include recent posts from your blog as well as presentations you've uploaded to SlideShare.
- Plug-ins can be used to automatically tweet your new blog posts.
- Your blog should have buttons for easy submission and voting on social news and bookmarking sites.
- Your YouTube videos can be embedded on your blog and on your Facebook page.
- You can link to your Second Life office from anywhere on the Web, including your blog, Facebook, and Twitter accounts.
- Your blog can automatically publish daily posts of the links you've bookmarked on Delicious.
- Your blog should have TweetMeme buttons to allow your readers to easily tweet about your content.

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Gender Differences in ReTweeting

Posted on Aug 10th, 2009 | 4 comments so far.

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[Contact me](#) to talk about how I can help with your social & viral marketing. Thanks!

Not all viral content sharing on Twitter happens in ReTweets, so when I designed my viral Tweeting survey, I included three similar questions:

- 1) What types of content do you ReTweet?
- 2) What types of content do you Tweet about?
- 3) What types of content do you Tweet links to?

They're all pretty similar, but there are obvious differences in each. For instance, people are OK Tweeting about their own opinions, but are unlikely to Tweet links to or ReTweet other peoples' opinions.

Content Types Tweeted

90%

80%



I'm a social & viral marketing scientist; read my [bio here](#). To get an idea of what I do, check out my [portfolio](#), [tools](#), and [research results](#). If you like my stuff, [subscribe to my feed](#), [follow me on Twitter](#) or [email me](#).



Follow me on Twitter



Subscribe to my Blog

Figure 10-10. In a sticky CTA, you can cross-promote to turn waves of traffic into return visitors.

Calls to Action

A *call to action* (CTA) is an invitation you make to your website visitors to engage in some type of action that benefits your business aims—and hopefully theirs, too. CTAs usually have one of two goals: stickiness and conversion. *Sticky CTAs* turn ephemeral waves of traffic into return visitors, whereas *conversion-based CTAs* lead a visitor into your sales funnel. The former will be accepted by most communities, and the latter should be approached more delicately to avoid the appearance of hucksterism.

Sticky CTAs

Social media campaigns often bring visitors in spikes that quickly dissipate; a video goes viral, or a blog post hits Digg's front page, and you get thousands of visitors for a few days. You want these people to stick around, become engaged with your content, and help promote the next home run.

If your content is hosted on your blog—as much of it should be—you have an easy option: feed and email subscriptions. Consider including invitations in your content: “If you liked this post, subscribe to our blog for more.” Another possibility is to offer exclusive content—an ebook, for instance—to subscribers only.

Social media sites with networking functionality also give you the option to encourage your readers to connect with you there. Ask your visitors to follow you on Twitter, fan your page on Facebook, or subscribe to your channel on YouTube. Don't forget to cross-promote; tweet a link to your YouTube channel, and ask people to subscribe (see Figure 10-10).

pointing to your business and also allows users to rate the business on a 5 star scale. Encourage fans of your business on Facebook or other social media sites to tweet the map and rate your business to create buzz.

Finally, above all else, **don't be spammy!** Just because you are following people does not mean you can message them every five minutes to go to your restaurant, bookstore, or hardware shop. Remember to keep your tweets interesting and relevant to your target audiences to get people to continue to follow you. Tweet about promotional offerings or upcoming events that you are hosting and/or that pertain to your industry. If you create content on a blog, tweet about it to drive visitors to your site. Combine your geo-targeted efforts with thought leadership in your industry to get your target audience engaged while remaining relevant to the rest of the Twittersphere as well.

Twitter for Business Kit



Learn how to use Twitter to get noticed in Social Media and spread news about your company.

[Download the free kit](#) to learn how to get started with Twitter and use it to help your company get found online!

FREE HubSpot

Article has 6 comments. [Click To Read/Write Comments](#)

Top 5 Marketing Stories of the Week: For Every Two Steps Forward, Take One Step Back

Posted by Lauren Brown on Fri, Aug 07, 2009 @ 07:51 AM

[Digg.it](#) | [reddit](#) | [delicious](#) | [StumbleUpon](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

Tags: [internet marketing](#), [inbound marketing](#)

- [public relations \(1\)](#)
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- [Shannon Paul \(1\)](#)
- [small business blogging \(3\)](#)
- [small business marketing \(4\)](#)
- [smallbusiness \(35\)](#)

Figure 10-11. A conversion-based call to action is designed to turn a visitor into a customer.

Conversion CTAs

Conversion-based CTAs are designed to turn a visitor into a customer (see Figure 10-11). There are two types of conversion-based CTAs, depending on your business model: leads and purchases. Very high-ticket items, such as cars or houses, as well as business-to-business transactions, start out as leads. A visitor becomes a lead when she fills out a form on your site that indicates that she's a potential customer. E-commerce sites, such as Amazon, don't have leads. Instead, visitors become customers by purchasing products directly.

Most lead-based businesses have (or should have) a simple conversion CTA in the form of a Contact Us page for interested parties to use. It is often more effective to ask a visitor to give you his information in return for some piece of content. You can require a reader to fill out a short form to download items such as ebooks and video webinars, and base your CTAs around these.

This type of CTA is more obviously commercial and should be used with more care than sticky CTAs. If someone has come to a blog post about a specific type of legal help, offer her an ebook about that area of the law, but don't shove it down her throat.

Takeaway Tips

- Remember your brand, but don't just use your old offline tricks in social media.
- Keep an eye on what people are saying about you, your products, and your competitors.
- Use your ongoing strategy to build a reputation, and then use short-term campaigns to kick-start specific offerings.
- Your social media marketing efforts should all work together.
- Use calls to action to entice your visitors to stick around and steer them to other offerings on your site.
- Don't forget the bottom line: be creative in how you convert social visitors to customers.



Introduction

To show business value and return on investment (ROI) for social media marketing campaigns, effective measurement is key. This chapter will focus on how you can prove the merit of the time and resources you invest in social media. It will help you convince your boss you're not just wasting time playing on Facebook.

In addition to conducting demographic research to identify which social sites your audience is using, you should also set goals with clearly defined levels for success. This chapter will discuss both of those topics, as well as teach you the basics of analytics on- and off-site.

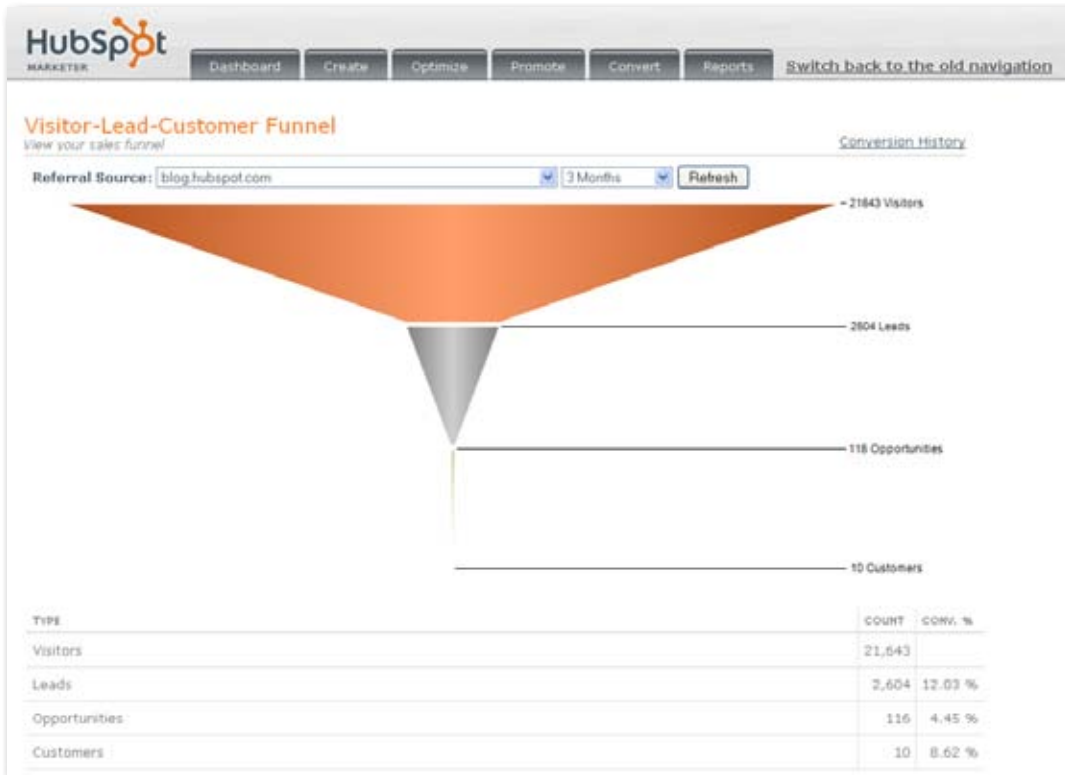


Figure 11-1. This is an example of closed-loop marketing analytics using HubSpot software.

Metrics

A *metric* is a standard unit of measurement; you measure how tall you are in the metric of inches or feet. I think about metrics for social media marketing in two categories: on-site and off-site. *On-site metrics* measure activity that takes place directly on your site, whereas *off-site metrics* measure activity that happens on other sites where you and your customers interact.

On-Site

This section will explore some of the basic on-site metrics you can use to measure your social media efforts.

ROI

The most important thing you can measure as a marketer is your return on investment, or how much money your efforts are contributing to your business. Is the cost of your investment in social media outweighed by the value it is providing?

All decent analytics packages allow you to track certain actions on your site, whether they are purchases or the completion of lead forms. By labeling visitors who've reached these goals, you'll be able to trace them back to their *referrers*, the sites that sent those visitors to you, and evaluate the effectiveness of each source.

If you're a lead-based company, estimate how much a lead is worth to you by calculating what percentage of leads turn into business and what your average customer is worth to you. Most software lets you configure their tracking mechanisms to include the actual price of a sale or this value per lead, so you can assign a monetary figure to each source of social media traffic. Some analytics systems allow integration with your sales systems to implement a concept called *closed loop marketing*. This means you can attribute closed business to specific leads, traffic sources, and campaigns (see Figure 11-1).

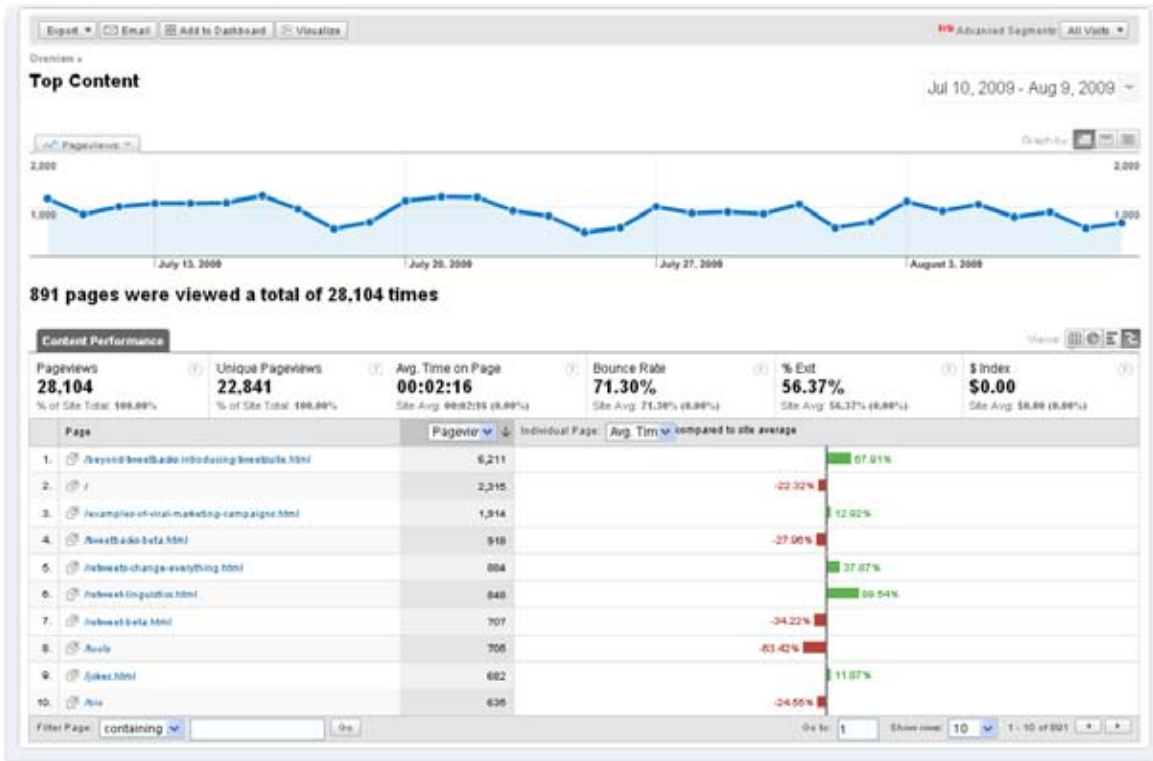


Figure 11-2. Google Analytics' engagement metrics indicate how engaged people are when they come to your site.

To calculate the actual ROI from your efforts, simply deduct the cost of your social media work (include monetary and time investments) from the income generated. If the result is a positive number, your investment has been profitable; if not, you should revisit your campaigns to see what is working and what is not. Also, pay attention to which sites and tactics are generating the most value. Not all businesses can beneficially engage all types of social media; focus on the ones that work for you.

Engagement

Not all of the people who come to your site from social media outlets are going to turn right into customers or leads, so you should also be measuring metrics that indicate how engaged people are when they come to your site. Most analytics software allows you to measure engagement metrics (see Figure 11-2).

The two easiest engagement metrics are time on-site and page views per visit. The longer a visitor spends on your site, or the more pages she reads, the deeper the relationship you're building with her. Hold on to sources of traffic that may not be generating direct sales (yet), but are generating highly engaged visitors, because as your traffic volumes increase, these sources are most likely to start producing conversions.

Bounce rates have been called the sexiest web metric. Analytical obsessions aside, they're a great way to identify which pages or sources of traffic are totally not working for you. A bounce is when I visit a page of your site and then don't go to any additional pages; I bounce right off your site. If you see a source of traffic that is generating a ton of bounces, first check which part of your site these people are landing on. Make sure that page is relevant to the reason they came to your site; if you had a tweet about cheap airline tickets, it shouldn't link to a page selling full-price first-class tickets. If they are landing on a reasonable page and still bouncing, that source of traffic might not be worth very much to you.

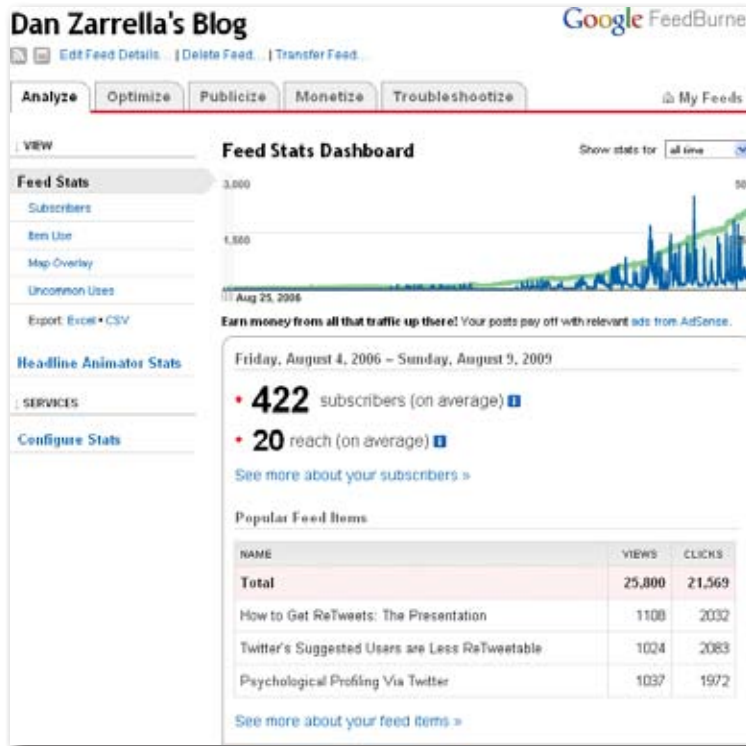


Figure 11-3. Subscriber metrics from FeedBurner provide information on the number of people consuming your feed and how they are consuming it.

But remember, an event such as going popular on Digg will generate a lot of bounces, but hopefully it will also generate some engaged visitors as well as links and subscribers, so balance bounce rates with the rest of your metrics.

If you have a blog—and you should have one—you can also measure the number of comments you're getting on each post. This is a good measure of the community you're building around your content. However, remember that a post without comments is not without value; controversial topics will generally get the most comments, but aren't necessarily doing the most good for your brand.

The other blog metric to keep a close eye on is your subscriber count. FeedBurner is a free product from Google that provides information on the number of people consuming your feed and how they are consuming it (see Figure 11-3). It also features an easy-to-set-up email subscription system that is a good way to deliver your content to nontechnical users. I've noticed that blog subscriptions are slow to rise, even long after a blog is getting tons of traffic, so don't expect overnight success here.

Eyeballs

Old-school marketers often come to the Web and start looking around for simple “eyeball” numbers (see Figure 11-4). They find hits, visits, and unique visitors. Of course, you should not ignore raw traffic counts, but be sure to look at them with a big grain of salt. The term *hits* typically means any request to a web server, and depending on the analytics system, that could include CSS files, images, and HTML, meaning that a single page view can have a dozen or more hits. Better than hits or even page views are the visitor and visit metrics.

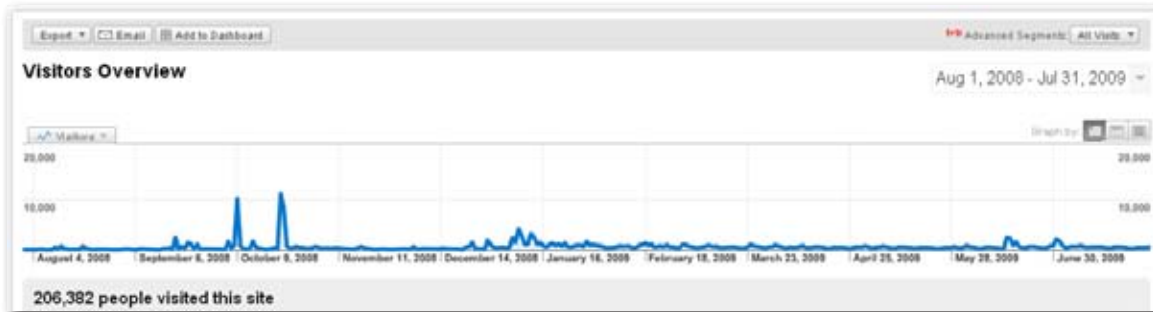


Figure 11-4. This is an example of pure eyeball-based metrics from Google Analytics.

Most software defines a single visit as one browser session with gaps between page requests no longer than 20 minutes. If I go to your site and poke around a little bit, read a few pages, and maybe fill out a form, that's one visit. If I come back tomorrow and do the same, I've added two visits to your reports. The visitor metric is an attempt to measure individual people coming to your site. If I don't delete my cookies and use the same computer both times, my two visits would be counted as one visitor.

As is possible with any kind of traffic on the Web, some types of social media successes will send a ton of people to your site who view one item and then leave. The majority of these visitors will not do very much for your business, but will create large spikes in the pure eyeball sections of your analytics reports—most real value on your site is created by people who push the needle in engagement metrics.

Off-Site

Because so many of your social media marketing activities occur in places other than your site, you should also be measuring a class of metrics that can be found off-site.

Twitter

On Twitter, the most obvious metric is the number of people following you. This represents your potential reach and is how most lists of top users are usually ranked. For marketing purposes, it is clearly better to have more followers, but it is not the only metric worth following. It is possible to get a ton of followers by simply following a ton of people and waiting for them to follow you back, but this does little to measure how engaged your followers are with your tweets.



Figure 11-5. Off-site Twitter analytics from TwitterCounter.com measure the number of people following you.



Figure 11-6. These Facebook page metrics indicate the gender and age of people who interact with HubSpot.

When people are actively following your micro conversations, they'll reply to you. This means that a count of how many times your username is mentioned in other people's tweets is a much better way to start understanding Twitter engagement. Figure 11-5 shows off-site Twitter analytics from TwitterCounter.com.

My favorite value—retweets—is harder to measure, but I believe it provides the best window into how influential you are on Twitter and what your total reach is. When I retweet someone else's content, I'm implicitly "voting" for his content as being valuable and worth sharing with my followers.

Facebook and LinkedIn

On Facebook and LinkedIn, your marketing efforts are focused on *pages* and *groups*, respectively, and although the words are different, they essentially mean the same thing.

The most basic metric to look at on both of these networks is the number of people who've joined your group or become fans of your page. LinkedIn does not provide any historical data like Facebook does, so you should record this number regularly by hand if you want to see how your group is growing.

Facebook also gives you more advanced data, but the "insights" platform is currently buggy and often does not actually return any information. The only statistic beyond the number of fans it does consistently provide is a demographic breakdown of the people interacting with your page, including gender and age. Although these numbers are interesting, they don't really provide that much actionable information. Figure 11-6 shows Facebook page metrics indicating the demographics of people who interact with HubSpot.



Figure 11-7. YouTube metrics show you which of your videos are getting the most views and who's viewing them.

Media-sharing sites

The most important metric for media-sharing sites is pretty straightforward: how many people viewed your image, presentation, or video. But since these are social media-sharing sites, you would be remiss to ignore how many people are commenting on your media. SlideShare and YouTube also allow viewers to stay connected to your content by following you on SlideShare and subscribing to your channel on YouTube. These last two numbers are similar to blog subscribers in that they will probably be the last to grow, but they are great indicators of a highly engaged audience (see Figure 11-7).

As I mentioned in other chapters, you should encourage your fans to upload media of their own to these sites, and when the media includes your product, brand, or you personally, you should tag it with your name. Simply doing a search for your name will then show you how many pieces of content other people have created about your company.

Social news and bookmarking sites

Since the point of marketing on social voting, news, and bookmarking sites is to get enough votes to become popular, you'll undoubtedly already be watching the key metric of votes. You can also monitor how many pieces of your content have been submitted to each site to understand whether your engagement with those communities is deeper (more votes on fewer pages) or wider (fewer votes on more pages).


Review sites

Clearly on a review site you should be looking at the number of reviews (more is better) and the quality of the reviews (higher-rated reviews are better). As I mentioned in Chapter 7, Yelp offers business owners great data about the amount of activity associated with their business listing. Traffic and search information is available, as is a simpler breakdown of the number and quality of reviews.


10-17-2009, 05:50 PM

Thread Tools | Rating | Display Modes

BodySpaceAdmin
 M00ySpaceAdmin



Join Date: Aug 2004
 Location: Boise, Idaho, United States
 Age: 39
 Stats: 5'9", 190 lb
 Posts: 3,225
 Bodylog Entries: 295
 BodyPhotos: 143698
 Rep Power: 1015984




Bodybuilding.com/NutraCoastal Presents: Vegas Nites Giveaway!

Bodybuilding.com and NutraCoastal (formerly Fast Action Pharma) is proud to announce a new giveaway to Bodybuilding.com forum members: the "Vegas Nites Giveaway!"

We will be providing 200 of the Vegas Nites 2-packs for FREE, which allows forum members to try this product in exchange for providing feedback/results about this product (here in this thread).

"Vegas Nites is great for the consumer that wants both a sexual enhancement/stamina benefit, along with mood enhancer, energy surge, and an added secondary benefit of helping with hangovers!"

Vegas Nites info here: <http://bodybuilding.com/store/fastaction/vegas.html>



Thus, the first 200 forum members who post in this thread with the phrase "Party On!" get to try the "Ultimate Party Pill" for FREE which "helps to increase energy, mood, and acts as an intense sexual enhancer!"

Party On!

UPDATE: Please also state which benefit(s) from this product you are most interested in receiving (e.g., energy surge, help with hangovers, sexual stamina, mood enhancer, etc). Thanks.

Not intended for those under 21 years of age.

One SUV gas tank fill-up would feed a man for a year... if it were served as corn rather than converted into biofuel. Corn is for people - not cars. "Green" is not always good.

Last edited by BodySpaceAdmin: 06-29-2009 at 02:52 PM. Reason: Updated info about age restriction.

Figure 11-8. Post number and reputation metrics are available on many forums.

Forums

Forum marketing presents an interesting challenge for measurement. Obviously, if you're linking to your site—something you should do cautiously and only when it is very relevant to the discussion—you can track how many visitors you're sending and how valuable those people are to your business. But beyond that, the only other metrics you can measure in forums are posts and whatever reputation system may be available (see Figure 11-8). You should never post just to increase your numbers, but you should strive to regularly generate useful content, and eventually your post numbers will reflect how active you are. If the forums you're working in measure reputation or post quality by way of user ratings, pay close attention to how much other forum members like your posts.

Second Life

The only officially created metric available for measuring the success of a location in Second Life is traffic. It is based on a somewhat unknown algorithm that counts the number of people who pass through an area on a given day. If your location has a landmark-giving object, you can have it record the number of requests it receives, indicating how many people were engaged enough by your content to want an easy way to return to it. You can also easily record the number of unique visitors your location has, which may prove to be a more interesting figure than your traffic score. The same goes for recording requests received for other objects, such as the ones that hand out product information or your website URL. The user agent string in your web server log will also indicate whether a viewer came to you from the Second Life client browser. If you've created a group that you're using for marketing, you can also watch the number of members you have, but given the limitations of Second Life groups, this is probably a dubious strategy.

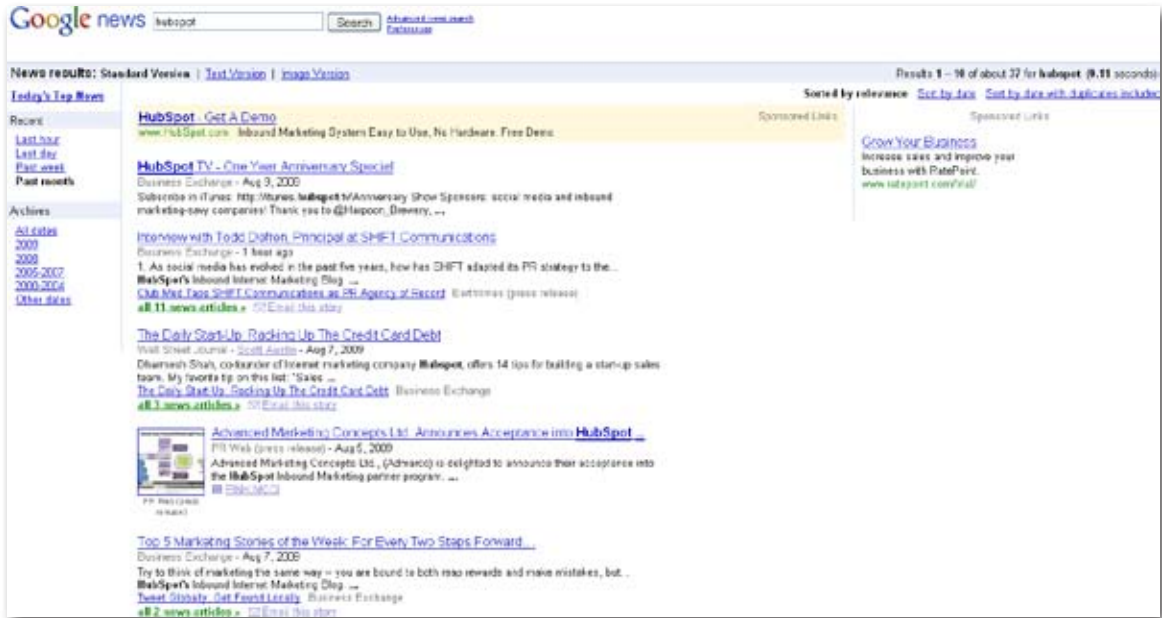


Figure 11-9. This Google News search shows earned media hits.

Earned media

The PR world gives us the concept of *earned media*, which is essentially the number of mentions your company gets in blogs, traditional news, and social media that it did not pay for. Successful social media efforts can generate a lot of buzz, so it is useful to track the number of times your company's name is mentioned on the Web. Easy ways to do this are with searches on Google News (see Figure 11-9) or simply Google Web.

Goal Setting

Before you start a new marketing initiative, you should set goals for your work. A simple example of this is to aim to generate a certain level of traffic, but as I mentioned before, pure eyeball metrics are problematic. The best goal you can set is for your social marketing efforts to lead to an amount of actual revenue for your business.

Your goals should include specific descriptions of success; don't have a goal of "increasing brand awareness." Rather, define exactly how you will measure awareness and an achievable threshold to shoot for. The actual metrics you'll use to measure your accomplishments toward a goal are called *key performance indicators* (KPIs). The various data points I detailed earlier can all be KPIs. For instance, if you're trying to increase your reach on Twitter, your KPI could be followers, and your stated goal should include an exact number of followers.

The screenshot shows the Clicky 'Spy' interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for Home, Visitors, Locale, Content, Links, Searches, Campaigns, Goals, and Spy. The 'Spy' icon is highlighted. Below the navigation bar, there is a section titled 'Spy basic' and a description: 'Spy is a live view of visitors interacting with your web site.' Below this is a table with the following columns: Time, User, Action, and Referrer.

Time	User	Action	Referrer
Aug 10 2009 7:20pm	75.0.146.206	/	google.com
Aug 10 2009 7:14pm	204.9.220.36	/gender.html Gender Differences in Retweeting Dan Zarrella	dan zarrella
Aug 10 2009 7:14pm	204.9.220.36	/	twitter.com
Aug 10 2009 7:12pm	143.111.168.183	/rumors.html How to Make and Spread Rumors Dan Zarrella	search.yahoo.com
Aug 10 2009 7:10pm	99.37.26.121	/	google.com
Aug 10 2009 7:10pm	99.38.177.206	/rtm-search.php?o=masfddt ReTweet Search	viral marketing

Figure 11-10. The paid version of Clicky offers a “spy” view, where you can watch activity on your site as it occurs.

Software

You can use a number of different software solutions to track your on-site metrics. Here are a few of the ones that are the most popular and easiest to use, but be aware that there are many more than I've listed here:

Google Analytics (<http://www.google.com/analytics/>)

One of the most popular analytics systems, Google Analytics is a free and robust package from Google. It allows you to track eyeball and engagement metrics, as well as goals, including direct purchases and leads. There is a delay between when a user performs an action on your site and when your reports will reflect the action, but for most companies, Google Analytics provides plenty of data.

Clicky (<http://getclicky.com/>)

One of my favorite analytics packages, Clicky has free and paid versions of its software. The statistics are real-time, meaning there is no delay as with Google Analytics, and the paid version offers a “spy” view, where you can watch activity on your site happen in real time (see Figure 11-10). This is especially useful for social news and bookmarking marketing efforts because you can see when a new site starts sending traffic to you and add buttons to your content for that site.

HubSpot (<http://www.hubspot.com/>)

The company I work for, HubSpot, offers analytics as a part of its inbound marketing software. It is different from the data offered by Google Analytics in that it is designed for marketing professionals, includes lead information, and integrates with Salesforce.com to allow for closed-loop marketing measurement.

Takeaway Tips

- Measure ROI as best you can; actual sales amounts or closed leads are best.
- Focus on engagement metrics over pure eyeball metrics.
- Don't forget to measure your performance on external social sites.
- Set achievable goals, and know how you're going to measure your progress.
- Select an easy-to-use web analytics package.

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